Étude critique / Review Essay

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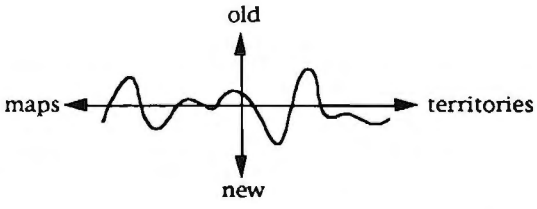

Canada is an unknown territory for the people who live in it. ... I'm talking about Canada as a state of mind, as the space you inhabit not just with your body but with your head. It's that kind of space in which we find ourselves lost. What a lost person needs is a map of the territory, with his own position marked on it so he can see where he is in relation to everything else. Literature is not only a mirror; it is also a map, a geography of the mind. ... For the members of a country or a culture, shared knowledge of their place, their here, is not a luxury but a necessity. Without that knowledge we will not survive.[1]

Margaret Atwood

What I can remember, I will say.
What I do not remember, I will not say.
I cannot read and write.
I can only remember.
Before the whiteman came, we were bush people.
When they came, where we live they said,
"this is my land."
And we have no more.
We can't read and write.
We only can remember it.
Since not too long ago that my people started to go to school.[2]

John Davis

WE INHABIT storied space. Storytellers like the Native elders John Davis and Annie Ned, and historians Dianne Newell and Sarah Carter, structure their worlds with narrative and extend coherence, care, and meaning to their own lives and their own communities. I understand the dangers of this

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1 Margaret Atwood, *Survival* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1972), p. 18–19.

2 John Davis, an Elder of the Dunne-za Cree cited in Robin Ridington, *Little Bit Know Something* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1990), p. 204.

own lives and their own communities. I understand the dangers of this totalizing, familiarizing statement, which simultaneously may be viewed by practising historians as a diminution of their profession. "History" lies closer to "anybody's story". Nevertheless, I seek a place of warmth, a gathering together, in the midst of shifting and disputed intellectual territory.

A coherent story of Western Canada's physical environment is critical to the life, identity, and action of its inhabitants. To respond to Northrop Frye's question "Where is here?"[3] we must answer the increasingly perplexing inquiry, "What was here?" "Emptiness", a metaphor used to justify the invasion of the continent,[4] was reiterated on March 8, 1991, when Chief Justice Allan McEachern of the British Columbia Supreme Court judged "a vast emptiness"[5] to exist where the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en saw named and occupied territories. Judge McEachern's failure to value the oral tradition revealed in the courtroom and his dismissal of the hereditary chiefs' claim for ownership and jurisdiction over their traditional resources and territories[6] was a jolting reminder that there is no objective "outside" from which to speak or write. Empty for whom? Canadian historians, increasingly sensitive to the social, legal, and political context of Native history, have acknowledged that Native people were not set-pieces, the "empty vessels" into which European culture poured religion and knowledge as it assumed control of their "vacant" and "timeless" land. Interdisciplinary approaches to the past have challenged the colonial imperative of much document-based history that begins with European exploration or Indian submission. In particular, the remains of material culture provide critical physical traces of human interactions with land and water. But human relationships with the environment are mental as well as material, aural as well as visual. Certain collaborative endeavours, like the exemplary *Life Lived Like A Story* by anthropologist Julie Cruikshank and the Yukon Native Elders Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith, and Annie Ned, celebrate humans as creative beings with language who share knowledge of Nature diversely in metaphor and narrative tradition.

Metaphors may ensure a favourable reception of an idea by asserting that things we thought were difficult, unusual, or impossible to comprehend are actually very much like things we do understand.[7] Not surprisingly, we often

3 Northrop Frye, "Conclusion", in Carl Klinck, ed., *Literary History of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), p. 826.

4 See Boyce Richardson, *People of Terra Nullius: Betrayal and Rebirth in Aboriginal Canada* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1993), p. 29.

5 "Reasons for Judgement of the Honourable Chief Justice Alan McEachern", Supreme Court of British Columbia, no. 0843, Smithers Registry, March 8, 1991, p. 12.

6 The B.C. Court of Appeal, on June 25, 1993, found that Aboriginal rights to the claimed territory in Northwestern British Columbia had not been extinguished by pre-1871 enactments. However, the court ruled these rights do not entitle the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en to jurisdiction or ownership. As of January 1995, the appeal case was being prepared for hearing in the Supreme Court of Canada. See *BC Studies*, vol. 95 (Autumn 1992), for a scholarly denouncement of the McEachern decision.

7 Trevor J. Barnes and James S. Duncan, "Introduction", in *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 11.

depend on spatial or geographical metaphor to discuss time, a difficult concept that may be easier to grasp with a tangible referent. Time is a river, or perhaps, as Fernand Braudel of the *Annales* school structured it, a sea divided into its depths, tides, and surface ripples.[8] Although I do not dispute the existence of non-narrative history or condemn Braudel's attempt to write it,[9] my focus here is historical narrative. Narrative is a structured, recounted story, and, like metaphor, its resonance is contingent upon particularities of time and place. These definitions are historically dynamic and must remain flexible in the following attempt to navigate between different ways of knowing.

Although (post)structuralists have extended the vocabulary of discourse, the "linguistic turn" is no stranger to the historian's craft. Thucydides, the first "objective" historian, consciously employed rhetorical strategies; Giambattista Vico and Friedrich Nietzsche celebrated persuasive language and metaphor. Donald Creighton, one of Canada's most influential writers of economic and political history, viewed his discipline as a literary art.[10] Several years have passed since the controversial Hayden White, indebted to Frye's categorization of tropes, suggested that historical narratives act as extended metaphors as they exploit the "metaphorical similarities between sets of real events and the conventional structures of our fiction".[11] Despite the modernist attack on White's narrative analysis[12] and the post-structural offensives against narrative as the totalizing discourse of humanism,[13] many historians continue to tell stories. According to David Carr, a scholar who tested many of his ideas at the University of Ottawa, telling coherent stories is naturally what they do.

Historians do not impose narrative structure on a world that has no such form. Carr, in his *Time, Narrative and History*, asserts that narrative is the way we deal with the experience of being in time. To summarize a very careful and considered argument, Carr employs spatial metaphor to argue for continuity between narrative and life.

> Like the Here in relation to the space we perceive, the Now is a vantage point from which we survey the past and the future. To exist humanly is not merely to be in time but to encompass it or "take it in" as our gaze takes in our surroundings.[14]

8 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), vol. 1, pp. 20–21, and vol. 2, pp. 1238–1244.

9 Interestingly, Paul Ricoeur, in his *Time and Narrative* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), vol. 1, demonstrates that Braudel, who considered himself anti-narrative in the service of creating scientific history, employed a narrative framework in *The Mediterranean*.

10 Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), p. 208.

11 Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 91.

12 See, for instance, Gertrude Himmelfarb, "Post-Modernist History and the Flight from Fact", *Times Literary Supplement*, no. 4672 (October 16, 1992).

13 See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: New Pantheon Books, 1970), p. xiv; and Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990).

14 David Carr, *Time, Narrative and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 95.

Carr invites us to explore our experience of sound. Unlike Marshall McLuhan who contrasted the "fragmented" visual space of the literate with the "boundless", "timeless" acoustic space of the "primitive",[15] Carr relates visual and acoustic space to demonstrate that the human experience of temporality is hardly unstructured. We experience melody with a retentional-protentional "gaze", and the retention of previous notes, present awareness of the occurring note, and expectation of the next provides closure and allows us to experience music as an event, with its beginning, middle, and end.

Just as we attempt to "take in" "melodies, concerts, trees falling, persons talking",[16] we strive to act as the story-tellers of our daily existence, reflectively bringing the coherence of narrative structure to our own lives. One result of sharing stories, the spoken or written narrative, is perhaps akin to what Ursula Franklin calls "extended reality, that body of knowledge and emotions we acquire that is based on the experiences of others".[17] The historian does not construct her own events because narratives, as objects of research, already exist in communities constituting the "I" and the "us" as we know them. Stories are not just the way we "write it up", they are the way we, as individuals and as communities, confront temporal chaos in order to act and find meaning in our worlds.

Carr is careful to demarcate his "we" from those who may not live life like a story. Sensitive to the charge of totalization and universalization, Carr is self-reflexive about his assertions. Nevertheless, at the very least, he describes a narrative framework that transforms the mental battle zone of written text into a more open, aware, and aural frame of mind. An exploration of written historical narrative will precede a discussion of scholarship which engages oral narrative, but mindfulness of Carr's framework can help orient us throughout this journey.

Spatial awareness of land and water is a significant aspect of Canadian literature and historiography. In his biography of John A. Macdonald, Creighton compares the great man to the great St. Lawrence River: during the humiliating Pacific Scandal, oratory confidence returns as a "great masterful wave of water, roaring through his body".[18] Such strong identification with Nature is reserved for exceptional mortals or people who embark on extraordinary spiritual journeys, however.[19] Frye wonders "if any other national consciousness has had so large an amount of the unknown, the unrealized, the humanly undigested, so built into it."[20] In her landmark

15 See, for instance, Marshall McLuhan, Quentin Fiore, and Jerome Agel, *The Medium is the Massage* (New York: Random House, 1967), pp. 48, 56, 57, 63.

16 Carr, *Time, Narrative and History*, p. 27.

17 Ursulla Franklin, *The Real World of Technology* (Concord, Ont.: House of Anansi Press, 1992), p. 37.

18 Donald Creighton, *John A. Macdonald: The Old Chieftain* (1955), p. 176. See Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, p. 217.

19 See Margaret Atwood, *Surfacing* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1972).

20 Frye, "Conclusion", p. 827.

study of Canadian literary criticism, *Survival*, Margaret Atwood describes a general attitude of distrust towards this "unknowable" Nature whose images pervade Canadian writing: "added up, they depict a Nature that is often dead and unanswering or actively hostile to man."[21] As Creighton's work suggests, attitudes towards Nature are often entwined with thoughts about the human body. Seeking control over the flesh, insofar as it revealed itself to be close to Nature, immigrant Canadians perhaps extended this impulse to the territory.[22]

Geographer Cole Harris writes that "European social formations were bent in Canada by non-European space."[23] Undoubtedly, geographical formations helped to shape the official "story of the country"[24] as new arrivals struggled to make the less familiar, familiar. Pioneering historians like A. R. M. Lower, F. J. Turner, and Harold Innis asserted the integral role of Nature in settlement and development. Innis made the environment a central feature of his Staples Theory, emphasizing the natural resources that could be extracted from the land and water, and the geography that aids or inhibits transportation. His political economy did not focus on cultural perspectives, indigenous or otherwise. However, *The Fur Trade in Canada* still elicits praise from historians for characterizing Aboriginal people as active and significant within the story of Canada's economy.[25]

In attempting to reconstruct past environments, document-based historians have worked with the views expressed in the written records of immigrants,[26] or struggled, often poetically, to leap the gap between themselves and the Unknown. In his 1952 narrative, *Strange Empire*, Joseph Kinsey Howard uses what George Stanley calls his "clever metaphor"[27] and wilful emotion to howl at the abyss.

> But history is impatient with intangibles: the mystic meaning of a shadow pattern on a sacred butte, or that of the order of wild geese in flight. It cannot pause to describe the roar of the black wind, the Plains chinook, which is a welcome sound; or the silence of the white cold, which is terrible. It cannot

21 Atwood, *Survival*, p. 49.

22 See *ibid.*, p. 63; and G. P. Grant, *Technology and Empire: Perspectives on North America* (Toronto: House of Anansi, 1969), p. 24.

23 R. Cole Harris, "The Pattern of Early Canada", in Graeme Wynn, ed., *People, Places, Patterns, Processes* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1990), p. 371.

24 Graeme Wynn, "Introduction", in Wynn, ed., *People, Places, Patterns, Processes*, p. 1.

25 Harold Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History*, revised ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956). For complementary remarks, see, for instance, Bruce Trigger, "The Historian's Indian", in Robin Fisher and Kenneth Coates, eds., *Out of the Background* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1988), p. 26.

26 See, for instance, Ronald Rees, *New and Naked Land* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1988).

27 George Stanley, "Book Review", *The Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 34, no. 1 (March 1953), p. 65.

> bother to reflect upon why some men, primitive and civilized alike, should believe that in personal contest or communion with the elemental fury of a blizzard, the loneliness of the prairie or the aloof majesty of an unclimbed mountain, they may chance upon the essential core of truth and meaning of life, revealed to them in an instant of intuitive experience as a reward for superhuman effort.[28]

Nevertheless, Howard's liberal application of the word "instinct" to explain the actions of those with Indian blood illustrates at least one pitfall of non-Native attempts to "write the west" through what Bernard DeVoto called his "identification with the defeated".[29] Howard's opening image depicts a Cree Indian dwarfed in an infinite space-time framework, constantly reminded by Nature and the mighty spirits of his "insignificance and weakness ... erect but humble in a frozen instant of endless time".[30] That Howard chooses one isolated figure with no time, no peopled imagination, no familiars is important to the story that follows. His portrayal of static, then degenerated Indian cultures, decimated by 1870 through disease and alcohol, is plotted to open the range to his history of the Metis hunters of Red River and Riel's dream of a strange empire in the West.

Wallace Stegner was a great fan of Howard's work and he, too, in his historical narrative, *Wolf Willow*, reflects on the gap between present and past experience. In autobiographical tradition, however, Stegner generally reflects on his own life. In contrast to the nineteenth-century geologists who dubbed his childhood home in Saskatchewan "desolate and forbidding", Stegner recalls sensual pleasure in his environment and thus imaginatively recreates what Sitting Bull and others might have experienced.

> I know how that October river bottom would have looked and smelled with the skin lodges and the willow fires and the roasting meat — the smells of autumn and the muddy banks, the Indian Summer pungency of drying leaves and rose hips, the special and secret smell of wolf willow, the glint of yellow and red leaves shaking down over the camp in a chilly night wind. It is an actual pleasure to think that their boots and moccasins printed the gray silt of those bottoms where my bare feet would kick up dust years later.[31]

But as a child, Stegner did not know Sitting Bull or the events of Cypress Hills and had no history with which to people his imagination and landscape.

> I knew the swallows and the muskrats, and was at ease with them; we were all members of the timeless natural world. But Time, which man invented, I

28 Joseph Howard, *Strange Empire: A Narrative of the Northwest* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1952), p. 19.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

31 Wallace Stegner, *Wolf Willow* (New York: Penguin Books, 1962), p. 118.

> did not know. I was an unpeopled and unhistoried wilderness, I possessed hardly any of the associations with which human tradition defines and enriches itself.[32]

Stegner's adult awareness of Indian demoralization in his community history cannot ultimately repair his ignorant childhood memory and he issues a challenge laden with irony:

> How does one know in his bones what this continent has meant to Western man unless he has, though briefly and in the midst of failure, belatedly and in the wrong place made trails and paths on an untouched country and built human living places, however transitory at the edge of a field that he helped break from prairie sod? How does one know what wilderness has meant to Americans unless he has shared the guilt of wastefully and ignorantly tampering with it in the name of Progress?[33]

Stegner's story, passionate and true to his memory, nevertheless reflects a tone of condescension towards the Real Indians to whom he had extended his mind and senses. In an untouched country of "Euclidean perfection", Aboriginal people exist in the "timelessness" of nature, shaped by the environment. Conversely, when whites occupy the land, European culture shapes the environment.

Such a view was entrenched in academic history thanks, in part, to George Stanley's document-based political history, *Birth of Western Canada*, which remained influential decades after it was first published in 1936. Stanley's work, weighted with dead metaphors of dispassion, confirmed that only white men modified the landscape. Indians did not produce space; "they wandered over the plains."[34] Savage and mysterious, "the essential Indian characteristics never became subordinated to their social organization."[35] His notion that Natives "of course" were "loath to abandon the thrilling life of the chase for the tedious existence of agriculture"[36] served to explain to Canadian society why Indian agriculture had failed on the prairies.

That Sarah Carter first dismantles Stanley's outmoded beliefs in her recent *Lost Harvests* is testament to Stanley's rhetorical longevity. Her view, that Native people had dynamic, adaptive cultures and changing patterns of land use, challenges Stanley's widely accepted view that Indians held and wanted to retain a "simple", "free", and "savage" relationship to the earth. Rather than attempt poetic leaps, Carter writes elegantly and ironically about European perceptions of Indians. To the Victorians, for whom "Man's

32 *Ibid.*, p. 122.
33 *Ibid.*, p. 282.
34 George F. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada* (1936; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), p. 197.
35 *Ibid.*, p. 196.
36 *Ibid.*, p. 218.

purpose on earth was to reclaim and resurrect the wilderness'',[37] Indians appeared ''listless'' and ''primitive''.

> A source of anguish to late nineteenth-century observers of western Canada's native population was the Indians' apparent ignorance of man's obligation to subdue the earth. The Indians displayed no visible evidence of any degree of mastery over the environment; they appeared to be, not in control of but at the mercy of natural forces. The most glaring evidence of the Indians' inability to master their environment was that they left no marks of their presence on the land. Living by hunting, fishing, and gathering, they were preceived as doing nothing to work and improve the land.[38]

With information provided by ethnologists and historical geographers such as Arthur Ray, Carter counters any suggestion of ''haphazard and irrational'' land use with the assertion that the Plains Cree were exceedingly rational and economic.

Ray's influential *Indians In the Fur Trade* represents the environment as a resource base for the Indians who, as partners in a mutually beneficial though increasingly destructive economic system, choose to relocate and adapt ecologically in response to resource cycles and resource depletion as well as external controls of company policy and international markets. Carter's adaptation of this model is a welcome shift away from Stanley's grating racism, and, in this context, her rhetorical use of technical and economic terminology, words currently associated with expertise and power, is appropriate. Natives ''manipulated competition ... and were demanding consumers'',[39] their ''highly specialized empirical knowledge of nature approached a science'',[40] and their leaders ''assessed and analyzed their current economic and military problems, devised appropriate strategy and tactics''.[41] Native attempts at agriculture failed not because the people lacked ambition or aptitude, but, as Carter demonstrates, government policies undercut their efforts.

In a critical addition to mental historical geographies that people the land, industrial archeologist and historian Dianne Newell creates a hydrography with her *Tangled Webs of History: Indians and the Law In Canada's Pacific Coast Fisheries*. Human interaction with water is basic to the history of the West Coast environment, and Newell anchors the reader in place and time. Her chapter on ''The Aboriginal Salmon Fishery and its Management'' stories the past with a detailed examination of the diverse aboriginal fishing technologies and their substantial impact on aqueous space, which is never

37 Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), p. 16.

38 *Ibid.*

39 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 49.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

"empty" even when not in active use. Newell's descriptive language is technical but fairly jargon-free, relating to what will undoubtedly be a diverse readership. The conclusion resonates with a strong space-time framework which entrenches her vision. However "imaginary" she declares her lines to be, her very concrete mental map divides the environment vertically and horizontally, reiterates her historical analysis, and thus makes the "geographical dimension" crystal clear.

> An imaginary vertical line along the coast separates two distinct groups. The inland people have their restricted, productive, traditional, low-cost riverine salmon fisheries, which some Indians can commercialize and others cannot. Indians who occupy the coast and offshore islands can participate in the industrial fishery at the start of the harvesting chain. ... An imaginary line drawn horizontally across the northern tip of Vancouver Island separates the more prolific ocean fisheries and the centre of processing operations of the south, dominated by the Fraser River salmon runs, from the less productive, more diversified northern fishing areas.[42]

Newell's extended temporal framework leaves us with an understanding that any resolution of the conflicts over fishing rights lies in the ongoing negotiations concerning Native self-government.

Historically self-conscious mental maps do not live in books but are active in the world. Indeed, returning to David Carr's thoughts about storytelling, narrative activity is "often a constitutive part of action".[43] In attempts to link communities of people to land or water, materialist models have an extremely important function in our courtrooms and legal histories. The arguments which place emphasis on instruments of resource exploitation and strategies assuring human survival are tangible and persuasive. They confirm that indigenous people in Canada, like groups everywhere, produced, managed, and utilized space and, of course, continue to do so.

Anthropologists and ethnographers, among others, have questioned the inherent superiority of models focusing exclusively on material culture. Newell describes traditional Native fisheries' management as well as specific fishing technologies. Anthropologist Robin Ridington argues that certain groups of Northern Athapaskan people value artifice over artifact[44] knowledge and information is valued more than things in nomadic hunting society. Hugh Brody expresses a similar understanding of the Northern hunting way of life in his *Maps and Dreams: Indians and the British Columbia Frontier Background*. From his association with Western Apache communities, Keith Basso learned that

42 Dianne Newell, *Tangled Webs of History: Indians and the Law in Canada's Pacific Coast Fisheries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), p. 215.

43 Carr, *Time, Narrative and History*, p. 61.

44 Ridington, *Little Bit*, p. 87.

> landscapes are always available to their seasoned inhabitants in other than material terms. Landscapes are available in symbolic terms as well, and so, chiefly through the manifold agencies of speech, they can be "detached" from their fixed spatial moorings and transformed into instruments of thought and purposive behavior.[45]

The study of information systems and semiotics are not mere "epiphenomena" in the attempt to understand historical environments. However, an exclusive reliance on European narrative tradition cannot bring us closer to bridging the epistemological gap.

Many anthropologists join with (post)structuralists to critique the accendancy of Western narrative tradition as the reference point of truth. Julie Cruikshank argues that "all societies have characteristic narrative structures that help members construct and maintain knowledge of the world."[46] Despite the increasing interest in oral history, however, professional historians tend to leave the sphere of indigenous narrative frameworks, oral tradition, to the anthropologists. Many might agree with Innis, who wrote that "It is scarcely possible for generations disciplined in the written and printed tradition to appreciate the oral tradition."[47] Yet such a belief did not prevent Innis himself from thinking seriously about a figure-ground relationship between oral and written tradition through time and space.[48]

What would oral tradition offer historians if they were sensitive to cultural differences and willing to value the unwritten contemporary expressions of experience and moral attitudes towards the environment? According to Cruikshank and Ridington, we may yet gain entry to the past. However, Cruikshank warns, "Attempts to sift oral accounts for 'facts' may actually minimize the value of spoken testimonies by asserting positivistic standards for assessing 'truth value' or 'distortions'."[49] The medium really is the message, and we must be attuned to narrative structure and the social processes that lead to the production of both written and oral narratives.

Cruikshank's joyful and self-revealing collaboration, *Life Lived Like A Story*, explores the use of traditional narrative by Yukon women to discuss and contextualize both past and present events as well as negotiate with the world. For the three Yukon women, Annie Ned, Kitty Smith, and Angela Sidney, stories give the landscape meaning. When narrating life history,

45 Keith Basso, *Western Apache Language and Culture: Essays in Linguistic Anthropology* (Arizona: The University of Arizona Press, 1990), p. 142.

46 Julie Cruikshank, "Oral Traditions and Written Accounts: An Incident from the Klondike Gold Rush", *Culture*, vol. 9, no. 2 (1989), p. 26.

47 Harold Innis, *Empire and Communication* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), p. 8.

48 In *Empire and Communications*, Innis argues that oral expression emphasizes time and individuality whereas written communication is related to space and territorial expansion. Although he surveys civilizations in ancient Egypt, Greece, China, and India, he unfortunately has little to say about the Americas.

49 Julie Cruikshank, Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith, and Annie Ned, *Life Lived Like A Story* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1990), p. 346.

Mrs. Sidney often explicitly followed the narrative "like a map".[50] Cruikshank reflects that "by imbuing place with meaning through story, narrators seemed to be using locations in physical space to talk about events in chronological time."[51] When Annie Ned says, "That's all Stony Creek, what I said,"[52] she is contextualizing her temporal experience with familiar features of the environment. Toponyms themselves act as extended metaphors, allowing a seemingly simple place name to contain events of the past and cultural knowledge.

> When Annie Ned instructs me, as she does all the time, "We've got to get the words right," she is absolutely correct. Through words the landscape is fashioned into a world of manageable, human proportions. If, as Rosaldo advises, "doing oral history involves telling stories about the stories people tell about themselves", place names may provide a point of entry to the past.[53]

In terms of stretching dominant notions of "place" and "event", toponyms may have, in Cruikshank's phrase concerning oral history in general, "elastic promise".[54]

Ridington learns from male hunting culture of Northern British Columbia and expresses this knowledge in two very different forms. *Trail to Heaven* is an experiment in self-reflexive ethnography that creatively urges the reader to attempt mythic thinking and appreciate the spatial metaphor of the trail in Dunne-za culture. *Little Bit Know Something* is a collection of essays about the Dunne-za that attempt to mediate cultural knowledge between Dunne-za reality and the reality of anthroplogists. Ridington asserts that stories train the individual to understand the world from an animal's point of view as well as in terms of a relationship with the whole environment, an awareness essential to the continuity of community life: "The carrying device is an essential artifact of hunting and gathering technology, but the technique of being able to carry the world around in your head is even more fundamental."[55] Stories imparted by an experienced elder, like John Davis, must be understood as knowledge: his oral tradition brings us into discourse with people of another generation.

Innis concluded *Empire and Communications* with the statement that "the ability to develop a system of government in which the bias of communication can be checked and an appraisal of the significance of space and time can be reached remains a problem of empire and of the Western world."[56]

50 Cruikshank *et al.*, *Life Lived Like A Story*, p. 350.
51 *Ibid.*, p. 347.
52 *Ibid.*, p. 353.
53 *Ibid.*, p. 354.
54 *Ibid.*, p. 346.
55 Ridington, *Little Bit*, p. 87.
56 Innis, *Empire and Communication*, p. 170.

As we navigate through familiar and less familiar territories, exploring new media of expression,[57] problems associated with power, bias, and significance remain ongoing challenges. Cruikshank writes that "it may not be possible to produce seamless narratives about colonial encounters, but we can learn how the very act of constructing, remembering, and transmitting narratives continues to be a reassertion of autonomy."[58] We can also appreciate that a dominant narrative tradition fenced securely from others is not open to evaluation. Such discussion is vital, for, as Carr reminds us, the historian's craft is part of making individual and community life coherent so that we may act with knowledge.

> To adapt the spatial metaphor we have used before, we stand within historical, social time as we stand within space. It extends in all directions about us. As historians we may pick out for treatment some familiar landmark, such as a recent war or famous political event, or we may turn to something hidden in the recesses among the familiar landmarks, something that puzzles us precisely because it is for us a gap in the terrain.[59]

Our narratives undoubtedly do many things. A field survey is a potential tool of surveillance. Yet, in an important respect, our stories also may extend care and meaning to the environment, and that continuum may sustain us though we deodorize the sensory realm, fill our ears with traffic noise, and reduce time to money. As the natural world rapidly is reduced and reordered, we slowly are beginning to appreciate the knowledge that the destruction of environment entails the destruction of human culture.[60] To gain knowledge about our position in the world, to frame the answer to "where is here?" in the long term of inhabited territory, we need powerful maps that challenge and expand our awareness spatially and temporally. Mental maps of First Nations' people first gave diverse landscapes human shape. With self-reflective listening as a constitutive part of narrative activity, the historian's respect for time may extend more fully to the honouring of place.

57 The potential of electronic hypermedia to represent sensitively both oral and written knowledge is currently being explored by individuals and groups including, for example, the curriculum committee of Sto:lo Nation in British Columbia's Fraser Valley.

58 Julie Cruikshank, "Oral Tradition and Oral History: Reviewing Some Issues", *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 75, no. 3 (1994), p. 418. This excellent review article discusses problems associated with the framing of colonial encounters.

59 Carr, *Time, Narrative and History*, p. 174.

60 See, for instance, Terry Glavin, "Eclipse of the Spirit Dancers: Sto:lo Seek New Allies as Bulldozers Threaten the Spirit Dance", *Pacific Current* (October 1994), pp. 12–18.