

# BORDER CROSSINGS

## *A Review Essay*

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BY ELIZABETH VIBERT

*Borderlands: How We Talk About Canada*

W. H. New

Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998. 119 pp. \$49.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

*Mental Territories: Mapping the Inland Empire*

Katherine G. Morrissey

Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997.

220 pp. Illus. US\$45 cloth, US\$18.95 paper.

*Terra Pacifica: People and Place in the  
Northwest States and Western Canada*

Paul W. Hirt, Editor

Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1998.

223 pp. US\$35 cloth, US\$19.95 paper.

**A**t my job interview for a Canadian history position at the University of Victoria, I was asked about the major themes in Canadian history that I would want to convey to first-year students. Pens were dropped and eyebrows raised when I offered, "Well, I don't consider myself a Canadianist ..." I fumbled for a response to the next question, the inevitable "What *do* you consider yourself?" It was hard to say: trained by Africanists, intrigued by India, writing a doctoral dissertation on British representations of Indigenous peoples in a little-studied region of the trans-border Pacific Northwest. "Colonial historian" has since become my flag of convenience. It raises more questions than it answers, but it lets me slip through some formidable disciplinary borders.

An invitation to review several new books dealing with "borders" of various sorts has led to some productive musing about the concept and its role in our academic and social discourse. On a practical level, the reading has also led to the conclusion that, globalization and blurring of disciplinary boundaries aside, the border between Canada and the United States looms as large as ever.

The project of border definition (what W.H. New in *Borderlands* calls "border walking") is at base an exercise in marking difference. When Canadians consider the significance of our border with the US, before long we turn to enumerating the differences between us and them. "Us" and "them," "inside" and "outside": such categories of difference have long been a focus of

social theory. More recently, scholars of many persuasions have begun to turn their attention from *describing* difference to analyzing the history by which differences have been produced. Difference – along axes of race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, class, nation, region, and so forth – is now widely seen as an effect of specific historical moments and specific struggles over meaning.

In practical terms, this theorizing of difference means that dualities like black/white, man/woman, colonizer/colonized, structure/agent no longer provide stable foundations for historical narratives. The probing of such apparently fixed dichotomies has become a requirement for theoretically informed scholars of many persuasions. The purpose, at least for most, is not to diminish the ongoing political salience and power imbalances implied in constructions like colonizer/colonized. For many the aim is quite the opposite: to illuminate the ways in which power is exercised through the very use of such labels; to point out that even the most basic of identities (woman, working class, Native) are never timeless, fixed, or uncontested.

An essential aspect of the study of difference, then, is the study of the relational nature of social identity. There is no Black without White: an important (and long overdue) development in the study of “race” relations in recent years has been the recognition that, equally, there is no White without Black (or Aboriginal, or Asian). Recent work in colonial history, for instance, is at pains to emphasize that European discourses of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – ever more potent discourses setting out appropriate gender relations, national characters, the nature

of bourgeois civility – were produced not in Europe alone, but in Europe’s encounter with worlds beyond its borders. Certainly Europe was a central laboratory for the production and hardening of metropolitan notions of, say, White middle-class manhood. But in the age of empire even the domestic European social context was heavily racialized. European identities, as Ann Laura Stoler has written, were “refracted through the discourses of empire ... by men and women whose affirmations of a bourgeois self, and the racialized contexts in which those confidences were built, could not be disentangled.”<sup>1</sup> Whiteness gained form and meaning through its encounter with the other-than-White.

The point that the self and the other “[cannot] be disentangled” is rich in analytical implications. It hints at a very complex understanding of the social subject, a subject whose identity is never singular but “always fragmented and always in flux.”<sup>2</sup> A contemporary example of the complexity of social subjectivity is explored in a 1991 essay by sociologist Mariana Valverde. She uses the phenomenon of green consumerism to highlight the mobility and fragmentation of subjectivity and to emphasize the intricate relationships at play between social structures and individual agency, between domination and resistance. Two social discourses once seen as antagonistic, consumerism and conservation, are now being rearticulated

<sup>1</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham and London: Duke, 1995), 7.

<sup>2</sup> Mariana Valverde, “As If Subjects Existed: Analysing Social Discourses,” *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 28, no. 2 (1991): 182.

to form a new discourse: “environmental big business.” This reorganization makes available to the average person several new subject positions, including “green shopper.” The role involves internal inconsistencies, of course, and is complicated as well by its relationship to other subject positions. The green shopper might at the same time be a “working mom wanting convenience foods,” an assembly-line labourer, and a taxpayer who resents government regulations that raise the price of goods.<sup>3</sup> The green shopper example highlights the complex manoeuvres inherent in the most mundane social gestures. It underscores as well the observation that social discourses are expressions of struggle over meaning. The struggles are waged across a range of highly fluid and historically defined boundaries between categories like White and other-than-White, colonizer and colonized, structure and agency.

Scholars today take on any number of “complex social subjectivities” in their forays into social theory. Two of the works considered here, W.H. New’s *Borderlands* and Katherine Morrissey’s *Mental Territories*, address issues of subject position and boundary definition quite explicitly. They do so from shared premises, among them the conviction that the borders delineating nations and regions are not so much fixed edges as slippery mental constructs. The borders that matter in people’s daily lives, both authors assert, are not those of the cartographic variety but those that people define for themselves, through ongoing dialogue and conflict. New, a BC professor of English and Canadian Studies, writes that the boundaries delimiting nations, for instance, are “psy-

chic, indeterminate” (4), yet the most powerful of metaphors. In a similar vein, American historian Katherine Morrissey points out that regional boundaries are “vague, shifting” (18), yet capable of fostering ardent loyalties.

Morrissey draws difference into the fray from the outset. The marking of local identity, she argues (following anthropologist Anthony Cohen), involves “an account of how people experience and express their differences from others, and of how their sense of differences becomes incorporated into and informs the nature of their social organization and process” (7). Difference, then, lies at the heart of the project of boundary marking. The theoretical point is well taken. In practice, though, the shifting “psychic” borders under discussion here seem all too determinate. Having spent the last while reading several books framed around the forty-ninth parallel, I’m convinced that in the academy at least, formal cartographic borders remain firmly in place.

To be fair, New’s *Borderlands* doesn’t pretend to cross borders. His task is to walk them and to sort out how borders figure in the ways we “talk about Canada.” New’s thesis is that the “Canadas” under scrutiny in his and other disciplines “derive from” various forms of boundary rhetoric (5, emphasis in original). Metaphors about borders suffice some of the most Canadian of preoccupations – regionalism, separatism, colonial attitudes, multiculturalism, the influence of the United States. He uses examples from Canadian literature, politics, and history to show how border metaphors pervade every aspect of Canadian consciousness.

One of New’s most engaging discussions is the analysis of age-old

<sup>3</sup> Valverde, “As If Subjects Existed,” 182-3.

centre-hinterland rhetoric in Canadian society. He identifies himself at the outset as a "West Coast Canadian," and his perspective on this particular instance of boundary discourse is shaped by that regional affiliation. It seems unlikely that a "central Canadian" would bristle quite so palpably at the tradition whereby Robertson Davies is treated as a national voice, Jack Hodgins as a regional eccentric. As a displaced Maritimer I found myself nodding wryly as New bemoaned the propensity of central Canadians to construct a hierarchy of regions built around barely submerged exclusions of class, wealth, and other privileges. He moves from the centre/periphery image to consider, in a very lucid way, the larger issue of how power becomes invested in and sustained by normative models of appearance, belief, and behaviour. New implicates the national media, among others, in sins of omission and commission that "create, as axiomatic, prejudices of various kinds – economic, religious, racial" (11). Such prejudices, by restating what is normal and delineating what is not, perpetuate existing power structures and entrench the marginalization of those excluded from power. The *Globe and Mail* springs to mind here, in particular its efforts to normalize deficit reduction as a "common sense" commitment of all right-thinking Canadians, and its more recent editorial campaign to shame mothers who work outside the home. Fine examples of the literary technique whereby a story, repeated often enough, gets "exaggerated into reality" (21).

Despite its sensitivity to such issues, *Borderlands* is no treatise on victimization at the margins. The borders under discussion are, after all, not fixed barriers but "metaphors of confrontation and exchange." In the long

essay on the meanings of the United States border in Canadian culture, New shows Canadians manipulating a range of boundary-marking devices in order, often deliberately, to "re-iterate our cultural separateness from the USA" (41). The forms of boundary marking discussed include acknowledgement and articulation of our separate histories; the (sometimes) distinctive nature of our media and corporate cultures; and the use of irony to characterize ourselves and our relationship to the US. (Much of our humour, he notes, is self-deprecating on the face of it but comes with a sting in its tail.) The final entry in this list of boundary-marking mechanisms is what New sees as the Canadian tradition of tolerance for dissension and difference. The musings under these headings are thought-provoking, if not always convincing. New's main point is that the act of border walking is perpetual for Canadians and that this is all to the good. Contemplation of our borders gives Canadians the opportunity to work out where our voice comes from and to determine what makes us cohere as a community (or series of variously overlapping and antagonistic communities). Borders like that between Canada and the US provide "a contact field, a place and a condition of negotiated affinities" (67).

Given this emphasis on negotiation, struggle over meaning, and the vitality of the project he calls border walking, New's repeated jibes at those who complain of their exclusion from the "community" seem misplaced. He writes of the need to offer positive inducements to local creativity in this country, to "foster and preserve variety" (62). But such pleas are undermined by his broadsides at the "self-congratulatory martyrdom" of groups that "prefer victimization" and "blame" to

productive solutions (65; also 10, 16-17, 67). These outbursts are unfortunate in a work that otherwise deals thoughtfully and critically with the processes of confrontation and exchange that continue to define our discourse about Canada. They point to a serious wrinkle in the fabric of New's liberal pluralist vision of the country.

While there is plenty of border walking in *Borderlands*, there is little attempt at border crossing. Katherine Morrissey's *Mental Territories*, on the other hand, sets out to tell the story of a region of the Pacific Northwest that quite explicitly transcends the Canada-US border. The "Inland Empire" covers portions of eastern and central Washington State, northern Idaho, and southern British Columbia. It is a region that had far more meaning at the turn of the century than it has today and that, to judge by the stories in this book, meant more to people in the vicinity of Spokane than anywhere else.

Morrissey brings together the theoretical insights of cultural anthropology, cognitive psychology, and literary theory with the textured detail of social history to trace the creation and maintenance of the Inland Empire in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. The region is "inland" in the sense that it is an "inner world of peoples' minds," and it is an "empire" because it is based on "an aggressive, forward-looking, futuristic policy of control" (19). Morrissey studies the writings and activities of real-estate speculators, railway promoters, Native Americans on reservations, women homesteaders, union organizers, and others to develop an understanding of the "sense of difference," and the perceptions of environment and community, that held this region together and set it apart. In the face of a large

body of Pacific Northwest scholarship emphasizing the factors that draw the region together, she usefully underlines conflict. "What intrigues me most about the ongoing creation of regions," she writes, "is the persistence of conflict and contestation" (14). Among instructive examples is a thoughtful account of contrasting Native and White visions of land use and boundary definition. Tensions and divisions within the diverse Native communities of the day could be better demonstrated and explained. The diverse interests at play on the White side, though, are generally well detailed. An unfortunate exception is the lumping of Shetland-Canadian ethnographer James Teit alongside other imperialist anthropologists, most notably his sometime employer Franz Boas. Teit's writings, which covered much of the territory of the Inland Empire, at times bore the heavy imprint of Boasian preoccupations – not least because Boas was his editor. But Teit himself was quite exceptional for his border crossing. In many ways he assimilated into Native communities, and he became a vigorous political activist on their behalf. Reference to the (predominantly Canadian) scholarship on Teit, especially works by Wendy Wickwire, Ralph Maud, and Roderick Sprague,<sup>4</sup> would have helped Morrissey avoid these errors.

*Mental Territories* bridges some pretty formidable gulfs – between abstract theory and close narrative; between nation and region, individual

<sup>4</sup> Wendy Wickwire, "Women in Ethnography: The Research of James A. Teit," *Ethnohistory* 40, no. 4 (1993): 539-62; Ralph Maud, *A Guide to Indian Myth and Legend* (Vancouver: Talon, 1982); Roderick Sprague, "A Bibliography of James A. Teit," *Northwest Anthropological Review* 25, no. 1 (1991): 103-15.

and collective identity; between frontier and settlement, rural and urban. Surprisingly, then, the study all but ignores the forty-ninth parallel. For a Canadian reader this is a major weakness. There was the potential here for some instructive comparisons. They never materialize. There are warnings early on that British North American antecedents will get short shrift: "Hudson's Bay Company" is misspelled throughout (as "Hudson Bay Company"), and fur-trade era developments and their links to later events and patterns are largely overlooked. Morrissey has visited and done research in British Columbia. She draws on some of that research in her accounts of early settler experiences in the Interior. But these lives are subsumed by the larger narrative of American immigration to the west. Annie Gordon, a Nova Scotian who moved to southern British Columbia in the late 1880s, becomes an example (alongside settlers from Kansas, Illinois, and Nevada) of someone who sought the familiar in new landscapes – and who shared "a belief in the potential to improve one's economic position and a faith in individual effort" and the ability to transform oneself (32-4).

Historical specifics are not well attended to here, and there is a theoretical price to pay as well in this elision of national and cultural difference. Morrissey explains early on that mental territories such as the Inland Empire come into being as their inhabitants devise a "rhetoric of unity" (New's rhetoric of coherence) to articulate their sense of themselves. A key aspect of that rhetoric is the recognition of difference, the people's awareness of their distinctness from those beyond their borders (and of the dominant group's distinctness from

others within). Social theorists like Pierre Bourdieu have taken this point further. Bourdieu argues that in the removal from home, the traveller or emigrant becomes acutely aware of his or her own ethnicity, where previously it might have gone unremarked. Cole Harris has shown how this process could affect newcomers to British Columbia in the late nineteenth century. Certainly there was integration: Harris shows how people from various regions of Britain and the eastern colonies got mixed up with one another and, to a lesser extent, with continental Europeans, Americans, Aboriginal peoples, Asians, and others. Such integration weakened pre-existing cultural patterns on the one hand but intensified ethnic affiliation on the other. When ethnicity came into the light of day in this way it became "sparse, symbolic, and altogether explicit." And as Harris notes, "it could be exceedingly powerful" (266).<sup>5</sup>

Of most consequence for Morrissey's work is the point that the colonial settler society of British Columbia was an expatriate *British* society. It was not a replica of Britain or any of its regions; the processes of human-spatial relations and cultural integration were too powerful for that. But it was a colony/province with a distinctly British flavour. Surely this separates British Columbia's settlement history from that of the American Inland Empire in ways that demand acknowledgement.

<sup>5</sup> Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), especially Chapter 9. For Bourdieu, see especially *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. R. Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

The critique I'm offering here is not novel. There is a long history of Canadians being, and perceiving themselves as being, absent from American narratives. New writes at one point that "when American textbooks do draw on Canadian materials, they tend to treat them in a special way, suppressing – erasing – the particularities that would identify their foreign origin" (53). To some extent such erasure is inevitable in scholarly work: we all have our practical and intellectual limits. So eighteenth-century specialists bemoan the short memories of historians of the nineteenth; students of the colonies throw up their arms in despair at the parochial Eurocentrism of historians of Europe. The problem is, we don't hear each other's protests. *BC Studies*, a distinctly interdisciplinary journal, is an all-too-rare venue for academic border crossing.

The infrequency of such cross-border enterprise is highlighted in the new anthology *Terra Pacifica: People and Place in the Northwest States and Western Canada*. The book is the fourth in a sequence drawn from the Pettyjohn Lecture Series at Washington State University. Editor Paul Hirt points out in his introduction that the volume "offers a uniquely expansive view of the Northwest" (ix): it includes Canada. Three of the ten essays are either comparative in nature or look at Canada-US relations; two of the three are by Canadians. This is progress, but it's depressing that this is so. One of the comparative essays, Donald

Worster's study of "the development myth" in Canada and the US, provides an indication of how American scholars might come to better understand the "shared signs and memories," along with the "interesting differences" (71), between Canadian and American wests. Worster, a renowned American environmental historian, reads Canadian scholarship. His critical analysis of the progressivist and exclusionary assumptions behind mainstream notions of "development" in both Canada and the US is grounded in a careful reading of Canadian scholarship on the frontier and metropolitan theses. Capital may be a homogenizing force, Worster argues, but its effects are not monolithic. Other factors mediate – among them, in the North American West, distinct cultural legacies and distinct physical environments. There are grand similarities in the patterns of settlement and "development" on either side of the border, then, but there are differences that demand attention. Canadian historian Gerald Friesen puts it well in his contribution to the volume. Just as Canadians, in this era of NAFTA and growing American cultural dominance, need to understand the powerful neighbour to the south, so Americans "are called upon to contend with, to study, and to assimilate" (107) an improved understanding of their Canadian counterparts. The books reviewed here point to the critical need for more cross-border study and for closer examination of the border itself.

*Aboriginal Slavery on the  
Northwest Coast of North America*

Leland Donald

Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.  
379 pp. Illus., maps. us\$40 cloth.

BY CHRISTON I. ARCHER  
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The early history of the Northwest Coast often presents historians and anthropologists with complex enigmas that make conclusions tenuous at best. One of the last remaining major ocean frontiers of European exploration, the Northwest Coast was a place where late eighteenth-century Russian, Spanish, British, American, and French voyagers and maritime fur traders encountered culturally advanced Indigenous coastal peoples who, in many respects, baffled and intrigued them. Anxious to open commerce, to gain access to iron and copper, firearms, textiles, and other trade goods, the Natives shared with Europeans a highly developed concept of private ownership. This extended from possession of real estate to access to fisheries, beaches, foreshore food resources, fresh water, grass, lumber, firewood, and even to intangible property such as songs and symbols. While Britain, Spain, and Russia competed for sovereignty, searched for a navigable Northwest Passage, and engaged in the trans-Pacific fur trade in sea otter pelts, the explorers and fur traders gathered data and artefacts, and sometimes kept detailed journals. Without much success, the visitors attempted to penetrate the mysteries of Northwest Coast societies; these societies presented one face to strangers and scrupulously withheld many

secrets about their culture and rituals. Despite the best work of Enlightenment scientists who accompanied Captain James Cook, the Comte de la Pérouse, Alejandro Malaspina, George Vancouver, and many others, even the most careful observers failed to answer perplexing questions. Part of the problem was that many observations occurred in the summer months, away from the winter village sites where annual ceremonial and ritual activities took place.

Following the maritime fur traders, Hudson's Bay Company men, missionaries, and, beginning in the 1880s, professional ethnographers and anthropologists such as Franz Boas arrived to undertake the difficult tasks of penetrating Native societies, learning languages, and posing answers to questions of critical importance concerning religion, social organization, ceremonial life, and ritual activities. As Leland Donald notes, however, the period between the end of the maritime fur trade and the arrival of the first anthropologists was an epoch of terrible demographic disasters and dislocations induced by disease epidemics that altered traditional Native cultures. Even with interviews of the oldest informants, there were gaps that living memory could not fill.

It is important to know that Donald came to his study of Northwest Coast



slavery from earlier research on slavery in Africa. While previous historians and anthropologists acknowledged the existence of slavery in Northwest Coast societies (and there is another recent study on the subject by Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown), no previous scholar has made Donald's claims about the critical importance of slavery as a central feature in Indigenous coastal cultures from Prince William Sound, Alaska, to the Columbia River in Oregon. Indeed, Donald anticipated that his conclusions would spark controversy and that some specialists might continue to downplay the importance of Aboriginal slavery. He argues that many ethnographers, from Franz Boas to Helen Codere and Philip Drucker, produced what became the orthodox view that slavery was relatively unimportant. Although a few scholars, such as Viola Garfield, dissented, the Native titleholders (chiefs) from the late nineteenth-century forward downplayed the significance of an institution that they recognized had become thoroughly unacceptable. Working with an enormous body of existing ethnographic, historical, and archaeological sources, Donald divides his book into four broad sections: an overview of Northwest Coast culture, a description of slavery during the first one-third of the nineteenth century, a study of the historical context of Northwest Coast slavery, and an examination of Northwest Coast slavery in perspective. While this approach tends to be repetitive, Donald illustrates his arguments from different points of view in order to build themes and conclusions concerning the ubiquity and central impact of slavery.

All observers of Northwest Coast history agreed that the Native peoples

were aggressive in defence of their territories and often extremely warlike in their relations with their neighbours. Most slaves – men, women, and children – were captured in wars and raids against neighbouring villages, and the aggressors made every effort to utilize surprise and stealth. Slaves might also be obtained through trade networks, as gifts from one owner to another, through common people enslaving themselves due to poverty or debt, and through chiefs enslaving orphans and other members of their own bands. Donald argues that the possession of slaves relieved chiefs from the drudgery of common labour and contributed to their wealth and prestige. Slaves could be killed by their owners for any reason, including ritual celebrations connected with funerals, whale hunts, new houses, and other sacrifices. In addition, Donald states that slaves were probably the source of human flesh consumed in cannibal performances. He establishes the existence of a well developed "aboriginal slave trade network" (139) and provides readers with tables and arrows to point out the directions of the trade. These tables are somewhat reminiscent of similar charts that describe African slave-trading patterns. One table illustrates the traffic in slaves for a southern region that Donald calls the Columbia River Slave Trade Network; it encompasses the coastal littoral from the Nuuchahnulth of Nootka Sound to the Shasta and Klamath of Oregon. The Northern Slave Trade Network extended from the Chugach of Prince William Sound southward to include the Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, Bella Bella, Nawitti, and other tribes, extending to Vancouver Island and even inland to Athapaskan groups.

What can one make of all these claims? What new evidence has Donald

produced through his research to back his views? While some of the author's conclusions are convincing, too much of this study is based upon supposition, sincere hopes, and repetitive narrative. In many sections Donald rakes over the same sources as have previous researchers and crunches figures that he admits are of "low confidence" (186) and that cannot be taken as conclusive. Readers will wonder if the results of this quantitative effort merit serious consideration or if the findings are more a case of "garbage in/garbage out." This point is crucial, since Donald uses this evidence to "suggest" that many Northwest Coast communities in the nineteenth century possessed enough slaves "to merit consideration as large-scale slave systems" (194). Even by combining detailed quantitative work, linguistic and archaeological evidence, and historical data, some aspects of Donald's analysis and conclusions do not bear careful scrutiny. For example, this reviewer wonders how so many slaves could have been controlled during the annual migration round of small bands from one seasonal village site to another.

In the historical record that commenced in 1774 with the Spanish voyage of Juan Pérez to the Queen Charlotte Islands and Nootka Sound and carried on through the period of Spanish activity and the maritime fur traders into the nineteenth century, researchers have a significant body of observer evidence upon which to establish the nature and prevalence of slavery. It should be noted that modern historians are careful to weigh European evidence and to acknowledge the chronic frustrations and difficulties of evaluating documentation concerning the Native peoples under observation. Misperceptions and contemporary

biases crowd the records of European visitors and have fostered numerous errors and popular legends. Enlightenment biases, misunderstandings caused by poor or non-existent language comprehension on both sides, and the negative propaganda of competing sea otter fur traders combined to spread rumours and to entrench premeditated lies. However, for all of their faults the historical sources are more comprehensive than is the linguistic and archaeological evidence about slave trading. Over the past few decades, British, Spanish, and American archives have been scoured by researchers looking for new documents, and it seems unlikely that there will be many major new discoveries.

Given the wealth of published sources available today, Donald's historical research is sometimes cursory and uncritical. Without actually working through the available primary sources, the author adopts a conclusion advocated by some eighteenth-century writers; that is, that the Natives practised not only ritual cannibalism, but also, quite possibly, gustatory, gastronomic, or epicurean anthropophagy. Such a view underscores the argument that some band chiefs traded for or engaged in war and raids to capture victims for cannibal feasts or ritual functions involving the consumption of human flesh. Donald accepts a story, discredited by most historians today, that vilified the Nootka Sound Mowachaht chief Maquinna, who was said to have fattened eleven children and then brutally killed and eaten them. This report originated with English fur traders such as John Meares – known to some contemporaries as "Liar Meares" – who published unsubstantiated tales that each moon Maquinna barbarously murdered and devoured a child slave raw, sharing the

reeking flesh with selected guests. Although other contemporary Native and European observers debunked these tales as outright lies, in some respects this general storyline appeared to predate later cannibal performances of the Kwakwaka'wakw *hamatsa*, as recorded by Boas and others. Donald also makes much of the dried trophy severed hands and skulls that were sometimes offered by the Natives as items of trade. While most historians and anthropologists today readily accept at least the possibility of ritual cannibalism, such as the tasting of blood or flesh of a fallen enemy or an executed captive, the more outrageous stories circulated among the competing fur traders and also recorded by some rather gullible Spanish observers who interviewed Europeans without actually visiting the Natives do not merit much attention. Indeed, more thoughtful English, Spanish, and other commentators who actually studied the question of indigenous anthropophagy dismissed the idea of gustatory cannibalism.

That Donald has resurrected old stories circulated by the fur traders to advance his theories about slavery, without having added any new evidence, does nothing whatsoever to advance either historical or anthropological knowledge. Moreover, the impact is extremely negative for Northwest Coast Indigenous peoples today, whose memory record does not extend back to the eighteenth century. Donald states: "The eighteenth-century Mowachaht material is important because it suggests that cannibalism was a fully developed cultural practice at the time of the first European contact" (177). In fact, the evidence referred to was most certainly not Mowachaht but European, and the use of qualified suggestion does

little to modify the stigma of these stories or to place them in a proper perspective. As a result, readers of the present study who lack much background in Northwest Coast history may well adopt a calumny advanced by late eighteenth-century writers and dismissed by most modern historians.

There are other worrisome aspects of Donald's large-scale slave systems that require further examination. First, there were few eighteenth-century eyewitness reports of Natives engaged in activity that could be described as a major slave trade. During the 1780s and 1790s, fur traders and explorers in coastal waters were ubiquitous from Alaska to California. Although the traffic in human beings may well have increased dramatically in the first half of the nineteenth century, this took place at a time when the Indigenous cultures had begun to suffer major dislocations caused by epidemic diseases such as smallpox. Incidentally, despite the claims of some historians there is no evidence (as Donald argues) of the Spaniards introducing smallpox in 1775 at Bucareli Sound, Prince of Wales Island. Second, while the Spaniards did purchase Native women and children with the intention of using them later as translators and to save them from imagined cannibal banquets, there were few healthy Native men on offer. Frequently, the Spaniards stated that the Native children and women they purchased were captives taken in wars rather than slaves. The Spaniards wrote quite a bit on this topic because there were some concerns among senior Spanish officials in New Spain that marine officers, soldiers, and seamen might have purchased Indigenous women and children with the intention of reducing them to peonage or even slavery. Investigations satisfied officials that this