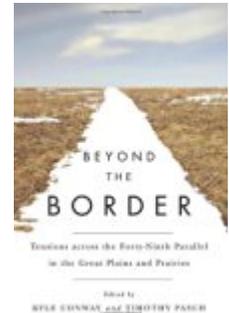


Kyle Conway, Timothy Pasch, eds.. *Beyond the Border: Tensions across the Forty-Ninth Parallel in the Great Plains and Prairies*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013. xi + 250 pp. \$29.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-7735-4131-3.



Reviewed by Geoffrey Hale

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Commissioned by Seth Offenbach (Bronx Community College, The City University of New York)

Beyond the Border is an edited collection of essays addressing border-related topics centered on the northern Great Plains states and prairie provinces of the United States and Canada respectively—although three essays in the collection address case studies or topics outside this regional frame. The volume, edited by Kyle Conway and Timothy Pasch of the University of North Dakota's Department of Communications, engages numerous “paradoxes” (p. 3) of the U.S.-Canadian border in a region once described by Joel Garreau in *The Nine Nations of North America* (1981) as the northern part of the continent's “Breadbasket” and the central part of its “Empty Quarter” distinguished, among other things, by relative surpluses and scarcities of water.[1]

The volume is divided into three segments, each with three essays, framed around distinct themes, and with introductory and concluding essays by the editors. The section on the “mediated” border, a play on words, frames the interaction of simultaneous features of cultural and economic attraction and differentiation through selected

media portrayals of the Canada-U.S. border and various approaches to their production, packaging, and marketing. The section on the “political” border addresses three case studies on the management of boundary waters along the 49th parallel, including a historical study of a water-related boundary dispute on the British Columbia (BC)-Washington border, and very different studies of water policies in the western and eastern plains/prairie borderlands. The section on the “native” border presents three distinct indigenous perspectives of the border, drawing on different intellectual and disciplinary approaches. Contributions are divided equally between American and Canadian-based scholars, and between established scholars and doctoral candidates spanning at least eight distinct disciplines and fields of study. All three sections contain contemporary and historical analyses.

The strengths of the volume derive from its engagement of multiple perspectives of borders and borderlands. Its varying accounts reflect the fact that competing cultural and historical per-

spectives of the border have contributed to the development of multiple borders (conceptual or administrative), which reflect the cumulative efforts of individuals and groups to enforce, refashion, negotiate, or negate them according to their own interests or preferences.

However, the editors have not really succeeded in fashioning any effective dialogue among these perspectives or in providing much of a voice to borderlands' residents themselves--as opposed to the projection or appropriation of voices by representatives of various disciplines. Apart from some of its indigenous peoples, the voices of borderlands residents surface only intermittently in most parts of the volume, most effectively in its historical chapters. At best, this mixture of voices may contribute to a partial understanding of the diverse perspectives or interests of multiple "others" among the varied communities (and ecosystems) scattered along the 49th parallel from the Sault Ste. Marie borderlands of Lake Superior to the communities of Washington State's Puget Sound and the Lower Mainland of BC. However, at times, readers may have the sense of listening in on others' private conversations as they face away from their neighbors (or the border) to sort through their communal dialogues or personal musings in various academic dialects.

The chapters of the mediated border address the often contested intersection of culture, identity, and the economics of what Canadians call "cultural industries." Sociologist Serra Tinic's discussion of Canadian cultural policies and television programming contrasts their historical emphasis on "negative identity ... the propensity to define yourself by what you are not" with cross-cutting incentives and tensions of promoting economically viable cultural sectors that acknowledge and accommodate Canada's distinctiveness and internal diversities, whether regional, cultural, or ideological (p. 29). Tinic notes the continuing relevance of the border as a symbol of many Canadians' historical non-Americanism or "negative

identity" in contemporary Canadian programming, something she attempts to distinguish from "anti-Americanism" (pp. 29, 37). However, Tinic does not "subscribe" to what she calls the "isolationist prescription" of the "outdated cultural imperialism thesis" beloved of many cultural nationalists resentful of popular tastes for American media and cultural products among Canadians (p. 30). Rather, she offers a more nuanced description of a borderland ethos that mediates both complementarities and tensions within and among regional, "domestic ... continental ... and global" discourses and interests within Canada's cultural industries (pp. 31-32). In particular, she points to the importance of co-production activities of American and Canadian film and television producers, which have enabled the emergence of regional production centers in Canada, particularly Vancouver, whose products are capable of penetrating wider North American and global markets. Tinic's emphasis on the emergence of distinctive regional voices with the "skills and financial resources (and all-important clout) that would allow" the latter "to develop the kinds of locally-inflected programs that they felt were under-supported by national regulators and funding agencies" involves an implicit challenge to traditionally dominant Toronto-centered perspectives of English (formerly British) Canadian identity and cultural nationalism (p. 33).

These domestic challenges are central to discussions of Canadian culture and perspectives of the border in Christopher Cwynar's chapter. Cwynar analyzes center-periphery tensions at three levels (regional Canadian, Western-Muslim, and Canada-United States) through a discourse analysis of the Canadian sitcom *Little Mosque on the Prairie*. In doing so, he emphasizes the multiple senses of "otherness" that inform certain aspects of Canadian culture. Cwynar concludes that "*Little Mosque* suggests that Canadian television does not so much involve 'writing on the border' as negotiating between the regional, national, and international elements in play in the Canadian

landscape” (p. 65). This approach echoes Tinic’s response to American perceptions of Canadian anti-Americanism by suggesting, in effect, that “it’s not about you; it’s about ‘us.’”

Paul Moore’s historical discussion of the “first year of moving pictures” (p. 71) distribution in Manitoba, North Dakota, and adjoining states and territories explores the competing patterns of cross-border and domestic Canadian distribution networks for live theater and motion pictures, and Canadian entrepreneurs’ use of the latter to promote nationalistic themes. Tensions between nationalist uses of cultural programming and consumer tastes for American programming among Canadian consumers have been a major emphasis of cross-border communications and cultural studies ever since. Moore’s chapter provides an interesting historical anchor for more contemporary discussions of cultural policies, and societal and commercial linkages and differences.

Water—including its fermented variants—and water-related policies provide the unifying focus of *Beyond the Border*’s discussion of the “political border” and the challenges of managing competing interests and priorities on both sides. If there is a unifying theme that cuts across the three chapters, it is Paul Sando’s observation that effective cooperation between or among cross-border communities is most likely on issues that involve a single, common objective within a limited geographical area. Such cooperation becomes progressively more difficult with the proliferation of policy goals and engaged interests involving the allocation of costs or the redistribution of benefits (including policy autonomy or discretion) across more groups and a wider area.

Brandon Dimmel’s historical vignette of cross-cutting concerns over cross-border pollution (effluents from fish processing and the prohibition-era liquor trade) on the Washington-BC border considers the ways that border management and cooperation (or lack thereof) between border communities became salient issues in the years

before the First World War. It offers useful insights into community dynamics involving conflicts between autonomy and interdependence which persist in contemporary bilateral law enforcement efforts to curb exports of BC’s largest (intoxicating) cash crop.

Michelle Morris’s chapter addresses the management of water shortages, particularly in the Milk River basin that sprawls across Alberta, north-central Montana, and southwestern Saskatchewan, and long-established water sharing arrangements under the International Joint Commission’s 1921 Order of Apportionment. Morris competently explores the effects of very different legal and bureaucratic systems on managing competing domestic interests in each country (especially Alberta) which enforce boundaries on cross-border cooperation in water management.

Sando’s chapter details the growing complexity of interests and policy goals in managing excess water supply through flood control measures in the Souris River and Red River basins of North Dakota, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba—and spillovers from the Devil’s Lake drainage basin which have become an international *cause célèbre* in recent years. Given the different narratives prevalent on each side of the border, Canadian readers will gain greater perspective on the challenges and trade-offs of effective water management and environmental protection over a much wider geographical area than coordinated through the relatively successful International Souris Board since the 1970s. Widening the scope of cross-border cooperation substantially increases the number of competing interests that must be reconciled on each side of the border—many of which have recourse to domestic legal (or regulatory) processes and remedies that generally trump cross-border agreements in both countries. Sando’s analysis could be applied productively to current domestic and bilateral discussions for the possible extension of the Columbia River Treaty.

The three chapters on the “native border,” while offering a variety of insights, are the most internally dissonant of the volume. They reflect a mix of different disciplinary perspectives; the fragmentation and multiple forms of alienation experienced within contemporary Native American and aboriginal communities; and the essentially contested nature of borders imposed on traditional native lands through historic processes of colonization, (re)settlement, and sometimes conquest. Zalfa Feghali’s chapter compares the circumstances of indigenous nations straddling U.S. borders with both Canada and Mexico, and cross-border rights of passage and trade recognized or extended under the Jay Treaty of 1794 and the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo respectively. Her chapter attempts to address the limitations of these guarantees, which have been challenged to some degree by tighter security provisions since 9/11, through discussions of indigenous literary discourses, to suggest that for many native peoples, “borders are perceived as ‘mere lines drawn upon the water’” (p. 165). Joshua Miner addresses the literary dimension of this discourse through an extended discussion of the writings of four contemporary indigenous authors—reflecting elements of what Feghali calls a “dialogue of resistance” (p. 160).

Phil Bellfy’s chapter provides an extended historical analysis of the papal and colonial proclamations and treaties that underpinned first the extension of European claims of sovereignty to North America, and then the recognition of and land cessions by indigenous peoples. Bellfy identifies a series of ambiguities and anomalies in treaties defining the boundaries of territories under British and U.S. authority, and in land cession treaties in the regions of Lakes Superior and Huron to justify claims by Anishnaabeg (Chippewa and Ojibwe) peoples to a common territorial sovereignty over lands in the Sault Ste. Marie border region of Michigan and Ontario. These claims have been recognized, at least in part, by a 2010 U.S. administrative law agreement to implement

the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative—although the government of Canada has yet to conclude any similar agreement.

A concluding chapter, by the editors, strings together a historical discussion of the challenges of drawing the border on the eastern Great Plains, west of Lake of the Woods, with “alarmist” coverage of the recent introduction of unmanned drone aircraft to patrol the border, and the challenges of cyber-security—whether to personal security from criminals or to personal privacy from security agencies (p. 233). As this reviewer and his wife were both subject to identity theft while driving across North Dakota last year, probably enabled by cyber-criminals, it may be trite but necessary to observe that there are more angles to these knotty policy problems than are readily grasped by the limits imposed by particular academic disciplines or ideological ghettos—whether of securocrats or academics.

In summary, *Beyond the Border* is an intriguing collection that contains many valuable and provocative insights of different aspects of cross-border relations, historical and contemporary, in the sparsely populated border regions between northern Michigan/Ontario and the Pacific Coast. However, its overarching view of borders as artificial and often arbitrary constructs, while an unremarkable expression of outsider discourse, provides few insights that would help either policymakers or ordinary citizens to reconcile effective border policymaking with the engagement of citizens’ “lived experiences” (p. 223) in ways that reduce the intrusiveness of security (or other) processes imposed from distant national capitals. Indeed, taken together, the volume’s contributors suggest that pressures to manage or enforce the border are as likely to come from competing domestic interests *within* the region as they are to be imposed from *outside*, and that the challenge of building responsive cross-border communities inherently increases with their size and diversity,

whether of demographic, geographic, or policy conditions.

Note

[1]. Joel Garreau, *The Nine Nations of North America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), 287-361.

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