

## Editor's Preface

Over the past twenty-five years the volume of scholarly work on British Columbia has expanded enormously. The part played in this by new institutions, growth at old ones, additional funding, and increased numbers of investigators has been critical. Central to the process too has been the emergence of new vehicles for the dissemination of scholarly work. Such agencies as the University of British Columbia Press have occupied a leading role in this activity, and so, it must be said, has this journal. Since its founding in 1969 *BC Studies* has in fact become indispensable to the study of this important Canadian region: as the contributors to this anniversary issue make clear, its hundreds of articles have combined with a substantial body of other work to enrich understanding, enlarge knowledge, and further the process of opening up new areas for investigation in ways that have been altogether fruitful, stimulating, and productive.

*BC Studies'* contribution has not, however, been in any sense limited to participation in an essentially quantitative kind of growth and development: profound change is occurring in the way scholarship in the humanities and social sciences is being seen and understood, and the very variety and range of the material with which *BC Studies* has presented its readers implicates it — with scholarly publications generally — in that fundamentally important process. This is immediately evident when one looks at the manner in which the extraordinary array of arguments, conclusions, points of view, hypotheses, and assertions its pages contain join with what has appeared elsewhere to call into question the basic assumptions which used to ground and justify regional work. That labour was once undertaken in the confidence that through it one was noting and cataloguing the varieties of a universal human experience; driven forward by a "case study" conviction that general truths were best illustrated by close consideration of specific instances; animated by a nominalist belief that particulars alone have reality; or inspired by a faith in the integrity of the local which was no less strong than the trust that its nature could be defined and made clear. Now, however, the results of the regional enter-

prise — and not just in British Columbia — steadily amplify the sense that investigation of human actors' bounded and insular activities delivers, not some vision of "certainty," but an especially dramatic demonstration of the way in which investigators' conceptual and linguistic tools — not to mention their circumstances, presuppositions, and interests — shape and condition an inquiry the multiplying and diverse results of which confirm in their endlessly ramifying character the impossibility of recovering final and settled meaning in what is being brought under consideration.

That the provisional and contingent nature of these "conclusions," "arguments," and "representations" presents itself with a special force when it arrives via an encounter with small and proximate places is not, perhaps, surprising: ostensibly easier to grasp and comprehend than larger and putatively more complex societies, the realization that they are anything but — that "knowledge" of them has exactly the same indeterminate status as that acquired in relation to their grander and more extensive analogues — necessarily hits with an impact more potent in its effects than assimilation of the proposition that "final" understanding of vast and imposing bodies continually eludes the investigator.

More unexpected is the fact that what has been happening has not in its challenging of old ideas concerning the significance of intellectual activity seriously disturbed those engaged in that work. Investigators who see no genuine threat to those ideas have, of course, little difficulty: continuing to believe that scholarly effort can, in principle, uncover and represent the "truth" about a knowable "reality," they carry on in the confident supposition that the heterogeneous range of ideas continually being produced will eventually cohere in some perfectly ordered representation of what "actually is." But even those who have come to accept that the mediated nature of the inquirer's relationship to the object of investigation has implications of a very serious nature sort do not appear unduly agitated. Viewing the sense of things they have adopted not as necessitating a rejection of inquiry's point and worth but as giving a sharp lesson in the need to redefine its import and purpose, they — again the parallel with what has happened in other places is clear — have oriented their activity around more complex ideas of "truth" and "understanding" and so experience what they see about them not as meaningless and chaotic but as a fertile and developing scholarship which in stimulating rather than foreclosing discussion constantly moves forward onto new and valuable ground. Far, then, from being overwhelmed in the presence of ever more numerous research and outputs, these investigators have been led by their appreciation of the bene-

fits continually being gained to react to what they have before them with enthusiasm, a sense of broadened horizons, and a genuine pleasure.

If contemplation of *BC Studies*' content helps show in what measure change in understanding regional study's significance is advancing, a look at that content also assists in making clear the extent to which new ideas concerning what is involved in carrying out that study have taken hold. Central to this phase of what has been happening is a growing tendency to suppose that the investigation of what attracts interest must include considering it in terms of the notion that contemplation of the small imposes no less of an obligation than examination of the large to view what is being scrutinized from a variety of perspectives: aware of the extent to which many-sidedness and complexity are characteristic of all phenomena, investigators increasingly realize that in the absence of a properly comprehensive and many-faceted approach none of those phenomena can be grappled with in a productive and meaningful way. This does not mean that persons involved in the study of sub-national units have managed the task of drawing on each other's fields any more effectively than other groups of investigators. It does, however, suggest that they have been at least as alive to the importance of transcending the borders of those fields in an effort to enrich, elaborate, and give texture to what they do. And — a point of special relevance in the present context — it certainly exposes to view their occupancy of a domain in which journals such as this have a particular place, for while much of what has been occurring in multidisciplinary study is investigator-driven and involves an explicit attempt by scholars to structure what is being presented in terms of insights from many disciplines, not a little of it has a quite different character. Essentially "reader"-created "work" done on that side is a product of readers' activity in supplementing, extending, re-constituting, and re-forming the text in front of them in light of perspectives they have drawn from other reading — and that is an operation a multidisciplinary journal not only encourages but virtually compels its readers to perform.

Work on British Columbia — here too the content of *BC Studies* testifies to the fact — is being "remade" not only by increasing recognition of the unstable and varying character of meaning and a new sense of the importance of transdisciplinary approaches: it is also taking on an altered shape in consequence of a quite different — and more specifically Canadian — kind of development. Where much Canadian interest in the local and regional was once housed within the framework of a belief that the region in view was part of a national community of a definable sort understanding of which would be enhanced in the act of considering the several

entities that made it up, an increasingly uncertain sense of the national has interacted with the developments just summarized to give local study an additional sort of relevance. As well as supposing that what they do will — directly or indirectly — increase understanding of the “experience” and “character” of a “national” whole, investigators more and more work in terms of the sort of data-concept polarity which functions to allow what is seen at one extremity to texture and refine comprehension of what is discerned at the other. Elements in regional life thus continue to be disaggregated for analysis and study, but that operation leads to a configuring of the results arrived at in terms of the way in which understanding of those results has been enhanced through the technique of viewing them in terms of some such general construct as class, race, or gender — or, more rarely, in respect of the manner in which what *they* reveal makes necessary a reworking of the *construct*. In either case the “old,” intermediate,” “national” term recedes from view and a new sense of the importance of both “local” and “general” gets foregrounded.

Plainly evident in work done on British Columbia, these tendencies have helped shape scholarship in relation to that place which is rich, textured, revealing of the results new ways of viewing the province can yield, and increasingly concerned to present it either as an entity whose component parts are intelligible in terms of a new sort of “universal” or as one of the elements of whose experience are best grasped within a framework of understanding which assumes meaning to be endlessly unfolding. In some areas, of course, the factoring out of the familiar boundaries set by notions of “determinancy” or “nation” has itself a kind of familiarity. Anthropology has not characteristically framed its activities in terms of the “national,” had a view of understanding as anything other than shifting and contingent, or been burdened by the notion that the relationship between “observer” and “observed” is straightforward and uncomplicated — absences from its practice which, as Michael Kew suggests, make even the rigorous self-scrutiny the British Columbia branch of it is currently undergoing compatible with its “tradition.” Sociology, as well, has utilized certain “new” perspectives for some time: though its character as a social “science” occasionally led practitioners to build their *schema* in terms of exaggerated notions of structure, stability, and pattern, its increasingly strong embrace of the idea that social phenomena were situated, dynamic, and in process of constant change and transformation opened the way for modellings of behaviour and institutions cast variously in terms of interest, class, racialization, and the gendering of roles and behaviour — the fruit-

fulness of which developments have been, as Gillian Creese makes clear, very evident in British Columbia.

In history's case, however, continuities are less marked. A lingering empiricism in fact ensured that when the break to the "new" finally occurred in that field, it would involve change of a basic sort. Much of what marks the shift has, to be sure, taken the form of a not fully problematized incorporation into the historical "record" of elements — native peoples, workers, women — previously omitted from it. Even this, however, reflected some awareness of the extent to which that record is "constructed," and the fact that it was followed up by increasingly sophisticated work done in the context of a non-essentializing sense that inquiry continually opens out into new ways of seeing marked significant growth in the measure of that awareness. This development has, of course, sometimes been accompanied by hegemonic tendencies of its own — Robin Fisher's strictures are certainly fair — but these lack a base in theory, give no sign that they are breeding the kind of orthodoxy they have arisen to contest, and so leave the thrust to the "new" fundamentally untouched.

In economics, too, there has been substantial movement, precipitated in its case by a need to account for new phenomena and an altering methodological and conceptual apparatus unique to the field. Acting under the influence of that forceful combination, investigators have been pushing study of the British Columbian economy away from a focus on its relation to national patterns of growth and resource-based activity and towards concentration on diversification and the proliferation of international linkages. The new picture this is yielding is not, it should be immediately added, the work of people altogether persuaded that such devices "construct" what they purport to "reveal," for students of the economy have been at least as reluctant as historians to confront established ways of thinking about these matters. And, as Ronald Shearer carefully points out, that picture remains in any case in process of development. That its appearance — even in provisional form — has a place in, and is contributing to, the generally shifting and changing overview we are getting of British Columbia is, nonetheless, clear.

The role political science has been playing in all this has also been complicated, but for a different reason. Many of the changes in the understanding of matters for which investigators in that field have been responsible tend in precisely the opposite direction to those generally in train — as the relative decline in interest in the provincial (political culture, party system) in favour of a concern with the national (what British Columbia has in common with the rest of the country) shows. But this —

David Elkins' demonstration of the point is unambiguous — has not meant that concern with the particular-conceptual polarity or the transdisciplinary principle has been absent, a fact that demonstrates that whatever countering of general trends is taking place has by no means been total and all-encompassing.

It is, as Laurie Ricou makes plain, in the area of writing about writing that we see work most fully informed by the new perspectives. Largely unencumbered by a "traditional" view of British Columbia fiction and poetry, commentators have been able to make a map the lines and markings defining which yield in their attention to the gaps, absences, and play seen in the texts under review a vision of those texts' richly indeterminate meaning which is as much a function of the free rein the commentators have been able to give their faith in what is produced by "critical reading" as it is a reflex of what is happening in the texts themselves. And not only does this commentary allow us to see the "new" being bodied forth in a kind of doubled way: in putting us in the presence of especially clever explorations of the manner in which language, writing and reading function, our look at that material permits us to get a quite good sense of the ways in which a vigorous interrogation of the text can make it reveal its character as the site of multiple "truths" and "significations" — with what our acquisition of that sense means for our own "confrontations" with "texts" standing forth as clearly as anything can.

In several respects, then, contemplation of what has been done to shape our understandings of British Columbia involves thinking about those understandings in unprecedented ways. Nor does the fact that there is a striking continuity running through all that has been noticed invalidate that general proposition. It is certainly true that sensitivity to the "new" has come through an awareness of generally circulating trends and ideas. It is also the case that that awareness — Margaret Prang is absolutely right to insist on the fact — shows that study of British Columbia proceeds (as it always has) in ways informed by an educated apprehension of propositions and arguments operating across a wide and cosmopolitan front. But if that clearly indicates an absence of change, it no less obviously specifies an absence of change that has change at its core: continuity — in this case at least — contains and fosters innovation and so neither dominates it nor stands in the way of its advance.

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Any acknowledgement of those whose work has given *BC Studies* its place in regional study must begin with the authors of the articles it has pub-

lished: since 1969 over 300 of them have put between its covers their commentary on various elements of British Columbia life, an action which allowed the journal to flourish at the same time that it showed just how rich and informative British Columbia scholarship had become.

Of great importance too has been the contribution made by those involved in reviewing the steadily growing body of book-length material concerned with the province: showing readers to that work has been a central responsibility of the journal, and the reviewers whose judgement and tact have made its discharge possible deserve both gratitude and recognition.

Maintaining standards in what it publishes itself has naturally been a principal *BC Studies* objective from the beginning: aided in the attainment of that goal by a consistently obliging — and constantly growing — group of informed and discerning manuscript assessors, the journal recognizes in its debt to them a burden that is at once heavy and a pleasure to bear.

Equally to be acknowledged is the role played in what *BC Studies* does by the good advice on a broad range of matters offered by the many people who have served as members of its editorial board: responding effectively to the needs and concerns of a number of disciplines requires advice which is especially balanced, sound and informed, and what has been received over the years from Charles Borden, Parzival Copes, Margaret Ormsby, Neil Swainson, Lewis Robinson, Donald Smiley, R. L. Carlson, Cole Harris, Michael Kew, Patricia Roy, Donald G. Paterson, Rennie Warburton, Marjorie Halpin, Sherrill E. Grace, Knut Fladmark, M. Patricia Marchak, Michael M. Ames, Norman J. Ruff, Donald E. Blake, Anthony H. J. Dorcey, Margaret Seguin Anderson, Gillian Creese, and Lynda Erickson has consistently met that high standard.

A very important part of what *BC Studies* offers its readers is contained in its bibliography: wanting from the outset to serve as a guide to writing on the province, the journal has published a comprehensive listing of work done in relation to it in every issue. Viewed by many readers as the single most useful item it publishes, the bibliography's standards were set and maintained for more than half the journal's life by Frances Woodward, were kept up through much of the 1980s by Eve Szabo, and have been preserved since 1988 thanks to the expert efforts of Melva J. Dwyer.

If content is the *sine qua non* of a publication's success, the elements which enter into its printing or production also figure importantly in the impact it has. Getting articles, reviews, bibliography, tables, graphs, maps, and illustrations to a state that will permit them to be published in an

accurate, intelligible and pleasing form is a notoriously complicated task, and *BC Studies* has been fortunate that the quality of the assistance it has received in carrying it out has been very high indeed: thanks to Diane Nelles in its early years and to the effort and dedication of David Greer over an extraordinary two decades, it has been able to produce results in this critical area that are second to none.

That readers hold in their hands a handsomely printed publication with good bindings, a crisp and attractive layout, and a clean, elegant typeface is a mark of the craftsmanship and standards of Morriss Printing. The firm in general, and particularly Ron Smith, and more recently Martyn Sharp, has been a pleasure to work with: it is no exaggeration to say that their proficiency in making the publication so fine an example of the printer's skill has been a mainstay of its success and appeal.

The role of art and design in confirming and complementing the impact of fine printing and production is not often demonstrated so clearly as it is in *BC Studies'* case: for many years Bruce M. Watson's cleverly drawn totem pole constituted a dramatic invitation to look within the journal's covers, while John Koerner's spare and graceful washes have extended the same welcome since 1983. In drawing the eye, counterpointing the content, and engaging the attention in so striking a way, these works have done their job with a charm and perfection that is simply admirable.

To pass from the place of art to the role of funding is to move from acknowledging the importance of one kind of necessity to recognizing the centrality of another. No scholarly journal survives without financial support from a variety of sources. Subscribers and purchasers of individual issues constitute some of these, but most money comes from institutions. In *BC Studies'* case, this has largely meant the universities of British Columbia. Over many years the University of Victoria and Simon Fraser University have provided grants in aid of publication. The University of Northern British Columbia has recently joined them, while the University of British Columbia has generously supplied office space and a solid subsidy from the beginning: each of these institutions has a special obligation to promote scholarly inquiry into the life of the province, and *BC Studies* is grateful that their recognition of this duty has benefited it in so welcome a way.

If the province's universities have taken the lead in providing funding, other provincial agencies have played an important part too. Without, indeed, support from the British Columbia Cultural Fund, the University of British Columbia Alumni Fund, the Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation, the British Columbia Heritage Trust, the Hamber Foundation, the Van-



couver Foundation, and the Boag foundation, it would have been virtually impossible for the journal to publish many of its acclaimed special issues.

The critical portion of *BC Studies*' income which derives from its relationship with national funding agencies needs, finally, to be noted. Qualifying early in its life for support from the Canada Council, the journal has continued to receive grants in generous and welcome measure from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. These make up a substantial part of its revenue, and it is glad to acknowledge that fact.

Any enterprise requires a capable person at the centre who has a sense of what is happening in all phases of the operation, knows how to keep matters moving, and (in the case of an undertaking such as this) understands what has to occur if the quotidian work of maintaining and enlarging subscription lists, corresponding with contributors, assessors and reviewers, managing finances and dealing with printers and distributors, is to get done. Beginning with Jean Wrinch, who took on these responsibilities in the early years, continuing with Mary Ellickson, who dealt with them through most of the 1980s, and moving to Henny Winterton, who has had them in hand during the particularly difficult period of expansion and change beginning in 1989, *BC Studies* has been fortunate indeed that this complex and essential work has been seen to by people of commitment, dedication, and professionalism.

It needs, finally, to be said how important the efforts of the founding editors were in getting this publication going, defining its purpose, setting its standards, and showing what had to be done to maintain a proper balance between general theme and local variation. Pre-eminently the right people in the right place at the right time, Margaret Prang and Walter Young were able to channel and direct a burgeoning quantity of British Columbia scholarship in exactly the way necessary to show it off to maximum advantage: it was a major contribution, and the thanks of a generation of students of British Columbia are owing to them for making it.

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Having reached a milestone, this journal can look back with a certain pride and sense of achievement at what it has helped to accomplish. Filled with interesting and well-conceived material, read across Canada, the United States, and into Europe and Asia, its one hundred issues have made it as much of a contributor to knowledge of British Columbia outside the province as it has been to the stimulation of understanding of it within its own borders. And if the character of its readership places it firmly in a supra-provincial system of learning and research, the material it publishes situates

it no less fully in a kind of British Columbia intertext — a fact that links it as closely to the work of Cook, Boas, and Lowry as to the writing of Angus, Ormsby, and Woodcock. Caught up in a collective endeavour dispersed in space and time, helping to shape as well as being shaped by the elements of that endeavour, and managing on not a few occasions to give point and direction to the conversation and exchange generated under its auspices, *BC Studies* expects to be active in the future in the same useful and facilitating way that it has been present in the past.