

## EDITORIAL

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The two lead articles in this issue of *BC Studies* turn around border questions. One considers fish, and the science about fish, that crossed the border in various problematic ways; and the other the idea of Cascadia that, rather like the fish, is scarcely troubled by the border. Border questions, of course, are part and parcel of Canadian life. They have to be. A small population is strung along a border on the other side of which is the most powerful and confident country in the world. We do not, like the Australians, have an ocean between.

And this segment of the border, a product of British-American diplomacy in the 1840s, made no particular sense at the time and has struggled to do so since. It bifurcated a trading system based on the Columbia River and made the Fraser, an unlikely route if ever there was one, the principal connection between coast and interior. It did not impede miners from California in 1858, or miners from the Inland Empire in the 1890s, or the adoption of technologies of resource procurement largely worked out south of the border in all the major resource industries of the province. It did not impede capital and only slightly refracts the constant barrage of American media, entertainments, and popular culture.

But it did draw a different stream of immigrants across a continent. Washington State was largely settled from the American Middle West and Scandinavia, British Columbia from Eastern Canada and Britain. Different patterns of immigration continue to the present. And it did hook up British Columbia to a different national experience. In the background of Washington State, as part of the United States of America, lie the eastern seaboard colonies and the nation-building events of the American Revolution, the drafting of a constitution,

and the Civil War. In the background of British Columbia, as part of Canada, lie a cod fishery and a fur trade, a French colony, the geopolitical events by which Britain lost its own position in North America and gained France's, and the belated, rather uncertain creation of a confederation out of the disparate, isolated colonial fragments of British North America. Different stories behind different countries.

And modern countries, as many have argued, tend to fill their space – precisely, to their borders – with their own laws and institutions, their own rules, regulations, and histories. In time an initially quite arbitrary border may become a substantial geographical reality. Such, for all its porosity, has been the history of the 49th parallel.

But times may be changing. Many now claim that countries are being squeezed between the pressures of the global and the local. Society is realigning itself, it is averred, in electronic space. Affiliations are becoming more issue-oriented and less space-specific, and in so doing are having less and less to do with country, community, or even neighbourhood; rather it is held that individuals now make issue-oriented connections with other individuals (wherever they may be) with similar interests. In such shifting, fractal space, there is little room for countries, provinces, states, or the borders between them.

Well perhaps, but we are doubtful that this is more than one edge of contemporary reality – although the editors of a journal devoted to British Columbia can hardly be expected to have a disinterested view of the matter. Yet there can be no doubt that the border question is real enough, both because of what British Columbia has been and is and because of the world we live in. It is explored in various ways in the articles that follow.

C.H.

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With great sadness *BC Studies* says farewell to Melva Dwyer after a dozen years – forty issues – as bibliographer. Melva's contribution has been enormous, and we thank her on behalf of all the journal's readers. At the same time we introduce Gail Edwards as bibliographer. She will, we know, continue the commitment of this journal to bring current writing on the province to the attention of our readers.

J.B. & C.H.