

one, tempered by availability" (7). The end result is a varied and informative array of illustrations from well over 300 historical maps (180 in colour) plus an assortment of additional photographs and engravings.

This affordable book introduces us to scores of maps – large and small, famous and obscure – and puts them into fascinating context. We learn which Russian charts Cook carried with him and why David Thompson's maps were so accurate. We see several of the rare maps laid out by First Peoples, such as the schematic outline of the Continental Divide, provided by the Blackfoot chief, Ackomokki, to a Hudson's Bay Company surveyor in 1801. We also see the fantastical side that is an integral part of exploration: early editions of *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) by Jonathan Swift included a careful map that located his land of Brobdingnag off the Northwest Coast, just beyond the equally mythical

Straits of Anian.

On the one hand, this is not the kind of cartographic survey, complete with detailed references for each map, that appears in classic studies of other regions, such as the recently revised third edition of William P. Cumming's *The Southeast in Early Maps* (1998). Nor, on the other hand, does this book offer the demanding, expensive, and tremendously useful maps that modern cartographers create to shed fresh light on historical issues and developments. For that one must turn to works such as the impressive *Historical Atlas of Canada* (which, strangely, Hayes does not cite). But volumes like this one help provide the groundwork for more specialized studies. Helen Hornbeck Tanner edited her intriguing international *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History* in 1987. Perhaps someone is now at work on a similar border-spanning volume for the First Nations of the Northwest Coast.

*Islands of Truth:
The Imperial Fashioning of Vancouver Island*

Daniel W. Clayton

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000. 330 pp. Illus., maps. \$85 cloth, \$29.95 paper.

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ISLANDS OF TRUTH is an important, imaginative, and provocative book that sails in the long wake of Michel Foucault and Edward Said. Daniel Clayton is less interested in what really happened in the imperial encounter between the British and the Nuu-cha-nulth peoples of Vancouver Island than in the variety of truths

about the encounter constructed from experience and ideology. The power to narrate – “to sustain some truths about land and people and to denigrate and marginalize others – is a constitutive feature of Western dominance.”

Clayton takes these normal post-colonial concerns and adds a sensitivity

to space and scale that is not at all typical of postcolonial studies. Clayton's claim is that Vancouver Island and places like it "are both products of the West and places with specific and irreducible identities" (xii). These irreducible identities are local and have been hatched "at the intersection of European and Native perceptions of the other" (63). Vancouver Island is thus both an example of a "globalization of Western interest" and "the geographically and historically diverse emergence of colonial relations and performance of colonial practice" (240). In making his case Clayton marries empirical research and methodological reflexivity. It is sometimes rather too harmonious a marriage because Clayton's empirical research more often than not confirms rather than disrupts his theoretical assumptions. He makes passing reference to the tendency to get "too much theoretical mileage out of colonial complexes," but he doesn't often attempt to roll back that theoretical odometer.

Clayton organizes his narrative around three constitutive events: Cook's arrival at Nootka Sound; commercial interchanges between Native peoples and Western traders, and, finally, the imperial apportioning of territory that leads to the creation of actual colonies on the Northwest Coast. In each case an imperial structure and disciplinary practices limit and contain the range of permissible meanings involved in complicated processes of contact.

In a revealing, if not wholly original exercise, Clayton pursues "methodically reflexive" readings of Cook's journals to understand the derivation of historical facts and the construction of historical truths. He compares the various journals of the expedition, the

official published account of Cook's journey, and various oral accounts of Native peoples. The result is not just a predictable rejection of the official journal's projection of Cook's scientific humanitarianism: bringing friendship and trade to peoples in distant corners of the world and returning with an objective account of distant lands and peoples because Clayton also takes on Mary Louise Pratt's account of travel narratives in *Imperial Eyes* (1992). Cook's crew was too diverse ("aristocratic, bourgeois, and clerical"), their world of a British ship too particular and strange, and the peoples they encountered too immediate and particular to allow an easy reduction of their goals to the propagation of an imperial view of the world. They were, Clayton contends, eager enough to bring Native peoples within an aesthetic and taxonomic field of vision, but the Northwest Coast was less orderable and "more aesthetically excessive than critics such as Pratt suggest" (38).

Unlike Cook, traders were not Enlightenment figures suitable for reflexive readings; they yield "itinerate geographies." Traders were in competition with each other and the information they produced as designed to deceive as well as reveal. They created "an imaginative space stocked with commercial desire and cultural derision" (77). What made this trade imperial was that traders explicitly conceptualized their local exchanges on the Northwest Coast as part of a global set of transactions, and thought that their knowledge of the scale of their enterprise gave them advantages that made them superior to Native peoples.

Still, this is a world where Native peoples mattered very much and Clayton analyzes Native rivalries, violence, and ambitions in some detail.

The result is somewhat discordant. Clayton's discussion begins with the kind of flat, ethnographic statements that he objects to in his discussion Cook. Everybody, even postcolonialists, has to place authority somewhere, and ethnography provides Clayton with his base. He is not uncritical of ethnographic conclusions, but the basis for his interrogation of white historical sources is the ethnographic construct of "chiefly relations of power" (112). The end result of this is a credible and interesting history of how "the contact process was influenced by chiefly relations of power and prestige, competition and collaboration" (129), but it is a qualitatively different kind of analysis than that which precedes or follows it. Clayton visibly struggles in the text to retain a critical agency for Native peoples while giving a dominant role to the "logic of capital." The discussion is probably the least satisfactory in the book – sometimes abstract, sometimes reified, sometimes vague and confusing (153-154). In it Clayton echoes Robin Fisher (*Contact and Conflict* [1977, 1992] more than he lets on and masks their overlap by attacking him a little too vociferously.

In his final section, Clayton draws back from the messiness of the negotiations and violence of actual trade and contact to "an imperial geography that deflated the materiality and physicality of the contact process" (161). This was largely the work of abstraction, and abbreviation as the more complicated, intimate, and negotiated knowledge of explorers and traders yielded to imperial equations. The ledger and the map became tools of power. It is one of Clayton's major points that "distance is both an enabling and a constraining variable in power/knowledge relationships at

both an imaginative and imperial level" (240).

First Spain and Great Britain, and then the United States and Great Britain, abstracted out sometimes odd, but under the rules pertinent, facts to buttress claims to territories. Each power appealed to aspects of the Law of Nations most favorable to themselves, but the categories of "private trade and national honour, profit and imperial right, monopoly and sovereignty" that organized the patterns of debate were mutually intelligible (189). As the scale and level of abstraction increased, the presence of Native peoples, so critical to the earlier discourses of discovery and commerce, became more and more attenuated. The "embodied world of apprehension, fear, and mistakes" survived only as European ideas of "civilization, sovereignty, and empire."

Britain's triumph in the confrontation of Nootka in Clayton's analysis laid the groundwork for formal colonialism, but it was not the thing itself. That would come with the Oregon Treaty and the settlement of the region by American and British immigrants, and for this George Vancouver was critical. Vancouver, from whom the island would take its name, created the geography of the island as an abstraction apart from trading sites, points of contact, Native habitations, and territories. Clayton, engaged in a second debate with Robin Fisher, is intent on making Vancouver complicit in colonialism, but debating Vancouver's complicity masks a more fundamental disagreement between Clayton and Fisher. Fisher is less interested in denying colonialism than in complicating it. He locates its origins as much in cooperation between imperialists and Native peoples as in conflict. Clayton wants to distance

imperialism, to make it the “insidious” (195) work of abstraction and power operating at a distance. Vancouver’s survey was part of a claim to “know the world as geometric totality and represent it accurately.” It allowed the “accumulation of both power and knowledge” at a central place (203). Clayton rightly notes that Vancouver’s survey was as much about renaming and the search for “*safe* anchorages, *deep* harbours and *fertile* tracts of land” as it was about angles, depths, and distance.

Clayton’s argument, however, doesn’t go to the heart of Fisher’s position, nor does it necessarily establish the connection between geography and empire. Vancouver’s survey was not sufficient for empire, and it may not even have been necessary. Vancouver, of course, surveyed and named other places such as Puget Sound that did not become part of the British Empire. In dealing with the imperial dispute between the United States and Great Britain over Oregon, Clayton more tentatively asserts that modern nation state “needed to be given its own distinctive state – it needed to be mapped.” Mapping, in the case of the United States, however, tended to come after not before the annexation of territory (210).

With the Oregon Treaty, Vancouver Island moved relatively quickly into the colonial realm, the object of settler fantasies of wealth waiting in the wilderness and dismissal of the rights and permanent presence of Native peoples as holders of the land. When in the 1860s Native people were relegated to small reserves, they were not, Clayton makes clear, “dispos- sessed by international treaties or maps” but instead by “a colonial apparatus of power.” The book ends with an assertion that this colonial project interlocked with the imperial fashioning that Clayton has described.

Clayton sees the history of Vancouver Island as very much part of Edward Said’s loss of locality to the outsider, and casts current struggles of Native peoples within an attempt to restore land and locality. In making this local story a particular variation within this “intrinsic feature of Western imperialism,” he depends very much on Native peoples. But Clayton’s very postcolonial unwillingness to engage them on the same grounds as he does imperialists can make the particularity seem vague and inchoate compared to a fuller, embodied, and more powerful imperialism.