

How Canadian Historians Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love the Americans!

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REVIEW ESSAYS/NOTES CRITIQUES

How Canadian Historians Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love the Americans!

DURING THE PAST DECADE THERE HAS been a revolution in Canadian historiography. From the 1950s to the 1970s most Canadian historians worried about the growing economic and cultural integration of Canada with the United States. Indeed, the most influential historians of the post-war period were undoubtedly Donald Creighton and W.L. Morton. Both viewed the United States as an aggressively imperialist power determined to impose its cultural values upon Canada and warned their colleagues about the danger of complacency in the face of the American threat. Yet in the past decade these fears have gradually receded. In the more recent studies of American-Canadian relations, American policy is seen as less aggressive and more benign and the integration, both economic and cultural, of Canada and the United States as inevitable and perhaps even desirable. Yet historiography — even revisionist historiography — is frequently cyclical. What emerges from the recent historiography is not an entirely new approach to the history of American-Canadian relations but a more sophisticated variation on some older themes.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries the first generation of English-Canadian historians were mainly gifted amateurs, all white males, all drawn from the upper middle class, and all of British origin, frequently quite recent British origin. Virtually all of the work they produced has been displaced by later studies which reflect a more sophisticated methodology and greater depth of research. In his formative article on English-Canadian historiography J.M.S. Careless described them as the “Blood is Thicker than Water” school. Yet for all their faults (and they were many), as Careless points out, they “contributed something of lasting significance” to Canadian history, “the idea that Canada represented a declaration of independence from the United States, an attempt to build a second community outside the American republic, and one marked off from it, indeed, by the longer persistence of the imperial tie”.¹ They understood instinctively what later historians have come to forget, or at least to downplay — the strong emotional and cultural appeal to English-speaking Canadians of being part of a Greater Britain.² Later generations of historians, obsessed with finding a justification for the existence of Canada, would place considerable emphasis on the role of geography in shaping Canada’s identity. The pre-World War One generation certainly believed that Canada’s northern climate had helped to shape the Canadian character, but they put greater emphasis on cultural rather than environmental factors for they defined

1 J.M.S. Careless, “Frontierism, Metropolitanism, and Canadian History”, *Canadian Historical Review*, XXV (1954), p. 3. Actually I would include in this school virtually all of the pre-war historians, including those whom Careless puts in the “School of Political Nationhood”.

2 On this point see my “Whatever happened to the British Empire?”, *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, vol. 4 (1993), pp. 3-32.

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themselves quite clearly as “British” Canadians with a set of institutions, values and even myths distinct from those of the United States. Although they desired to “build up a Dominion on the basis of English institutions, in the closest possible connection with the mother country”,³ their attitude toward the Americans was ambivalent. Incidents like the Alaska Boundary Dispute confirmed their fears about the American commitment to manifest destiny. Yet they also viewed the United States as essentially a product of an earlier phase of British settlement and therefore as reflecting many of the same cultural values as their own. Few of them were anti-American in any meaningful sense of that term, and they hoped for a closer Anglo-American rapprochement, even while rejecting any form of closer union with the United States.

Following the First World War, Canadian historiography underwent a significant change of direction with the emergence of a new generation of historians, virtually all of them native-born, although most of them were professionally trained at graduate schools in the United States or Britain and a number of them ended up teaching outside Canada, particularly in the United States. Though rarely opposed to continuing the imperial connection in a looser form, they supported the drive of the Canadian government in the 1920s for greater autonomy and they were strongly influenced by American intellectual currents, including the emphasis on environmental determinism then popular among American historians. Although Canadian historians quickly came to the conclusion that the frontier thesis of Frederick Jackson Turner could not successfully be applied to Canada, they downplayed the significance of the imperial connection and stressed the importance of the North American environment in shaping the Canadian identity. In their minds, geography, not cultural influences emanating from Europe, was the primary determinant of the Canadian identity. Canada, as John W. Dafoe and Frank Underhill declared, was an “American” nation. As committed internationalists, they abhorred the destructive impact of modern nationalism, which they saw as responsible for the First World War, and they pointed to the relationship between Canada and the United States, two countries with the longest undefended border in the world, as a model which other nations might emulate. Quite naturally this approach — which Donald Creighton later dubbed “the continental approach to Canadian history” — emphasized the close and friendly relations between the two countries and the common roots and shared experience of the American and Canadian peoples.⁴

These were the themes embodied in the most ambitious scholarly project of the 1930s, the 25 volume series on *The Relations of Canada and the United States* sponsored by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and published by Yale University Press in the United States and the Ryerson Press in Canada. As Carl Berger has pointed out, “The whole project was initiated, largely supervised, and partly written by Canadian-born scholars in the United States aided by

3 Sir John G. Bourinot, *Canada under British Rule 1760-1905* (Cambridge, 1909), p. 279.

4 See Donald Creighton, “John Bartlet Brebner: A Man of his Times”, in *The Passionate Observer: Selected Writings* (Toronto, 1980), pp. 160-70.

scholars who were American-trained and living in Canada".⁵ Perhaps the book which best captures the spirit of the series is *The Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples* (New Haven and Toronto, 1940), which was begun by Marcus L. Hansen but completed by John Bartlet Brebner, one of the two editors of the series. The book traces the movement of populations back and forth across the border, which is seen as an artificial and unnatural boundary dividing two peoples who share a common history and an almost identical culture — "North Americans all, and eminently capable of allegiance to one country one day and to another the next" (p. x). One of the central themes of the book is that the natural lines of trade and communication in North America run north-south, not east-west; the differences between Canadians or Americans living in different regions of their respective countries are thus seen as greater than the differences between Canadians and Americans living in the contiguous regions of the two countries. The same theme is found in Charles C. Tansill, *Canadian-American Relations 1875-1911* (New Haven and Toronto, 1943) and L. Ethan Ellis, *Reciprocity 1911: A Study in Canadian-American Relations* (New Haven and Toronto, 1939). Both books admitted that during the 1911 debate over reciprocity some Americans made inflammatory speeches, but these are dismissed as mere rhetoric which played into the hands of Canadian vested interests who, for their own selfish reasons, persuaded Canadians to reject an agreement which would have benefitted both countries by bringing about the integration of two economies that were naturally complementary, not competitive. Although a number of the books in the series dealt with tensions and crises along the American-Canadian border, almost all the authors emphasized that such conflicts were accidental, did not reflect any serious long-term imperialist ambitions on the part of the United States, and were moderated by good sense on both sides. The myth that Canada and the United States had always been good neighbours was thus sanctioned by the series, despite abundant evidence that this had not always been the case.

One book in the Carnegie series did not blend at all well with the others and that was *Empire of the St Lawrence* (Toronto, Macmillan, 1937), written by a young Canadian scholar, Donald Grant Creighton. Creighton was not immune to the intellectual currents of the interwar years and he was strongly influenced by the emphasis on environmental and geographical factors in defining the natural boundaries of nations. But he was also strongly influenced by his colleague at Toronto, Harold Innis, whose work on the cod fisheries and the fur trade focused on the extent to which societies in the New World were originally developed to produce staples for the Old and how the pursuit of these staples shaped the contours of the new societies. In *Empire of the St Lawrence* Creighton built on these insights to argue that Canada existed not in defiance of geography but because of the existence of the St Lawrence-Great Lakes system, which was in competition with rival

5 See Carl Berger, "Internationalism, Continentalism, and the Writing of History: Comments on the Carnegie Series on the Relations of Canada and the United States", in Richard A. Preston, ed., *The Influence of the United States on Canadian Development: Eleven Case Studies* (Durham, N.C., 1972), pp. 33-54 and Gordon T. Stewart, *The American Response to Canada since 1776* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1992), pp. 6-11.

systems to the south for commercial penetration of the continent. It was this rivalry which led to the creation of two distinct and competitive nations on the northern part of North America. In the period following World War Two, Creighton further developed what came to be known as the Laurentian thesis, attacking the continentalists for arguing that Canada had always been "a typical North American community, virtually indistinguishable from the United States".⁶

In the 1930s Creighton was something of a voice in the wilderness, but during the 1950s and 1960s the climate of opinion in Canada again changed. World War Two had seen a growing integration of the Canadian and American economies and an increasing number of Canadians were concerned by the political and cultural implications of living next door to a superpower. Although most Canadians shared with most Americans a commitment to contain Soviet expansionism, many Canadian intellectuals were disturbed by the Cold War mentality of the United States and appalled by American policy in China, Cuba and particularly in Vietnam. Some Canadian historians were also influenced by American revisionists, like Richard Van Alstyne, William Appleman Williams and Gabriel Kolko, who were extremely critical of American foreign policy and located its roots in an imperialist past. In this new atmosphere Creighton's work struck a responsive chord. One of his colleagues at Toronto, C.P. Stacey, demolished the myth of the undefended border in *The Undefended Border: The Myth and the Reality* (Ottawa, CHA pamphlet, 1960) and another, R. Craig Brown, defended Macdonald's National Policy and showed that it applied to more than tariffs in *Canada's National Policy, 1883-1900: A Study in Canadian-American Relations* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1964). W.L. Morton, who had originally been critical of the regional implications of the Laurentian thesis, became increasingly sympathetic and joined with Creighton to edit the multi-volume Centennial History of Canada series. Creighton's approach influenced a whole generation of younger Canadian historians (including myself). But in his later years Creighton's attacks on the continental approach and his denunciation of American influences became more and more strident and intemperate. His last major work, written for the Centennial Series, *The Forked Road: Canada 1939-1957* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1976), was a prolonged attack on Canadian politicians and diplomats for failing to stop the drift into the American Empire.

Inevitably these comments produced a reaction. Initially it was a mild one. No one was more stung by Creighton's criticisms than the officials at the Department of External Affairs, who rejected the notion that they had betrayed Canada. In *Life with Uncle: The Canadian-American Relationship* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1981), one of the most insightful analyses of the problems facing Canada, John W. Holmes, a former diplomat, denounced the "feckless kind of nationalism" (p. 5) that had marked the preceding decades and argued for greater realism on the part of Canadians, emphasizing how successful Canada had been both in protecting its vital interests in negotiations with the United States and in influencing American policies internationally. Continentalism, he suggested, was

6 Creighton, *The Passionate Observer*, p. 166.

“a force of nature” and the objective of the Canadian government must be “to control and discipline that force rather than to encourage it”. Thus “rules, commitments, or even institutions ... designed to reduce conflict” were not necessarily intended to bring the two countries closer together but “to regulate forces which, unless a Canadian place is staked out, would inevitably erode our sovereignty and our identity” (p. 43). Holmes argued that conflict and competition between the United States and Canada was “natural and inevitable” but he also suggested that Canada had survived because of “the benign element in Americans at large” (p. 44). What one might describe as the “benign” interpretation of continentalism gradually became more popular during the later 1980s. By the end of the decade America had disentangled itself from Vietnam, the Cold War was slowly grinding to a halt and most Canadians had come to accept, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, that there was no longer a viable alternative to economic integration with the United States. In this altered environment the scholarship on the history of Canadian-American relations has begun to shift dramatically.

One emphasis of the recent scholarship is a reassessment of American intentions toward Canada. In *United States Expansionism and British North America 1775-1871* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1988), Reginald C. Stuart, a specialist in American history teaching in Canada, argues that Canadians have exaggerated the threat posed by American expansionism. “At the level of national policy-making,” he insists, “territorial expansion was primarily opportunistic and defensive” (p. 5). He dismisses as unwarranted the historical reputation acquired by Revolutionary Americans “as aggressive conquerors casting covetous glances at Canada and Nova Scotia” and interprets the 1775 invasion of Canada as “a strategic defense with only overtones of imperial ambition” (p. 10). American expansion into the Northwest after 1783 arose out of a fear of the continuing British presence in the region and the American invasion of Canada during the War of 1812-14 was “a defensive expansionism arising from the circumstances of war rather than an effort to translate a territorial and political ambition into reality” (p. 60). After 1815, while many Americans might talk about absorbing British North America, these statements did not reflect government policy: “‘continentalism’ took the form of confidence in the flow of history. It was a fancy, rather than a policy to be pursued” (p. 83). No American government ever “pursued a policy of force against the British North American provinces” (p. 92) and “by 1846, if not by 1842, Anglo-American detente about sharing North America had emerged, whatever the rhetorical excesses of Manifest Destiny extremists” (p. 105). Stuart concludes that the term “American imperialism ... has little meaning if applied to American policies toward British North America between 1783 and 1871” (p. 257).

Stuart’s interpretation is echoed in *The American Response to Canada since 1776* (East Lansing, Michigan State University Press, 1992), written by Gordon T. Stewart, a specialist in Canadian history teaching in the United States. Stewart admits that for the 70 years after 1783 Canada and the United States were “bad neighbours” (p. 23), but argues that American policy-makers were motivated by defensive objectives. The outbreak of the War of 1812 “only served as confirmation to Americans that the Canadian colonies were a threatening and destabilizing force in North America” (p. 23). After 1815 Americans were obsessed with fears of

British interference and dominated by a desire to weaken Canadian ties with Britain; even in 1911 “far from being a byproduct of rapprochement, the reciprocity policy was, in part, a fearful reaction to Canada’s revitalization within the Empire” (p. 104). Gradually such fears receded in the interwar years as the Canadian economy became increasingly integrated with the American and by the end of the Second World War Stewart describes the American view of the relationship as one of “cooperative dependency” (p. 162). That relationship was threatened during the Diefenbaker years, but Stewart argues that the evidence for an American plot to oust Diefenbaker from power is “not compelling” (p. 164). Indeed, from the defence crisis of 1962-63 to the Free Trade Agreement of 1988 “American officials and cabinet members hardly thought it was necessary to have a policy for Canada” (p. 167). Stewart concludes with an insightful chapter assessing the permanent features and recurring patterns in the American response to Canada. These he defines as “the goal of disengaging Canada from the British Empire” (p. 185) and the belief that “geographical forces, if allowed to operate without artificial hindrance, would naturally draw Canada into a close and cooperative relationship with the United States” (p. 186). Stewart dismisses as “effusive oratory ... directed to a domestic audience” (p. 190) the annexationist sentiments of American politicians. He admits that “an incipient imperialist ideology with respect to Canada” (p. 196) has existed in the United States since the end of the War of 1812, based upon the view “that the United States had the right to dominate the continent”, but since “Canadian governments led by freely elected, experienced, and well-educated politicians, advised by competent officials, chose to follow the path of cooperation with the United States”, it is “unproductive to classify American policy with respect to Canada as imperialism” (p. 197). The critical period in the relationship was not 1935-1988 but 1763-1812, for what had been the French colony of Canada, a colony “developed in harmony with the geography of North America”, was gradually sealed off “from the natural grain of the continent”. Canada had a base for development, but “it was a stunted base” (p. 199) and not even Confederation could alter the fact that “the United States was the dominant continental power”. Thus free trade and continental integration were inevitable: “In North America, geography is winning out over history” (p. 200).

The books by Stewart and Stuart are reminiscent of the volumes in the Carnegie Series, but the research is deeper and the analysis more sophisticated. They provide important correctives to the rather simplistic interpretation found in many of the earlier studies. America was not a world power at the moment of its creation in 1783 and both books are right to emphasize that American policy toward Canada was partly shaped by fears about British intentions and a continuing desire to disentangle Canada from the Empire. Both authors try very hard to downplay the significance of annexationist sentiment. They employ the “smoking gun” theory of history; since at no time did America have a formal policy of annexing Canada, then clearly there was no consuming desire to do so. Evidence which supports this more benign interpretation of American policy is endorsed as representing the genuine American opinion; statements to the contrary by American politicians are dismissed as electioneering rhetoric and as unrepresentative. Of course, all historians select the evidence they need to support an interpretation, but at times

both Stuart and Stewart resort to what might be described as special pleading. By 1846, Stewart notes, "the United States had secured its border against British North America" (p. 37) and "no longer felt as threatened by Canada as they had during the early years of independence" (p. 53), but "the old American view of Canada as a martial colony" continued into the 1860s, along with "a troubling awareness that Canada was persisting in her efforts to become a rival power on the continent" (p. 74). "American expansion was deemed to be in harmony with nature and geography; British and Canadian expansion was viewed as artificially instigated by imperial designs to check American growth" (p. 37). How naughty of first Britain and then Canada not to recognize that God and Nature had predetermined that America had a manifest destiny to occupy the North American continent! Indeed, the very concept of defensive expansionism is based upon an acceptance of the view that America had a right to expand and to obliterate anything that stood in its way. Both books accept that American expansionism cannot be described as imperialistic because it was natural and inevitable, not a result of human designs and deliberate policy.

Manifest Destiny, Reg Stuart writes, was "more than mere imperialism — the rule of alien lands and peoples for profit — and meant more than the annexation of contiguous territories. Americans believed in self-determination, and popular constitutional arguments denied the federal government the licence to seize foreign territory at will" (p. 98). Really! Well, actions speak louder than words and when told that Americans in the 19th century were not imperialistic and believed in self-determination, my immediate reaction is: go tell it to the Native people they dispossessed, go tell it to the French and Black inhabitants of Florida and Louisiana who were absorbed into the American Republic without consultation, go tell it to the Mexican settlers in New Mexico and California who were acquired by conquest and whose land titles were ignored despite the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, go ask the Puerto Ricans and the native Hawaiians whether they were consulted about becoming Americans. The very expression "defensive expansionism" is a contradiction in terms. It is true that after the generous peace settlement of 1783 the British government sought to erect barriers against any further expansion by the American Republic, but there was no threat to the existing American boundaries after Jay's Treaty of 1794. It was *lebensraum* the Americans wanted. After 1815 the British were on the defensive and during the Webster-Ashburton and Oregon negotiations they bent over backwards to satisfy the acquisitive Republic, in the case of Oregon even accepting American claims which had no historic validity over territory in which virtually no Americans lived. After 1846 there were no major revisions in the American-Canadian border, but only in retrospect is it clear that there would not be. And the Americans did not acquire Alaska in 1867 because they liked snow and ice.

For a very different and much more convincing perspective one should turn to the first two volumes of D.W. Meinig's projected four-volume study of *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*. Meinig presents American expansionism as a form of imperialism, little different from European imperialism elsewhere. In the first volume, *Atlantic America, 1492-1800* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1986), Meinig adroitly linked European imperial

expansion into North and South America, the Caribbean and Africa and focused on the imperial rivalries between the European states and their subjects for control over the territory and resources of the Americas. In *Continental America, 1800-1867* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1993) he carries on this theme, casting the United States as one of the key imperial players. In the end the Americans not only pushed aside all their European rivals but also the Native Americans and Mexicans who stood in their path. Why, he asks, is this surprising? After all, the United States “was an outgrowth of a vigorously expanding Europe, and it had been fitted out at its birth with even more effective tools for rapid advance” (p. 197). Meinig rejects the notion that in its drive across the continent America was acting out of self-defence and that its intentions toward its neighbours were benign, even if American expansionism was frequently “rationalized as a means of self-preservation” (p. 203). Although he agrees that the annexation of Canada was “never accepted as a specific policy objective by any administration” after the War of 1812-14 (p. 203), he warns against the “simple categorization of *private* and *government* modes of expansion implied in the common mythology. Governments may make use of private individuals or groups in informal or secret ways (as was notorious in some filibuster cases); citizens may act in the belief (true or false) that they are not only serving their own interests but in some larger sense tacitly doing the government’s will as well; and of course the two may find their separate initiatives converging into mutually reinforcing effort” (p. 203). Imperialism is about territorial expansion but territory may be acquired by purchase, sometimes accompanied by violence or the threat of violence if one’s neighbours refuse to sell; by “the assertion of claims and diplomatic compromise”; by military conquest and annexation; by the establishment of a military protectorate followed by eventual annexation; by filibusters organized by independent groups sometimes encouraged and sometimes (at least until they are successful) discouraged by their national governments; by annexation by request from a foreign state or population; and by annexation by request from one’s own settlers once they had emigrated to foreign territory and become the dominant population (pp. 203-209).

Meinig is primarily concerned with the emergence of the United States as the dominant power on the North American continent and he thus focuses on the successful application by the United States of each of these forms of imperial expansion. Although he does devote a chapter to the creation of Confederation, he deals only peripherally with American-Canadian relations. Nonetheless, the Americans attempted to use almost all of the “modes of expansion” which he describes to acquire parts of Canada. America was never able to purchase Canada because the British could not be forced to sell, but at the end of the American Civil War, when the American government was demanding reparations from Britain for the losses which the North had suffered because the South had been allowed to buy ships in Britain, William Seward, the American Secretary of State, was prepared to accept Canada in lieu of financial compensation. On several occasions, particularly during the Maine-New Brunswick and Oregon boundary disputes, the United States used diplomatic pressure to acquire territory, to which its claims were weak. The United States did not acquire any Canadian territory by conquest, but it certainly tried to do so in 1775 and 1812, and whatever its formal policy after 1815

the American leadership had not abandoned the belief that sooner or later the British North American colonies would become part of the United States. The raids by the Patriot Hunters in the aftermath of the 1837 Canadian rebellions and by the Fenians in the aftermath of the American Civil War were attempted filibusters. They were unsuccessful and the American government refused to countenance the raids (just as the British government disavowed responsibility for the Jameson raid against Kruger's Republic at the end of the century), but were the leadership of the Hunters Lodges and of the Fenians really wrong in their assumption that, if they had been successful in establishing their control over British territory, American policy might have been very different? In 1812 the invasion of Upper Canada was based, in part, on the mistaken assumption that the large American-born population of Upper Canada was prepared to support it, and the Canadian government had legitimate reasons for fearing that, if British Columbia and the Prairie West were not integrated into Canada and flooded with British settlers, they might be dominated by Americans who would eventually call for annexation to the United States. Prior to the Treaty of Washington the notion that they were living next door to a benign power would have seemed nonsensical to British North Americans and it is.

In the late 19th century American intentions certainly became more benign, but the narrow focus on government discussions and agreements in Gordon Stewart's book glosses over the fact that what has concerned Canadian nationalists in the 20th century is not the fear of an American take-over but the increasing reduction of Canada to a satellite of the United States and the influence of American corporate interests, both economic and cultural, on Canada's development. The argument in Canada against both the FTA and the NAFTA had both an economic and a nationalist component. Many Canadians were concerned quite simply about whether these agreements would improve or weaken employment prospects for Canadians; in itself this had little to do with Canadian nationalism. The major argument of Canadian nationalists against both agreements was not that Canadians could not compete and prosper within a continental market but that the American government and American corporate interests (and it is not always easy to distinguish between the two) would be able to set the rules of the game and that these rules would undermine many of the social programmes and social values which distinguish Canadian society from American and deny Canada the ability to protect its cultural institutions. Of course, the implication of Stewart's argument is that geography has already determined that there is little Canadians can do to resist continental integration.

An increasing number of Canadian historians seem to agree with him. Robert Bothwell's *Canada and the United States: The Politics of Partnership* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1992) is revisionist history with a vengeance. Bothwell devotes only a chapter to the period before 1945. After 1814, he insists, Canadians had no reason to fear American annexationism: "Though individual Americans trumpeted the 'Manifest Destiny' of the United States to absorb all of North America, the American Government as such never did" (p. 3). Bothwell's major theme for the 19th century is the gradual convergence of American and Canadian societies; he emphasises every similarity (some real and some

exaggerated) he can find and concludes that “differences in lifestyle were insufficient to either explain or justify the border” (p. 5). His heroes and villains are the exact reverse of Creighton’s. Canadian politicians are condemned not for embracing free trade but for not adopting it earlier. In 1911 Canadians rejected reciprocity after a campaign “notable for its vehement British chauvinism” (p. 9). Even Mackenzie King was too “British-centred” (p. 11) to follow the sage advice of the American-born C.D. Howe, about whom Bothwell co-authored an earlier sympathetic biography, and agree to a free trade agreement in 1948 (see p. 33). But the desire of Canadian consumers to gain access to the wider variety of cheaper consumer goods advertised in American magazines and on American television could not be resisted indefinitely. Bothwell recalls nostalgically that as a child he had “an unsatisfied craving for Wheaties cereal and Crayola crayons” (p. 27), which free trade has presumably allowed him to satisfy. Actually Bothwell has some intelligent things to say about the divergence as well as convergence of Canadian and American societies in the 20th century. Moreover, while one may question his sympathetic approach to American policy during the Cold War and his unsympathetic analysis of the Diefenbaker and Trudeau governments’ attitudes toward the United States, the research is solid and the analysis worth considering, even if it is one-sided. One may even accept that, on balance, the FTA was necessary by the mid-1980s to ensure Canadian access to the American market. But it is hardly fair to call the 1988 results a referendum on free trade. If they were, then the Free Traders lost since a majority of Canadians did not vote Conservative, as Bothwell implies. Bothwell dismisses the naysayers contemptuously. “Artists and writers”, he notes, “were almost unanimously anti-American. Canadian literature was increased, if not enriched by their outpourings” (p. 151). Bothwell concludes that “the perpetuation of the division between the two countries is thus more likely than not, but not certain”. He seems little concerned one way or the other since the differences between Canada and the United States are so minor. In a line that could have been taken from *The Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples*, he declares that “For most of the time, people moved freely across the border, Canadians more than Americans, finding no very large personal differences in crossing the border” (p. 156).

For Better or Worse: Canada and the United States to the 1990s (Toronto, Copp Clark Pittman, 1991) by J.L. Granatstein and Norman Hillmer adopts a broadly similar approach but is better balanced. Granatstein and Hillmer also deal only briefly with the period before 1903, but they accept that Canadians had legitimate reasons for fearing American aggression and quote D’Arcy McGee’s famous critique of the American desire “for the acquisition of new territory” (p. 9). They also accept that long after Confederation most Americans continued to believe that Canada “could never be a real friend as long as it clung to the British and indulged in deliberately anti-American schemes such as closing the fisheries and building the Canadian Pacific Railway” (p. 22) and that American officials — like Secretary of State James Blaine — continued to hope that Canada would fall “like an apple on a tree” into American hands (p. 26). Although they approve of the creation of the International Joint Commission to resolve differences between the two countries, they note that the possibility of fairness or objectivity in the work of such bodies

“diminishes in inverse proportion to the self-interest of the larger partner” (p. 42). Clearly they sympathise with Laurier in the election of 1911, but they concede that Canadians sincerely believed that “their nationality was in danger” (p. 53).

With the decline of British power in the 20th century, Granatstein and Hillmer believe that the forces of continentalism became irresistible and they offer a convincing defence of Mackenzie King against those critics (like Creighton and Morton) who argued that he was too pro-American. They are, however, critical of “Washington’s New Insensitivity” (p. 148) to Canada after the United States entered the Second World War in 1941, noting that the Americans could be “irrational and bullying” (p. 150). Certainly they harbour no illusions about American policy. In the long run the primary goal of the American government remained to drive “a wedge into the heart of the British Empire and into the Ottawa system of British preferential tariffs” (p. 169). Yet Granatstein and Hillmer see resistance as futile and seem to sympathise with John Deutsch, who attempted to negotiate a customs union with the United States in 1948, even though it meant Canada’s economic policy would “be shaped in Washington” (p. 171). The closer the book gets to the present, the more critical the authors become of the efforts to resist continental integration. Because Alvin Hamilton, Diefenbaker’s Minister of Northern Affairs, insisted on his right to visit a DEW Line base operated by Americans and to have the American flag lowered and the Canadian flag raised, he is criticized for his “truculence” (pp. 195-6). The authors accept that Howard Green, advised by his undersecretary at the Department of External Affairs, was right to raise questions about Canada’s decision to join the nuclear club (see p. 200) and that the Kennedy administration set out to “teach Diefenbaker a lesson on how to deal with the power of the American empire” and committed “an unacceptable intrusion into the affairs of a friendly sovereign state” in 1963 (p. 213). Nonetheless, they clearly feel the primary responsibility for the crisis in American-Canadian relations must rest with Diefenbaker (and his anti-American wife!) and view with relief the election of Mike Pearson after he had jettisoned his own opposition to arming the Bomarc and the proliferation of nuclear weapons: “The new Canadian Prime Minister realized that his country could not win a one-on-one fight with the United States on an issue so important to the more powerful nation” (pp. 218-19). When President Johnson forcibly reminded Pearson of this lesson after Pearson made a speech at Temple University mildly critical of American policy in Vietnam, the authors comment that “Pearson ought not to have been surprised at LBJ’s outburst” (p. 217). Pearson’s “realism” (p. 240) is contrasted favourably with the followers of Diefenbaker and their “know-nothing nationalism, one that harked back to a mythical simpler age when Britain ruled the waves and the fondest desire of every Canadian was the monarch’s favour” (p. 239). The authors have some sympathy with Trudeau’s efforts to moderate the Cold War mentality of Ronald Reagan, but they feel that in the end Canadians had little choice but to accept American leadership, even when not entirely convinced of the merits of American policy, as in Grenada and Panama. They also believe that free trade was unavoidable, although, like Bothwell, they downplay the opposition to the FTA in 1988 by insisting that “elections in Canada are not decided by the popular vote, but by seats in Parliament” (p. 311). Since Canadians cannot resist

continental integration, they will have to learn to live with the fact “that if the Americans exert themselves on any single issue they can virtually count on getting their way” (p. 317), although Canadians can at least “work the margins” of American politics and can take comfort in the fact that “the break-up of the stable and strategic country to their north” is not “wished by *all or even most* in Washington” (p. 318, my italics). Granatstein and Hillmer refuse to predict whether Canada can survive “as an independent transcontinental nation” but compare the American-Canadian relationship to a marriage which “for better or worse” must endure (pp. 317-18). They do not point out that it is, to some extent, a forced marriage and a patriarchal one.

Jack Granatstein carries these arguments to much more extreme lengths in *Yankee Go Home? Canadians and Anti-Americanism* (Toronto, HarperCollins, 1996). One of Canada’s most prolific and distinguished historians, Granatstein has been engaged in an intellectual odyssey similar to that of Donald Creighton, only in the opposite direction, from a modest degree of concern over American imperialism to a rigorous defence of ever closer ties with the United States. The theme of *Yankee Go Home!* is the irrationality of anti-Americanism in Canada. Unfortunately Granatstein never really defines what he means by anti-Americanism, which seems to incorporate everything from a passionate dislike of the United States and everything it stands for to opposition to specific American policies to a refusal to accept Canada’s status as an American satellite. After a rambling survey of what anti-Americanism has meant in Canada, he asks (rhetorically): “is Canada’s anti-Americanism anything more than a defensive reaction from a people who, in fact, are not simply North Americans but Americans in all but name?” Indeed, a Canadian is simply a “kinder, gentler American, a different American” (p. 9). If this sounds like a return to the environmentalism of the 1930s, it is. Indeed, Granatstein repeatedly praises the insights of Frank Underhill and castigates those of Donald Creighton.⁷ Like most continentalists he accepts the reality of American exceptionalism (without ever defining what it is that has made America exceptional) and simply extends the concept north. And surely it is anachronistic (and really quite silly) to talk about anti-Americanism in New France and to see an unbroken line of intellectual thought between the Loyalists and any contemporary Canadians.

The earliest chapters of the book are by far the weakest. Granatstein seems to think America was a democratic society at the time of its birth in 1783 (it wasn’t!). He places too much significance on the Loyalists (though he is not alone in this) and he inflates out of all proportion the importance of the myth of the militia in the War of 1812-14, which he claims “has bedevilled Canadian defence ever since — the idea that the professional soldiers are unneeded because the people, with

7 At one point Granatstein declares that “As usual, Underhill had it fundamentally right” in refusing to talk about “American Imperialism” after World War Two (p. 282). One wonders whether Professor Granatstein believes Underhill also got it right when he promoted isolationism in the 1930s, declaring in *Maclean’s* in 1937 that “Canada should emulate Ulysses and his companions and sail past the European sirens, our ears stuffed with the tax-bills of the last war”. Quoted in J.M. Bumsted, *The Peoples of Canada: A Post-Confederation History* (Toronto, 1992), p. 256.

minimal training, can defend the country” (p. 24). Granatstein ignores the critical impact of immigration after 1815 and sees as “artificial” the efforts by the inhabitants of British North America to erect barriers against American influences (see p. 33). He dismisses “the Loyalist view of Canada” as flying in the face of reality, a reflection of the “blind hatred” (the title of chapter two) of “the loyal and conservative anti-republican Canadians” (p. 25) for all things American. Of course, this means ignoring the fact that Loyalist attitudes (even those of the Loyalist elite) toward the United States were far more ambivalent than he implies, that the “hatred” (if such it can be called) of British North Americans was rooted in a fear of American intentions and had something to do with American behaviour, and that anti-republican sentiments were shared by liberals like George Brown as well as conservatives like Strachan, indeed by most of the British immigrants who flooded into Canada after 1815.

Granatstein argues that Canada was an “American” nation and could not be otherwise, “though for many years Canadians would forget that essential fact” (p. 38). How careless of them! The efforts of generations of Canadians to remain part of the Empire he dismisses contemptuously. Loyalty to the Empire, he believes, was promoted by the local elites out of undisguised self-interest and he gleefully points out how “the Montreal anglo bourgeoisie” (or more accurately a minority of them) signed the annexation manifesto of 1849 when Britain adopted free trade: “So much for hatred of the Americans, so much for Loyalism, so much for the British connection” (p. 42). Predictably he heaps scorn upon Macdonald’s use of the loyalty cry in the election of 1891 and his discussion of the election of 1911 could have been taken directly from Ellis’ 1939 study. Granatstein dismisses Arthur Hawkes’ pamphlet *An Appeal to the British-Born* as a “grotesque reading” (p. 60) of Canadian history, though it seems far less grotesque to me than Granatstein’s. Granatstein admits that even if annexationism was not an immediate goal of American officials in 1911, control over the Canadian economy was their longer-term objective and that Borden and the Conservatives genuinely feared the implications of continental integration. Nonetheless, he describes the Conservatives as “unscrupulous” in opposing free trade in 1911 (p. 64). Granatstein’s approach is heavily deterministic and teleological and his tone moralistic. How could British Canadians, he implies, be so short-sighted in not recognizing that two world wars would sap Britain’s strength and Canada would pass “from being a British colony to an American one” (pp. 68-69)? Granatstein ends his story of this transition with an impassioned defence of Mackenzie King, “a prime minister who only did what he had to do”, and a scathing attack on “anti-American academics” (specifically Creighton) and “ill-informed journalists” (p. 97), who failed to recognise this fact.

Granatstein blames the left for the persistence of anti-Americanism into the Cold War era. He focuses in particular on James G. Endicott, “a Soviet dupe, the very personification of what Lenin had called the ‘useful idiots’ who would serve the Soviet state’s interests at almost no cost” (p. 103). Granatstein uses Endicott’s extreme views to prove that anti-Americanism had now become “firmly entrenched in the left-wing Canadian psyche”, and he condemns “Marxist ideology” for turning “an otherwise intelligent man into an anti-American of such venom” (p. 109). He admits anti-Americanism in Canada was fed by such incidents as the

persecution and subsequent suicide of Herbert Norman, but he is not convinced that Norman was not a spy for the Soviet Union (see p. 118) and he has nothing but scorn for those Canadians who questioned America's aggressive policy for containing the spread of communism. During the Cuban Missile crisis John F. Kennedy's brinkmanship brought the world to the brink of a nuclear war and he treated Canada as if it were a colony, but Granatstein is more concerned with Diefenbaker's refusal to bring the Canadian components of Norad to alert status automatically when the Americans called for this action, a decision he considers little short of treasonable: "The Kennedy Administration said nothing officially about Ottawa's dilatoriness — its tolerance can only be described as remarkable" (pp. 131-32). He approves of Kennedy's decision to give Diefenbaker a "brutal nudge" (p. 172) in early 1963 when Diefenbaker refused to arm the Bomarc missiles, and when, later in 1963, Walter Gordon sought to limit American investment in Canada, "the Americans decided to teach the Pearson government a lesson, *much as they had been obliged to do to his predecessor*" (p. 158, my italics). Canadian Prime Ministers would have to learn that "if Canada did not cooperate, the United States — *in its own self-interest* [again my italics] — would do the job itself, with potentially serious consequences for Canadian territorial and political sovereignty" (p. 172). No defender of American imperialism ever put it better! Granatstein seems to believe that Canadians should avoid criticizing American policy even when they believe it to be wrong-headed and that Johnson "had a point" (p. 176) when he admonished Pearson for offering some mild criticism of the bombing of North Vietnam in his speech at Temple University in 1965. When pressure mounted in the later 1960s for an end to arms sales to the United States, Granatstein dismisses it as "insulting rhetoric" (p. 179) and condemns it as "excessive Canadian moralism, a desire to criticize the Americans, those bearing the free world's burdens, while not carrying a fair share of the load" (p. 182).

The last section of the book consists of a critique of those Canadian intellectuals who are unwilling to accept the new reality of continental integration and a discussion of "Last Gasp Anti-Americanism: The Free Trade Agreement of 1988 and After". Once again Granatstein deals rather cavalierly with the election results: "the Conservatives' 43 percent of the vote and 169 seats gave them a solid majority and, under the rules of parliamentary government, a firm endorsement of their trade policy" (p. 271). Anti-Americanism, he declares, "had been marginalized, bypassed, and overtaken by events" (p. 277). As an ideology it "is confined to the left of the political spectrum — the bloodied remnants of the democratic left and the unreconstructed irredentists on the Marxist left". Then comes the big smear: "Many of these are the people who never could see the faults in Soviet Communism, but who dwelled on those of American (and Canadian) capitalism". Fortunately, the New Democratic Party (which by implication adheres to these sentiments!) is "on the verge of extinction" (p. 282). Granatstein repeatedly criticizes "the venomous anti-Americanism" (p. 225) of Donald Creighton, but Creighton at his worst was no more vitriolic than Granatstein is in his attack on all those poor misguided left-wing Canadians, university academics and intellectuals who continue to resist the forces of continentalism.

Although Granatstein declares that "the money — and the will to sustain a

nation — all but ran out in the mid-1990s” (p. 219) and that Canada “may well ultimately be absorbed by the United States” (p. 286), he declares he would lament the disappearance of Canada. But he believes that “Anti-Americanism never was and never could become the basis for any rational national identity”. Unfortunately he does not offer a very satisfactory definition of what that basis should be, only that Canadians should be grateful that they “live in God’s country, the best of all places on earth, a land graced with North America’s bounty and few of the United States’ worst problems” (p. 286). He falls back on the long-since discredited notion of national character: “There are Canadian virtues — grit, tolerance, opportunity, civility, compassion, and equality — and they should be part of any definition of national character. So should our love of the land, our shared history, our forms of governance, our common love of hockey, and those policies that bind us together like medicare and equalization” (p. 286). Although I don’t share Granatstein’s love of hockey (which I hope doesn’t mean I am unCanadian) and am not convinced (especially in the winter) that we live in God’s country and that all Canadians possess the admirable characteristics he lists, I don’t disagree with what Granatstein wishes to protect. But I do believe that there was a rational basis for resisting integration with the United States in the past and that Canada should carve out a distinctive foreign policy and should speak out (on issues like Cuba) when it believes American foreign policy is misguided even if that will hurt our economic clout with the American government and Congress. Nor do I think the efforts to do so really constitute anti-Americanism, even if that is how the Americans (and Granatstein) would define them. Moreover, although economic integration may well bring economic benefits, the fact that a plurality of Canadians voted Conservative in 1988 does not prove that the majority are prepared to make any sacrifice to achieve a slightly higher standard of living. And it is not anti-American to question whether the FTA may lead to a degree of social and cultural integration which may turn out to be undesirable from a Canadian perspective. Even Granatstein is concerned with this issue and he is in favour of the Canadian government protecting “serious culture”. But he would not extend this policy to include popular culture and he is particularly scathing of the efforts to promote country music in Canada (pp. 244-45), although it is not clear why it is important to promote classical orchestras (playing music which is, after all, imported from Europe) and not country and western music (particularly when it is written in Canada). In any event, surely it is not anti-American to believe that the Canadian government has a right and a duty to promote cultural activities of any kind within Canada?

It is interesting that in those areas where Granatstein believes the “national government” has a role to play — such as promoting medicare and equalization payments — he does not seem to recognise that, in fact, Canada is more like many western European nations than it is like the United States — in other words, that Canada is more European than American (if one wishes to use such vague terms). This becomes clear from reading *Canada and the United States: Differences that Count* (Peterborough, Broadview Press, 1992), edited by David Thomas. Although Thomas admits that the book excludes several key areas distinguishing Canada from the United States, such as “the linked topics of guns, violence, poverty, race,

and crime” and the significance of Quebec (pp. 11-12) and therefore focuses on areas where there is a substantial degree of convergence between the United States and Canada (and for that matter between both countries and the members of the EEC), he points out that “specific differences can add up, and their cumulative effects will shape the lives of citizens in very important ways” (p. 13). He also makes his own biases clear: “I think of myself as a moderate Canadian nationalist, but a nationalist nonetheless: proud of being the citizen of a ‘middle’ power, grateful for Canada’s mix of ideological debate and appreciative of its history as well as its geography” (p. 15). The articles in the book, he declares, are not meant to show that the ways things are done in Canada are “better or worse, they are simply different” (p. 16). Certainly a number of articles do lead to this conclusion. Equally, some of them also lead (at least they lead a moderate Canadian nationalist like myself) to the conclusion that the Canadian model is better, such as Robert G. Evans, “Less is More: Contrasting Styles in Health Care”, in which he makes the point that “in health care as in hockey, the Americans are not the team to beat” and that we ought to compare our system with the relatively successful European systems rather than with the less successful American system (p. 22). Yet, as Thomas rightly points out, even in those areas where Canadian policies are clearly superior to American, there is evidence of “increasing convergence” between the American and Canadian approaches (which, of course, almost always means increasing convergence to the American model). Nonetheless, he insists that “significant patterns of difference do matter” (pp. 409-10) and will continue to matter: “Government action (or inaction) can confer country-specific advantages in a host of different areas such as education, labour markets, capital costs, taxation, social safety nets, fiscal policy, urban infrastructure, and crime control and prevention. Institutions are not merely artificial creations to be reshaped at will; they are inextricably tied to belief, behaviour and vested interests” (p. 411).

This will come as a surprise to those who adhere to the Borderlands approach, an approach particularly popular among Canadian Studies scholars in the United States. Most American scholars interested in Canada do not see themselves as imperialists, either economic or cultural, and they would resent the accusation. In their own minds they are only being friendly when they state, as they frequently do, their belief that the Canadian-American border is an artificial one dividing two peoples who share a broadly similar — if not virtually identical — culture. Like the continentalists of the 1930s, Borderlanders believe that the natural lines of trade and communication run north-south rather than east-west and that both sides of the border contribute to the creation of a common culture which transcends national boundaries. This approach is also popular among those who see all forms of nationalism as divisive and outmoded in the post-modernist world, the theme of a number of the papers in *North America without Borders: Integrating Canada, the United States and Mexico* (Calgary, University of Calgary Press, 1992), edited by Stephen J. Randall with Herman Konrad and Sheldon Silverman. Most of the essays focus on the implications of Mexico becoming part of the FTA, but Victor Konrad, formerly director of the Borderlands Project at the University of Maine at Orono, presents a theoretical piece on “Borderlines and Borderlands in the

Geography of Canada-United States Relations". Emphasizing that "North America runs more naturally north and south rather than east and west as specified by national boundaries" (p. 190),⁸ he feels it is unfortunate that "in a time when borderlines [a term which he obviously uses to indicate that borders are simply lines on a map] are becoming less important ... North America continues to embrace formal borders and border formalities" (p. 193). North Americans, he complains, "have not yet adjusted their separate national outlooks to a new vision of North America as a workable continent" for their vision is still "clouded by nationalist sentiment" (pp. 193-94). Several of the Canadian contributors to the volume express reservations about this perspective, especially John Thompson who contributes a stirring defence of "Canada's Quest for Cultural Sovereignty: Protection, Promotion and Popular Culture". Thompson points out that "Americans have never taken Canadian complaints of U.S. cultural domination seriously" (p. 274). Certainly Sheldon A. Silverman, one of the editors of the book, doesn't. In his "Reflections on the Cultural Impact of a North American Free Trade Agreement" he declares that Thompson's position "brings to mind an American slogan heard during the Cold War: 'Better dead than red'" (p. 309) and that "I am often 'bewitched, bothered and bewildered' when I hear passionate debates concerning cultural sovereignty. I suspect that what I am really hearing is a claim as to who is going to control the means to myth-making — as if it really mattered culturally" (p. 311). Well, actually, it does matter culturally!

I have previously expressed in a general way my concerns about the Borderlands approach and its implications, as the concluding speaker at a Conference at the University of Maine at Orono. The papers delivered at the Conference and my concluding remarks were subsequently published in *The Northeastern Borderlands: Four Centuries of Interaction* (Fredericton, Acadiensis Press, 1989), edited by Stephen J. Hornsby, Victor A. Konrad and James J. Herlan. My comments aroused the ire of at least one Canadian reviewer, Stephen G. Tomblin, who noted:

While this book fills a major gap in the literature and in so doing challenges old myths about cross-border relations, it is more than ironic that the conclusion finishes by pointing out the dangers of such scholarship and by attacking scholars who would consider pushing onto the public agenda ideas which directly threaten the unity of the country. P.A. Buckner, who admits to being a Canadian nationalist, goes out of the way to label borderlanders as unpatriotic and promoters of "an even older American concept — Manifest Destiny". It is also argued that "those who deny the validity of the international boundary are promoting continentalism" (p. 158). Such a response provides further evidence that many scholars continue to feel threatened by any approach or concept

8 Actually he is quoting himself here since the quotation is taken from Lauren McKinsey and Victor Konrad, *Borderlands Reflections: The United States and Canada*, Borderlands Series 1 (Orono, 1989).

which directly challenges old ideas or images.⁹

Actually I did not label Borderlanders as unpatriotic (since most of them are Americans why would I do so?); I warned them against the danger of accepting uncritically the Borderlands hypothesis. And I find troubling the implication that Canadian nationalists are bound to feel threatened by new approaches or ideas and thus have nothing to contribute to the debate. Unfortunately, Tomblin appears to know little about Canadian history prior to 1945 and probably has read very little written before the 1970s. There is no evidence in the article that he has read the literature, references to which are cited in my footnotes, to see whether I am justified in asserting that all the major themes of the Borderlanders are foreshadowed in the 1930s literature. Tomblin notes that the central theme in the Borderlands approach, which “challenges old ways of thinking”, is the assumption that “North America runs more naturally north and south than east and west as specified by national boundaries”. To see this as a bold new perspective is akin to believing that General Motors invented the wheel.

What really disturbs me about the Borderlands approach is not its lack of originality but the fact that it is based upon a series of dubious assumptions. The first of these is the geographical determinism implicit in the statement that the natural boundaries in North America run north and south. There are no such things as natural boundaries for nations. All nations are artificially constructed and so are their boundaries. The very idea of natural boundaries in North America was first elaborated by American politicians to justify their drive across the continent. As Stewart points out in the *The American Response to Canada since 1776*, Adams, Rush and Gallatin in the 1820s; Andrews in the 1840s and 1850s; and Pepper, Hoyt and Osborne in 1911, all believed that “contiguity and the north-south grain of the continent should be the basis for American thinking about Canada” (p. 187). But there was nothing inevitable or natural about the division of the mainland of North America into three large countries along a north-south axis. The original division of the continent emerged out of the efforts of the various European Empires to establish their claims over territory in North America and it reflected geopolitical realities in Europe and only in secondary ways geographical realities in North America. It is not hard to envisage an entirely different set of North American boundaries. If the Netherlands had been larger and more powerful, New Amsterdam might have survived and evolved into a separate nation. If France had been willing to devote more resources to the defence of its colonies, New France or even Louisiana might have survived and evolved into one or more separate nations. Indeed, New France may yet evolve into the separate nation of Quebec. If Spain had not gone into decline, New Spain might have evolved into an even stronger power than Mexico and perhaps into two or three nations. Of course, it did not turn out that way. Because of events in Europe, Britain emerged as the dominant force on the North American continent by 1763 and the Thirteen Colonies were

9 Stephen G. Tomblin, “Shifting Boundaries and Borderlands Discourses”, *Acadiensis*, XXIII, 1 (Autumn 1993), p. 200.

positioned to become its heir.

Even after 1783 it was not inevitable that the United States would spread across and dominate the continent. If the Native peoples (with British support) had been numerous and united enough to be able to create a buffer state, if Mexico had been strong enough to hold on to its possessions north of the Rio Grande, if the South had been strong enough to establish its independence, the territorial divisions of North America would be very different. It is somewhat ironic to talk about the natural boundaries running north and south when one of the bloodiest wars in the 19th century was fought between Americans divided along a North-South axis. It is also strange to attempt to describe the American achievement as anything other than what it was: a successful imperial expansion. The United States was lucky in that at each stage in its drive across the continent it confronted forces too weak to resist its superior power. Its expansion south was not halted by any natural boundary — as Meinig points out, the Rio Grande is no more a natural boundary than the Colorado or Gila Rivers or the Sierra Madre mountains — but by the resistance of Mexico. Some Americans suggested solving this problem by simply absorbing Mexico after the successful American invasion during the American-Mexican war but Mexico had a large population, which would have been difficult, if not impossible to absorb or even to subdue, and a simple cost-benefit analysis, as well as a strong dose of racism, persuaded the Americans to limit their territorial ambitions to the Rio Grande. To the north, American expansionism was halted by the existence of a rival Empire, the British. Of course, the American-Canadian border is an artificial one, determined by the respective power of the rival empires even if arrived at largely through negotiation and arbitration rather than, as in the case of Mexico, by war. But geography did not determine that the United States would occupy its present boundaries. As Meinig argues:

The shape of the United States is the result of historical chance as well as geographical calculation, and none of it is “natural” in any forceful sense of that term. Statesmen and propagandists read geography in their own terms. Through the lens of nationalism and expansion, “natural” appendages and systems, barriers and boundaries appeared whenever needed, and with proper adjustments in angle and perspective a compelling contiguity and propinquity of almost any desired territory could be brought into clear view. By midcentury natural limits seemed much less prominent or obvious than they had only a few years earlier. It was becoming widely agreed that the highest mountains and the broadest oceans imposed nothing insuperable to a vigorous and hopeful people, as was attested by the reality of a transcontinental state and the agitations to annex the Hawaiian Islands (p. 202).

In fact, the language of “natural boundaries” is almost always the language of imperialists, intended to justify the expansion of their territorial claims. This was the case in India and in South Africa, where the British repeatedly justified annexations of territory by reference to natural boundaries. Canadians, of course, also had imperial ambitions, and in its desire to stretch “from sea unto sea” and

thus establish its own “natural boundaries” Canada treated the claims of its Native Peoples with no more respect than the Americans did theirs. But Canadian imperial ambitions were circumscribed by the expansion of the United States on the North American continent in the 19th century and by the gradual collapse of the British Empire in the 20th.

My second objection to the Borderlands approach is that, at least in the way it is applied, it lacks intellectual rigour. Indeed, the Borderlands approach frequently confuses a borderland with a border region. A borderland exists along a frontier where two (or more) national communities overlap, where local loyalties based upon self-interest have greater relevance than allegiance to any distant national governments and national identities are weak, and where the border is not clearly defined or is extremely porous.¹⁰ This is how Reg Stuart uses the term in *United States Expansionism and British North America* and how John Reid uses it in his article in *The Northeastern Borderlands*. The term has some validity when applied to the period before 1815 in the Maritimes and Upper Canada, both of which were (as the literature of the 1930s also argued), in a sense, frontiers of American settlement even while under British jurisdiction. But frontiers move on and after 1815 the American-Canadian border took on a hard, new meaning and national allegiances and national identities solidified.

A borderland may become a border region where the population of two nations overlap and two cultures may each be influenced by the other. This is, for example, what Raul Fernandez means when he talks about *The Mexican-American Border Region: Issues and Trends* (Notre Dame, Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, 1989). As Fernandez admits, a border region lacks precise boundaries since it is not simply defined by the border line. It is rather an area where “two dissimilar social systems” interact with each other so that each culture borrows from the other (p. 32). This is the case along the Mexican-American border where considerable economic integration has taken place and “where the popular culture has become Mexicanized north of the border, and Americanized south of the border” (p. 3). Fernandez argues that “the *sui generis* feature of the border region involves not merely the integration of two economies but the specific manner in which this integration has taken place, i.e., a manner based upon the uneven development of the two economies” (p. 33). In other words a border region has been created along the Mexican-American border because Mexicans are attracted across the border in large numbers to seek work and a higher standard of living in the United States and American capital and entrepreneurs have been attracted to the Mexican side by the availability of cheap labour, especially since the establishment of the *maquiladora* programme. Fernandez contrasts this situation with the Canadian, pointing out that despite the fact that most of the Canadian population for climatic reasons lives close to the American border and the Canadian economy is highly

10 The term “Borderland” was originally applied by Herbert Eugene Bolton in 1921 to Florida and the Southwest. See David J. Weber, “The Idea of the Spanish Borderlands”, in David Hurst Thomas, ed., *Columbian Consequences, vol. 3: The Spanish Borderlands in Pan-American Perspective* (Washington, 1991), pp. 3-20.

integrated with that of the United States, integration has not produced Canadian border towns and the Canadian population concentrates some distance from the border. Canada and the United States possess similar living standards, and educational and technical capabilities and integration is not limited to a fringe along the border but arises from the complementary nature of the American and Canadian economies. It is this reality which leads Konrad in "Borderlines and Borderlands in the Geography of Canada-United States Relations" to declare that "virtually all Canadians live in the borderlands shared with the United States" (p. 191), whereas only a small fringe on the American side of the border live in the Borderlands. This definition, of course, makes nonsense of the whole notion of a region of shared loyalties.

In any event, the Borderlands construct is based upon the fallacy that geography — in the sense of similar natural landscapes — is more important than history in shaping culture. But how then does one explain the enormous cultural differences between groups who inhabit similar space? In *Borderlands: Essays in Canadian-American Relations* (Toronto, ECW Press, 1991), edited by Robert Lecker, the majority of the contributors (none of whom is an historian) adopt a continentalist perspective but a number of the articles raise questions about its validity. In "Northern Frontiers: Political Development and Policy-Making in Alaska and the Yukon", Michael Pretes points out that once a border is drawn "different political and economic systems begin to develop, independent of regional considerations" and that it is "these national institutions and systems that have taken the greatest hold on border residents" (p. 309). Alaska and the Yukon may be "a single region" but they have developed very differently under "different federal systems imposed from outside" (p. 325). Precisely, borders do matter and a sense of national identity has always transcended cross-border ties. Indeed, the existence of a border leads naturally to the evolution of different institutions and values. This is also the conclusion of Michael A. Goldberg and John Mercer in *The Myth of the North American City: Continentalism Challenged* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1986), a study which "should force considerable greater and more general skepticism and reappraisal about the continentalist approach to a host of other issues in Canada and the United States" (p. 254).

Fortunately, not all of the recent literature has fallen into the continentalist trap. As the sub-title indicates, *Canada and the United States: Ambivalent Allies* (Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994) by John Thompson, a Canadian historian teaching in the United States, and Stephen J. Randall, a Canadian specializing in American-Latin American relations, is a sophisticated study of the interaction between the two countries. The central theme of the book is that platitudes about the special relationship between Canada and the United States "belie the dissonance of the nineteenth century and exaggerate the harmony of the twentieth" (p. 1) and that "the U.S.-Canada relationship in the future can not be other than intense, close and cooperative, yet conflictual in both its details and its fundamentals" (p. 8). Like the other recent general studies of American-Canadian relations, *Ambivalent Allies* focuses on the 20th century, but the synthesis of the earlier period is far superior to all the others. I remain unconvinced of the utility of the notion of defensive expansionism in 1774-1775 (p.

11). I am also dubious of the claim that the Americans invaded Canada in 1812-14 "not for territorial expansion but to expel the British" and that "Canada was to be seized as a hostage rather than captured as a prize of war" (p. 21). Somehow I doubt that if the Americans had seized Canada, they would have given it back! The authors also accept as a given (as do all of the other studies) that the United States and Canada were "so close geographically and so similar ethnically (save for the French Canadians of Lower Canada and New Brunswick) that many American ideas spilled north" (p. 26). But this is, at best, a partial truth for the authors themselves admit that many of these so-called American ideas — such as anti-slavery (and temperance for that matter) — filtered across the Atlantic from Britain as well as across the border from the United States. Although the authors do recognize the profound impact of the enormous British immigration into British North America after 1815, they do not grasp the significance of the fact that Canada would draw virtually all of its immigrants until the 20th century from the British Isles and in the latter part of the 19th century overwhelmingly from England, while America became a far more ethnically diverse society. Thompson and Randall do point out that fears of American expansionism in the mid-19th century were justified and they offer an insightful critique of the whole "Mingling of the Canadian and American peoples" thesis. They note that those English-Canadian immigrants who settled in the United States acted like many other immigrant groups and sought to preserve their separate identity in the United States. Indeed, both Francophone and Anglophone Canadians had low rates of naturalization compared to other immigrant groups and delayed taking out American citizenship until late in life. These Canadian-Americans were "almost as ambivalent about the United States as were the families they left behind" (p. 55). So much for Bothwell's claim that they were voting with their feet and Granatstein's belief that under the skin they were all Americans!

Thompson and Randall also have some insightful things to say about the continuing debate over reciprocity. As they point out, not all supporters of unrestricted reciprocity in 1891 were annexationists but "all the annexationists supported unrestricted reciprocity" (p. 60) and Secretary of State James Blaine insisted that Americans should refuse any reciprocity short of commercial union in order to force Canada to seek admission to the American union. Thompson and Randall lay the blame for the deterioration in Anglo-American relations in the 1890s squarely on the United States and its emergence as "an imperial power" (p. 66) and they recognize that, although the two countries would begin to forge a closer bilateral relationship in the early 20th century, this does not imply that English Canadians were becoming more American (see pp. 85-86). They also point out that the decision of Canadians to reject reciprocity in 1911 was "more than simple American bashing" (p. 90). They are sympathetic to "Canada's timid cultural nationalism" in the 1920s, critical of the Americans for being "seldom able to distinguish economic protectionism from genuine concerns about culture and nationalism" (p. 124) and convinced that in the interwar period Canada was not becoming Americanized but had a "better sense of itself as a nation than it had ever had" (p. 125). Indeed, they avoid that pernicious and ahistorical teleological approach that mars most of the studies of this period.

"The modern U.S.-Canadian relationship", Thompson and Randall sensibly declare, "dates from the intensified cold war that began in 1948" (p. 184). Like the other scholars discussed above, they accept that Canada became an integral part of the American empire after 1948 but they are not critical of the "understated Canadian countereffort, not always vigorous, for an independent voice" (pp. 184-85). They even have a degree of sympathy for Diefenbaker during the Cuban Missile Crisis, although they conclude that "Like Kennedy's brinkmanship, Diefenbaker's indecision is easier to explain than to defend" (p. 225). In one of the most insightful sections of the book they point out the critical importance of the differing attitudes of the American and Canadian governments toward the Cold War. Dismissing (hopefully once and for all) the notion that the present-day differences in social programmes between the two countries arise out of Canada's supposedly more Tory past, they argue that "the strange death of liberal America and the curious creation of social-democratic Canada" were a result of the comparatively greater "emotional and fiscal resources" the United States expended in fighting the Cold War: "America battled the Communist threat around the globe and, in the process, built a warfare state instead of a welfare state" (pp. 240-41, 243). Clearly the authors have little sympathy with the Reagan administration's "Hollywood-style vision of [a] world struggle between the forces of good and evil" (p. 275). They also recognize that it was not simple-minded anti-Americanism which accounted for the vehemence of the opposition to the 1988 FTA but a legitimate fear that the FTA "was part of a conservative corporate agenda to 'harmonize' Canada and the United States by undermining Canada's more generous social programs" (p. 284), a fact which seems to have escaped most of the other authors writing on this topic. And Thompson and Randall point out that the opponents of the FTA won a majority of the votes and thus a "moral victory" in the 1988 election (p. 285). They conclude that, despite the shared cultural heritage of English Canadians and Americans, "the differences between the United States and Canada are not insignificant, though Americans underestimate and Canadians overestimate them" and they deny that "the conservative years of the 1980s and 1990s heralded a new consensus and convergence between Canada and the United States" (pp. 302, 305). One can only hope that they are right and the others wrong.

If Canada at some point ceases to exist and becomes part of the United States, it will certainly not be because such a fate was determined by geography. It will be because Canadians live on the border of the most successful empire ever created. The emergence of the United States as a power stretching across the continent was not inevitable, nor were the boundaries eventually established. The Americans were lucky because the United States spread across a comparatively thinly populated continent with enormous economic potential. It gave full rights of citizenship to most of those it conquered and to the millions of immigrants it attracted and so evolved into the world's most powerful nation, exercising a pre-eminent influence over the world's economy and exporting its culture and values around the globe. America's influence is not circumscribed by geography; it is global and affects to a greater or lesser degree every country in the world. Thompson and Randall are right to stress "the degree to which Canada is just like any other country to the United States" (p. 305). However, Canada faces these pressures to a greater degree than

any other nation in the world. But economic integration and even a general convergence in life-styles will not in themselves lead to the disappearance of Canada. Nations and national identities, as Benedict Anderson has written, are artificially constructed out of a sense of belonging to an imagined community.¹¹ So long as Canadians believe their imagined community to be Canada and not North America, Canada will survive. My concern with the recent historiography of Canadian-American relations is that it endorses, in some cases reluctantly and in some cases enthusiastically, the opposite assumption and even portrays the end-result as preordained by geography. This interpretation seems to me to be based upon a fallacious reading of the history of North America. But even if it were true, history can and frequently has proved stronger than geography and hopefully, in the case of Canada, it will again. In *Life with Uncle John* Holmes warned Canadians not to “acquiesce in an American disposition, however generous, to treat us as if we were not really foreigners” (p. 72). There was nothing irrational nor ignoble about the effort to carve out a nation distinct from that of the United States on the North American continent and, while we should seek friendly relations with our neighbours to the south, we should never cease to treat them as if they were not really foreigners.

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11 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983).