

JOHN BARTON

THE DOUGLAS TREATIES: A REVISION

“The sound of waves came in at the open door; the smell of the sea and of the sun-warmed earth came in too.”

—Emily Carr, “The Blouse” (1941)

Offshore, south of Vancouver Island, the
boats E. J. Hughes might have painted let the sound
of their horns usher cruise ships to harbour, tuneless entreaties of
their diamond-hard monotones glinting on the waves

chilling a rain-slicked coast others earlier came
to, who’d also come in waves, some not coming to ground without erasure, in
crests overreaching before falling back to reach forward still farther, at
peril of wiping clean the shadows, blasting sand against the

dogged mutability of whatever rock we stand on, the open
magic tunings of the wind a door
blown wide for walking through with the life the
best in each of us would land and give voice to, the ageless smell

of kelp and salt reminding us of the
salmon-pink plenty to be blessed and shared, the rising sea
not a blank document to be endorsed without promise and
obligation—dear god, my companion Harrys and Evelyns from everywhere, of

what sterling character can we more than aspire to as the
existing residents and guests, Songhees, settler, Cree, South-Asian, and Black,
sun-warmed
welcome alike—*mamaskatch*, isn’t it humbling how the Earth
keeps trying to sustain any or all who once disembarked without thought,
who came

to articulate what had been thought it should mean to be alive here—in sight of the Olympics in what we've since called Washington state, it's past time to listen too.