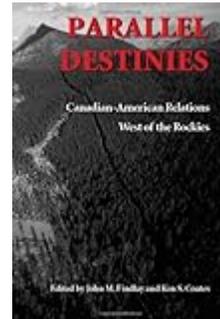




**John M. Findlay, Ken S. Coates, eds.** *Parallel Destinies: Canadian-American Relations West of the Rockies*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002. xix + 328 pp. \$50.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-295-98252-6; \$22.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-295-98253-3.



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## Lines Drawn in the Sand

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*Parallel Destinies: Canadian-American Relations West of the Rockies* is an interdisciplinary anthology of ten scholarly essays that, except for one, were originally presented in 1996 at a conference hosted by the University of Washington in Seattle commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Oregon Treaty of 1846, the legal means by which the national boundary between Canada and the United States was established at the 49th parallel. The editors offer a deceptively simple purpose for assembling these papers: to examine the transnational border in terms of its impact “on the lands and peoples west of the Rocky Mountains” (p. vii).

“Deceptively simple” is an apt qualifier because these authors understand international boundaries to be more than centrifugal demarcations delineating the territorial possessions of modern nation states. For them they are something more complex and dynamic. In the case of the 49th parallel, it is the backbone of a vast borderlands region in which, to some extent, people on both sides of the fold share a common history, culture, economy, climate, environment, and even destiny. It is this interconnect-

edness between Canada and the United States that lies at the core of this volume: to explore how the creation and the ongoing re-creations of one are a result of the other or, to phrase it slightly differently, how the interests of one reflect the interests of both.

This collection is organized chronologically and arranged into three parts. In each succeeding section, the presence of the 49th parallel becomes ever more pervasive and intrusive. In fact, early on the impact of the international border seemed minimal if at all. This initial period, labeled by Findlay and Coates as the era of the “permeable” border, roughly spanned the years 1846 to 1900. As Daniel P. Marshall insightfully points out in a strong essay documenting the forays of settlers, miners, and the military into the Fraser River valley, for much of the nineteenth century the international border represented “little more than a paper demarcation with no parallel in physical space” (p. 65). For him, the non-Indian occupation of the region was more closely related to pervasive patterns of settlement and extraction evident throughout the North American West.

Similarly, John Lutz argues in a chapter titled “Annual

Migrations of 'Canadian Indians' that the existence of the 49th parallel failed to impede the yearly trek of aboriginal northerners to the Puget Sound region for purposes of raiding, working, and acquiring wealth. According to Lutz, government officials did not ignore the border crossings but took few steps to thwart them, primarily because—as is the case today in United States relations with Mexico—American employers needed a ready supply of cheap labor and the Canadian Indians needed jobs. These strategies of economy were prevalent among non-Indians as well and even seeped into the corporate realm. Author Patricia K. Wood traces how Italian immigrants easily moved back and forth between Canada and the United States, and a fine chapter by Jeremy Mouat suggests that the competition between the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Great Northern Railroad had more to do with a quest for profits and market share than it did with nation building.

After the turn of the century, the international border played an increasing role in regulating Canadian-American relations. During this period, which in many respects extends to the present day, citizens of both countries began to turn inward, identifying and aligning themselves with their places of birth and residence, and looking to the nation state as a protector of individual rights and the upholder of group interests. The three papers addressing these developments are set in a section titled "Negotiating the International Boundary," representing the editors' nod to the extensive array of treaties, accords, pacts, agreements, sanctions, quotas, and mutual expectations under which both countries functioned and were bound. The need for such legal imperatives emerged unmistakably in the early-twentieth century as controversy erupted over the ownership of fishing runs. According to Joseph E. Taylor III, a century of international diplomacy worked to the satisfaction of no one and might even be described as "irrational" and "crazy," but nonetheless illustrates how industry and the state became "enmeshed in complex layers of natural and social space" (pp. 174-175).

National interests struck an even more resounding chord as war clouds beckoned overhead. In the words of Galen Roger Perras, "unconvinced of the threat to the eastern Pacific, united by a desire to preserve national sovereignty in the face of perceived U.S. imperialism, and confronted by an ambivalent ally that could not duplicate Canadian unanimity nor convince President Franklin Roosevelt to intervene personally," Canada rebuffed American efforts to integrate British Columbia into a United States led system of unified command prior

to the Second World War (pp. 181-182). Carl Abbott closes this section with the resigned proposition that the emergence of the global age of bureaucracy has had the deleterious effect of leaving the Northwest more divided today than at any point in its past.

The final three essays fall under the heading "National Distinctions" and are philosophical and topical in nature. Chad Reimer argues that the settling of the Oregon boundary dispute followed a logical sequence of historical events and "contributed to the drift toward a larger Anglo-American rapprochement through the nineteenth century," while simultaneously convincing both nations of the necessity of strengthening their grip on their "respective holdings of the Pacific Slope: the United States by organizing the Oregon Territory, Britain by creating the colony of Vancouver Island" (p. 236). Donald Worster, in a paper titled "Wild, Tame, and Free," compares Canadian and American views of nature, particularly the steps taken by each to protect wilderness areas. In this regard, Worster detects a striking difference between parties, taking Canada to task for its failure to develop a nation-wide system of wilderness preservation as the United States has done, lamenting that "hostility, indifference, or wariness toward the wild seem to be found at all levels of Canadian government" (p. 258).

In a remarkable final essay called "Sleeping with the Elephant," Michael Fellman asserts that the demographic, economic, political, cultural, and historical impact of the United States on Canada has been enormous, prompting in some instances anti-American backlash. Fellman points out that Canada throughout its history has experienced substantial in-migrations from the United States and today a stunning 90 percent of the Canadian population lives within fifty miles of the American border. Fellman, however, positions the source of Canada's angst closer to home, blaming it on the dearth of national symbols as well as its lateness in coming to the table of nations possessing independent self-rule status.

*Parallel Destinies* is an impressive and valuable collection of essays particularly suited for use in undergraduate and graduate level college courses. So rich and vast is both the source material and the topics available for further exploration, I would urge the editors to consider producing a follow up volume. Sports, media, advertising, medicine, music, education, construction and roads, language, timber management and logging, fire control, and responses to environmental issues such as global warming come readily to mind as areas worthy of inclusion in such a future study.

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