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Benjamin Hoy, *A Line of Blood and Dirt: Creating the US-Canada Border Across Indigenous Lands*

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Benjamin Hoy, *A Line of Blood and Dirt: Creating the US-Canada Border Across Indigenous Lands* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 344pp. Hardback. US$35. ISBN: 978-0-1975-2869-3.

Benjamin Hoy's, *A Line of Blood and Dirt: Creating the US-Canada Border Across Indigenous Lands*, offers a thorough historical account of the making of the US-Canada border. Nowadays naturalized and conceptualized as an almost straight line separating two sovereign countries and major powers in North America, Hoy's work helpfully reminds us that such is far from the case. The US-Canada border, Hoy shows, was in the making for over two hundred years. By regulating the ways in which transnational travel could or could not take place, it affected—and continues to affect—peoples and communities, specifically Indigenous communities, living quite far from it as much as those who lived—and are living—in the borderlands.

The first several chapters trace how war and violence shaped the early stage of border-making. Hoy then moves to chart the fundamental unevenness of the border, both in the way it was made and how it affected and continues to affect travelers with different races and ethnicities, genders, class backgrounds, and so on. The making of the border in the prairies, Hoy shows, differed from how it came into being in Coast Salish territory (Pacific Northwest), which differed from how it was constructed in the Great Lakes region. While white men and to a large extent white woman throughout history could travel across the border with ease and encounter little to no interrogation, such was not—and is still not—the case with Indigenous individuals and community members, Chinese and other East Asian labourers in the age of Chinese exclusion in both the US and Canada (chapter six and eight), as well as Sikh and other South Asian migrants (chapter nine). Throughout the book, Hoy anchors the unevenness of the border quite well.

Methodologically, Hoy skillfully combines macro-historical narrative with individual testimonies and oral histories, especially those who were affected by the border. This mixed methodology enables him to both attend to macro-historical trends and shifts, without losing insight into how they affected real individuals living in relation to the border. The border, as the title of the last substantial chapter 'The Borders of Everyday Life' suggests, is lived in the everyday and only takes concrete shape when it structures and affects individual lives'. He also brings in Indigenous conceptions of land, community, and animals to illustrate the disruptive and often disastrous consequences imperial border-making had on Indigenous communities. While the land that came to be claimed by Canada and the United States had been—and still is—the homeland of Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island since time immemorial, and they had been able to move freely across a wide geographical range and forge intimate connections with communities lived quite far away geographically. The consolidation of the border fundamentally altered the nature of their movement and livelihood, as well as their relationships to land, the human and non-human world. For example, as traditional food sources such as bison and other game became scarce and famine and starvation became a prominent problem, the increasing closure of the border greatly impacted Indigenous peoples and communities. This was certainly more pronounced for borderland communities, such as Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe communities of the Great Lakes area, Cree communities of the Prairies, and Coast Salish communities, but

was also the case even for Indigenous communities living far away from the border, such as the Lakota. In this process, Indigenous understandings of and relationships to land were—and still are—under severe attack.

Since the subheading of the book is "Creating the US-Canada Border Across Indigenous Lands," I was expecting a more thorough and in-depth engagement with Indigenous and settler-colonial scholarship on land and dispossession, or dispossession of Indigenous land, which is the defining feature of settler states such as the US and Canada. Taking up this analytic, I believe, could bring more conceptual clarity to Hoy's analysis, and as a result, deepen the political and historical stakes of this work. Similarly, more in-depth engagement with treaty-making could also clarify the political stakes of making settler-imperial borders on Indigenous land. Moreover, although Hoy does draw from Indigenous understandings of land and practices concerning land, I believe that such engagement could be deepened and systematized to ground the work further in Indigenous understandings of and relations to land, and center Indigenous actors more.

While recent political events have highlighted the violent nature of borders and border-making, national-imperial borders remain more or less a naturalized existence for most people. This book is a good introduction to anyone interested in learning and rethinking borders, borderlands, settler-colonialism, and modern US and Canadian history, and a very productive intervention in these fields.

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