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Freeing Trade in North America

by Greg Anderson, Kingston and Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020, 208 pp., CAN $32.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-2280-0075-4

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overfishing, bed destruction, and disease, oysters, they found, could not be farmed so easily. Gulf lobsters suffered similar declines. Like mackerel, the lobster fishery was largely controlled by American firms. Canned and shipped to the United States and Europe, lobsters developed into the Gulf's most valuable fishery by the 1890s. But with few conservation controls in place, the fishery crashed. As Suzanne Morton's chapter demonstrates, "The act of transforming a 'Canadian' lobster into an international consumer product by 'American' companies and capital thus transformed the marine ecosystem and fostered debates about resource conservation, national interests, and international ownership" (249).

The book's third section shows that as the Gulf was remade materially, it was also transformed imaginatively. J.I. Little shows how painters and writers remade Atlantic Canada into a new frontier. Contemporary observers described a bleak Labrador landscape filled with what they perceived to be primitive people. They marveled at Cape Breton's dramatic landscapes and Highlander culture. They also reveled in Prince Edward Island's rolling green pastures and celebrated the Gaspé peninsula's primordial ruggedness. And in doing so, they advanced the perception that the Gulf was a "slower-paced, less developed extension of their own country" (277). Examining the work of Canadian writer Lucy Maud Montgomery, best known for her novel *Anne of Green Gables*, Claire E. Campbell recreates the ecology of late-nineteenth-century Prince Edward Island, which, in its patterns of resource use and connections to a wider Atlantic world, was, Campbell contends, anything but "a timeless idyll" (285). And in the volume's final essay, Caitlin Charman examines the tension between leisure and industry and the "shift in the Canadian imagination of the Gulf region … from resource provider to the Nation's 'Ocean Playground'" (337).

Ultimately, this collection demonstrates that the Gulf of St. Lawrence was and "is a complex ecosystem upon which humans have imposed layers of economic, political, social, and cultural constructs" (344). These layers piled up over time, creating a hybrid world. In its ability to recenter the Gulf in the history of the northwest Atlantic, this book provides important contributions to Atlantic, environmental, and oceanic historiographies, and adds to a growing body of scholarship on littoral history. Though the volume would surely have benefitted from more detailed maps, it is well organized and clearly written. In sum, this book reminds us that strong currents and heavy fog force us to reorient ourselves geographically. And perhaps the stench of cod flakes, canneries, and the coal smoke from a Boston steamer encourages us to think more deeply about the ways humans have shaped the sea over the long sweep of time.

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Freeing Trade in North America, by Greg Anderson, Kingston and Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020, 208 pp., CAN $32.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-2280-0075-4

There are two questions that motivate every scholar of North American regionalism: does North America exist? And, is there a North American idea? Greg Anderson adds to a vast volume of literature with a sweeping survey of contemporary North American integration in his latest book, *Freeing Trade in North America*. Anderson begins with these big questions, but

rightly points out that the conceptualization of North America "is often connected to what people think" the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) "itself is or ought to have been" (7). The majority of the book thus focuses on explaining exactly what NAFTA is (and isn't), and offers a thorough overview of its performance in an effort to both isolate and illuminate NAFTA's contribution to the formation of a North American region. Anderson argues that "NAFTA represented the zenith of regionalism in North America," and that the newly minted United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) that replaced it moves us further away from a cohesive regional identity.

But where does the journey toward a North American region begin? For proponents of North American integration, it is Turtle Island, the name given to the continent and rooted in the creation myths of its Aboriginal communities. Modern political borders have complicated this vision, and rendered Turtle Island a concept largely unknown outside the community of scholars and supporters of North American regionalism. More commonly, the ideational origins of North America, as Anderson points out, are situated in the early post-World War II period, as regionalism, interdependence, and the liberal international order altered the way states engaged with one another.

As a contrast in regionalism, Anderson examines the European integration project, highlighting the stark differences in the depth of regionalism between the European and North American continents. But this was entirely by design. As he points out, NAFTA was a relatively shallow trade agreement, and was never outfitted with the type of institutions and governance structure that enabled European regionalism. For instance, NAFTA does not have an address for its Secretariat, which is instead spread across the three countries in their relevant agencies; it did not have a functioning state-to-state dispute settlement mechanism (though this is corrected in the USMCA); and most importantly, it did not include any provisions that compel the heads of state to meet on a regular basis (it only did this for the Free Trade Commission, which is usually made up of the trade ministers). The last omission is a key point of weakness in North American integration, which Anderson mentions but does not explore in greater detail. While he does make reference to Mexican President Vicente Fox's bold ideas for a "cohesion fund" and a more ambitious commitment to regionalism, he pays scant attention to why these ideas failed to take root, and how leadership has more generally impacted the scope and trajectory of North American integration.

Anderson is absolutely right, however, that NAFTA was always limited in what it could achieve. It was a trade agreement after all. But it did present an ideational shift that reoriented the continent toward a trilateral framework. However, this spirit of trilateralism stands on shaky ground as the two major forces that shape North American integration—asymmetry and ambivalence—often prompt Canada, Mexico, and the United States to operate in dual-bilateral fashion by default. Anderson catalogs the countless initiatives bearing similar names, with the only difference being the participants—U.S.-Canada or U.S.-Mexico. The lack of strong ties between Canada and Mexico stands out as a continual obstacle to regionalism and this is particularly evident in the junior status Canada often affords Mexico, which was perhaps most visible in how the Harper government tightened visa rules to restrict the entry of Mexican nationals to Canada.

The absence of a solid bond between Canada and Mexico was again revealed during the eleventh hour of negotiations of the USMCA, when Canada simply disappeared from the discussions. The final agreement was declared concluded between Mexico and the United States, and Canada was caught off guard (though official government accounts may try to suggest otherwise). But it is this resurgence of dual bilateralism inherent in the USMCA negotiations that, as Anderson argues, signals the decline of North American integration.

I agree that there are many aspects of the USMCA that weaken the trilateral spirit of NAFTA. I also agree that it represents a *partial* improvement in regional governance—it updated the rules and added new ones that could not have been foreseen when NAFTA was negotiated (i.e. those on digital trade), though much of this came from the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) agreement, from which the U.S. withdrew in 2017. It also recognized the achievements of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, not only by retaining its physical location in Montreal, but by moving the environmental chapter from a side-letter to the main text of the agreement itself.

Surprisingly, Anderson devotes little attention to what (as I have argued elsewhere) is the fatal flaw—or the ticking time bomb—in the agreement: the "sunset clause," which requires the three countries to negotiate the continuation of the agreement, or amend it, six years after the agreement comes into force. If they cannot come to agreement, the USMCA automatically expires in 16 years. This may represent, beyond any other aspect of the agreement, the biggest blow to deepening regionalism in North America. It embeds—institutionally—the two forces that have pulled at the fabric of our regional cohesion—ambivalence and asymmetry. It ensures that in six years, NAFTA reassumes its role as political fodder, and the three countries descend into a battle of their defensive interests, giving, again, short-shrift to the trilateral spirit of the original deal.

Having written this book amidst the many changes going on in the USMCA negotiations, I credit Anderson with a clear assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. It would be interesting to hear his thoughts on the final changes made by House Democrats in December 2019, in particular, the rapid response mechanism to deal with violations of the labor chapter—aimed solely at Mexico. This amendment raises significant questions about the continuity of a regional North American spirit amidst the potential for a flood of new labor disputes that are likely to sow greater distrust and apprehension between the United States and Mexico. Instead of seizing on the call from President Fox in the aftermath of 9/11 to tackle our shared challenges by recognizing our common history and the brotherhood of nations—the USMCA instead sets the stage for greater division.

Anderson makes a strong case for more discussion on the competing visions for North America—on the one hand, the desire for deeper integration, for Turtle Island, and on the other hand, a desire for cooperation on some issues mixed with a wariness over institutionalizing cooperation through pooling sovereignty and a general skepticism of globalization. Since much of the popular debates over NAFTA have been devoid of fact, a broader discussion, not focused on the agreement, but on our shared continental challenges and how we might address them, would be welcome.

Anderson concludes his book with this call for more debate, in a way taking us back to the start, to the two major questions that motivate research on North American regionalism and the work of the two late giants of the field (and my mentors), Stephen Clarkson and Robert A. Pastor. Does North America exist, and is there a North American idea? Anderson does not provide a definitive answer to either, but does offer an analytical discussion to help us better conceptualize North America, and to tease out NAFTA's contribution to that regional identity. This is a valuable contribution to the literature, and one, I hope, that will spur future research on these questions.

In a way, the author hints at the existence of the region, though not explicitly, but is more skeptical of the idea. He cites Pastor's treatment of the subject as "unsatisfyingly ill-defined," and I don't fault him for feeling this way. In *The North American Idea*, Pastor concluded with an anecdote that I think best captures what the idea is, but also underscores why it is so difficult to define in concrete terms. He wrote: "when I meet Canadians in third countries, I am reminded of a feeling when I met someone from a rival high school when traveling in another

state. The differences that seem so important in cheering for different sides during a football game melt away as you leave your hometown, and they are replaced by the shared experience of being at the same game" (202).

What Pastor is getting at, and what so many of the debates on North American regionalism get wrong, is that the North American idea transcends NAFTA, something that Anderson also alludes to. It is, to paraphrase Ronald Reagan, the moment when our neighbors are no longer considered foreigners. While Anderson concludes that the USMCA has moved us far from this inflection point, the evidence he presents suggests that this ideational shift was not predetermined. It was the product of a distorted conception of North America's institutional foundation, and a failure to surpass the many imagined borders that divide us.

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Home Feelings: Liberal Citizenship and the Canadian Reading Camp Movement, by Jody Mason, Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press (Carleton Library Series 249), 2019, 340 pp., CAN $34.95 (paper), ISBN 978-07735-5887-8.

Home Feelings is a noteworthy, interdisciplinary study about Canadians "in the making" along the frontier during the first half of the twentieth century. Jody Mason's primary goal is to investigate the emerging conceptualization of liberal-democratic citizenship before World War 2 through the activities and ideas of Alfred Fitzpatrick, the founder of the Canadian Reading Camp Association (later known as Frontier College), and his evolving relationship with the federal government. Mason investigates Fitzpatrick's innovative approaches to adult learning and how they influenced the idea of citizenship that became a vital part of the evolving "liberal order framework" currently debated by historians. The subject matter ranges across theoretical approaches in fields of interest to many academics: social history, literacy, the history of reading, citizenship and cultural studies, the sociology of culture, and adult education. The research is based on primary sources, notably the Frontier College archive, including contemporary published studies, newspapers, magazines, and government records.

In contrast to historical narratives that cast adult education in the light of benevolent liberal education initiatives or growing public acceptance of a national cultural mosaic, the author proposes that Frontier College devised an adaptable citizen pedagogy for foreign-born laborers drawing, in major part, on affective dimensions, or "home feelings." This educational fieldwork became a means of shaping different ideas about liberal citizenship and, after World War 1, curbing liberalism's chief rivals, socialism and communism. At a time when the majority of Canadians were legally British subjects, self-assured in the primacy of Anglo-centric values, Frontier College advocated a federal role in educating a growing non-British demographic in the orthodox duties and rights of citizenship. For Mason, the intersection of pedagogical work with the use of contemporary literature was essential to the attainment of literacy and national consciousness in remote lumber, railroad, mining, and relief camps. Because New Canadians influenced by radical ideologies or class-based doctrines posed a threat to the established liberal order, the state began to assume a greater role in assimilating new arrivals with