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**Review of *The Borderlands of the American and Canadian Wests: Essays on Regional History of the Forty~ ninth Parallel* Edited by Sterling Evans**

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good and useful one. Despite its claim to be an examination of the "Regional History of the Forty-ninth Parallel," most of the nineteen essays focus exclusively on Great Plains history (about six have a decidedly non-Plains focus, while a few address more general area-wide topics). The value of the book is in its commitment to exploring how the imposition of the border affected people throughout the region, given the reality that no natural physical features exist to mark such an arbitrary division of peoples referred to as "Children of a Common Mother" on the "Peace Arch" straddling the Washington-British Columbia border. Yet, as editor Sterling Evans reminds us in his afterword, the area's Indigenous people may not be inclined to accept such sentiments, and this recognition is the foundation for what follows.

While certainly not true of all of the book's contributions—Bruce Miller's essay on the effects of the border on West Coast Indians and First Nations people being a commendable exception—when an essay addresses issues encompassing the Indigenous population, readers may feel that its author is relegating Native people to positions of "reactors" to settler initiatives, ignoring the real possibility that Indigenous people are often the main "actors" in the unfolding events that shaped the lives of everyone in the region.

Let me point out a few instances where I see this problem manifesting itself. Consider, for example, these statements by Marian C. McKenna in "Above the Blue Line": "Traders venturing into this territory risked losing not only their goods but also their scalps" (82); "the territory was the home of many warlike tribes" (95); or this (quoting the novelist Wallace Stegner) "the 49th parallel [as enacted by law] was the beginning of a civilization in what had been a lawless wilderness" (104). What exactly do these characterizations bring to mind? Now that you've conjured up those images, what do you make of these statements, also by McKenna? "[The traders] were mainly responsible for the frequent clashes and atrocities in this region"(82); "The white traders did not hesitate to use their rifles on

*The Borderlands of the American and Canadian Wests: Essays on Regional History of the Forty-ninth Parallel.* Edited by Sterling Evans. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006. xxxv + 386 pp. Maps, figures, notes, index. \$49.95.

Before getting into my admittedly narrowly constructed remarks, I wish the reader to understand that overall this volume is a

the Natives, whether wantonly or in drunken abandon. . . . [and] shamefully abused the men and debauched the women" (82); "In a single region of [Montana], there were more than thirty Indian massacres after 1860" (95), apparently as "the authorities went about finding methods of pacifying the Natives" (84) due to their being "human obstacles to future white occupation" (96). McKenna also explains that "the Blackfoot were *conciliated sufficiently* to tolerate the construction of Fort Benton" by the 1840s (86-87, emphasis added).

I find references to Native people as scalping raiders in need of "conciliation" wholly stereotypical and, given the descriptions of the traders and settlers of the region, not entirely plausible. Had the editor either sent this essay to a First Nations scholar for review or included essays from a First Nations perspective dealing with this admittedly complex history, the worst of these stereotypes might have been avoided.

Another example of the problems inherent in approaching a study of this region by failing to include "Other" perspectives can be found in the ways the Riel-led "activities" of both 1870 (in Manitoba) and 1885 (in Saskatchewan) are referred to. In the index, the reader will find entries for the "Red River Uprising" (the 1870 "activity") and the "North-West Rebellion of 1885." "Uprising" and "rebellion" are loaded terms, I believe, intended to impugn the motives of the Métis under Louis Riel in 1870, and the Métis and their Native allies in 1885, giving legitimacy to the "civilizing" thrust of the British-Canadians during this turbulent process of "Taming the West."

While "uprising" or "rebellion" appear about a dozen times in this volume in reference to the Métis, I could find only one counter-example—the use of "the Riel *Resistance* in Red River" (147, emphasis added) by Gerhard J. Ens in his essay "The Border, the Buffalo, and the Métis of Montana." Curiously, in the same sentence, Ens uses the phrase "Riel Rebellion in the Northwest." Had the volume been reviewed by Métis scholars (or, barring that, by scholars who approach the history of this era with a keen awareness of the Métis perspective of this

history), the distortions engendered by such "dominant culture" characterizations might have been muted or countered.

Readers of this review may be dismayed that I am spending so much time "picking nits" over terminology that many will find wholly acceptable, which is exactly my point. While the editor as well as the individual contributors should be commended for breaking new ground by publishing "under one cover an interdisciplinary understanding of the region's transboundary history of interactions" (xxi), the volume would have been greatly strengthened—and their goal more comprehensively met—had they included the perspectives of *all* of the region's actors. The perspective of the region's Native peoples is painfully absent; consequently, that laudable goal of providing readers with the "richer understandings" (38) promised by Theodore Binnema in the volume's opening essay, "The Case for Cross-National and Comparative History," has fallen somewhat short of its potential.

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