

Andrew K. Frank, A. Glenn Crothers, eds.. *Borderland Narratives: Negotiation and Accommodation in North America's Contested Spaces, 1500-1850*. Contested Boundaries Series. Tallahassee: University Press of Florida, 2017. 224 pp. \$74.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8130-5495-7.

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Frontier and borderland regions have fascinated American historians since the beginning of our discipline in the nineteenth century. With that fascination has come continual argument and re-assessment, from competing theories to lively debates over the basic terminology. In the introduction to *Borderland Narratives: Negotiation and Accommodation in North America's Contested Spaces, 1500-1800*, editors Andrew K. Frank and A. Glenn Crothers helpfully survey the state of the field. Originally, "borderlands history" denoted a focus on Spanish-speaking colonial efforts and their neglected role in the history of America. Herbert E. Bolton's landmark *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest* (1921) served as an important counterweight to Frederick Jackson Turner's rather Anglo-centric and deterministic (though enormously influential) frontier thesis, first publicized in 1894. Whereas Turner saw the frontier "as a process that ultimately came to an end" (p. 2), Bolton saw borderlands as areas where a process, multicultural interaction, took place. Eventually, the term "borderlands" became popular as a replacement for "frontier," a term that had significant trouble escaping the long arm of Turner's increasingly discredited usage. In recent scholarship, the increasingly broad geographic definition of borderlands

history places "Native Americans and Europeans as full partners in the process" (p. 7), as exemplified by this collection of essays exploring the Ohio Valley, Gulf Coast, Southeast, and Missouri regions.

Rob Harper's "The Politics of Coalition Building in the Ohio Valley, 1765-1774" examines the complex political and cultural origins of Lord Dunmore's War (1774). While Iroquois, Mingo, Delaware, and Pennsylvania authorities were all involved, it was ultimately a lopsided fight between Shawnees and Virginians, which actually resulted in ultimate disappointment for nearly all participants. Frank's "Community Convergence on the Florida Borderlands, 1780-1840" deftly dissects the complex identities and allegiances of the Seminoles, especially those of African descent. He concludes that the removal period saw a significant divergence in the attitudes of Oklahoma and Florida Seminoles regarding race and identity.

Tyler Boulware's "'Skilful Jockies' and 'Good Sadlers': Native Americans and Horses in the Southeastern Borderlands" notes that, contrary to myth, by the mid-eighteenth century, natives in the Southeast were nearly as fond of horses as those of the Great Plains. More important, "horses facilitated cross-cultural and economic exchanges while undermining the structures of authority for

both Indians and whites” (p. 70). As Indians became both consumers and traders of horses, it noticeably altered (and complicated) Indian-relations in the region. Carla Gerona’s *“Los Desparecidos in the Gulf Coast and Early Texas Borderlands”* returns to more traditional borderlands inquiry, both geographically and in examining the story of Cabeza de Vaca. But the essay’s focus on “disappearances” in this fluid region, be they Spaniards, Frenchmen, or Native Americans, brings a fresh perspective. A fleeting reference to modern casualties of the drug war and US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detainees serves as a reminder that borderlands can remain regions of harrowing loss.

Rebekah M. K. Mergenthal’s “‘Odious’ Abolitionists and ‘Insolent’ Runaways: Natives, Slaves, and Settlers in the Missouri Valley Borderland” calls for a further examination into the role that “border fixing” played in forming people’s sense of identity (p. 123). As with Frank, Mergenthal finds that identity, especially when affected by race, tribal rank, and competing national loyalties, proves a complicated and fluid concept that defies easy categorization. In Michael Pasquier’s “French Missionary Priests and Borderlands Catholicism in the Diocese of Bardstown during the Early Nineteenth Century,” Catholic priests from Baltimore must negotiate an array of frontiers—religious/cultural, material, geographic, temporal, and national—when relocated to Bardstown, Kentucky. In addition to a starkly rustic existence for which they were not well prepared, the priests had to compete with nearby Protestant and Native American competition, and even their own crises of faith and dashed expectations.

Philip N. Mulder’s “Borderlands Redemption: Protestants Negotiate the Ohio River Valley” traces the careers of Presbyterian minister Joseph Badger of Connecticut; John Taylor, a Baptist missionary from Virginia; and the Methodist Peter Cartwright. They battled wild animals, lack of interest from natives and newcomers, and harsh

travel conditions. In assessing their differing strategies and expectations—Badger hoping his religion would transform the region, Taylor and Cartwright hoping the borderland region would purify their faiths—Mulder concludes that “for some, the Ohio River Valley was a place to be redeemed; for others, it was a redemptive place” (p. 183). Julie Winch’s “‘The Mark Unmistakably Fixed upon Their Brows’: A Free Family of Color on America’s Borderlands” dissects the tangled family history of the Clamorgan clan, a Norman French family that became intertwined with African Americans in the St. Louis region. Free people of color had to negotiate their own brand of borderland, as questions of race and legal status could prove quite complicated, particularly when regions changed national allegiance.

Frank and Crothers argue in favor of a more expansive definition of “borderlands,” and the selected essays help illustrate the utility of such an approach. The analysis of boundaries, whether physical, geographical, ethnic, legal, temporal, or gender-based, can definitely benefit from the techniques employed by these contributors.

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