

mystique of pirates – the reason why their theatre is so attractive – is not their show of macho masculinity. On the contrary, it is the subversive femininity in their masculinity. That makes a blurred genre of living, an attractive model because that is what living actually is. It is the “reality” of rhetorical certainty that is so unreal. The good in evil; the evil in good: the centre in the margins; the margins in the centre. Piracy is a parable on the edginess of living.

This is what I hear in Turley’s wonderful chapter on Daniel Defoe’s novel *Captain Singleton*, anyway. Quite rightly Turley brings this chapter into *Rum, Sodomy and the Lash* from elsewhere in his writings. Turley’s gentle, wistful style lingers on the sweetness of a life-long relationship that Defoe presents between Captain Singleton and Quaker William. These two dissenters – Singleton dissenting to the power of the state, William dissenting to establishment belief and values – marry their edginess. The love of men for one another is truly subversive. Defoe, Turley writes, “challenges the standards by which individuality must be integrated with and defined by social norms.”(127)

That’s piracy for you!

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Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

Adele Perry’s *On the Edge of Empire* offers a very unique study of the history of colonial British Columbia. By carefully combining feminist theory with post-structuralism, post-colonial research and, to a lesser extent, Marxist theory, Perry adeptly weaves a powerful argument that the region Jean Barman calls “the West beyond the West” was a colonial project at once powerful and vulnerable, asserting whiteness as the dominant norm despite the resistance to Victorian ideals by working-class white men, many working-class white women, and, of course, the numerous First Nations peoples of the region. Perry’s analysis uses gender as the central category to demonstrate the significant gap between imperialist theory and actual imperialist experience, particularly emphasizing “the importance of race to the social experience of gender in nineteenth-century British Columbia” (8).

Perry’s study locates her within several schools of research. First of all, by placing gender as the central organizing principle describing the colonial experience, Perry is positioned within feminist postcolonial scholars such as Ann Laura Stoler, Robert J. C. Young, and Anne McClintock, all of whom she refers

to in the book. At the same time, Perry puts much effort into demonstrating the need to interrogate “whiteness as a race,” thereby placing herself within the recent spate of historians concerned with challenging “the assumption that whiteness is normal,” such as David Roediger and Grace Hale. In *The Wages of Whiteness*, Roediger contends that, for the most part, “attempts to apply post-structuralism to history have foundered” (15), yet Perry’s discursive analysis demonstrates the “historically constructive character of social relations” in colonial B.C. (4). As well, Perry’s work contributes significantly to the work of historians of British Columbia, of course, including Jean Barman, Patricia Roy, and Tina Loo.

There are numerous strengths to Perry’s study, too many to list here. Of major significance are the valuable insights gained from her meticulous research into the shifting and unsettled nature of all of the imperial categories for the peoples of the colony. The critical forms of resistance to Victorian ideals occurred mainly on two fronts: the backwoods white male homosocial culture and the mixed-race couples of white males and Aboriginal women, both the result of the under-representation of white women, common to resource-based colonial economies. Perry provides excellent historical evidence demonstrating the resistance to the anti-miscegenation discourse that was in its heyday during this period throughout the British empire. Moreover, the positioning of middle-class Christian settlers to act as moral reformers to white working-class men and Aboriginal people is clearly seen to be a social construction of a historical moment designed to outline the distinctions of nineteenth-century bourgeois identity. The failure of the reformers to significantly alter these social arrangements, as well as the failure to attract British settler families to the region resulted in four recruitment campaigns of British women during the colonial period. This strategy was somewhat successful in creating white settler families more in keeping with Victorian ideals, as many of the working-class female recruits became the wives of labouring men and the domestic servants of white middle-class families. As Perry points out, however, concern arose because “[a]ssisted white female migration ... delivered the disturbing presence of working-class female independence” in a variety of ways (192). Perry highlights these acts of resistance and examples of domestic violence in all-white couples to deliver one of the most profound insights of her research, namely, that there was a “sharp disjuncture between colonial discourse and colonial practice on this edge of empire” (167).

There are several passages in *On the Edge of Empire* that yield valuable insights at the same time that they contain historical inaccuracy or loosely defined theoretical terms. In *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, Robert J. C. Young describes the attitudes of nineteenth-century scholars toward the white working classes, equating them with savages (Young, 56, 59). In a similar fashion, Perry makes it clear that a similar analogy was at work in

the colony of British Columbia, as some Christian reformers considered white gold miners “an appropriate object of civilizing efforts akin to those directed against First Nations people” (95). The implications of this are hugely significant, as “settler men’s claim to membership on the white side of the imperial divide was far from secure” and yet Perry fails to invoke what Roediger calls the “wages of whiteness” to explain why the backwoods white men strove to be considered white rather than as working class with their non-white labouring colleagues. This omission suggests a binary racial divide that runs through the entire book but did not run through colonial British Columbia. Indeed, Perry addresses the omission of Chinese labourers in her study because she intended “merely to probe the fault line that cut most strongly through British Columbia” at the time (9). Yet by the time British Columbia joined Confederation in 1871, there was one Chinese male for every five white people, and the “yellow hordes” discourse was becoming part of mainstream thought.

Although Perry never defines what she means by the term “discourse,” it is clear that she utilizes it in the Foucauldian sense of the word, connecting desire and power to language itself by focusing on not only what can be said, but who is allowed to say it. Perry persuasively demonstrates the strength of the discourse of imperialism that allowed five hundred or so white settlers even to believe that they had the right to exert power over the original inhabitants of the land through this inclusionary/exclusionary system of rules, as Vancouver Island became a British colony in 1849. Perry makes it clear how the imperial discourse, buttressed by powerful sub-discourses such as white supremacy, Christianity and capitalism, enabled whiteness, or more specifically, Britishness to be the norm in B.C., a region in which First Nations people still made up 71 percent of the population at the end of the colonial period despite massive losses from smallpox epidemics in the 1860s. In fact, Perry’s work asks the question, “Which is most influential on the other: ideas or reality?” Perry clearly demonstrates that the process is both simultaneous and bidirectional.

The strengths of *On the Edge of Empire* greatly outweigh the few flaws. For the sake of being critical, I found Perry’s rendering of First Nations resistance to be lacking throughout much of the work, their portrayal emphasizing passivity rather than agency. For instance, the mixed-race couples in colonial B.C. had much to do with building alliances, sometimes between Hudson’s Bay Company officers and the daughters of Aboriginal chiefs, a strategy that is not considered at all in the book. Moreover, although Perry claims to be informed by certain aspects of Marxism (4), her contention that “class relations are central to social relations” in the imperial context receives little attention, especially considering this period as being the beginning of the contentious nature of employer/employee relations in British Columbia. Further, there is no men-

tion whatsoever of the wage labour opportunities for First Nations men, a group that for the main are invisible throughout.

On the whole, *On the Edge of Empire* is a powerful and cogent argument that illuminates the strategies used to create a white society in British Columbia during the colonial period. It is absolutely convincing in its portrayal of the region as a tenuous exercise in British imperialist expansion, often dominated by forms of white masculinity that ran counter to the dominant form of British Christian ideals. The huge amount of historical evidence amassed by Perry serves to demonstrate that there was a tremendous gap between imperial theory and ideals and the experience of those who participated in the project of so-called empire-building. Moreover, one of the book's main strengths lies in its discursive analysis, clearly explaining how the entire exploitative imperialist project was supported by dominant ideas of the period, namely, white supremacy, Christianity, anti-miscegenation and capitalism.

The current debate in the teaching of history in public schools has been dominated on the one hand by the traditionalists such as Jack Granatstein, who call for more teaching of the accomplishments of nation-building, and on the other hand, the social historians like Ken Osborne, who want a history taught that includes those who have been mostly silenced throughout history. Adele Perry's book suggests that there may be a third perspective on the matter, one that incorporates discursive analysis and the effects of these powerful discourses in creating and maintaining hegemony for only a very few, as the Other underwent social processes that resulted in all of them being gendered and racialized to different locations in the social hierarchies of the day.

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Allan Kulikoff, *From British Peasants to Colonial American Farmers* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

Expanding his influential earlier work on the interchange between economic conditions and demographic realities in the development of southern cultures in the Chesapeake, Allan Kulikoff has produced an ambitious and richly detailed agrarian history of the mainland Anglo-American colonies. The first of two projected books on the American small farm economy in the period before the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, *From British Peasants to Colonial American Farmers* examines patterns of European migration and settlement in America, the evolution of relationships of production, and the co-development of markets and neighbourly exchange. A immense array of literature is called