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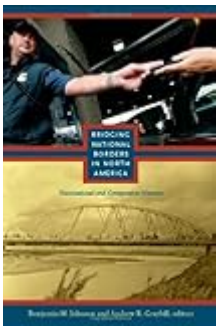

Benjamin H. Johnson, Andrew R. Graybill, eds. *Bridging National Borders in North America: Transnational and Comparative Histories.* American Encounters/Global Interactions Series. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010. x + 373 pp. $89.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8223-4688-3; $24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8223-4699-9.

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Toward an Integrated History of North America's Northern and Southern Borderlands

This collection of ten original essays seeks to begin, in the words of its editors, Benjamin H. Johnson and Andrew R. Graybill, âa conversation between scholars of the continentâs northern and southern borderlands that seems long overdueâ (p. 3). We have much to learn, Johnson and Graybill suggest, by comparing the histories of North Americaâs two borderland regions and, more ambitiously, moving toward an integrated approach to borderland studies. The essays, originally presented at a symposium cosponsored by Southern Methodist University and Simon Fraser University in March 2007, cover a wide range of topics, from the mobility of diseased Indians in the Pacific Northwest in the nineteenth century to Hollywoodâs role in shaping borderland stereotypes in early westerns. The volume includes an excellent historiographical introduction by the editors and a comprehensive fifty-page bibliography. *Bridging National Borders in North America* succeeds in its goal of showing the potential of comparative and integrationist approaches to borderland studies. Unfortunately, it also demonstrates the difficulty in actually doing this type of history: only two of the ten essays put both regions under the same microscope.

Borderlands history has risen in vogue in recent years as historians have sought to elude the nation-state as a unit of analysis in order to shed more light on transnational processes. States and the borders they draw are obviously important but not as determinative as commonly assumed. The first of the volumeâs four sections, âPeoples in Between,â includes two strong essays that illustrate the divergent fates of communities disrupted in the nineteenth century by the delineation of North Americaâs international borders. Miguel Angel GonzÃ¡lez-Quiroga, the only Mexican contributor to the volume and one of very few scholars from Mexico dedicated to borderlands history, examines how the largely Hispanic population on both sides of the Rio Bravo (or Grande) managed to maintain a sense of unity despite endemic violence as the United States seized by force Mexicoâs extensive northern fringe. He argues that regional commerce, anchored in San Antonio in Texas and Monterrey in Nuevo LeÃ³n, encouraged a level of cooperation

that counteracted the violence of the War of Texas Independence in 1836 and the Mexican-American War of 1846-48. The economic connection between Texas and northern Mexico especially took off during the U.S. Civil War, when the Confederacy routed its international trade through Mexican Gulf ports.

In contrast to the Hispanic community of the southern borderlands, the MÃ©tis of the North were unable to survive the much more peaceful consolidation of the border between Canada and the United States along the 49th parallel. As Michael Hogue points out, the free-ranging lifestyle of the MÃ©tis, based on the buffalo hunt, clashed with the agricultural settlement favored by both Canada and the United States. In addition, their mixed-race status confounded the efforts of both countries to stake out racial categories as neatly as territory. Read together, the first two essays suggest that the MÃ©tis lacked the numbers and economic clout enjoyed by Hispanics to the South to deflect national projects. In addition, the similarities of the cultural and settlement policies of Canada and the United States precluded the MÃ©tis from playing the countries off each other, a strategy available to their counterparts in the southern borderlands.

The three essays in the second section of the book, âEnvironmental Control and State-Making,â demonstrate the utility of an environmental history perspective in the study of borderlands. Jennifer Seltz, in a somewhat discursive essay, shows how the historic mobility of Pacific coast Indian nations posed a serious problem for both Canada and the United States when epidemic disease took hold. As with the MÃ©tis of the plains, a small, racially distinct group could not withstand the combined efforts of Canada and the United States to strengthen border control, in this case for the stated purpose of public health. In the next essay, Rachel St. John argues that it was the movement of cattle across the western section of the U.S.-Mexico border, not people, that initially gave rise to stricter border controls. In fact, the first U.S. border fence was built in 1909-11 to keep out cattle, not human border hoppers. Ranchers on both sides of the line, however, resisted national efforts to divide their transborder ranges and largely succeeded in modifying the enforcement of restrictive laws, a common outcome it would seem in the Mexico-U.S. borderlands.

Lissa Wadewitz looks at a species even more difficult to corral than cattle–the salmon of the Fraser River. Canadians and Americans competed fiercely to exploit these fish, which spawned in Canadian waters but migrated through the international Strait of Juan de Fuca to the Pacific. It took forty years of conflict between British Columbian and Washington State fishermen and the disastrous collapse of salmon stocks before Canada and the United States reached an international agreement, the 1937 Sockeye Salmon Treaty, to regulate this fishery. It would appear that in this maritime borderlands dispute the intervention of the federal governments of Canada and the United States was necessary to prevent locals from destroying a common but inherently mobile resource.

One topic that calls out for an integrated approach to borderlands history is immigration. In the bookâs third section, âBorder Enforcement and Contestation,â S. Deborah Kang looks at the enforcement of the 1917 Immigration Act and 1918 Passport Act on the Mexico-U.S. border. She unfortunately misses the opportunity promoted by this book to include the situation on the Canada-U.S. border for comparative purposes. The 1917 and 1918 statutes, occasioned by wartime anxiety over the porosity of U.S. borders, blocked the movement of Mexican workers needed by U.S. agriculture and industry and disrupted life in the border towns, where residents crossed the line on a daily and even hourly basis. Officials of the U.S. Bureau of Immigration, bending to local pressure, carved out exceptions to the new immigration laws that preserved transnationalism. Andrea Geigerâs essay on the Japanese invocation of the right of transit privilege does include both the northern and southern borders in the scope of analysis. To circumvent immigration laws designed to exclude Asians on racial grounds, many Japanese arrived in Mexico and Canada and claimed the right of transit under international law in order to enter the United States. Once again, national borders proved more permeable in practice than in theory, as a savvy network of Japanese immigration brokers and their clients found loopholes in restrictive legislation.

The fourth section of the book, âBorder Representations and National Identity,â broadens the inquiry to include ideas, symbols, and images of the borderlands. Catherine Cooks introduces her examination of the role of North American tourism in defining racial and cultural difference by presenting the interesting but hardly representative case of the African American writer Langston Hughes, who as a teenager visited Mexico as a tourist to see his father, who had built a successful career in Mexico free from U.S. racism. According to Cooks, the U.S. tourism industry promoted a clichÃ©d but generally positive image of Mexico and the Hispanic Southwest as an exotic contrast to the Anglo North. She sug-

gests that this romanticized vision of race and culture may have even helped to undermine notions of white supremacy in the United States. Dominque BrÃ©gent-Healdâs essay presents her extensive research on cinematic representations of both the southern and northern borderlands. Like tourism, the film industry reflected popular perceptions but also may have helped to soften them. For example, on the one hand, the 1910 silent film *Ramona*, starring Canadaâs Mary Pickford, sympathetically depicted the Spanish and Indian cultures displaced by Anglo-Americans in California in the late nineteenth century. On the other hand, the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution just as the film industry in Southern California consolidated in the 1910s helped to establish an image of the southern borderlands as a place of violence and disorder. The northern borderlands were often portrayed in a similar if less harsh light, but with the Canadian Mounties usually riding to the rescue of order and civilization.

The final essay, by Bethel Saler and Carolyn Podruchny, surveys the historiography of the North American fur trade. It might better have been presented apart, rather than awkwardly included in the section on cultural representations. It sets out a general problem for the future of North American borderlands history, the difficulty in overcoming nationalist biases, even in the study of transnational phenomena. The authors show how historians have treated the fur trade in distinct ways. Canadians traditionally see it as central to their national development, the key industry that opened up the western and northern frontiers. American scholars, in contrast, view the trade in animal pelts as merely a precursor, in certain regions, to agrarian settlement, the real mark of American civilization. According to the authors, âThe border between Canada and the United States seems to act like a glass curtain. Scholars of the fur trade do not pay any attention to it, yet they seem to be unable to pass through itâ (p. 288). Only now, with greater interest in environmental history and especially the role of Indians in the fur trade, have less nation-based perspectives emerged.

In their incisive introduction, Johnson and Graybill acknowledge the national divisions that continue to hinder the broad contextualization of borderlands history. U.S. historians have long dominated the field, in large part due to the emergence of a number of historians, mostly of Hispanic descent and native to the southern U.S. borderlands, dedicated to the study of this increasingly important region. Canadian and Mexican historians have been less interested in the study of borderlands, feeling perhaps the need to validate the national projects of their respective countries against perceived U.S. hegemony. For Mexicans, the powerful patronage of their national government over academic production has reinforced this insular tendency. North American scholars also face many practical problems in carrying out comparative and integrationist research on borderlands. It is telling that in a volume dedicated to fostering such a broad approach only two essays, those by Geiger and BrÃ©gent-Heald, look specifically at both border regions. Despite these caveats, this well-edited and thought-provoking collection will be of great interest to all scholars interested in the transnational processes that have always characterized the borderlands between Canada, the United States, and Mexico. *Bridging National Borders* ultimately points toward the difficult but not impossible dream of fashioning, in its editorsâ words, a âtruly continental approach to the study of North Americaâs pastâ (p. 25).

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