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Lissa K. Wadewitz. *The Nature of Borders: Salmon, Boundaries, and Bandits on the Salish Sea.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012. 384 pp. $24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-295-99182-5.

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Drawing Lines in the Salish Sea

Even the most cursory glance at North American borderlands scholarship reveals that we are, overwhelmingly, a bunch of drylanders. The vast majority of us are obsessed with tracking invisible lines and the categories they create or challenge on the open dry land of the continent. What makes Lissa K. Wadewitz's work so refreshing and important is that she turns her back firmly on the land and gazes out to the deep, salmon-rich water of the Salish Sea, where present-day British Columbia and Washington State meet. In doing so, she accomplishes something unprecedented in the field of North American borderlands history.

She introduces us to the Salish Sea, its geography and different salmon species, in her introduction "Pacific Borders." Her first chapter, "Native Borders," explores how indigenous groups in the Pacific Northwest managed and harvested the abundant salmon runs. Wadewitz delineates carefully the lines that Native peoples drew around and through their most abundant resource. Salmon were deeply embedded in their spiritual and material culture, for example, which ensured that the fish were respected and managed very carefully. Individuals and tribes were entitled to fish in certain areas but not others, and only at the right times of year, again ensuring the health and longevity of the stocks. She returns to this in her conclusion, "The Future of Salish Sea Salmon," where she notes that current management practices have succeeded only when they more closely follow these indigenous practices.

In chapter 2, "Fish, Fur, and Faith," Wadewitz notes that when white newcomers arrived, eager to exploit the region's rich resources and colonize the indigenous population, they initially had to respect and in fact follow Native practices when it came to salmon fishing. The outsiders "could not just impose their own spatial or social boundaries on the region's Native peoples. They had to take Native borders and related customs seriously if they wanted to achieve their own economic and social goals. They had to understand the role of salmon in the Indians' worldview. The Indians made sure of that" (p. 30). This state of affairs did not last for long however. Chapter 3, "Remaking Native Space," discusses how diseases, intermarriage, and the sheer scale of the new commercial fishery did eventually allow whites to overwrite Indian practices and boundaries with their own. White governments forced treaties on coastal Natives, and the commercial fishery fundamentally reshaped the local economies on both sides of the new national border. New fishing technologies allowed newcomers to catch far more fish than any previous technology, often more than the canneries could even use, and to operate further out from land.

These new technologies, the dramatic growth in the commercial fishery in the 1890s and early 1900s, and the ethnic diversity of the non-Native fishery workforce created a host of new problems for fishers and governments. In chapter 4, "Fishing the Line: Border Bandits and Labor Unrest," Wadewitz explores the various responses to these new problems. Everyone involved in "the expanding canned salmon industry at the turn of the twentieth century recognized that the international border created two distinct economic, political, and regulatory regimes that could be exploited to their benefit" (p. 91). Fishers crossed the border when it got them a better price for their catch, and cannery workers would likewise work for whatever cannery offered better wages regardless of which side of the line it was on. Visible minorities, such as the Chinese, Japanese, and South Asians, whose labor and skills were in high demand in the salmon industry even when the people were not, used the porous border to make the best of (and find ways around) discriminatory legislation aimed at keeping them out. This chapter also analyzes the ways in which the borderlands setting, racial differences, and the equally important differences in the kind of gear fishers used made it nearly impossible

to unionize workers.

My favorite chapter by far is chapter 5, "Pirates of the Salish Sea," where Wadewitz discusses the many forms of banditry that took place on the Salish Sea. As technology and regulatory regimes increasingly favored the big companies and owners over the independent fishers and smaller operations, the "fish pirates" took matters into their own hands to retain some small measure of control over the "two precious commodities in this western waterscape: salmon and space" (p. 123). They stole fish from traps and docks when they could, and sometimes stole nets and boats too. They bribed the poorly paid night watchmen that the big companies hired to guard the traps. The "fish rustlers" then turned around and sold the fish to the highest bidder on either side of the line. The pirates had the advantage of knowing the water better, and usually had faster and more maneuverable boats than the officials who tried to stop them. The border patrols were sorely underfunded and understaffed until the early twentieth century, and local juries tended to sympathize with the pirates even when they did get caught. All you need to know about the difficulties of managing a mobile resource in a water borderland is summed up in the following example from this chapter: "In one case the defense attorney laid three salmon on a courtroom table and asked the trap owner to identify his stolen property; when the plaintiff was understandably unable to do so, the case was dismissed" (p. 142).

Wadewitz's final chapter, "Policing the Border," describes the various efforts to regulate the fishery and the fishers that began in the 1890s. These efforts were rarely effective however, and there was little real cross-border cooperation until after WWI when the United States and Canada finally "confronted the costs involved in drawing borders so disconnected from the natural world" (p. 167). Her conclusion then follows the story of the West Coast salmon fishery through the twentieth century, briefly outlining the significant challenges the fish stocks and the industry faced and the ongoing efforts to solve the problems.

At the risk of straining the metaphor, her book explores uncharted waters and does so masterfully. Wadewitz has just set the bar incredibly high for future historians who also want to turn their backs to the land and gaze out to those coastal waters.

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