

approach. "Concerning the Influence of America on the Mind" makes the important move of outlining a transatlantic romanticism (Chandler is more skeptical of including England within a European romanticism) and of thus locating romantic historicism not in a local but a comparative context. Throughout these chapters but particularly in the work on Shelley, Chandler also demonstrates that he need not give up the rigor of formal, close reading in turning to a historicized method. As in the recent and quite different work of Susan Wolfson, there is an effort to show that one can attend to historical and textual detail at the same time. Shelley also allows Chandler to show that the romantics themselves were struggling with the key Marxist formulation that human beings make their own history but not as they please. If we have had at different times a Wordsworthian or Blakean or Byronic romanticism, Chandler offers a Shelleyan one, where the author is not an isolated, self-defined and freely creating genius nor a mere mouthpiece for the spirit of the age but is instead an actor on a historical stage certainly not of his making but open to the impact of his makings, his poems.

It is here, finally, where I think Chandler and Thompson most importantly come together to discover in the interaction of romantic poetry and history both a sense for the importance of history to the understanding of our key cultural artifacts and a feel for the power of those artifacts and their artificers as they work to imagine and thus to help make the future. Together, they suggest that we adopt a historicism that is finally romantic in its engagement with the details of the present, its interest in the differences of cultures in different times and places, and its ability to posit a future made better by the work of the imagination.

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Daniel W. Clayton, *Islands of Truth: The Imperial Fashioning of Vancouver Island* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000).

Daniel Clayton's *Islands of Truth: The Imperial Fashioning of Vancouver Island* is a big book. At 330 pages, it is not so much literally big as it is intellectually ambitious. Clayton provides a study of European-Aboriginal contact on Vancouver Island in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and uses that history to begin a much-needed rethinking of the loaded connections between place, power, politics and memory in British Columbia and, by implication, Canada and empire.

Clayton is a historical geographer concerned with physical, psychic and social space and how people live and think it. Yet *Islands of Truth* is a distinctly and literally literary work. For a book ostensibly about the visual realm of maps,

it includes only thirteen illustrations. Clayton instead focuses on European writing and, to a much lesser extent, Aboriginal speaking about space and contact and their implications in Vancouver Island. His analysis is presented by dense and stylish prose that is animated by a canny and sometimes disarming use of vocabulary.

Islands of Truth proceeds in three parts. Part One, “Spaces of European Exploration,” deals with the European “discovery” of Vancouver Island in the eighteenth-century. Emphasizing the iconic Captain James Cook, Clayton analyses how European explorers represented their contact experiences and how these representations have been used in both popular and scholarly histories of British Columbia. Part Two, “Geographies of Capital” moves from the strictly representational to the economic, analysing the maritime fur-trade in sea otters and how European and Aboriginal became implicated in what Clayton calls the “spacial politics of exchange.” Part Three reckons with how exploration and trade laid the basis for the more literal colonization of Vancouver Island in the mid-nineteenth-century, and have continued to inform the fractious politics of contemporary British Columbia.

Throughout this, Clayton suggests that we disaggregate history and representation at our peril, and that scholars of British Columbia have failed to sufficiently recognize the importance of imperialism and imperial discourse to both our history and our understandings of it. In doing so, *Islands of Truth* navigates adroitly around some vexing intellectual and political predicaments. Clayton highlights the discursive and the textual without losing sight of political economy. He also draws some meaningful conclusions about Aboriginal history and perspective without underestimating the profound methodological difficulties in doing so. *Islands of Truth* defies those who equate attention to the cultural with denial of the material and recognition of First Nations’ specificity with a wholesale abandonment of the historical project.

Islands of Truth’s engagement in international, post-colonial scholarship is its greatest strength. Clayton links his title to an epigram used by Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant, but it more tellingly invokes Marshall Sahlins’ foundational *Islands of History* (1985). This suggests how Clayton rejects what he dubs the positivist and provincial tone of British Columbia historiography and turns instead to post-colonial literature, especially on the Pacific. He is less interested in the influential feminist contributions to this scholarship. A two page discussion arguing that European men saw trade as necessarily masculine (44-7) confirms rather than disputes *Islands of Truth*’s studied indifference to gender as either a social experience, analytic category, or a mode of critique.

Clayton’s disinterest in gender is incongruous in a book that is otherwise remarkable for its scholarly breadth and political engagement. The number of authors that Clayton quibbles and queries can indeed be bewildering and ultimately distracting. Literary critic Terry Goldie’s notion of indignization is “too dichotomous” (52); post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha fails to “grasp the

complexity and productivity of colonial discourse" (87); historians Robin Fisher and Hugh Johnson give Vancouver Island an inappropriately "congenial reputation in the history of contact and colonialism." (193) The impact of Clayton's many critiques dwindle in relation to the sheer volume of them.

Islands of Truth is well-conceived and executed, but it is not as singular as its author would sometimes have it. Clayton's comment that he sees "the work of empire where others scholars do not" (xxi) is belied by the recent publication of a series of works that ask similar questions about similar places. Like Cole Harris' *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism in Geographical Change* (1998), Clayton's is a reconsideration of British Columbia's history in light of post-colonial thinking. Like Elizabeth Vibert's *Trader's Tales: Narratives of Cultural Encounters in the Plateau, 1807-1846* (1997) and Christopher Bracken's *The Potlatch Papers: A Colonial Case History* (1997), Clayton's is a rethinking prompted by post-structuralist insights into the nature of historical inquiry. And, however much Clayton distances himself from the existing historiography of contact and the fur-trade in British Columbia, his analysis ultimately reconfirms some of its central claims, namely of the decreasing influence of Aboriginal agendas throughout the nineteenth-century.

Islands of Truth takes some significant chances and makes some important contributions. But it also leaves one big question essentially unaddressed. Clayton exposes the centrality of imperialism to Western knowledge in general and to British Columbia's history in particular. What he does not ask is whether he, as an author writing in a very scholarly – and very Western – tradition, can be an effective critic of something he is so obviously a part of. I wish *Islands of Truth* had raised the question, but suspect that the answer is yes – the best critics often speak from within the very thing they challenge. At any rate, historians of British Columbia, Canada, North America and empire have found a critic worth listening to in Daniel Clayton.

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Sol Dollinger and Genora Johnson Dollinger, *Not Automatic: Women and the Left in the Forging of the Auto Workers' Union* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000).

Part revisionist history, part clarion call for action, and entirely unrepentant, Sol Dollinger's book *Not Automatic*, links the personal and the political in a powerful and at times touching manner to explain the creation of the United Auto Workers union. Dollinger, who worked at a number of automotive companies in the 1930s and 1940s during the heyday of unionization in the auto