

Unwilling to let brevity stand in the way of a story, occasionally Benson simply gets it wrong. He asserts in the Levick photograph "*Shamrock and Resolute*" (p. 165) that one can see the effects of hogging on *Shamrock* by comparing her lines to that of *Resolute*. He might have a point if *Resolute* was not between the viewer and *Shamrock*, heeled over in a light breeze and sailing slightly away from the viewer. Never mind that both yachts were a good distance from Levick when he took the shot. When on occasion the story does happen to be brief, as it is with the "Sound Muffling Trunk" (p. 142), the viewer is left with insignificant conjecture about an image that would have benefited greatly from more research. Then, in "Letters Salvaged from the *Empress of Ireland*" (p. 116), Benson spends an inordinate amount of space expressing his amazement at how the mail system functions, when a more important question might have been why the

photographer felt that the letters were important enough to record in the first place.

Overall there are too few instances where the viewer is enlightened with any substantial interpretation. As "photography once more rolls out its own seductive version of the truth" (p. 164), so, it seems, does Richard Benson. Greater editorial control would have remedied Benson's case of logorrhea, and placed the stories in a more supportive role to the photographs which are the original reason for the album. Benson asks us in the story of "Raising the *Lord Dufferin*" (p. 134) "to suspend our analytical eye and enjoy a photograph for what it is" only to continue his own analysis for another entire paragraph. The publication would have fared better had he taken his own advice more often. One must then ask whether Szarkowski, whose background as an author, and Benson, who has set a new standard of photographic reproduction, should not have switched roles in this publication.

## Robin Fisher and Hugh Johnston, *From Maps to Metaphors: The Pacific World of George Vancouver*

ANNE GODLEWSKA

Fisher, Robin and Hugh Johnston. *From Maps to Metaphors: The Pacific World of George Vancouver*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993. 365 pp., 18 illus., 7 maps. Cloth \$39.95, ISBN 0-7748-0470-X

*Maps and Metaphors: The Pacific World of George Vancouver* is the treasure box that its title promises: full of interesting things, some old and some valuable. Books about exploration and discovery certainly have changed in the last couple of decades.<sup>1</sup> This book reflects how happy that change is. From a story told by one man about the heroism of the explorers, the wonder of their scientific instruments and calculations, the geopolitics guiding their steps,<sup>2</sup> these books have evolved into tales told from multiple points of view. This work, focused on George Vancouver's appearance in the Pacific, is multi-authored, multi-disciplinary and suggestive of how rich history can be when written critically.

In the first chapter Ben Finney describes the surprise and fascination with which Vancouver's predecessor, Cook, and his crew discovered the extent and consistency of a Polynesian culture spread over 3000 kilometres between

Tahiti and New Zealand. Finney describes the unprecedented European curiosity that embraced the native peoples' language and culture but also focused on their shipping and navigational skills and the way these were adapted to the peculiar climatic conditions of the South Pacific. These observations brought Cook and his associates to very early and remarkably sound hypotheses about the origins and migrations of the Polynesians.

The next five chapters by Glyndwr Williams, Andrew David, Alun Davies, James Gibson and Alan Frost are amongst the most traditional in the book. They focus on the mapping effected during Vancouver's voyage, the clock technology revolutionizing oceanic travel at the time and the geopolitics of exploration. It is because Vancouver does not himself describe his mapping operations, that Andrew David must reconstruct them from several sources. He uses Vancouver's descriptions of his map making operations in other regions of the world and his charts of the Pacific coast. David also essays the instructions sent by Major James Rennell, surveying and astronomical manuals and instruments known to have been on board and accounts of Cook's voyages and mapping

procedures. It is an elegant argument requiring — like the mapping David describes — the careful balancing of various sources of information. Alun Davies' chapter on Vancouver's chronometers provides some fascinating statistics on the cost of these instruments, how many were produced from the 1770s on, the way they were used, their performance, and the speed with which this technology spread. James Gibson clarifies why the Russians, who had been trading for high quality furs on the west coast of America long before the British or Spanish appeared there, nevertheless were little evident when Vancouver arrived on the scene. The reasons for this are many but include the logistical difficulty of mounting expeditions across the continental expanse of Russia, the lack of a Russian fleet and navigational experience, and Russia's relative backwardness in the technologies needed for exploration: map making, printing, medicine and nutrition, and ship-building and navigation. Alan Frost describes the conflict between Spain and Britain. From the Spanish point of view the issue was control of the Upper Pacific coast of North America, in particular Nootka Sound; and from the British point of view, it involved access to a fur trade between that region and China. The British won the access they sought by sheer force of bullying, well supported by the ideology of free trade.

The next four chapters are amongst the most innovative and exciting in the book. They are all, to some extent, focused on the "encounter" and on the indigenous cultures of the North and South Pacific. Christon Archer describes the efforts of the Spanish to negotiate with and understand the indigenous peoples of the north-west coast of America. He describes relations of restrained violence, confusion, miscommunication, frustration, lost patience, and conflicting aims between the Spanish and the native peoples, between native groups and between a variety of Spanish interests. It is clear from this account that the "encounter" took place in conditions and an atmosphere guaranteed to thwart any coherent policy. Yvonne Marshall takes a closer look at the geopolitics of three distinctive Indian trading blocks on the west coast of Vancouver Island and what is now the north-west tip of Washington State. Each of the groups negotiated for control of the trade with both the Spanish and the English and were profoundly affected by similar games being played by their prospective trading partners. Of striking note is her description of the friendship that grew up between the most powerful of the indigenous

leaders, Maquinna and the Spanish Captain Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra and the destabilizing impact on the coastal geopolitics of the replacement of Spanish power with British power, represented by Captain George Vancouver.

Victoria Wyatt's chapter is probably the most innovative and fascinating in the collection. In the absence of written sources documenting the encounter from the indigenous point of view, Wyatt uses native art of the time of the "encounter" to document the response of native culture to the European incursion into the North Pacific. The impact can be traced in the use of new materials, innovation with art forms and the development of art works depicting non-native peoples. The fact that these latter entailed a sharp move away from traditional imagery is suggestive of the recognition of a profound dissonance between the Europeans and indigenous cosmography. A highly speculative chapter, it suggests some of the potential of approaches not restricted to and structured by documentary sources.<sup>3</sup>

In the last of the chapters devoted primarily to the indigenous experience, the story moves to New Zealand, Norfolk Island and the South Pacific. Anne Salmond tells a compelling tale of the kidnapping of two Maori men by the Commander of Vancouver's supply ship. The British government hoped that the Maori could teach the convicts engaged in hard labour on Norfolk Island how to process flax and thus make it a viable commercial product. The tale is a rare and unexpected one of honour, respect and friendship in a context of violence and easy betrayal. The consequences of this exchange, and it really was an exchange, were profound, especially for Maori culture and history.

The last three chapters return to a European frame of reference with an emphasis on writing about the South Pacific. W. Kaye Lamb looks at the ship doctor's journal written on the Vancouver expedition and locates it within the political nexus of hostility between Joseph Banks and George Vancouver. K. R. Howe comes back to the theme first explored in this collection by Ben Finney, the lack of understanding by Europeans of the indigenous cultures of the South Pacific. Howe, in an interesting review of the major European thinkers interested in Polynesian culture, explores the reasons, both psychological and political, for the peculiar images of Polynesian culture held by Europeans. The book closes with an intriguing essay by David Mackay that explores the place of the South Pacific in European delusions,

fantasy and fiction. This is a theme already touched upon in a more traditional way by Glyndwr Williams. Mackay argues that fiction has been a far more powerful motivating force in exploration — and perhaps in many other realms — than ever was fact.

In general, books of collected essays lack the sustained analytical focus of single-authored works. What they *can* offer is a diversity of view. Roughly a third of the essays in this book might have been written in the 1960s or 1970s.

The rest are deeply informed by preoccupations and approaches of the 1990s. The book lacks a conclusion and its introduction is presumptive rather than critical. The opening address by the Squamish Chief Philip Joe is more token than a convincing declaration of commitment to a balanced and critical approach to the history of the “encounter.” Nevertheless, the quality of scholarship in most of the chapters and the imaginative flair of two thirds of the book carry it.

#### NOTES

1. First O’Gorman, then Jennings and finally Todorov sent off the opening salvos with Edmundo O’Gorman, *The Invention of America: An Inquiry into the Historical Nature of the New World and the Meaning of Its History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961); Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America, Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (New York: Norton Co. Inc., 1975); and Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984). For a strong sense of new and important trends see Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); R. Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997); Ken G. Brealey, “Mapping them Out: Euro-Canadian Cartography and the Appropriation of the Nuxalk and Ts’ilhqot’ in First Nations’ Territories, 1793–1916,” *The Canadian Geographer* 39, 2 (Summer 1995): 1140–156; and Karl W. Butzer (ed.) “The Americas Before and After 1492: Current Geographical Research,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 82, 3 (September 1992).
2. The traditional history of “discovery” has been a popular topic of research since the early nineteenth century. The best of the work of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s came from the pen and influence of David Beers Quinn.
3. See Victoria Wyatt’s book: *Shapes of their Thoughts: Reflections of Culture Contact in Northwest Coast Indian Art* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984). Of recent interest are Janet Catherine Berlo, ed., *The Early Years of Native American Art History* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1992); Judy Sund, “Columbus and Columbia in Chicago, 1893: Man of Genius Meets Generic Woman,” *Art Bulletin* 75, 3 (September 1993): 442–446; and more popularly, Vickie Jensen, *Where the People Gather: Carving a Totem Pole* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1992).

## John E. Barnard, *Building Britain’s Wooden Walls: The Barnard Dynasty, 1697–1851*

DANIEL G. HARRIS

Barnard, John E. *Building Britain’s Wooden Walls: The Barnard Dynasty, 1697–1851*. Introduction by Jean Sutton. Oswestry, England: A. Nelson, 1997. 110 pp., 48 illus., 26 tables and plans, 18 appendices. Cloth £20, ISBN 0-904614-638.

This fine book about British eighteenth and early nineteenth-century commercial shipbuilding by Mr John E. Barnard is the result of his perusal of a magazine in the waiting room of his oculist. In it, he was surprised to find a reproduction of a print of a merchant vessel on

the stocks; its caption read “An Indiaman in H. Barnard’s Yard, Deptford — published by H. Moses 1824.” That print roused the curiosity of the former royal marine reservist, stockbroker and yachtsman about his shipbuilding ancestors. The consequence of that 1985 visit was twelve years of extensive and thorough research of Admiralty, Municipal and Royal Society records.

Those twelve years of research have culminated in the production of a scholarly and well-documented work about one of the leading merchant shipbuilders for the Royal Navy, and