

ignored lower orders from the enormous condescension of posterity. Such was done, argues Phillips, to produce an affect, namely to make present a sentimental view of the past in order to help bring about an ideological engagement with the current struggles of humanity.

It's clear that Phillips finds this sentimentalism dominant within the current "family of historical representation" as even academic and popular forms of history seem to be converging precisely on the grounds of producing a sentimental feeling in the reader. More could have been said about the recent return to the large scale, and how the modes of distantiation promoted by genres like deep history and big history may (or may not) differ from the sentimental school. Phillips seems to assume that these new grand narratives would "choose to turn away from the current fascination with affect to embrace programs that seem to offer historians grander prospects or more rigorous designs" (206), but they rely on a rhetoric of creating a sense of deep feeling in the reader towards the *longue durée* even while such rhetoric is embedded within a supposedly objective and scientific mode of knowledge that was only made possible by the passage of time that has led to ourselves.

It is in this way that *On Historical Distance* provides a useful conceptual apparatus for analysing historical thinking and representation that is by no means limited to Phillips' particular subjects of interest. But is this broader view of distance any less prescriptive than the much narrower one that it seeks to replace? I'm not so sure. It certainly allows us to cast a much wider net while thinking more generally about the way representations of history are often complex mediations between past and present. And yet Phillips' conceptual scheme necessarily stresses the artistic and affective side of history not unlike the way the narrow view of distance stresses scientific detachment. We are no longer naïve enough to be blinded by the prescriptions of the latter, but we might just sympathise enough with the former to fail to notice the prescriptive elements in what is presented as a mere heuristic.

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ROBERTSON, Leslie A. and the Kwagu'ł Gixsam clan – *Standing up with Ga'axsta'las: Jane Constance Cook and the Politics of Memory, Church, and Custom*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2012. Pp. 569.

Before the publication of this book, Ga'axsta'las or Jane Constance Cook (1870-1951) was recorded as a leading proponent of the colonial ban on the potlatch, this despite her wide ranging involvement in early-twentieth-century Aboriginal political activism, and her seemingly non-stop involvement in all aspects of community life at 'Yalis (Alert Bay). For Cook, and especially for her descendant who grew up after the lifting of the potlatch ban, this image of Cook as a "colonial

collaborator” weighed heavily on the family, stigmatizing many of Cook’s grandchildren and great-grandchildren and isolating the family from the wider Kwakwaka’wakw community. *Standing Up with Ga’axsta’las*, a collaboration between anthropologist Leslie Robertson and Cook’s descendants (the Kwagu’l Gixsam clan), is written to revise the image of Cook, and the place of her family within the Kwakwaka’wakw context. As one descendant and contributor to this book explains, he wants the book to “set the record straight on who she was and what she was about,” so that other children in his family do not have to face the same exclusion from the cultural realm of Kwakwaka’wakw society he felt as a child (p. 27). The resulting text of *Standing Up with Ga’axsta’las* comprises three interwoven narratives: the story of Jane Cook and her decisions to speak out against the potlatch; the story of Leslie Robertson’s research journey amongst the Kwagu’l Gixsam clan and through the written archive related to Jane Cook; and the story Robertson’s co-authors, the Kwagu’l Gixsam clan itself, and their hope of using a written academic monograph as part of a journey towards being more accepted by their community. Teasing apart these narratives is complicated and Robertson’s great strength is her ability to move almost seamlessly between discussion of the present, the past, and her own thinking about the project. The resulting book, although organized chronologically around Jane Cook’s life, retains these three narratives throughout.

Of the three narratives, the story of the Cook’s descendants and their journey towards reconciliation with their community is the most persuasive and comprehensive of the whole book, and, in a sense, this book itself becomes a chapter in this story. Readers are consistently pulled into the lives of the present-day descendants, their memories of being ostracized from their community, and their hope that this new history of Ga’axsta’las/Jane Cook will reconnect them with their community.

The other two narratives are more problematic in their presentation. That of Cook’s life, her decisions and her actions, was the most disappointing. While Robertson and Cook’s descendants do succeed in presenting a revisionist history of Cook that allows her to be a community leader rather than simply an anti-potlatch activist, we do not learn enough about Cook’s complex identities and decisions as a woman, a wife, a Christian, an Aboriginal activist, or how these decisions fit within the broader Kwakwaka’wakw context. On her Christian faith, for instance, the book is particularly vague, perhaps relying too much on contemporary memory (and a contemporary context in which many Aboriginal people have a strained relationship with Christianity). We are told that Cook was a devout Christian and committed member of the mission community at ‘Yalis but that she was distinctly different from the European missionary (Alfred Hall) who ran the church. At one point it is suggested that Cook and her family were attracted to the church because of prestige (something they had lost in the traditional longhouse), while at other points, it seems Cook lived as Christianity in all ways possible. What we do not really know is how Cook herself thought about her faith. Did she actively construct (as did her well-documented near-contemporary Tshimsian Christian catechist Wellgition Clah) a faith that recognized the

combined Indigenous-Christian nature of her spirituality? It would seem that her descendants, and Robertson too, are unsure of how to represent Cook's alliance with the missionary and the church. Perhaps some closer reading of Cook's own archives would have brought us closer to the nature of her faith.

What is most striking in the book's discussion of Jane Cook is the lack of emphasis on Cook's modern feminist perspective, and how this perspective was a constant theme in her life and work as a community leader, church member, potlatch critic, grandmother, and Native Rights activist. Indeed, if there was a single thread running through Cook's life, it would seem to be her Christian-inflected modern feminist sensibilities; that is, her eagerness to topple, not "the potlatch" or "colonialism" but patriarchy broadly (be that white or aboriginal). We see glimpses of this throughout the book, but Robertson could have used this lens much more effectively to explain Cook's actions, her ostracism from the patriarchal society of the Kwakwaka'wakw community, and even to contextualize the activist work of many of her descendants upon whom Robertson relies for information (here Pearl Alfred, Jane Cook's granddaughter, is the most memorable example). Had Robertson placed more focus on the history of Cook, we as readers would have learned much more about what motivated her to move against the potlatch. The upshot might have been a more illuminating understanding not of how *religion* played a decisive role in Kwakwaka'wakw community patterns and Jane Cook's support of the potlatch ban (indeed Robertson notes that many Christians practiced the Potlatch (p. 108), but how *gender*, and the battle over the rights and roles of women, seemed to be the most crucial issue here.

The third narrative thread, Robertson's own reflections on her methodology, is uneven. While she begins the book with a useful and sophisticated discussion of her "method of hope" (p. 21), reflecting her sensitivities about the way knowledge is constructed and her commitment to community-based research, throughout the bulk of the text there is little reflection on how her own choices have shaped her representation of Jane Cook. There are evident benefits to both researcher and community to using the kind of community-based approach presented here by Robertson, but Robertson's silences and omissions of substantial critical discussion of her methodology raises concerns. For instance, for all the wonderful nuance and detail we receive about Jane Cook and the way she was central in the lives of her community and her descendants, we learn about her in something of a vacuum. At one point Robertson notes that "not everyone [in the Kwakwaka'wakw community] agrees with the decision to commemorate Ga'axsta'las [in this book]" (p. 10), but we never learn who these people are, or why they have reservations about the project. And, except for a brief description of a feast and ceremony of community reconciliation at the end of the book, we are not introduced to oral testimony from other member of the Kwakwaka'wakw community—those whose ancestors would have been responsible for ostracizing Jane Cook's family. What is their memory of the past? How do they explain the role of the Potlatch and of Christian critiques like Cook? We never really know, and Robertson rarely pauses to reflect on the motivations or perspectives of her informants or the need to seek other perspectives on events or memories. The narrative arc in this book is more

one of redemption—or even resurrection—of one woman and her family, and less an analytical and reflective history of the complicated legacy of colonialism in Indigenous communities: indeed there is limited reflection on the “politics of memory” mentioned in the book’s title. While writing (or rewriting) history towards reconciliation and “hope” is needed in our (somewhat) post-colonial context, just as important are histories and stories that tell us about the broad patterns created by church, colonialism and patriarchy; those tensions in which Jane Cook and her family found themselves. It is in revealing these tensions—how and why they existed in the past and in present memories—that we can more honestly create understandings about colonialism and how, perhaps, to lead to reconciliation or true decolonization. It is in revealing these tensions, and the multiple memories of these tensions, that histories of colonialism employing community-based approaches will find long-term value.

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SANYAL, Shukla – *Revolutionary Pamphlets, Propaganda and Political Culture in Colonial Bengal*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. Pp. 211.

Which sentiments and values motivate a colonized society to take up arms against its European master? Shukla Sanyal’s research on revolutionary pamphlets in early twentieth-century Bengal unpacks the subversive power of the printed word. Sanyal, Professor and Department Head at Presidency University, Calcutta, offers a focused study of Bengali revolutionary pamphlets to examine national identity formation and political mobilization. *Revolutionary Pamphlets, Propaganda and Political Culture in Colonial Bengal* is a discourse analysis of cultural symbols, identities, and language embedded in a wide range of pamphlets and newspapers located primarily in the West Bengal State Archives. Drawing inspiration from critical scholars including Dipesh Chakrabarty, Jürgen Habermas, and Benedict Anderson, Sanyal argues that revolutionary pamphlets provide unique insight into the “ideas, value systems, hopes and aspirations” (p. 2) of an anti-colonial society straddling tradition and modernity. Consequently, Sanyal is adamant that hers is not a study of politics or revolutionary action. It is an interpretation of ephemeral print media sources as cultural artefacts, rebellious acts, educational tools, and barometers of public opinion (p. 12). The Bengali nation as social construct rests at the intersection of these themes.

The first two chapters outline the origins and themes of the nationalist revolutionary movement in the context of Bengali politics and society in the early 1900s. The dialectic between local resistance and colonial oppression is a dominant theme throughout the monograph. Frustrated by their lack of agency, Bengal’s western-educated, middle-class intellectuals—the *bhadralok* (gentlefolk)—turned toward revolutionary means to achieve political independence. Newspapers,