

## BOOK REVIEW FORUM

*Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family  
and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World*

Adele Perry

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DANIEL CLAYTON

The web of our life is of a mingled yarn.

– William Shakespeare, *All's Well That Ends Well*

**A**DELE PERRY CHARACTERIZES her terrific book as a “lived history of empire” that critically engages how “the colonial archives imagine men in specific ways and figure women at best infrequently and in ways that obscure their histories” (3-7). She explores questions of colonial intimacy, chiefly in nineteenth-century British Columbia and as they might be seen through the fragmented family archive of the prominent Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) fur trader and colonial governor James Douglas, his wife Amelia Connolly, and their kin in North America, the West Indies, and the United Kingdom. The history of this scattered family and remarkable marriage of almost fifty years – its background in the slave trade and continental fur trade, and in changing fortunes as White settlers, missionaries, systems of colonial governance, and racialized ideas of imperial identity and authority reached British Columbia – forms the cornerstone of the narrative. Perry keeps a lot of balls in the air at the same time, and she does so by utilizing a sophisticated theoretical framework and extensive archival research that opens up the varied and shifting histories and geographies of intimacy, empire, and the colonial archive that course through the Douglas-Connolly story.

Born in Guyana in 1803, Douglas was the son (and one of three children) of an itinerant Scottish merchant and (in all likelihood) Martha Ann Telfer, a free woman of colour who owned some slaves and property in this plantation colony. But Douglas’s father went on to

marry a Scottish woman and moved back to his native Glasgow, there to slip into a different (and from a metropolitan vantage point respectable) model of family life. Born at Fort Churchill on Hudson Bay in 1812, Amelia Connolly was the daughter (and one of nine children) of a high-ranking Irish-Canadian fur trader and of Miyo Nipay, who came from a prominent Cree family. Amelia's father, like James's, also had a second family, marrying his cousin in 1836 and moving to Montreal after twenty-eight years in "the Indian Country" (82). In 1828, James Douglas married Amelia Connolly at Fort St. James, where he was clerk and William Connolly was his boss. But their marriage *à la façon du pays* (a common-law union between a white trader and Aboriginal or Métis woman customary during the fur trade), which was further complicated by Douglas's family history, was not recorded, and to an outside British world increasingly hung up on issues of propriety in public and private life, the Douglas-Connolly family, and the empire of "unequal families and serial partnerships" it exemplified, would forever have a questionable connection to Britishness (84, 231).

The book's seven substantive chapters trace this family's history in chronological terms and in relation to a wider colonial history of heterosexual coupling. But Perry also interprets particular moments and locations in the family's history in relation to other times and places. Different chapters juxtapose and traffic between plantation and settler colonialisms, economic and social motives for and calibrations of family life and sexual liaison, quotidian and intergenerational facets of colonial intimacy and domestic life, and how all of this was bound up with changing and competing conceptions of empire and practices of colonial governance, and performed, in the case of the Douglas-Connolly family, in locations as far apart as Demerara, Hudson Bay, Scotland, and Victoria.

Along the way the book ponders the difficulties of writing about the affective life of empire (in all of the meanings of that complex term "affect"): of recovering and heeding voices (in this instance of women, wives, daughters, and Indigenous/black and creole/Métis people) situated at the edges of, and muted within, the colonial archive. Because of the exclusions and obfuscations of this archive, the writing of James Douglas necessarily takes centre stage in Perry's ruminations, and one of the most intriguing facets of the book is its configuration of Douglas as a mixed and split colonial subject. On the one hand, Perry sees Douglas almost as a subaltern, operating outside and alongside (and at any rate never fully within) the ruses and rules of empire. But on the other hand, she does not disavow the imperial privilege, authority, and sense of

opportunity he wielded. Postcolonial and subaltern thinkers have long made a theoretical meal out of the liminal negotiation of identity and difference across the metropolitan-colonial spectrum of empire, partly as a means of evaluating and questioning what is caught within, and what escapes, evades, or undermines, the strongholds of imperial command and colonial governance. I can think of no better figure with whom to think through these questions than Douglas, a towering, resourceful, and at times ruthless man who yearned for recognition and respectability, who had an idealized image of imperial Britain in his head, and yet who clung tenaciously to his own local ways of living and governing, and of dealing with Native people, which often departed from British norms and Colonial Office expectations. Perry has done this postcolonial-subaltern trope of liminality full justice here by showing, as no historian of British Columbia quite has before, how the public world of power and the private world of family were entangled in much of Douglas's writing (his fur trade and colonial correspondence, and his private journals and letters to family, friends, and associates), and how these worlds bled and cosied into one another.

Perry might have characterized how she uses the notion of "intimacy" more sharply at the outset. On my reading, it is invoked as three sets of relations that are interconnected and inherently spatial: (1) as a set of discourses and practices of connection that take particular interpersonal and institutional forms; (2) as a mode of interaction and identification that can stretch from the local/personal to the distant/global; and (3) as a scale of analysis that is focused principally upon the body, the family, and the household. Furthermore, homosexual coupling and desire, and the imperial anxieties surrounding them, lay beyond the purview of this book; and Perry might have done more with the photographs (especially the family portraits) that illustrate the text (there is scant reference to a vibrant critical literature on the visual culture of empire). However, what is marshalled mightily in this book (albeit chiefly in textual terms) is an understanding of the fraught power of distinction in the making and meaning of empire. Perry makes a convincing case that colonial intimacy has to be regarded as a live rather than as a settled matter and, thus, as part of a lived and malleable rather than of a neatly centred or focused history and geography. She is concerned with the incessant "making and remaking" of colonial intimacies (this expression abounds in the book) and how this process involves domination and resistance, adaptation and resilience, and both global projections and local accommodations of power.

Accordingly, the book's title has a dual meaning. Most immediately, it captures what is an assiduously researched and perceptively told story about the Douglas–Connolly household that took the author to twelve archives. Douglas and Connolly forged a seemingly tender marriage that was a product of the customs and expediencies of the fur trade. The book documents how this family prospered and adapted as the fur trade gave way to a white colonial society and did so not least due to Douglas's personal sense of spousal duty and family honour. Historians of nineteenth-century British Columbia and of the gendered dimensions of the Canadian fur trade have talked about the significance of the “family-company-compact”: how a fur trade elite anchored in unions like that of Douglas and Connolly transformed itself into a colonial elite, first on Vancouver Island. *Colonial Relations* deepens our understanding of how this distinctive colonial phenomenon worked as an affective state that hinged on family loyalties and kin networks, and as a state that endured in sublimated forms for decades after the fur trade had vanished. “Local histories and geographies of empire both produced these families and framed how they were understood long after models of governance and economic practices ceased to define the territories they operated in” (155–56). But the title also points to a feminist-postcolonial framework that is attentive to the relational qualities of empire, and particularly to how relations of class, race, gender, religion, and education were caught up in the making and representation of colonial identities and expedited through tropes of autonomy, deference, domesticity, manliness, marriage, property, race, respectability, and servitude.

On both counts, Perry goes in search of a “polyvocal set of archives” and, in Douglas and his family history, finds a party piece for thinking and writing about the affective (emotional and embodied) history of empire, and the motile, hybrid, and interstitial quality of imperial and colonial categories (7, 257). Drawing on a recent and eclectic critical literature on “how amenable discourses of Britishness were to highly localized and colloquial performances,” she shows how the Douglas–Connolly family “both exemplified this and demonstrated some of the limits to these vernacular and hybrid sorts of Britishness” (205).

While Perry does not want to downplay the violence of colonization (in any of its forms), an important rhetorical effect of her pursuit of the hybrid and vernacular is that it turns the political into the personal, for both good and ill. I found myself rooting for Douglas and his wife as they wrestled with alien categories of race and respectability, and pushing local colonial violence (especially towards Native people) to the corner

of my mind's eye. And yet it seems to me that the political purpose and importance of a book like this is that it reminds us not only that ties to place in former settler colonial societies like British Columbia involve family connections that are rooted in the past, and often ardently so, but also that colonial lives are itinerant, that family roots are relatively short-lived and vulnerable, and that the latter-day embrace of such roots is unsustainable without compassion for the history and presence of others with competing attachments to the same place. Douglas harboured his wife and family from prying imperial eyes, but he also knew how his career had placed them in the imperial spotlight and exposed them to energies and changes beyond his control.

Two final points, and these are about the spatial and postcolonial tenor of the book. First, Perry underscores her interest in the "translocal" qualities of empire (15). Empire is still seen as an indubitably metropolitan and divisive project at the behest of a Eurocentric-white-male world view with its own privileged and distorting archive. And it is still deemed to be structured around binaries and hierarchies of centre and margin, colonizer and colonized, and with class, race, and gender as core vectors of distinction. However, Perry also treats empire as historically and geographically variegated, as localized and contextualized in different ways in different times and spaces, and she is concerned with how colonial lives and families are forged across empire as well as at specific (and often isolated and alienating) locations within it. Colonial locations and particulars matter, and they are never made or dominated by metropolitan agendas in a simple or complete way. Perry's writing suggests that, in order to grasp how and why empire was – and will always be – relational, we need to engage with its relational geographies. Her spatial mantras are that empire was never lived in exactly the same way in any one place or time and was always lived in uneven and unequal ways. While geographical terms themselves do not appear in the index to the book, *Colonial Relations* is mediated by a thought-provoking language of place and location, space and scale, land and territory, local and global, context and variation, movement and connection, distance and proximity, and territory and dispossession (e.g., 15-18, 26-29, 34, 41, 59-63, 77, 93, 108, 138, 143, 155, 166, 199, 225, 236). This language does great analytical work at crucial points in the narrative, and there are fine discussions of the domestic spaces of the fur trade; of how they jarred with missionary and racial ideas of family, home, and property; and of the impressive house and garden (in many ways a sanctuary) that Douglas and Connolly set up in the middle of Victoria.

Second, this spatial language – which is both material and metaphorical – is geared to the key postcolonial problematic of distinction (both difference and decoration) running through the book: namely, of trying to figure out which ideas, practices, experiences, and relations of power come from where, and how they took root or were resisted or tolerated; and of ascertaining how much agency colonial margins and actors had in bending and accommodating central directives and imperial outlooks to their own aspirations and arrangements. All colonial locations and identities are unique, complex, and contingent reflections of the imperial connections that foster them, Perry insists, and their meaning does not simply hark back to the imperial centre. At the same time, she continues, the histories and geographies of colonial lives and locations are not self-contained. Edward Said famously argues that we need to grasp how we live in a world of interconnected and interdependent, rather than divided and mutually exclusive, histories, geographies, and traditions. Perry argues something similar. The Douglas-Connolly family, she surmises, was “forged and lived within empire and reflected both the power and the limits of some of its most cherished ideals and enduring practices,” and the wider histories of colonial intimacy they feed into were “thick” and “layered” (other terms that abound in the book) (174).

While holding hard and fast to the feminist-postcolonial metaphor of crossing – of questioning hierarchical and Eurocentric presumptions about gender, sexuality, race, and nation by tracing colonial lives and intimacies across imperial terrain and, thus, of thinking about empire in global terms – critical histories like Perry’s necessarily create and come from one vantage point rather than another and do their critical work in the flight they take towards that place. Obversely, the problem with much theory and scholarship undertaken in this spirit of crossing – work that claims to decentre empire and restore its colonial margins and unsung actors to the imperial fray – is that it seeks ultimately to address and critique the West and turns colonial locations into case studies of some larger problem or generalization concerning the West and its globalization through empire. The colonial margins make a name for themselves by trying to become part of a conversation about what “the West” has subjugated and expunged in the name of civilization, progress, reason, morality, and so on. Not so in Perry’s case. Her heart is in British Columbia and is at the receiving end of the imperial conceit that the world is unimaginable as a better place without the West. And the family stories – archive stories – she tells point, she says in the conclusion, to “the power of studying empire from its ragged margins” (255). As Perry

tells this story, much of this power resides in the capacity of the untidy margins to complicate and confound the West's attempt to grant to itself the unbridled right to say what counts as right, normal, and true and what does not (in the present case with respect to family, marriage, respectability, and intimacy). Adaptation and resilience are the watchwords of how she sees the Douglas-Connolly family's engagement with the nineteenth-century imperial world, and to reverse the well-known boxing metaphor (coined by Howard Sackler), it is British Columbia and its best known (if until this point little understood) family that turns out to be the "great white hope" (promise of a less stolid and divisive future).

However, as enthralling and instructive as the "writing back" to empire in this important book undoubtedly is, it nonetheless exposes an issue shadowing other work that is cut from a similar feminist-postcolonial-subaltern cloth: that in seeking to uncover and challenge metropolitan-bourgeois hegemony as the *bête noire* of colonial intimacy and colonial lives that are deemed to be recalibrated versions of what goes in the imperial centre, that hegemony can be assumed, overplayed, and potentially stereotyped, and may not be subjected to the same exacting standards of contextual and comparative analysis that are bestowed on the colonial margins. How powerful or stable were the categories and norms of domesticity, respectability, and race to and for which the fur trade, colonial British Columbia, and the Douglas-Connolly family furnish a limit? Does the margin need a hegemonic – certain, settled, categorical – centre in order to imagine itself as a limit or site of recalibration? And how resilient is the imperial centre to the critical insertion of the ragged margins into its narratives of dominance and hegemony? *Colonial Relations* raises these sorts of questions but does not push them very far, mainly because its primary (and laudable) commitment is to enriching an understanding of British Columbia. Postcolonial thinkers such as Stuart Hall argue that it is not simply the case that metropole and colony need to be brought into a unitary analytical frame. Scholarship and criticism also needs to entertain both the dissemination/displacement and condensation/over-determination of imperial binaries and colonial categories, and track how these relations shuttle within as well as between metropolises and colonies. Perry hints at elements of this in her discussion of Herbert Beaver, the Oxford-educated chaplain who was posted to Fort Vancouver in 1836 and came into conflict with HBC officials over what he viewed as the "unlawful connections" that were the bastion of domestic life there but, to him, were a sign of a society "without any distinction" (91). He was beaten in public view by the fort's factor for his disconcerting

intervention, and Perry treats this and similar events as flashpoints in the lopsided and fractious encounter between centre and periphery. But we also learn that Beaver's intervention was opportunistic, an attempt "to garner metropolitan attention" and the upshot of a wandering life preaching in different corners of the British Empire. In this instance the power and location of the imperial centre seems as complex and elusive as the colonial margin upon which it fixates. Fixed and certain reference points in the process of imperial distinction recede from view, and, to invoke Shakespeare (whose own imperial centre was entangled with various ragged margins), metropolitan as well as colonial webs of life seem to be made of a mingled yarn.

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FAE DUSSART

**I**N *Colonial Relations*, Adele Perry uses the life histories of James Douglas and his wife Amelia Connolly Douglas to create a thought-provoking rereading of empire from its "ragged margins" (257). Putting the Douglas family's intimate relations at the heart of her analysis, Perry unravels the complicated discursive and material connections between some of the disparate places that made the nineteenth-century British Empire. These places were constituted by people who, through intimate interactions with each other, worked and reworked them into distinctive societies that were in constant negotiation with their variegated, variable histories. Wider and contested notions of what empire was, what it should be, and how those it ruled should be positioned within it were also an important part of this ongoing, often violent conversation.

The book is structured thematically and chronologically, with each chapter using a different aspect of James Douglas and his family's life to tell a bigger story about the relational character of colonial places and their entanglement within the plural histories that made them. We follow Douglas from his birth to a Scotsman and a free woman of colour in Demerara, to his education in Scotland, to his beginnings as an unfree labourer in the fur trade in northern North America, to his ascendancy through the ranks of the Hudson's Bay Company, and on to his eventual role as governor of the Crown colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia. We meet his wife Amelia Connolly Douglas. The

daughter of an Irish-Canadian fur trader and an Indigenous woman, Miyo Nipay, Connolly Douglas's elite Métis identity was testament both to (1) the hybrid cultural space produced by the dependence of fur traders on Indigenous cooperation and consent to their presence and (2) to the power of the human mobilities and intimacies that underpinned empire to rework the character of places and the hierarchies they contained.

The tension between the local and the imperial is key for Perry, and it is a theme that she explores adeptly. She centres her analysis on the realm of the intimate, demonstrating the political character of personal relations and the way in which local structures of intimacy intersected with, and contested, imperial structures as homogenizing ideas about morality and hierarchy circulated within imperial space from the 1830s onward. Putting the marriage between Douglas and Connolly Douglas at the heart of the book allows Perry to produce a tender analysis of the way in which intimate marital and filial relations, friendships, and enmity were enmeshed with the practice of colonialism. Customary marriage, legal marriage, and the power to marry-off were all entangled with the political and economic alliances that sustained colonial and imperial trade, and with the gendered, classed, and raced hierarchies that evolved in concert with colonial expansion and the dispossession that it entailed. Perry shows how the crafting of intimacies and the historical specificity of the local intersected with bigger movements of people, objects, and ideas across imperial space. She is attentive to hybridity and ambivalence – to the uncertain positioning of contested identities in a recalibrating world – and listens for agencies often elided in existing histories of empire.

The book is packed with gems of analysis: a brief mention of a fur trade official hitting an HBC chaplain with the chaplain's own cane is later expanded into a thought-provoking meditation on the figuring of violence within an imperial discursive context – on how its legitimacy was framed by its gendered contextualization so that, while interpersonal violence might have raised few eyebrows in the local colonial environment of the fur trade, when situated within the broader and evolving moral framework of empire, its meanings shifted. The pressure of the imagining of the imperial world, and the desire for ownership of their own iteration of it, ensured that, even while the empire of “knowledge” grew tighter round Douglas and Connolly Douglas and their friends and family, the threads of other, pre-existing histories still endured. Perry describes Connolly Douglas, lovingly remembered for the archive by her children and grandchildren, telling them stories of her Cree folklore, of their own Cree histories, even though they didn't explicitly name it as such.

The desire to reconcile that identity with other kinds of identity was problematic and messy for her aspirational husband. In Perry's account of Douglas we see a pragmatic, diplomatic man, ambitious but also consciously responsible, a father figure, albeit a violent one, a man with one eye on the fort and the other on the world.

In many ways the overarching theme of the book is an exploration of the multiple negotiations through which the identities of individuals, communities, nations, and empires were refined and constantly reconfigured. Perry highlights the way in which ephemeral things – feelings like fear, hunger, desire, loneliness, affection, and ambition – shaped the material conditions of people's lives in ways specific to the places in which they were felt. But she also recognizes that these places and the people whose relations constituted them were multi-dimensional – assemblages of layered meaning connected to other places, other ideas about ways of being. It is striking that, throughout the book, Perry uses the language of materiality: she speaks of the thickness, layering, and the density of histories sedimented in people and communities. She also speaks of the body: in her analysis empire has sinews, tissues, and limbs that hold people in place and along which they travel. These metaphors work to describe the living character of the relationships Perry is unpicking and the hierarchies, places, and communities that were constituted with and through them. They convey a strong sense of the complexity, solidity, and mutability of the identities at the heart of Perry's work and also of their temporal specificities. Lands settle and are settled, bodies change and die: the sense here is that, through the Douglas family's life histories, we are also considering the messy living history of empire itself.

*Colonial Relations* is a scholarly tour de force. More than this, it is also a gripping read. The labour and care that has gone into this work is impressive in its scope. Perry has clearly spent many hours immersing herself in multiple archives. Where she has been unable to find her actors directly speaking to those archives, which can often be the case when researching the history of anyone not an elite white man, she has carefully mapped their presence in letters, journals, and drawings produced by other, more visible pens. The danger here, of course, is that relying on such authors' subjectivities can constitute a recolonization of the very people the historian seeks to foreground. However, Perry is acutely conscious, as she reminds us on page 159, that colonial archives are best read "as productive rather than reflective of the worlds they represent." Her determination to read along the archival grain; her sensitivity to the suggestion, rather than declaration, of things; her careful contextual-

ization of her sources within their local and imperial contexts; and the reflection on the problems of archival elision with which she opens the book, and to which she returns throughout, mean that she gives voice to, rather than speaks for, her historical actors.

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HEATHER DEVINE

OVER THE PAST YEAR, A HANDFUL of significant publications related to Indigenous ethnohistory have entered British Columbia's historical canon. Adele Perry's *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World* is a recent Canadian contribution to Cambridge Press's Critical Perspectives on Empire series, a scholarly project that examines the social, economic, and political intersections of "empire" and "colony" from an international and interdisciplinary perspective.

There are many, many good things to say about this book, not least of which concerns the topic that Perry has chosen to study – the family of BC colonial governor James Douglas (1803–77) and his consort Amelia Connelly (1812–90). One might assume that all of the information pertaining to the Caribbean-born, mixed-race Douglas and his family would have been discussed in detail already, given the extensive and persistent scholarly interest in fur trade marriage and family formation since the release of two landmark texts in Canadian social history: Sylvia Van Kirk's *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society* (1980) and Jennifer Brown's *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (1980). Both of these publications devote considerable attention to Amelia Connolly, whose mother, the "country wife" of Hudson's Bay Company chief factor William Connolly, was replaced with a white woman shortly after his retirement to Lower Canada. Although Connolly had made financial provision for his country wife as dictated by fur trade custom, his new wife and children inherited the vast bulk of his estate after his death. A lawsuit, initiated subsequently by Connolly's Métis son to have himself and his siblings recognized by the courts as legitimate heirs to the family fortune, was ultimately successful. The court case also served to educate and titillate the Anglo-Canadian elites concerning marriages *à la façon du pays* (according to the custom of the country), which permitted

temporary and more permanent hinterland unions to take place without the blessing of clergy.

The scope of both Brown's and Van Kirk's studies encapsulates the experiences of several different fur trade families and women, and their analyses are shaped by their particular scholarly interests. In the case of Van Kirk, attention is placed on the plight of First Nations and Métis women after the arrival of white women in fur trade society upset the frontier social order that had existed for several generations. Jennifer Brown's focus, on the other hand, is on comparing the role that the corporate cultures of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company played in the establishment of mixed-race families and how those families functioned within the economic hierarchy of the fur trade.

Both of these volumes provide a detailed understanding of the role of the fur trade in the ethnogenesis of the Métis people of western Canada as well as insight into the essential role that kinship played in maintaining social, commercial, and military relations with Indigenous communities. What these books do *not* explore in any great detail is the international context for evaluating Indigenous-newcomer relations. And it is in this broader, pan-colonial context that Adele Perry demonstrates how race, gender, geography, education, wealth, and social class intersected to shape the trajectories of the Douglas-Connolly family over the course of the nineteenth century.

In our scholarly preoccupations with Canadian regional and Indigenous histories, we sometimes forget that the relationships being forged by fur traders were not the only instances of kinship pursued in order to achieve imperial and commercial goals. Around the world, wherever Europeans encountered Indigenous peoples, various marital and quasi-marital unions were established. The British Empire of the nineteenth century featured a wide array of interracial couples, nominally led by British males married to local women, who, together with their mixed-race children, would serve as agents of British values, attitudes, behaviours, and skills in these far-flung places. Over time, these relationships were codified to ensure a form of socio-economic and political stability. Within this codified framework, influenced not a little by classic Roman approaches to conquest and settlement, opportunities for social and economic mobility were available to ambitious and intelligent individuals courageous enough to seize them.

Perry's extended examination of the Douglas-Connolly family begins with her investigation into the origins of James Douglas, the product of a "customary relationship" between John Douglas (a Scotsman) and

Martha Telfer (a “free woman of colour”) in Demerara, Guyana. These Caribbean beginnings allow Perry to incorporate some new primary source material on James Douglas and the cultural and commercial environment of eighteenth-century Caribbean plantation society, a milieu populated by temporary economic migrants – “sojourners” – resident in the Caribbean for a brief time. The conventions of plantation society permitted and encouraged temporary liaisons with local African and mulatto women – relationships that would last until the sojourners had made their fortunes and returned to Britain to contract “proper” marriages with British women. From here Perry’s narrative shifts to the Canadian Northwest and the social milieu of the fur trade, which James Douglas would eventually join in 1819 as a young clerk in the North West Company. Perry uses this shift in locale to “set the stage” for Douglas’s entry into fur trade society, which, as it turns out, is not substantially different from the plantation world of Guyana. Here Perry introduces a number of men who would become James Douglas’s colleagues, friends, and relations – men like William Connolly, who would eventually become his father-in-law after Douglas’s marriage to Connolly’s part-Cree daughter Amelia.

As Douglas navigated his way upward through the ranks of the Hudson’s Bay Company, eventually attaining the role of colonial governor of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, he paid particular attention to managing his personal and family affairs so that he and his family would avoid or minimize the scrutiny they would inevitably attract as elites of mixed race. By the mid-nineteenth century, the advent of pseudo-scientific studies on race threatened the fortunes of any individual or family having the taint of “inferior” bloodlines. James Douglas was determined that his children – indeed, his descendants – would not be marginalized due to their mixed heritage. His meticulous, even obsessive, attention to raising his children as “British” while hiding his and their mixed ancestry from public scrutiny offers a fascinating glimpse into the predicament shared by many upper- and middle-class families trying to make the transition from frontier to settled society.

James Douglas’s efforts enjoyed mixed success in the long term. The final chapters trace the adult lives of his children, particularly the escapades of his dissolute only son, James William. The difficulties experienced by James Jr. characterized the destinies of numerous young men of mixed race, who were generally barred from marrying white women of their own station and were sometimes kept outside of the newly established commercial networks dominated by white British and

Canadian males arriving in British Columbia to make their fortunes. However, Douglas's daughters were more fortunate, making marriages based, in part, on their father's mentorship of young men employed by the colonial governments of Vancouver Island and British Columbia. In the end, the Douglas family's ultimate social and economic success was ensured, in large part, by the family fortune, which was considerable at the time of James Douglas's death in 1877. The family's wealth allowed family members to insulate themselves from the scrutiny of outsiders and to acquire the accoutrements of education and breeding. However, the impact of wealth would have been negligible without the ability, and desire, of the Douglas daughters and their children to successfully obscure their "baser" racial origins and to gradually dilute their Indigenous bloodlines with those of settler society through marriage. It was this combination of wealth, ambition, and strategic planning that would serve to build and secure the Douglas family legacy as the founding family of British Columbia.

Race has always mattered in the British Empire, and the extensive bibliography from scholars around the globe is a testament to the impact that the institution of colonialism has had on peoples of colour over the centuries. Perry's deft inclusion of this literature in her analysis of the Douglas family's experience provides readers with an introduction to a large body of scholarship that will be useful to them in initiating their own, more broadly based, comparative studies of race, gender, and class. *Colonial Relations* is a major scholarly achievement that not only offers social historians fresh new insights and scholarly approaches but also manages to communicate the pathos surrounding a man and his family as they struggle to find a secure place in an unforgiving empire.

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TONY BALLANTYNE

*Intimacy and the Shifting Social Relations of Empire*

**D**ETAILED AND TEXTURED, Adele Perry's *Colonial Relations* is a sophisticated work that reconstructs the dynamics of family formation within the broader history of the incorporation of the Canadian west into the world-spanning networks of the British Empire. Anchored in a deep commitment to the power of feminist

scholarship to illuminate the production and operation of cultural difference, *Colonial Relations* places intimacy at the centre of the story of empire and colonialism. Pressing against “celebratory local histories” (ix), Perry effectively uses the complex ancestry and expansive social connections of the Douglas-Connolly family to reread the culture and politics of the British Empire.

The history that Perry offers is underpinned not only by extensive labour in the archives but also by a rich appreciation of the two generations of scholarship on women’s and gender history. Given that feminist scholars – such as Catherine Hall, Antoinette Burton, Kathleen Wilson, and Mrinalini Sinha – have been at the forefront of the emergence of the so-called “new imperial” history, it is not surprising that the question of the family has moved to the centre of work on empire. While the history of families was an important element in the project of social history as it took root within many national historiographies during the 1970s and 1980s, the “new imperial history” has been deeply concerned with the place of gender in mediating and moulding both the political and the cultural connections that created new forms of interdependence between Britain and its colonies. More recent work explores the importance of direct connections between colonial sites and the mobile lives of individuals who moved through a range of locations. This monograph is an especially rich example of this expansive vision of empire as Perry is alive not only to the crucial Cree kin networks of Amelia Connolly but also to both the significant imprint of James Douglas’s Caribbean connections and the broad web of British and Irish genealogical ties that framed James’s and Amelia’s families and their descendants.

A work that is as rich and expansive in its vision as *Colonial Relations* can be read in a variety of ways. One useful potential starting point is to read the volume against a set of debates over patterns of broad change that historians have identified within the British Empire as a whole. This approach is signalled by Perry herself, when, in her Acknowledgments, she notes that the book is a study of the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century, a period that she came to understand as an age of “radical possibility,” presumably because the hierarchies of race and gender that were central to the consolidation of colonial authority and nation making in the later Victorian period had not yet calcified.

The question of temporal change is a particular concern of Chapter 4, “Changing Intimacies, Changing Empire.” In this chapter Perry is concerned with the reframing of intimate relations over time, taking as her starting point one of Sylvia Van Kirk’s key arguments in *Many*

*Tender Ties*: that local marriages became increasingly marginalized as colonialism developed through the middle of the nineteenth century. More recently, of course, Sarah Carter, in her *The Importance of Being Monogamous*, produces a nuanced reading of these transformations, tracing how formalized Christian models of life-long monogamous marriage became dominant. Perry is concerned, however, to recover the “complicated history” (79) of imperial intimacies, their contingent, multiple, and even contradictory forms. While the chapter begins by exploring the changes that were set in train by the arrival of both missionaries and white women in the 1820s and 1830s, key markers of change in Van Kirk’s work, Perry suggests that, ultimately, the response of high-ranking local families such as the Douglas-Connolly family was of more enduring significance. Exploring correspondence, public debates, and legal cases, Perry suggests that the social practices and cultural ties that were developed in the early nineteenth century within this family were significantly more persistent than the existing historiography recognizes, even if these forms lived on within “particular and narrowing spaces” (80). Through this discussion Perry repeatedly demonstrates the constantly in-process nature of intimate relationships and their entanglement in both private negotiations and public disputation.

Perry’s understanding of the ongoing transformations of intimacy and the family form leads her to push against straightforward declensionist narratives: there was, she rightly asserts, “no golden age of fur-trade marriage” (106). She ends this sentence with another telling claim: “if there was a decisive moment of decline, it did not occur until the final two decades of the nineteenth century” (*ibid.*). This is a strong and important reinterpretation that has some significant implications for understanding the history of colonialism in Canada, but Perry might have more firmly located it within the broader historiographical terrain and explicitly teased out the implications of this understanding for two broader sets of debates around the nature of empire and colonialism.

First, this argument about the more gradual transformation of the intersection between intimacy and race, and Perry’s approach more generally, is a potentially significant intervention in debates over the connections between race and power within the historiography of the British Empire. She gestures towards Durba Ghosh’s influential work on intimacy and family in colonial India, agreeing with what she understands to be Ghosh’s key argument: that, although the “status and legitimacy accorded to imperial intimacies did decline – markedly, and for the individuals and communities involved, consequentially – over the course of

the nineteenth century, they did not do so in a straightforward manner” (80). *Colonial Relations* can, in fact, be productively read alongside the historiography on the interrelationship between cultural difference and political power within the British Empire as a whole. Surveying that work, we can generally see three points of accelerating change. The first point concerns the revolutionary age in the final decades of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth century, when the rising power of the state (especially in its military-fiscal form), the growing prominence of Protestantism as a marker of Britishness, and a resurgent British patriotism ruptured the accommodationist cultural traditions that had often developed on the frontiers of the empire. Ghosh’s *Sex and the Family in Colonial India* is a key study of this undermining of an early imperial tradition of cross-cultural intimacy and intellectual traffic, a pattern celebrated in William Dalrymple’s *White Mughals*. The second point is often identified as occurring in the 1830s, when evangelicalism, the politics of reform, and a series of crises on imperial frontiers recalibrated imperial rule. The growing authority attached to statistics, the elaboration of the routines of bureaucratic governance, and a deep preoccupation with social problems (reflecting the influence of evangelicalism and humanitarianism) had far-reaching consequences for the empire. These forces realigned the racial politics of the South African frontier, shaped the cultural foundations of formal colonial rule in New Zealand, and, in India, propelled a turn to a more formal, distant, and anglicizing style of colonial authority. The third point concerns the key rupture that historians frequently identify as the imperial crises in the years either side of 1860, including the Rebellion in India, the New Zealand Wars, and the Morant Bay Rebellion. It is commonplace to see these events as securing the primacy of race in the imperial imagination and producing a hardened and deterministic set of racial hierarchies at the heart of British imperial culture. *Colonial Relations* pushes against this chronology in some interesting ways, recognizing the significance of these forces but stressing a more gradual and perhaps ultimately more partial set of transformations, an approach that I think offers many significant insights.

Second, Perry’s arguments can be juxtaposed against some of the theories regarding “settler colonialism” that currently enjoy considerable currency. Perry’s argument about the persistence of these older models, the weight of local knowledge, and the active engagement of Métis and Indigenous peoples with colonial institutions and cultural forms is a salutary reminder of the limitations of work that follows Patrick

Wolfe and Lorenzo Veracini in understanding “settler colonialism” as a fundamentally eliminationist project. Perry does repeatedly deploy the terms “settler colonial” and “settler colonialism,” but she thinks carefully and judiciously up from her archives and, as a result, produces a messy, more nuanced, and contradictory set of images of this historical formation. As a result, settler colonialism in this monograph is not a neatly hegemonic form erasing all before it; rather, it a shifting and fissured set of relationships that is negotiated and remade through long cycles of cross-cultural debate and struggle between a host of agents – from fur traders to colonial administrators, white missionaries to Indigenous communities, Métis families to metropolitan officials. Perry is very attentive to the texture of social formations and the meaningfulness of the processes and decisions that shape cultural patterns. This approach allows her to demonstrate that, in “settler colonial” spaces, the dynamics of empire building were made in “complicated and ongoing conversations with local peoples, places, and their thick and abiding histories” (199).

*Colonial Relations* will be an important book, both within Canadian scholarship and within the broader fields of feminist history and scholarship on British colonialism. But it also points to a key challenge ahead. Perry notes that, while grammars of cultural difference – primarily class, race, and gender – structured the imperial world, ultimately difference was “irrecoverably tied to place and to the distinct histories contained therein” (200). By implication, this means Britain’s oceanic empire was a messy and entangled agglomeration of places and people, profoundly shaped by local circumstances and the weight of very particular histories as well as the integrative work of long-distance connections. *Colonial Relations* strikes a fine balance in explicating the significance of the local while also tracing the expansive linkages and global forces that were woven into these places, histories, and families. The broader questions for the field are: How do we bring this book and the histories it re-materializes into sustained and effective dialogue with other parallel works that also immerse us in the dense histories of other sites of analysis, such as Ghosh’s *Sex and the Family in Colonial India*, Damon Salesa’s *Racial Crossings*, Angela Wanhalla’s *In/visible Sight*, Carina Ray’s *Crossing the Color Line within the British Empire*, or works such as Emmanuelle Saada’s *Empire’s Children*, which discuss other imperial systems? How do we bring these kaleidoscopic histories together more effectively in order to apprehend not only the commonalities that increasingly structured global modernity (such as the primacy of the nuclear family) but also how to map the limits of that order, its fault lines, fissures, and fracture points?

## PLACES, RELATIONS, EMPIRES:

*A Response*

ADELE PERRY

I AM WRITING THIS FROM A HOUSE that, in the summer at least, looks more than a little like the Douglas-Connolly family house shown in the photograph on page 147 in my 2015 book, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World*. The Douglas-Connolly house sat in Victoria's James Bay neighbourhood, near but distinctly apart from Fort Victoria. It was at the Fort, and later at the offices of Vancouver Island's and then British Columbia's colonial governments, that James Douglas performed much of the work that he is most remembered for, in either local commemoration or scholarship. The Douglas-Connolly house was emphatically a familial space, though one that did not always fit tidily in hardening expectations of bourgeois nineteenth-century family and gender norms. For all the celebrated associations between James Douglas and the city of Victoria, the Douglas-Connolly house did not survive long enough to become a part of any heritage industry: it was demolished in 1906.<sup>1</sup>

My family's house stands in what is now downtown Winnipeg, on a long and skinny piece of land. The lot recalls the Métis river-lot system of agriculture that defined the Red River Settlement during the years that Douglas was negotiating what are now known as the Vancouver Island Treaties, which instructed Vancouver Island's surveyor-general on how to lay out land and sell it to newcomers.<sup>2</sup> After 1870, the newly formed and ambitious settler nation of Canada would remake much of the Red River Settlement at the direct and tangible expense of Indigenous peoples and their long-standing methods of governance and landholding. The Anishinaabe understanding of Treaty 1, the first of Canada's numbered treaties signed in 1871, was put aside in favour of what

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.victoriaheritagefoundation.ca/Neighbourhoods/jamesbayhistory.html>.

<sup>2</sup> On Vancouver Island, see Richard Mackie, "The Colonization of Vancouver Island, 1849-1858," *BC Studies* 96 (Winter 1992-93), 3-40; Frederike Vespoor, "The Fort Victoria and other Vancouver Island Treaties, 1850-1854," British Columbia Archives, 2012, located at <http://roy-albcmuseum.bc.ca/assets/FortVictoriaTreaties.pdf>. See Norma Hall, *Casualty of Colonialism: Red River Métis Farming, 1810-1870*, ebook located at <https://casualtyofcolonialism.wordpress.com/>, chap. 2.

scholar Aimée Craft describes as “the reported terms of a treaty rooted in surrender of land in exchange for annuities and goods.”<sup>3</sup> The recognition and resources promised to the Métis under the Manitoba Act, 1870, included 1.4 million acres of land encompassing what is now Winnipeg and that would be undelivered in a swirl of inefficiency, fraud, and provincial and federal malfeasance.<sup>4</sup> But echoes of Red River’s distinct and Indigenous ways of reckoning and organizing space echo through the city still, and our awkward lot is but one of the small reminders of the multiple Indigenous and colonial pasts of this particular space and its connections.

I begin this response with my house and the Douglas-Connolly house not to foreground the relationship between “self and subject,”<sup>5</sup> though surely those issues are always there. How the connections between historians and their subjects play out in the particular terrain of imperial historiography is explored in Antoinette Burton and Dane Kennedy’s recent collection, *How Empire Shaped Us*.<sup>6</sup> The animating connection between scholar and subject is perhaps rendered especially visible when the historian sets her or his sights on one of the most conventional units of historical inquiry – the individual. The emphasis shifts when we move to the larger but still intimate terrain of the family. For all the gravitational pull that James Douglas exerts on the story that *Colonial Relations* tells – and there is much to be said about why and to what effect this is the case – the book is not in any real sense a biography. *Colonial Relations* is a study of the kin and community of fur trader, governor, and landowner James Douglas (1803–77) and his wife Amelia Connolly Douglas (1812–90) over the course of the long nineteenth century. It aims to take the iconic local figure of Douglas outside of the mid-nineteenth-century years and local geographical context with which he is most often associated and best studied and, instead, locate him within a longer time frame, a wider imperial world and a revealing and demanding network of kin.

<sup>3</sup> Aimée Craft, *Breathing Life into the Stone Fort Treaty: An Anishinabe Understanding of Treaty One* (Saskatoon: Purich, 2013), 106.

<sup>4</sup> See *Manitoba Metis Federation Inc. v. Canada*, 2013, located at <http://www.canlii.org/en/ca/scc/doc/2013/2013scc14/2013scc14.html?autocompleteStr=manitoba%20m%C3%A9tis&autocompletePos=1>. For the wider context, see Adam Gaudry, “Fantasies of Sovereignty: Deconstructing British and Canadian Claims to Ownership of the Historic Northwest,” *Native American and Indigenous Studies* 3, 1 (2016): 46–74.

<sup>5</sup> See Richard White, “Here Is the Problem: An Introduction,” and contributions from Karen Halttunen, Philip J. Deloria, Jacquelyn Down Hall, John Demos, and Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Journal of American History* 89, 1 (2002): 17–53.

<sup>6</sup> Antoinette Burton and Dane Kennedy, *How Empire Shaped Us* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016). This includes Tony Ballantyne, “Paths to the Past,” and my “Homes and Native Lands: Settler Colonialism, National Frames, and the Remaking of History.”

My house, the Douglas–Connolly house, and their respective colonial and postcolonial geographies speak to three of the themes that cut across and through the four generous, engaged, and sharp-minded reviews of *Colonial Relations* that *BC Studies* has gathered here. In different ways, Tony Ballantyne, Daniel Clayton, Heather Devine, and Fae Dussart raise questions about the relationship between place in a colonial world, about intimacy and feminist analysis, and about settler colonialism and its relationship to other modes of colonial economy and social formation. These questions are drawn from a number of places, both literally and figuratively. Ballantyne is a historian of Aotearoa/New Zealand, South Asia, and the imperial world; Clayton is a historical and cultural geographer whose interest includes but is not restricted to British Columbia; Devine is a historian of Métis peoples and the Prairie west; Fae Dussart is a historical geographer who studies the relationship between the British Empire and identity. From these different points of departure each of these authors asks questions of *Colonial Relations* that ultimately lead back to the central theme of this special issue: settler colonial British Columbia.

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History is almost always about place, in one way or another, though historians often disagree about the best way to approach it. As Ballantyne stresses, *Colonial Relations* presses against local histories and puts the story of the Douglas–Connolly family within a wider, more mobile frame. *Colonial Relations*' attempt at a wide-angle lens likewise depends on the existence of a wide-ranging postcolonial scholarship that has developed over the last two decades and that forms the backdrop to Dussart's response here. My choice to publish with a British academic press is a perhaps ironic effort to have Canadian history read and discussed outside of its usual circuits. Historian Ann Curthoys writes that Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand history has "little purchase or audience outside their home countries,"<sup>7</sup> and this means that calls to work outside national boundaries have different stakes.

Yet *Colonial Relations* remains a kind of local history. The scope and grain of the book would have been impossible without the presence of a rich scholarship on nineteenth-century British Columbia, one written

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<sup>7</sup> Ann Curthoys, "We've Just Started Making National Histories and You Want Us to Stop Already?" in *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation*, ed. Antoinette Burton (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 70.

by university-based scholars like Cole Harris, John Lutz, and Sylvia Van Kirk as well as by community-based authors like John Adams.<sup>8</sup> Heather Devine is right to situate *Colonial Relations* within a long historiography that bridges family and fur trade history and spans present-day and historical borders. Van Kirk and Jennifer S.H. Brown's respective 1980 books remain the standard references here. They are joined by more recent scholarship, including Devine's own remarkable book, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1900* and Jean Barman's multiple-prize-winning *French Canadians, Furs, and Indigenous Women in the Making of the Pacific Northwest*.<sup>9</sup>

*Colonial Relations* utilizes and speaks to this scholarship, but the intellectual wealth and political acumen of recent Métis studies – written, it is worth noting, overwhelmingly by Métis scholars – has become even clearer in the past year. In different ways, Chris Andersen, Michel Hogue, Adam Gaudry, Brenda Macdougall, Nicole St. Onge, and others are challenging the conflation of Métis with “mixed” and offer archaically rich analyses of Métis life in the nineteenth century and beyond.<sup>10</sup> Scholars of the particular North American territories through which the Douglas–Connolly family moved will benefit from this careful research and tough-minded analysis.

In this sense, Clayton's remark that my heart remains in British Columbia is both prescient and slightly off the mark. *Colonial Relations* was written with the conviction that we can and perhaps should write the history of empires with the pasts and presents of colonized and

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, John Adams, *Old Square Toes and His Lady: The Life of James and Amelia Douglas* (Victoria: Horsdal and Shubert, 2001); Sylvia Van Kirk, “Tracing the Fortunes of Five Founding Families of Victoria,” *BC Studies* 115/16 (Autumn/Winter 1997–98), 148–79; John Sutton Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Sylvia Van Kirk, “Many Tender Ties”: *Women and Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980); Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1980); Heather Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in one Canadian Family, 1660-1900* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004); Jean Barman, *French Canadians, Furs, and Indigenous Women in the Making of the Pacific Northwest* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014). I deal with some of this scholarship in Adele Perry, “‘Historiography That Breaks Your Heart’: Van Kirk and the Writing of Feminist History,” in *Finding a Way to the Heart: Feminist Writings on Aboriginal and Women's History*, ed. Jarvis Brownlie and Valerie Korinek, 81–97 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> See Gaudry, “Fantasies of Sovereignty”; Brenda Macdougall with Nicole St. Onge, “Rooted in Mobility: Métis Buffalo Hunting Brigades,” *Manitoba History* 71 (2013): 21–32; Chris Andersen, “Métis”: *Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014); Michel Hogue, *Métis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2015); and many of the essays collected in Nicole St. Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall, eds., *Contours of a People: Métis Family, Mobility, and History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012).

decolonizing places foremost in mind. The call for transnational and transimperial historical scholarship can produce studies that roam widely but treat colonized places, especially if they are outside of the scholar's accustomed routes of engagement and research, as *venues* of empire still imagined in primarily metropolitan terms. What might imperial history look like if we began with the assumption that colonized and decolonizing places mattered, were legible and knowable, and maybe even mattered most of all?

Dussart is right to see *Colonial Relations* as an effort to return imperial history to Georgetown, to Red River, and to Vancouver Island. But it is not an effort to centre British Columbia, not really. Historians of Canada slip easily into regional or provincial grooves. We argue endlessly about the particular parameters of these definitions. Is British Columbia part of "Western Canada"? Where do the "Prairies" or the "Prairie west" start or begin? Can a province like Ontario or Quebec be considered a region?<sup>11</sup> In Canada, history as a discipline is still organized primarily if not exclusively along lines of region and/or province, which, like the national scholarships analyzed by Curthoys, are most often read, taught, and evaluated within their respective borders. But the histories mapped in *Colonial Relations* make clear the limits of so doing. Of all the contenders, mid-nineteenth-century Victoria is best compared to Red River. These were lived and tangible connections that left their marks in the archive. The letters that circulated around the fur trade world made this clear, as did those exchanged between members of the Douglas-Connolly family in Victoria and in Red River. They moved to Vancouver Island, usually imagined as a distinct space, even before the union of Vancouver Island and British Columbia in 1866. Family members also moved from that space, across the Rocky Mountains and the Atlantic Ocean. The emergent historiography on imperial lives and careering speaks primarily to a historiography of empire,<sup>12</sup> but Laura Ishiguro's article in this special issue shows how its findings might shift how we frame our approaches to the specific places therein, including nineteenth-century British Columbia.

Likewise the connections between colonized and decolonizing places are revealed as more abiding than a scholarship that spins exclusively

<sup>11</sup> We address some of these questions in Adele Perry, Elylt Jones, and Leah Morton, "Introduction," *Place and Replace: Essays on Western Canada* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> See, most notably, David Lambert and Alan Lester, eds., *Colonial Lives across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

on the axis of metropole and colony might often suggest. The connections between settler British Columbia and Asian British Columbia have been raised by Henry Yu and, in a very different way, by Renisa Mawani in *Colonial Proximities*.<sup>13</sup> *Colonial Relations* only hints at these cross-currents. It has more to say about connections between slavery and dispossession, but much more might be said still. Leanne Simpson explains that contemporary black and Indigenous communities in Canada are connected through histories of land theft, slavery, and child removal, through “systems of oppression that would prefer us not to exist unless it can exploit us as commodities for labour.”<sup>14</sup> Indigenous slavery and “unfreedom” is a topic that is receiving new and timely attention, though largely by historians based south of the border. The complex histories of unfreedom that shaped Douglas’s tenure at both Fort Vancouver and Fort Victoria need more historical attention. The connections between transatlantic slavery and the fur trade made legible by the Douglas family story – not to mention by the histories of Hudson’s Bay Company stalwarts Andrew and Eden Colville, and colonial and provincial BC politician Joseph Trutch – make clear the ways that Caribbean and Canadian histories might be viewed in conversation.<sup>15</sup>

In different ways, each of the interlocutors here situate *Colonial Relations* as a work of gender or feminist history. I cut my historical teeth on women’s history and remain committed to the transformative optics of feminist inquiry, to the capacity of feminism to upend and reorient conventional reckonings of the world and what matters in it. Devine notes that *Colonial Relations* depicts “the pathos surrounding a man and his family struggling to find a secure place in an unforgiving empire,” while Dussart discusses “histories sedimented” in people, communities, and bodies. These are matters not only of *what* is seen as historically relevant, but how it is. I want a history that registers people as fleshy and frail, and no less complex than those who write about them.

Clayton is right to note that my definition of intimacy is never clearly defined. For me the value of intimacy as a framing device lies in its relative flexibility and capacity to register a range of different labours, relationships, and commodities as making sense in the intimate terrain of people’s lives. For all its attention to intimacy, gender, kinship, and

<sup>13</sup> See Henry Yu, “Introduction: Refracting Pacific Canada: Seeing Our Uncommon Past,” *BC Studies* 136/57 (2007–08): 5–10; Renisa Mawani, *Colonial Proximities: Crossracial Encounters and Judicial Truths in British Columbia, 1871–1921* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> Leanne Simpson, “Indict the System: Indigenous and Black Connected Resistance,” 28 November 2014, located at <http://leannesimpson.ca/indict-the-system-indigenous-black-connected-resistance/>.

<sup>15</sup> See the Legacies of Slavery project, found at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/>.

family, *Colonial Relations* would not meet many definitions of *women's* history. The extent to which women disappear and occasionally resurface even within a history framed around family is a testament to the limits of recuperative strategies for “finding” Indigenous and female subjects in a colonial archive that worked to minimize, deny, or terminate their existence.

“The promiscuity of the archive begets a wide array of reading, but none that is capable of resuscitating the girl,” writes Saidiya Hartman in her compelling analysis of the lives and deaths of enslaved women.<sup>16</sup> In the 1990s, historians debated the risks and benefits of shifting the primary analytic from women’s history to gender history. Perhaps *Colonial Relations* is among the works that could be a useful measure of whether the studying of men and masculinity alongside women and femininity does the kind of analytic work that some hoped it might and that others feared it would not.<sup>17</sup> How the histories of gender, family, and kinship might be read more carefully through the analytics provided by queer theory and history is broached by historians like T.J. Tallie in his work on Natal and settler colonialism.<sup>18</sup> This is something that *Colonial Relations* might have considered with more rigour and care.

Where *Colonial Relations* fits in discussions of settler colonialism is a question that Ballantyne rightly registers in his response here. My 2001 book *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849–1871* makes the argument that British Columbia’s history is best understood within a comparative framework of settler colonialism, echoing an assumption that undergirds Cole Harris’s 1997 and 2002 books, among others.<sup>19</sup> As an interpretative framework, settler colonial studies has grown in both scale and nuance in the last decades, represented by the establishment of the journal *Settler Colonial Studies* in 2010 by Lorenzo Veracini and Edward Cavanagh.<sup>20</sup> The articles by Ishiguro, Sabina Trimble, and Madeline Knickerbocker and Sarah Nickel

<sup>16</sup> Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *Small Axe* 26 (June 2008): 1–14.

<sup>17</sup> Joan Sangster, “Beyond Dichotomies: Re-assessing Gender History and Women’s History in Canada,” *left history* 3, 1 (1995): 109–21; Karen Dubinsky and Lynn Marks, “Beyond Purity: A Response to Sangster,” *left history* 3, 4 (1995–96): 205–20; Franca Iacovetta and Linda Kealey, “Women’s History, Gender History and Debating Dichotomies,” *left history* 3, 4 (1995–96): 221–37; Joan Sangster, “Reconsidering Dichotomies,” *left history* 3, 4 (1995–96): 239–48.

<sup>18</sup> T.J. Tallie, “Queering Natal: Settler Logics and the Disruptive Challenge of Zulu Polygamy,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 19, 2 (2013): 167–89.

<sup>19</sup> Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997); Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002).

<sup>20</sup> See <https://settlercolonialstudies.org/about/>.

in this special issue show the capacious way that such an analytic might be employed to register the significance of a colonial politics anchored in population without underestimating its fragility or the ways that Indigenous people, as anthropologist Audra Simpson explains, interrupt and cast into question “the story that settler states tell about themselves.”<sup>21</sup>

*Colonial Relations* puts the history of settler colonialism that so radically reworked British Columbia in the last half of the nineteenth century within a wider context that also registers other colonialisms, most notably those associated with economies of slavery and the fur trade. Thinking seriously about the fur trade as a long moment in colonialism’s past in northern North America necessarily shifts our analysis of the colonialisms that have existed along it or followed in its wake. Adam Gaudry is right to warn us against according the Royal Charter of 1670, the Nootka Convention of 1790, or the Charter of Vancouver Island of 1849 the fantastic qualities they so loudly claimed for themselves. But we still might think seriously about fur-trade colonialism as a distinct and meaningful practice of empire, one that did not simply disappear when legislative assemblies were created in the small pockets of non-Indigenous settlement spread through northwestern North America in the middle years of the nineteenth century.

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The complicated present of settler societies in North America or the Antipodes reminds us to keep our analyses supple and alert to the limits as well as to the possibilities of even the most grandiose and violent of settler dreams. The four generous interlocutors here point to the ways that *Colonial Relations* speaks to place, to intimacy and gender, and to settler colonialism. By putting the Douglas-Connolly story within a wide chronological and geographical frame, *Colonial Relations* perhaps complicates our understanding of the arrival, consolidation, and administration of settler colonialism in nineteenth-century British Columbia. At the same time, it documents the enormous power of settler colonialism to remake Indigenous and fur trade worlds and spaces. As scholars of British Columbia and parts of the world it was connected to through ideas, commodities, lives, or laws, our challenge is to do justice to this power and the complex ways it was and is actualized and contested.

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<sup>21</sup> Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 177.