

BOOK REVIEWS

*National Visions,
National Blindness:
Canadian Identities in the 1920s*

Leslie Dawn

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006.
446 pp. Illus. \$85.00 cloth, \$34.95 paper.

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LESLIE DAWN makes an ambitious contribution to a hotly debated topic of Canadian cultural history – the role of the visual arts in the formation of the image of a modern Canadian nation. The title's reference to national blindness and the cover illustration take us to the heart of the book's argument. A handsome portrait of a Gitxsan woman chief in ceremonial regalia is seen hanging on a gallery wall. She gazes out, while in front of her the blurred figures of a gallery audience pass by. The painting seems to be a piece of Canadian heritage, but neither the image (Martha Mawlhān of the Raven clan of Gitsegukla, BC, portrayed in 1924) nor the artist (W. Langdon Kihn) are familiar today. The book's title promises an enquiry into what have become our accepted icons and what

has been rendered invisible. Based on a huge fund of new archival research, *National Visions, National Blindness* will be an indispensable resource, even for readers who question the patterns of interpretation that Dawn superimposes throughout his narrative.

At issue is how and why certain time-hallowed images of Canada, such as the paintings of the Group of Seven, were enshrined at the formative moment when national institutions – the National Gallery of Canada and the National Museum – were newly created. Dawn's general perspective, that Canada's self-image as a pristine northern wilderness of jack pine, lake, and snowy peak was constructed by a self-appointed Anglo-Canadian elite, is one widely shared by revisionist scholars since the 1980s. Many critics (now accessible in *Beyond Wilderness: The Group of Seven, Canadian Identity, and Contemporary Art*, edited by John O'Brian and Peter White, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007) have noted the paradox that the painting of these seemingly unspoiled wilderness scenes coincided with the exploitation of northern Ontario for mining, logging, and tourism. They have pointed to the erasure of first Nations presence from the landscape in paintings by

the Group of Seven, at a time when the government's policy of Aboriginal assimilation through Indian residential schools and enforced enfranchisement aimed to eradicate first Nations cultures in Canada.

Dawn's mission is to explain what he pinpoints as a crisis in the representation of the Native population in Canadian arts and popular culture during this formative period. He presents a series of detailed case studies that trace the activities of the artists and administrators who put in place a public image and identity for Canada during the 1920s for domestic and for international consumption. The imagery of the landscape and of the regalia of a "primitive" and now allegedly vanishing Native population, Dawn notes, was required to fill a gap because of Canadians' lack of an ancient *Volk* – a central concept for European nation-states grounding their own national mythologies. As a result, he points out, "Native populations had no viable place within the new 'native' Canadian culture, except as emblems of their own disappearance" (2). While this manufactured image of the nation suited the interests of the state and the elite it served, it was fraught with ambiguities and was highly unstable because Native peoples, in fact, were not disappearing but were engaged in numerous local struggles to resist current government policies. Their visibility in popular culture (rodeos and "Indian Days" in the Canadian west) and in the arts thus always threatened the fiction of their "vanishing" and, with it, the assumption by colonial newcomers that unused lands and a "prehistoric" Native cultural legacy were up for grabs.

Dawn scrutinizes a series of artistic projects through which Canada's newly fledged cultural institutions launched

their fictions of Canadian identity and, concurrently, he suggests, worked to *cover up* the contradictory state of "Indian" affairs. He discusses the key exhibitions through which the National Gallery promoted the Group of Seven – at the British Empire Exhibitions at Wembley in 1924 and 1925, through a Canadian art exhibition sent to Paris in 1927, through the now notorious Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern at the National Gallery in 1927, and in shows circulated in the North American continent during the 1920s and 1930s. He examines the activities of government ethnographers and of the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) with regard to recording and preserving Native artifacts and totem poles and deploying them as tourist attractions. In the dock are the first director of the National Gallery, Eric Brown; ethnographer Marius Barbeau of the National Museum of Canada; Duncan Campbell Scott, superintendent-general of the DIA; and the Group of Seven's A.Y. Jackson and Lawren Harris. Like a prosecuting attorney tracking evidence of cultural crimes, Dawn combs through their desk drawers, files, mailboxes, and published reports in search of smoking guns.

He finds plentiful evidence of systemic racism, although how far the activities of the individuals he discusses were as self-consciously calculated as he makes them sound may be questioned. Dawn acknowledges some risk and unease in combining two distinct methodologies: (1) the analysis of broad historical systems and their inherent logic (here, the colonial situation in Canada that saw a conflict between Aboriginal peoples and colonizers over control of the land and the enforcement of cultural values) and (2) the application of detailed attention to the role of specific actors. In Dawn's narrative it is these

actors rather than the colonial power structure that become the villains of the tale.

While the cultural projects Dawn investigates have been described and discussed before, in each case he finds sufficient new evidence to clarify the links between political agendas and cultural policies in Canada after the first World War. With his detailed examination of the reception of the Group of Seven in London, Paris, Toronto, and Montreal, for example, Dawn makes clear how dramatically the meaning of the art shifted with the varied ideological positions of different audiences. He attributes the Group's critical success at the British Empire Exhibition in 1924 to the artists' use of an underlying pictorial structure that carried on the conventions of the Picturesque movement, conventions that historically had signalled a Eurocentric gaze upon an entrepreneurial and colonial domain. The members of the Group of Seven succeeded in "displaying an image of national difference" with their new Canadian Shield imagery and their broad post-Impressionist colour and handling, while remaining "loyal to the empire" with the more conservative structure of their compositions (11).

Dawn shows that appreciation of the Group of Seven unravalled when the National Gallery sent their work to the Jeu de Paume Museum in Paris in 1927. He reveals that the National Gallery, which expected to score a further endorsement of the Group of Seven, obtained the invitation for a Canadian exhibition through covert solicitation. But the reception by the French press, which in general assessed the work of the Group of Seven as weak and immature and the Native artifacts in the show as masterly, was so contrary to the National Gallery's intentions that,

instead of publishing the reviews in a pamphlet, as it had promised and as it had done with the Wembley reviews, it in fact suppressed them.

Dawn goes on to analyze the complications of reception that arose in a succession of cultural projects that attempted to insert first Nations heritage into "Canadian" culture. His treatment of the Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern brings new light to its political aspects. A crucial argument in Dawn's book is that the visibility of Native traditional cultures in art exhibitions, and the excessive interest that this often elicited from observers, was seen by administrators as a threat to the government policies that aimed to eradicate a separate Native identity in Canada. Dawn sets out a fascinating accounting of the divisions among government administrators and anthropologists "on the issue of the continuity of Native cultures and identity and the policies of assimilation and repression" (190). He makes it apparent that Marius Barbeau was more often in sympathy with D.C. Scott than with the explicitly anti-racist position of the head of the Canadian anthropological division, Edward Sapir (381 n. 39), although his portrayal of Barbeau as a spy for Scott rests on conjecture. Dawn draws a general contrast between the attitudes of art circles and government officials in Canada and the United States in the 1920s and 1930s. Compared with the growing support for local Native art production in the American Southwest on behalf of a market of interested art patrons centred in New York, Canadian bureaucrats complied with the DIA to discourage anything that made Native ownership and retention of their customs and traditions seem viable (243-44).

These Canadian priorities, Dawn contends, also account for the ultimate disappearance from view of the work of Langdon Kihn, an American painter first sponsored by the CPR to paint portraits of Native chiefs in the Canadian Rockies. Dawn's lengthy discussion of Kihn's paintings and activities supplies a significant missing chapter in Canadian art history. It also serves as an example of Dawn's tendency to find conspiracies everywhere. He argues that the National Gallery's purchase in June 1926 of Kihn's paintings of Skeena Valley subjects was a calculated move to take them out of circulation and effectively bury them because of their sympathetic and detailed portrayal of Native individuals. Kihn portrayed his sitters dressed in the regalia of their traditional rank – images that, if seen in London, might sway public opinion there. It is certainly true that “control of the image of the Indian” was important to D.C. Scott and the DIA in 1926, when the Allied Tribes of British Columbia was challenging the government on the question of land and Aboriginal rights in that province. But far from “having to concede defeat of his policies to eradicate Native culture and identity” (172), Scott was all too successful in blocking further land claims activity, and the Allied Tribes was given no chance to take its case to London. There are numerous slippages between speculation and fact in Dawn's account of Kihn's treatment in Canada. Since Kihn was an American, the relegation of his paintings to various Canadian museum vaults is just as likely to have been the result of the nationalism and artistic turf protection that gave primacy of place to the new Canadian art movement epitomized by the Group of Seven. Dawn notes only Kihn's successes in the United States and

not the fact that his work was equally eclipsed there by the Stieglitz circle and its patriotic modernism. The humanity and cultural specificity of Kihn's Native portraits was perhaps a subliminal reason that Canadian government officials stopped promoting his work, but it was hardly the only one.

Dawn is quite right to point out the National Gallery's failure to buy Emily Carr's new monumental paintings of Northwest Coast totem poles in the early 1930s – a rejection he attributes to the nervousness of the art establishment regarding the vivid impression of Native presence in her works (272). But he goes on to elaborate a conspiratorial scenario in which Lawren Harris, through “subtle and brutal” innuendoes in his letters (306), virtually “coerces” Carr into submission to his “moral, racial, national and aesthetic imperatives” (307). Dawn's argument that Harris pressured Carr because of the political connotations of her Native imagery is sheer conjecture: it should be noted that the National Gallery did not buy her landscape works at this time either. Also unconvincing is Dawn's depiction of Carr as responding to Harris and Brown's supposed “bullying” by calculating which of her paintings to send east in order to avoid exclusion. He represents her submission to the National Gallery's Canadian Annual Exhibition in 1931 as “eschewing the monumental Native pieces she had been working on and showing elsewhere.” Actually, Carr had none of her recent Native paintings at hand as they were still retained by John Hatch after her show in Seattle, a fact that she bemoaned as it left her with nothing to send east. Dawn explains the apparent contradiction (that the painting Carr *did* send, *Indian Village, BC*, was in fact a Native subject) by citing Doris Shadbolt's suggestion that this

might have been the same painting that had been hung at the Baltimore Pan-American Exhibition. States Dawn: "It had been accepted into the Pan-American Exhibition. Given its ratification by such an authority, refusing it in Canada would have been hard to justify" (305). But since the dates of the two exhibitions overlap, these two paintings could not have been the same. So Dawn's argument holds no water.

Dawn's frequent reliance on such apparent statements of "fact" to construct elaborate speculative scenarios somewhat mars a challenging book that otherwise adds a great quantity of significant detail to our picture of cultural developments in Canada between the two world wars. The repetitive deployment of a profusion of details to construct what Dawn infers were the schemes and motives of individual players creates a fascinating and tendentious "reality effect," to use a term from Roland Barthes. How far this extends our understanding of the actors in this drama and how far it gives rise to blindnesses of its own will generate a continuing debate.

*The Mapmaker's Eye:
David Thompson on the
Columbia Plateau*

Jack Nisbet

Pullman, WA: Washington State
University Press, 2005. 180 pp.
Maps, illus. us\$29.95 paper.

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MORE THAN AN exhibition catalogue but every bit that as well, Jack Nisbet's *Mapmaker's Eye* takes its reader farther into Anglo-Welsh-

Canadian explorer David Thompson's five years (1808-12) on the Pacific Slope than has any previous publication. Visually enhanced by the sketches of several artist-travellers who succeeded Thompson over the next five decades, *The Mapmaker's Eye* is a suitable title for this highly illustrated work, which is as inquisitive, ample, and engaging as is Nisbet's *Sources of the River* (1994; 2007). If Thompson carries a disincentive for scholars of the West, it is that, apart from his maps and a few sketches of mountain ranges, he did not compile a visual record. We know from his verbal record that his eye was catholic in its scope, taking in features particularly of the non-human world that escaped all other early recorders. But Bodmer, Warre, Kane, Sohon, and Wilson all compiled distinctive visual records – at least of people and landscapes if not of flora and fauna – near enough in time to Thompson's years in the Columbia watershed to justify the use of their work to complement a treatment of Thompson's discoveries and observations. Their works were put to effective use in the well-researched exhibition mounted in Spokane by Marsha Rooney of the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, from 8 October 2005 to 3 September 2006, in advance of bicentenary events marking the acme of Thompson's career. *The Mapmaker's Eye* is the exhibition's legacy. Not only those illustrations but also portions of most maps in existence during Thompson's explorations (by Turnor, Pond, Mackenzie, and Vancouver) are also reproduced effectively.

Nisbet does not restrict his treatment to the 1808-12 period; rather, he grows Thompson up in London, sails him to Hudson Bay, and initiates him into the fur trade. And, after 1812, he winds him down in Terrebonne, Williamstown, and Montreal. Steeped in archival as

well as published textual and cartographical sources, the brief first two chapters portray the boy's culture, learning, and experience prior to his becoming an explorer and cartographer, and it rehearses the history of the Pacific as well Thompson's own explorations up to the time of Lewis and Clark's winter on the upper Missouri, 1804-05. (More might have been made of Vancouver's achievement, given that his four-and-a-half-year expedition along the west coast was the longest naval survey in history – surely no little achievement in the eyes of a fellow surveyor-explorer.) These preliminary chapters point out the fetching possibility that Thomas Jefferson learned that Thompson was in the Rockies in 1803 and responded with his western initiative – a complementary variation on the view of Donald Jackson, John Logan Allen, James Ronda, and others that Alexander Mackenzie's book, *Voyages from Montreal* (1801), was the chief catalyst for Jefferson.

The third chapter takes its reader with Thompson over the mountains in 1807 to Windermere Lake, where he built Kootenae House. The fourth recounts two and one-half years' travel of epic proportions: down McGillivray's (Kootenai) River and back on a circular journey to Kootenai Falls in early 1808; over the mountains and across the Prairies to Rainy Lake (northwestern Ontario) and back by November; winter at Kootenae House; a mountain traverse to Fort Augustus (near modern-day Edmonton) and back in mid-summer 1909 in time to reach the Kootenai River by 20 August; from there, with the help of flatheads who came north to meet him, a trip south to Pend Oreille Lake, where, in early September, he built Kullyspel House "just west of the delta where the Clark Fork River spills into Pend Oreille Lake" (75) and met Pend Oreille and, later, Spokane people for the

first time; thereafter, a trip southeast up Clark Fork River on a circular route that brought him back to Kullyspel House (as Nisbet explains [156], Thompson used the name "Saleesh" for all three of the Pend Oreille, Clark Fork, and flathead rivers because he heard a linguistic consistency as he travelled along them); then another journey up Clark Fork in order to establish Saleesh House, where he passed the winter of 1809-10 before failing, the next spring, to reach the Columbia by way of the tortuous lower Pend Oreille River and so, instead, crossing the mountains again by the Blaeberry River/Howse Pass route he knew well and passing down the North Saskatchewan to Fort Augustus by the end of June. Typical of Nisbet's careful work are his identification, thanks to a living descendant, of Ugly Head, a flatbow leader who came to Kootenae House that September (47) and guided Thompson across Canal flats, and his two-page explanation of Thompson's design for the wood plank canoes that he introduced on the Pacific Slope (94-95). But the book is festooned with nuggets that illuminate Thompson's catholic interests and encyclopedic knowledge. Most impressive is Nisbet's generous contextualizing of Thompson's whereabouts both in the explorer's terms and in those of readers prompted to retrace his routes on modern maps. Nisbet's scholarship is not exhaustive – while his notes are sufficiently frequent, they are referential, seldom discursive – but he is Thompson's best, most intimately knowledgeable, biographer to date.

The fifth chapter covers the thirteen months from June 1810 to June 1811. No further insight is provided into Thompson's moment of doubt on the North Saskatchewan and his decision to evade the Piegan blockade by going north to the Athabasca; however, a

detailed explanation is provided, for the first time in Thompson studies, of the sort of “clinker built” craft that the party assembled at Boat Encampment on the upper bend of the Columbia (today’s Kinbasket Lake) for the season’s travels both up- and downriver (not clinker built at all, as it turns out), the first of seven boats that Thompson designed and that his men built in 1811 (125). By June, he had reached the southward flowing Columbia for the first time at Kettle Falls. From there, as Chapter 6 tells us, he launched his return trip to the river’s mouth, completing a survey of its entire length in seven months and not stopping before arriving at Saleesh House in November at “the end of a year and a half of continuous travel, often at a furious pace for a man who was now forty-one years old” (125).

The Mapmaker’s Eye does not lose its focus at 1811, but Thompson covers so much more territory during this summer that any account necessarily widens its focus. Still, Nisbet finds room for enlightening remarks, such as this gloss on the explorer’s observation of a comet in a September sky: “Contemporary European astronomers called this the Comet Flaugergues, which at its brightest appeared at magnitude 1-2, with a tail twelve degrees in length. For several weeks, this spectacular object in the handle of the Big Dipper lit up the northern latitudes; its closest approach to earth was on September 12, 1811.”

If *The Mapmaker’s Eye* ended with Thompson’s crossing of the Cordillera for the last time in May 1812, it would have served its reader well, but Nisbet continues with a chapter on the explorer’s legacy, which delivers on the book’s titular promise by mounting a careful, detailed discussion of Thompson’s maps, the purposes he had for drawing each of them, and their whereabouts today. (One sketch map reproduced

is notable: held by the Library of Congress, it depicts the upper bend of the Missouri, so identified by a note in the hand of Thomas Jefferson [34].)

The Mapmaker’s Eye concludes with a series of five appendices. These discuss tribal trails in British Columbia, Washington, Idaho, and Montana; the region’s flora and fauna, well glossed by Nisbet’s expertise; tribal names; a list of “North West Company men and associated free hunters on the Columbia Plateau”; and a selected list of trade goods and supplies found in Thompson’s order for the Columbia Department in 1807-08, including something called a pischen.

Nisbet expresses sympathy for Thompson’s efforts to influence negotiators of the Oregon Treaty in 1845 (he called for the border to run down the Rockies from the 49th parallel to the 47th parallel, west along it to the Columbia River, and then down that river to the ocean) and poignantly notes that the agreement that, as Thompson predicted, settled most of the territory in which he established posts on the United States, “deeply galled” him (139).

The bicentennial of his years on the Pacific Slope are bound at last to bring Thompson into a prominence that he has not enjoyed in popular North American history before now. His concern for accuracy, as exhibited in his nearly endless textual revisions, might have stood him in excellent stead as a cartographer, but it also denied him the prominence that book publication accorded less luminous predecessors, contemporaries, and successors. The bicentenary, together with a new edition of Nisbet’s *Sources of the River* and *The Mapmaker’s Eye*, as well as the promise of William Moreau’s edition of all of Thompson’s writings, will surely garner him a posthumous fame on a par with that of Lewis and Clark.

That said, a gap remains in Thompsoniana: neither Nisbet, who foregrounds Thompson's interests in geography, cartography, ethnography, and natural history, nor anyone else has yet plumbed the depths of Thompson's Christianity in an effort to understand how his faith and his science aligned. Did the former render him more willing than most of his contemporaries to dwell among Native peoples, such that his career takes on a different shape from that of most out-and-back explorers? Was Thompson, as Matthew Wangler has suggested, a catastrophist? Without a knowledge of deep time, a concept that later occupied Charles Lyell in his *Principles of Geology* (1830), was Thompson, like Samuel Black after him, disposed to understand the formation of the Cordillera as a sudden geological event, like the Deluge of the Book of Genesis? If not, whence derived his idea that the Rockies "must once have been Liquid and in that State when swelled to its greatest Agitation, suddenly congealed and made Solid" (31)?

*Native Seattle: Histories from
the Crossing-Over Place*

Coll Thrush

Foreword by William Cronon

Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007. xxi, 326 pp. us\$28.95 cloth.

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COLL THRUSH's book lies at the intersection of two bodies of scholarship that usually run parallel to each other. Urban history and Indian history meet in *Native Seattle* with panache and authority. Thrush tracks the presence of Indians, his

term of choice, both as persons and as symbols in the settlement history of the northwestern United States' most prominent urban conglomeration.

Thrush's main point is captured in the first sentence of Chapter 1: "Every American city is built on Indian land, but few advertise it like Seattle" (3). In ten linked chapters, some more essay-like than others, Thrush describes the much celebrated "founding of Seattle" at Alki Point in 1851, describes the next two decades during which newcomers relied on Indian people, details their marginalization to the periphery of the increasingly self-confident city, tracks the growing appeal of Indian imagery, and acknowledges the self-confidence that encouraged Indian peoples' return to some aspects of Seattle life during the second half of the twentieth century.

The text operates on two levels. Thrush approaches Seattle not as a case study but, rather, as the emotional core of his inner self. Seattle is him, and he is of Seattle. He writes with a flourish, and the text is in turn evocative, reflective, and exhilarating. The enthusiasm obscures the book's solidity. The breadth and intensity of primary research that girds each point in the text makes the footnotes exciting in and of themselves for scholarly readers. Thrush has plumbed an incredible array of sources, from governmental and family archives to contemporary newspapers and books to manuscript censuses (which, fortunately for historians of the United States, are available for research after seventy years, unlike the ninety years in Canada) to personal interviews. It is this combination of intimacy and deep scholarship that gives *Native Seattle* its power and authority.

Thrush's subtitle, *Histories from the Crossing-Over Place*, has another meaning, I expect, for British Columbian

and Alaskan readers than for their Seattle counterparts. Indian peoples' reliance on large canoes to travel up and down the coast meant that both British Columbians and Alaskans "crossed over" to Seattle and its environs. While Thrush seeks to focus on the Duwamish, Suquamish, Muckleshoot, and other local peoples, their British Columbian and Alaskan counterparts repeatedly intrude into the text. Nuu-chah-nulth, Haida, Tsimshian, Tlingit, and their neighbours lived and worked in Seattle as a matter of course. For Tsimshian diarist Arthur Wellington Clah, Seattle was the "great city" (III). It was Alaskan artistic creativity that formed the core of Seattle's conception of itself as an Indian place. Thrush describes how visiting Seattle clergymen, land developers, and bankers blithely sawed down a coastal Alaskan totem pole honouring a Tlingit woman who had drowned and then reinstalled the Chief-of-All-Women pole in Pioneer Place Park as Seattle's first piece of public art (II3-14). At the same time, Washington differed in important ways from British Columbia, including with regard to miscegenation laws that, from 1855 onwards, banned interracial marriage, whereas Canada never formalized the everyday racism characterizing both places.

Well-chosen images enhance the text, which would have benefited from maps plotting the spatial dimension of the changing face of Seattle. Thrush traces so eloquently in words. Readers may find it useful, as I did, to print out relevant maps from the web to plot Puget Sound and Seattle locations central to the flow of the text.

When maps do appear, it is for a different purpose. The last fifty pages contain a co-authored "Atlas of Indigenous Seattle." Some 127 sites are mapped (although not with sufficient specificity actually to locate

them), named in English and the local language, and described with regard to their most prominent natural features. *Native Seattle* is an important book both in and of itself and for the challenge it throws down to historians of other cities to rethink their pasts more honestly and creatively.

*Athapaskan Migrations:
The Archaeology of Eagle Lake,
British Columbia*

R.G. Matson and
Martin P.R. Magne

Tucson: University of Arizona
Press, 2007. 224 pp. 25 b/w photos,
36 illus., 35 tables, 12 maps. \$65.00
cloth.

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MIGRATION IS ONE mechanism that archaeologists have put forward to explain significant change in cultural materials through time. However, due to its linear and rather simplistic explanation of human activity (i.e. material change = wholesale cultural change) compared with more nuanced perspectives that also consider socioeconomic interaction or internal cultural forces, its popularity as an interpretive tool has waned. In addition, problems associated with assigning ethnicity to archaeological material, an unavoidable requirement for accepting a migration hypothesis, further complicate its effectiveness. In *Athapaskan Migrations*, R.G. Matson and Martin P.R. Magne address the issues of migration and ethnicity in the archaeological record of the Chilcotin region in the southwest interior of British Columbia.

Focusing on sites located in the Eagle Lake area of the Chilcotin, the Eagle Lake Archaeological Project's main objectives were to determine the arrival date of Athapaskan speakers into the Chilcotin and to situate this event in the spread of Athapaskan languages out of southeastern Alaska. To confront the problem of tracking ethnicity, Matson developed the "parallel direct historical approach" (6-7), a variation on the "direct historical approach," as a means of identifying cultural rather than simply functional or adaptive changes in the archaeological record. In brief, this approach compares archaeological and ethnographic data from two areas with similar environments, allowing for the environmental factor to be ignored as a variable in an explanation for change. Any changes noted in the archaeological record of one of the areas could then be tested against a migration hypothesis. The Eagle Lake region and the area around the mouth of the Chilcotin River (MOC) were chosen as the parallel locations for the project. The former is in the traditional territory of the Chilcotin people, who are Athapaskan speakers; the latter is traditionally Interior Salishan territory. The early archaeological deposits found in both areas are characterized by Plateau Pithouse Tradition (PPT) material culture, which is assumed to be the precursor of the Interior Salishan Shushwap of the MOC. However, the recent deposits in the Eagle Lake district change to constitute what Matson and Magne argue reflect the migration of Athapaskans into the Chilcotin. Using the parallel direct historical approach, Matson and Magne build their case for Athapaskan migration into the Eagle Lake area circa 245 ± 34 BP or AD 1645-60. They support their argument by comparing ethnographically described material culture, house types, and

settlement patterns with what was noted archaeologically. In addition, they build a chronology derived from radiocarbon samples collected from the three main excavations in the study area and from dendrochronological data based on a local tree ring chronology developed for the project.

Athapaskan Migrations is an exhaustive study that combines data derived from ethnography, archaeology, linguistics, ethnoarchaeology, and oral tradition, with the greatest emphasis placed on the former two. The findings derived from these sources are presented in five chapters: (1) comparisons of settlement patterns, house types, and material culture; (2) detailed descriptions and summaries of the various surveys used in the analysis; (3) detailed descriptions of the main excavations (the Boyd Site, EkSa 32 [PPT]; the Shields Site, EkSa 13 [PPT]; and the Bear Lake Site, EkSa 36 [Athapaskan]) combined with the dating methods used; (4) the ethnic identification of material from a comprehensive analysis of point types, lithic assemblages, and debitage; and (5) Matson's and Magne's reassessment of the larger Athapaskan migrations from the perspective of Eagle Lake. Six companion appendices for the volume are downloadable from an online database at the University of British Columbia and can also be viewed through a link on the University of Arizona's web site: <http://www.uapress.arizona.edu/books/bid1740.htm>.

Generally, *Athapaskan Migrations* is an excellent volume that puts a much needed spotlight on the issue of ethnicity in prehistoric archaeology. My main concerns are with the uncritical use of ethnographic data that underpin much of the work and also with how the radiocarbon dates are interpreted and presented. With respect to the former, the work is a perfect example of

what Cole Harris, in *The Resettlement of British Columbia* (1997), describes as contributing to an “academic datum plane.” He argues that, given the myriad problems associated with ethnographic information, potentially erroneous descriptions of the distant past can become reified and entrenched in academia as a consequence of the uncritical use of data. I would add that assuming a direct linear correlation between ethnographically described materials and similar materials found in archaeological contexts ignores other viable possibilities for their presence, such as social interaction, trade, or diffusion, all of which question a one-to-one relationship. Oddly, Matson and Magne recognize the issues associated with ethnographies (22) but choose, nevertheless, to see a direct connection between ethnographic and archaeological data and gauge the strength of their archaeological findings against their ethnographic expectation.

As noted above, there are also problems with the interpretation and presentation of the radiocarbon data pertaining to the arrival of Athapaskan speakers in the Chilcotin (88-89). Two dates are of particular interest here: 505 ± 70 BP (Boyd Site) and 245 ± 34 BP (an average of three Bear Lake Site dates). The former is given as the latest PPT occupation of the study area, while the latter is an earliest estimate of Athapaskan migration into the Chilcotin. The way these dates are interpreted and presented suggests that there was an approximate 250-year hiatus between the latest PPT residence in the Chilcotin and Athapaskan arrival, which strongly supports the ethnic identification of the Bear Lake Site as Athapaskan. Although it is important to have strong temporal control to support the ethnic argument, averaging the three Bear Lake dates only serves to create a false level of

precision at the expense of accuracy. It would make more sense to average the dates if, for example, they were derived from the same piece of wood, bone, or feature, but the radiocarbon samples were collected from three separate features. It is not possible to know with certainty if these features are associated with the same event, so it is difficult to understand why they were averaged. On the one hand, Matson and Magne assert that they are not presenting the averaged date as definitively representative of the earliest Athapaskan occupation (89), but, on the other, they refer to it as such with some regularity (90, 102, 159).

With respect to presentation, all of the radiocarbon data discussed in the book should have been calibrated and presented graphically and/or in tabulated form showing the 2-sigma range. If this were done, the overlap at 1-sigma of the calibrated Boyd Site date (505 ± 70 BP or AD 1390-AD 1453) and the earliest Bear Lake Site date (415 ± 115 BP or AD 1417-AD 1529) would have been apparent, suggesting the possibility that this may not have been an Athapaskan site (I calibrated both dates using the radiocarbon calibration program, Calib. Rev5.0.2, developed by Minze Stuiver and Paula J. Reimer 1986-2005 at <http://calib.qub.ac.uk/calib/calib.html>, viewed on September 11, 2007). Something more involved than simply replacement through migration may have occurred during this early time frame, such as interaction or some other form of cultural exchange between Athapaskan and PPT ethnic groups. Clearly, Athapaskans did migrate into the Eagle Lake area at some point in the past, given that the Chilcotin people are Athapaskan speakers; however, the timing of their arrival has not been definitively shown in this study.

Overall, *Athapaskan Migrations* is a comprehensive and well-researched volume. One small editorial issue I have is with Appendix VI-8, in which the weights and measurements for the side-notched points are tabulated. The text explains that the eighty-seven points used in the various statistical analyses were measured and weighed to the nearest tenth of a millimetre and the nearest tenth of a gram, but there are no decimal points in the tabulated numbers. Also, there are many three-digit and a few single-digit numbers, which suggests different levels of precision than the nearest tenth. This issue and the larger concerns expressed above aside, *Athapaskan Migrations* is an important contribution to both Athapaskan research and to the study of ethnicity in archaeology. Although the findings presented here are not definitive, they provide a starting point for further research and give some comfort to others who hope to find something more than function and economics in the archaeological record.

*Sharks of the Pacific Northwest:
Including Oregon, Washington,
British Columbia, and Alaska*

Alessandro De Maddalena,
Antonella Preti,
and Tarik Polansky

Madiera Park, BC: Harbour
Publishing, 2007. 144 pp. Illus. \$21.95
cloth.

ANNA HALL
University of British Columbia

HUMANS HAVE instigated the generalized obliteration of large predators for centuries. The severe,

routinely fatal penalty that sharks have paid appears to result in large part from social perspectives founded in fear and ignorance. From eradication programs to trophy hunting to the demonstration of wealth and success by providing shark's fin soup, shark populations worldwide are suffering the consequences of misinformed social opinion. Adding further to these injurious actions is the indiscriminant target and non-target killing of sharks in global fishing operations. The ubiquitous common denominator is often our collective lack of understanding and compassion for this unique taxon of fish.

Sharks of the Pacific Northwest is a first-rate guide to the eighteen species confirmed from the cold Pacific waters of Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, and Alaska. Alessandro De Maddalena, Antonella Preti, and Tarik Polansky engage the reader's respect for these misunderstood creatures who have successfully navigated their way through biological history, radiating to some 479 species (19). The general taxonomic overview provides an appreciation of how, through time, physiological adaptations have allowed sharks to thrive in a diverse array of ecological niches.

The biological and ecological information presented throughout is relevant and exactly what the title indicates. De Maddalena, Preti, and Polansky introduce the reader to shark taxonomy, evolution, morphology, physiology, and ethology in a well-organized and sequential manner that in no way resembles that of a textbook. The language is clear and coherent, and associated images and illustrations allow even a novice naturalist to fully understand the distillation of scientific material. *Sharks of the Pacific Northwest* delivers in each chapter by providing an appropriate level of detail without an overwhelming amount of scientific jargon.

This beautifully illustrated book successfully merges chapters of biological and ecological narrative with a dichotomous classification key more often found in field guides. Though it is unlikely that most readers would ever have the opportunity to identify any of these sharks in the field, key features highlighted for each species further contribute to the reader's appreciation of shark diversity. The book is useful for residents and visitors alike as the presentation is general enough to attract a wide audience of natural history enthusiasts, yet the regional details are such that local audiences will garner even more. The book certainly contributes to the available literature on the coastal and oceanic marine life of the Pacific Northwest, and its explanatory presentations are firmly founded in science.

The overview of global research initiatives is a useful addition that enables one to connect the familiar human community with the more mysterious realm of the shark. De Maddalena, Preti, and Polansky also highlight some historical accounts of shark/human interactions in specific localities throughout the Pacific Northwest and provide details that counter common misconceptions. *Sharks of the Pacific Northwest* concludes with ecological summaries for each of the eighteen species, ranging from the familiar piked dogfish (or spiny dogfish) (90) to the largely unknown longnose catshark of Oregon (114). A level-headedness prevails throughout these summaries, which is particularly evident with regard to the historically more feared species such as the shortfin mako (107) and great white shark (104). Nevertheless, the authors do not make light of the species-specific threat to humans.

The only element that detracts from *Sharks of the Pacific Northwest* is

the unfortunate misspelling of several invertebrate taxa in the generalized diet sections of five shark species. Nevertheless, the contribution this book makes by educating its readers in a non-sensationalistic manner about the life of local sharks outweighs any oversights in spelling. From start to finish, the book aims to improve knowledge and to dispel misconceptions.

Sharks of the Pacific Northwest is an excellent resource that should begin to turn the tide of public opinion, at least in the western United States and Canada. Overtones of shark conservation and respect pervade each chapter. However, descriptions of the recent rounds of anthropogenic-induced mortality raise the question of whether these extant species have the ability to survive. De Maddalena, Preti, and Polansky clearly communicate the inherent value these cartilaginous fish have to the marine ecosystem. This book is an informative and important addition to the available non-specialist literature on coastal cartilaginous fish of the eastern north Pacific Ocean, and it will enhance any wildlife enthusiast's library.

*Blue Valley:
An Ecological Memoir*

Luanne Armstrong

Nelson, BC: Maa Press, 2007. 240 pp. Illus. *The Colours of the Columbia* series. \$23.00 paper.

ANNE EDWARDS
Moyie, BC

LUANNE ARMSTRONG is a walker. Walking the land where her ancestors farmed and where she has lived, walking the cities where she and her children have spent time, walking by

rivers and lakes and mountains and over the soil: walking has been the centre of her connection and her understanding of ecology. "Sometimes," she remarks, "going for a walk is a very long journey." It is this journey she records in *Blue Valley*.

Born on the eastern shore of Kootenay Lake near Sirdar, Armstrong sheltered in the cocoon of her family farm. In the most elemental sense, the farm nurtured her, educated her to the world, and remained her centre over the years. In *Blue Valley* she traces all the phases of her growing, either on the farm or as sustained by it while she was away learning about the wider world, finding the assurance and education she needed in order to fulfill her childhood determination to become a writer. What she records is a truly rural experience – a circumstance rare today and becoming more and more rare as time passes. Her facets of light and chords of harmony demand the reader's knowing and remembering, and thus the reader finds her/himself adding new layers of excitement to Armstrong's elemental recognitions. Perhaps her eloquence draws more easily the descant of other rural readers, but I believe her "ecological memoir" is so basic that it echoes also in the souls of those who do not live in a rural landscape set in mountains or by water but who nonetheless appreciate the harmony of land, sea and air, flora and fauna, and vibrate to the ecological truth of her insights.

Armstrong the narrator is a complex person who sought urban as well as rural experiences. She was a tomboy, grew into being a woman and a mother, succeeded at her studies, fled from her peers – when she recognized them – shared her home in harmony and discord, reached into the wide world, and retreated into sanctuary. The constant anchor was the land, the

place that was also loved by her parents and family and friends, the farm that demanded sacrifice and endless work if they were to survive. She stresses the contradictions: the poverty and the plenty, the bonds that can so easily be chains, the singularity of her place, which she notices every time she walks, even though "it's the same beach and the same summer repeating itself like an ancient liturgical chant."

A few points of epiphany mark Armstrong's progress into the wider world. She determined to be a writer when her first schoolteacher taught her to read "at six and I never went back on the idea ... As far as I know, no one in our family had ever met a writer or had any idea how anyone went about being such a thing." When her dad cursed her little brother for lagging when there was work to be done because "it was work or starve and, by God, we were going to work," Armstrong "got it clear. It was one of those moments when life suddenly made sense. We were all in this together. We had this thing to do, called survival." Even feminism came "like a cold clean wind blowing through my head, blowing out the humiliation and the embarrassment. For the first time I realized that what had happened to me, the abusive marriage, the children, the fear of university, hadn't all been my fault. Perhaps ... I could prevent it ever happening again."

Armstrong's home retained its central importance in her life: it gave her an identity that fit. A Toronto woman looked at her worn backpack when she went to Halifax for a conference that was to lead to an international women's peace conference in Nairobi and remarked, "Oh, going camping?" But participants cheered Armstrong for her contribution to Canada's position statement. Most people who moved into the Kootenays in the 1970s to create a

new counterculture were part of a wave of pioneers; however, as Armstrong says, "For me, the counterculture was real and deeply felt; it reflected the values by which our family had always lived: being independent, self-sufficient and living a life centred around family, community, animals, gardening and nature." Armstrong is an evocative, companionable, insightful guide to a life well incorporated into the ecology of the Kootenays.

*Harbour City: Nanaimo in
Transition, 1920-1967*

Jan Peterson

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

PATRICK A. DUNAE
Malaspina University-College

NANAIMO IS a perplexing place for a historian. The city's elected officials and first Nations leaders often disregard and frequently disdain historical structures. Recently, two buildings that had been listed on the city's heritage register were demolished without any public discussion. City Hall allowed a developer to demolish the former Crace Street school (1873), the second oldest school house in the province. Upon receiving a parcel of land in a transfer agreement from the Nanaimo Port Authority, the Snuneymuxw first Nation speedily demolished Nanaimo's oldest industrial site, a foundry built in 1881. A spokeswoman for the Snuneymuxw justified the destruction by saying the building had no historical value to Nanaimo's Aboriginal community, even though many Native men were employed in the foundry in the last century. Readers of

this journal can probably offer other examples of historical vandalism in "the Harbour City," as Nanaimo is now called for promotional purposes. And yet historical books about Nanaimo continue to be written. Books by Jan Peterson are the most popular.

This is the third in a trilogy of books by Peterson on Nanaimo. The first, *Black Diamond City: Nanaimo – The Victorian Era*, was published in 2002; the second, *Hub City: Nanaimo 1886-1920*, appeared in 2003. I reviewed the two volumes in *BC Studies* 144 (Winter 2004/05). While I enjoyed the author's narrative and applauded her research, I thought the books needed more analysis and suggested that, in the concluding volume, she might consider some historical themes and trends. Specifically, I raised questions about the "tough-guy" character of Nanaimo. Can we attribute the glowering persona of Nanaimo to historical circumstances? Is the city still smarting from capitalists like Robert Dunsmuir, who left slag heaps near Nanaimo and built castles in Victoria? Is Nanaimo's "hard-man" personality a legacy of the once-militant labour movement? The author is silent on these questions. Still, she has provided lots of new information about Nanaimo in this book.

She begins by evoking the sounds of the city: "The rhythm of the day in Nanaimo was set by mine whistles and by the chimes of 'Big Frank,' the Dominion Post Office clock ... Ship horns, foghorns, and ferry engines broke the silence of an early morning or late evening" (11). She refers to the sounds of railway locomotives, airplanes, automobiles, and radio transmitters. Nanaimo was one of the first cities in British Columbia to have a commercial radio station. Staying with her theme, she recalls the musical sounds of the bands and orchestras that

played in the city's most popular dance hall, the Pygmy Pavilion. Other sounds, including the cheers of spectators at the Central Sports Ground, are evoked in the opening chapter, entitled "The Roaring Twenties."

In following chapters, Peterson provides vignettes of politicians such as George S. Pearson, a Liberal MLA and cabinet minister who represented Nanaimo for nearly twenty-five years (1928-52); poets, notably Audrey Alexandra Brown, author of *ADryad in Nanaimo* (1931); and entrepreneurs like Sam Madill, a blacksmith who invented mobile spars and hydraulic yarders used by logging operations worldwide. The author devotes several pages to the enigmatic cult leader, Brother XII, who established a commune near Nanaimo in the late 1920s.

Some chapters are devoted to themes such as education and health care; others are devoted to eras. The era of the Second World War receives the most extensive treatment, as Peterson notes that nearly eleven thousand soldiers trained at Camp Nanaimo during the war. In some years, the population of the army camp was larger than that of the civilian population. While Peterson's coverage of the home front is thorough, she neglects to mention that many soldiers stationed in Nanaimo were conscripts from Quebec. These men were vilified as "zombies" by Nanaimo residents whose family members had enlisted voluntarily. When the soldiers marched down Front Street after V-J Day in 1945 they were jeered, not cheered.

The most sparkling chapter is entitled "The Fabulous fifties." Here Peterson conveys the spirit of prosperity and optimism that characterized Nanaimo in the 1950s. This was the decade when the massive Harmac pulp mill opened, providing employment to nearly one

thousand men; when the most glamorous woman in the Commonwealth, HRH the Princess Margaret, visited Nanaimo to help citizens celebrate the 1958 centennial. Her task there was to cut the world's largest birthday cake. The book concludes in another centennial year, 1967, with a description of the opening of the Nanaimo Centennial Museum. The museum building, located on top of a promontory called Piper's Park, was strikingly modern at the time. Its octagon design was intended to echo the design of the city's oldest building, the Hudson's Bay Company Bastion (1853). The author alludes to that structure in the final sentence of the book, which appears in a two-page epilogue that takes the narrative up to the year 2006: "As the city looks to the future, the old ... Bastion still stands on Front Street as a silent reminder of Nanaimo's humble past" (205).

The concluding line does not do justice to the city's history or to this book. Nanaimo's history is sometimes depressing, occasionally exhilarating, but it is not "humble." Paterson has chronicled the evolution of the city during the twentieth century in a lively and entertaining way. Using material from the Nanaimo Community Archives, she offers new and original perspectives on Nanaimo's past, though she does not probe very deeply into historical eras or events. Moreover, she exaggerates the importance of Nanaimo's flamboyant mayor and real estate developer, Frank Ney, and overlooks the more laudable achievements of Rod Glenn. A director of the Nanaimo Credit Union, one of the first such institutions in British Columbia, Glenn was a much respected figure in the international cooperative movement. But Ney, who inaugurated races from Nanaimo to Vancouver in motorized bathtubs and bestowed

names like Captain Kidd's Terrace and Friar Tuck Way on the streets of Nanaimo, certainly deserves a place in this book. And certainly *Harbour City* deserves a place on the bookshelves of urban historians and heritage enthusiasts, who will be able to see from its many illustrations Nanaimo's lost landscapes. The Malaspina Hotel, once adorned by murals by the celebrated artist E.J. Hughes, a Nanaimo boy; the Civic Arena, home of the formidable Nanaimo Clippers hockey team; and the Edwardian-era theatres and stores on Commercial Street, depicted in an evocative 1950s photograph (171) – all these buildings have been demolished in the last five years. At the time of writing, the 1967 Centennial Museum building was also slated for demolition. Thanks to this book, we have a record of what those places looked like and how they served Nanaimo, a city still in transition.

*The Comox Valley:
Courtenay, Comox,
Cumberland, and Area*

Paula Wild with Rick James;
photography by Boomer Jerritt

Madeira Park, BC: Harbour
Publishing, 2006. 144 pp.
Illus. \$34.95 cloth.

JAMIE MORTON
North Island College

IN THE PUBLISHER'S promotional sheet, this attractive book is described as "an intimate portrait of an incredibly beautiful and special place." This sense of affection for the region comes across strongly in the course of reading *The Comox Valley* and viewing the photographs that illustrate it. The

majority of these are contemporary views by Boomer Jerritt, with some historical images inserted to support themes raised in the text. The choice of photographs used to represent the beauty and unique identity of the region is interesting. Following the traditions of North American landscape art, a few of them present the "sublime" natural features of the region – for instance, the Comox Glacier and various beaches – emphasizing the transcendent power of nature and the environment. However, most of them seem to have been chosen to portray the "picturesque" nature of the region. In other words, they focus on how people, and the cultural manifestations of human occupation, make the region "home." The intent appears to be to celebrate how people have transformed the region into a pleasant place to live rather than the splendour of the environment.

The Comox Valley is organized into seven chapters, with the first, "Origins," dealing with the physical environment and first Nations heritage. The stereotypical linking of indigenous populations with "wilderness," the past, or "prehistory," is mediated by the authors' introduction of some contemporary issues and initiatives of the K'omoks Nation. In this chapter, as in the rest of the book, a summary narrative provides context, which is augmented with anecdotes and information that illustrate what is distinctive or special about the region – curious animals, from elasmosaurs to marmots and lampreys – and exceptional cultural features, such as the huge system of precontact fish traps in Comox Bay.

The next four chapters follow a similar pattern, dealing with the geographic subregions of the Comox Valley. Summary narratives, often dealing with historical development,

“pioneers,” and ghost towns, provide contexts in which to emphasize anecdotes, special events, buildings, or districts, and particularly local characters who have contributed to the distinct character of the Comox Valley. For instance, Chapter 2, dealing with Courtenay, focuses on (among other things) the “crusty pioneer” Eric Duncan, the Native Sons Hall (“the largest free-standing log building in the world”), and thespian/city councillor Sid Williams. Other “regional” chapters likewise summarize the development of the districts, towns, and settlements, with a strong emphasis on inhabitants – from the elites that shaped industry and settlement to the characters who symbolize local identity. These chapters also link macro-level socioeconomic changes in British Columbia and on Vancouver Island to the rise and fall of communities in the Comox Valley.

This leads neatly into the last two chapters, “Working the Land” and “Paradise in the 21st Century,” which summarize the region’s shift from an economy based on agriculture and industry to a postindustrial economy focused on service industries, recreation, and tourism. “Working the Land” describes the agricultural and forest industries of the Comox Valley, and it ends by noting that the major employers in the region today are all in the service sector: the Canadian Forces Base, the local school district, the local hospital, and Mount Washington Alpine Resort. The final chapter focuses on ongoing struggles between recreational and environmental interests in the Comox Valley, using anecdotal examples including Mount Washington Alpine Resort, the Vancouver Island marmot, and the long-time environmental activist Ruth Masters.

The Comox Valley closes with a three-page guide to “Discovering the Comox

Valley” and a two-page bibliography. The former summarizes what a visitor might see, while the latter provides an overview of the literature about the valley (much of which was used in the book’s preparation). As a photo essay that summarizes the natural and human history of the Comox Valley, this book provides an appealing and effective introduction to the region. It is an affectionate “insider’s” view, emphasizing those aspects seen as making the valley a special place to live, hence the reliance on anecdote, distinctive natural and cultural features, and remarkable inhabitants past and present.

The first and last chapters may be the weakest because they fail to examine the way the region has been conceptualized and reconceptualized by indigenous populations, by Euro-North American resettlers attracted by agriculture or industry, and, finally, by postindustrial populations. The recreation versus environment issue is one manifestation of the larger issue in the Comox Valley – rapid growth and resultant pressures. This issue is driven by “lifestyle” or “equity refugees,” mostly from other parts of Canada, looking for the archetypal West Coast experience in a less urban and less expensive setting than Greater Vancouver or Victoria. Inexpensive direct flights from Alberta have linked the Comox Valley conceptually to Prairie cities. In many respects the valley provides a laboratory for the overall “Whistlerization” of British Columbia, with an economy driven largely by real estate and banking and a population living in attractive planned communities and generously provided with recreational opportunities such as skiing, golf, watersports, restaurants, and shopping. Not only is the Comox Valley a “beautiful and special place” but it may also provide us with a glimpse

of the future of postindustrial British Columbia.

*Chinese Servants in the West:
Florence Baillie-Grohman's
"The Yellow and White Agony"*

Edited with an introduction by
Terry Abraham

Moscow, ID: Asian American
Comparative Collection, 2007.
65 pp. Illus. \$10.00 paper.

PATRICIA E. ROY
University of Victoria

W.A. BAILLIE-GROHMAN is known to British Columbians for his aborted plan to build a canal in the East Kootenay and his stories of big game hunting, notably *Fifteen Years' Sport and Life in the Hunting Grounds of Western America and British Columbia*, published in London in 1900. Less well known is that book's chapter on the servant problem – a chapter written by his wife, Florence Baillie-Grohman. Florence, who lived in British Columbia from 1887 to 1893, brought from England the idea that proper middle- and upper-class homes required at least one domestic servant. One day, when both her Chinese servant and her child's English nurse were on holiday, the doorbell rang. Expecting a friend, she answered it before removing her apron. When she discovered that her visitor was the new admiral, she pretended to be the maid and said that Mrs. Baillie-Grohman was not at home! In British Columbia, the serving class, then so prominent in England, barely existed. Like her contemporaries, Florence was forced to depend on Chinese men.

She tells of the determination of some Chinese servants to stick to a routine

once it has been established and of occasional criminality. Sometimes she is condescending, discussing their timidity, their unnatural fear of the "debil" and of being photographed, and, of course, their pidgin English. Yet, Florence Baillie-Grohman wisely points out that one could judge neither all Chinese nor all employers by the behaviour of some. She relates that Chinese servants gossiped about their mistresses and that those with reputations as bad employers were unable to hire them. On the whole, she believed that, in contrast to the average white help, the Chinese servant did twice the work, was cleanly, sober, and "fairly honest" (21).

In introducing Florence Baillie-Grohman's chapter, Terry Abraham draws on examples from throughout the Pacific Northwest to show that her experiences were not unique. Perhaps even more than Baillie-Grohman he appreciates the importance of the Chinese servants who, "by freeing men and women from domestic chores ... played an incalculable role in the development of the West" (2). Extensive quotations from contemporary sources give immediacy to his story and illustrate the ambivalence of attitudes towards the Chinese. Abraham cites complaints of incompetent servants and of their habit of leaving unsatisfactory jobs with little or no notice. Resentful of having to bake an elaborate cake, one Chinese cook decorated it with icing that read: "I leave tomorrow" (15). Although Abraham suggests that the Chinese initially secured domestic service positions because of their low wages, they soon gained a reputation for superior work and "loyalty, reciprocity and righteousness" (3). Consequently, they could sometimes demand higher wages than white servants.

Baillie-Grohman did not explain the word "Agony" in the title. Abraham only

remarks that the word is “telling” in that the feeling occurs “on both sides of the racial divide” (6). He correctly notes that few nineteenth-century Chinese immigrants left written records and that domestic servants were even less likely to do so, possibly because some worked as servants only for brief periods before finding other careers. Fortunately, some grandchildren are attempting to recover that history. Abraham exploits a few of these sources; alas, for students of British Columbia, all are American. Nevertheless, by reprinting Baillie-Grohman’s essay and by setting it in a broad Pacific Northwest context (indeed, the border scarcely appears in his introduction), Abraham has provided a valuable service in reminding us that not all Caucasians saw Chinese in stereotypes and that, when Caucasians and Chinese got to know each other, a feeling of friendship and mutual benefit – not agony – could evolve.

*River of Memory:
The Everlasting Columbia*

William D. Layman

Seattle, WA: University of
Washington Press and Wenatchee
Valley Museum, 2006. 160 pp. 130
colour and duotone illustrations.
\$40.00 cloth; \$24.95 paper.

BRUCE SHELVEY
Trinity Western University

RIVER OF MEMORY is a snapshot of the Columbia River prior to the massive human manipulation of the region. Layman argues that, when we understand the river in its natural state prior to 1933, we gain a greater appreciation of it and become more aware of our own personal and corporate

human identity. In recent years, dams and diversions have obscured aspects of the river’s true identity, and Layman is well aware of the difficulties inherent in reconstructing a nostalgic past. Nevertheless, resurrecting the unaltered Columbia through pictures, maps and paintings, the memories of elders, the diary entries of newcomers, the musings of poets, and the interpretations of historians is his way of enlivening our lost intimate connection with the Great River of the West.

River of Memory, originating from an exhibition at the Wenatchee Valley Museum in the summer of 2006, ambitiously attempts “whole river understanding.” Layman’s contribution to the literature on rivers comes in the form of his use of concepts like “everlasting” to question the nature of change and the essence of transformation. Does something of the river’s origins remain even after it has been transformed by technology? Unlike Richard White’s *Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River* (1995), in which the Columbia is interpreted through labour, *River of Memory* attempts to use images, both in photography and literature, to interpret the river’s shape, its function, its purpose, and, ultimately, its meaning. Layman hopes that an earlier memory of the river can act as a critique of consumerist society and a reminder of what we have lost. In this way, *River of Memory* introduces the metaphysical qualities of the Columbia. We consider it as the embodiment of the human soul (xiii), an orientation point that teaches us something of origins (upstream) and wisdom (downstream). The author asks: “In harnessing the Columbia for our own pleasures, needs, and ends, in what ways have we lost connection to the river’s natural world and, in turn, to our interior selves?” (xiv). Layman

answers this question by presenting images and text that encourage us to think of a world outside of ourselves and our utilitarian notions of nature. Interestingly, *River of Memory* moves against the typical downstream narrative current. As Layman puts it: "We preferred the more strenuous upriver journey in homage to salmon and other fish returning to natal waters from the sea. This corresponds to the indigenous belief that the salmon are ancestors who have made the arduous journey of return for the benefit of all" (xiv-xv). The choice to start at the mouth (read culture) rather than at the source (read nature) of the Columbia is the literary equivalent of "rediscovery" or "recovering," an attempt to counter the historical.

There is much to commend in *River of Memory*, as evidenced by its recently being declared the 2007 Washington State Book for General Nonfiction. The book is beautifully presented: most impressive are the illustrations of indigenous fish drawn by Joseph Tomelleri and Dan McConnell (the lifelike creations are worth seeing as silk paintings if you can attend the travelling exhibition, which runs in various communities until 2008) and the portfolio of captivating black-and-white photographs. Further, when contributors lend their expertise to the text, the narrative is insightful and adds to our understanding of the photographs. The choice of voices from the past, such as David Thompson's and David Douglas's journal entries from the winter of 1810-11 (120) or Canadian travelling artist Paul Kane's description of time spent in the Lower and Upper Arrow Lake region in 1847 (104), give the book a welcome perceptual depth. There are some irritants that detract from one's enjoyment of *River of Memory*. At times the narrative is

disjointed, with brevity rather than thoroughness being the rule. The author provides no remedy for this, not even a footnote or a bibliography. Further, many of the representations deserve a better introduction and possibly even interpretation. For example, when photos tell a story of transformation, like the one on page 15 that appears to show a significant flooding incident in 1934, the author is silent. Nor does he acknowledge that photographs themselves are a way of seeing the world. Images like those of Steamboat Rapids (111) represent a genre of landscape photography that was used to promote development. Perhaps many of the images should have been understood more as cultural expressions of their time than as "natural" representations of the Columbia and its environs. Further, *River of Memory* has a curious practice of using partial representations of historical maps without providing any visual or textual clues as to scale, scope, or even directionality with reference to the full original map. Spatial information is manipulated without any explanation (2-3, 19), and many of the maps are illegible even when magnified.

When Layman sticks to his expertise – his intimate knowledge of the lower Columbia River – he is an excellent guide. And he provides something for almost every traveller, from the novice who needs a basic introduction to the place to the expert who desires to gather intimate details of the region's history or character. Art historians might find this a useful book for exploring how photography represents a certain place/region in time; literati will enjoy indigenous perspectives in verse and the use of river metaphors to shape our understanding of the self; borderland scholars will be intrigued by the distinct impact of the 49th parallel,

despite Layman's attempt to show us a coherent river; historians will appreciate the author's ability to combine visual evidence with poetic interpretations to challenge our traditional interpretations

of the Columbia; and nature lovers will find the book to be a treasure trove of forgotten landscapes and beautiful representations of rivers, forests, mountains, rocks, and fish.