

Ben Bradley, Jay Young, Colin M. Coates, editors. *Moving Natures: Mobility and Environment in Canadian History*. 338 pp. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2016. \$34.95 (paperback) and Open Access (ebook.)

Blair Stein

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Canada, we are often told, is really big. Its vast distances have informed everything from popular music to the once-dominant “staples” and “Laurentian” paradigms of economic development. *Moving Natures: Mobility and Environment in Canadian History*, edited by Ben Bradley, Jay Young, and Colin M. Coates is a welcome intervention in several fields that engage with Canada’s size, including environmental history, mobility studies, science and technology studies, and Canadian social and cultural history. Here, dominant narratives of transportation networks as vaunted annihilators of Canadian distances are complicated and decentralized by prying open the black-boxes of mobility studies and environmental history with the crowbars of the other. The editors seek to add “materially grounded, place-specific studies” of historical interactions between “older, less exotic” networks and the environment to mobility studies, and the mechanisms by which visitors enjoy parks, wilderness areas, or “natural” leisure activities to environmental history. (10) The result is a well-rounded set of twelve interdisciplinary stories that address both the impact of mobility networks on the environment as well as changing perceptions of the environment when viewed from different transportation platforms.

Moving Natures is divided into two sections. The first and larger section engages generally with mobility and labour. Some of the essays here, such as Daniel Macfarlane’s piece on the St. Lawrence Seaway and Jay Young’s fascinating account of displacing dirt for the Toronto subways, are concerned with the environmental effects of transportation infrastructure. Others, such as Merle Massie’s essay on freighting and tourism in northern Saskatchewan, deal with the impact of the seasons on Canadian mobility patterns. Seasonality is a major through-line of *Moving Natures*; the relationships between Canadians and their seasons have yet to be given the scholarly attention they deserve, and these essays suggest some potentials for the field. The second section is the more cohesive and deals with the framing of Canadian environment-based experiences through mobility. Although tourism appears as an analytic throughout this volume, it is spotlighted here, where the essays break down the methods by which Canadians have undertaken leisure voyages and centralize the lived experiences of travelers. They highlight how Canadian environments have been constructed through mobility, as Elsa Lam and Maude-Emmanuelle Lambert show in their pieces on rail and automotive tourism, suggesting that mobility patterns “helped to make certain environments into regionally or nationally iconic landscapes.” (200) These themes are helped along by visuals such as promotional posters, brochures, maps, and postcards, which help tie the environmental consequences of mobility to historical perceptions of Canadian environments.

The essays in this volume deal with wide range of mobilities, from steamships to subways to the automobile, but are closely linked thematically as well as by their playing with the methodological and analytic ideas of scale and speed. The editors hint at this in their volume and section introductions, and it is one of the great strengths of this collection. The chapters zoom in and out, so to speak, from national megaprojects to the hyper-local, such as Thomas Peace, Jim Clifford and Judy Burns' micro-history of small-town Nova Scotia shipbuilding, and from the dizzying speed of trains to the leisurely pace of golf games. In so doing, they connect individual travel experiences to regional, national, and even global flows of people, goods, and ideas, as well as larger questions of modernity, urbanization, and place.

As with any edited volume, there are some holes. The editors rightly point out that the volume is lacking a pointed analysis of animal-drawn vehicles and aviation. They have also privileged relatively elite Euro-Canadian narratives, which neglects regions (the Arctic is conspicuously absent,) voices,

and uses of transportation that could really stretch the boundaries of mobility studies. Some of this stems from the occasional accidental conflation of mobility with modern industrial transportation; even when “pre-modern” mobility networks appear, such as in Jessica Dunkin’s excellent paper on canoe clubs, they seem decentralized. This is not the case in every essay—J. I. Little’s chapter on steamboat tourism, for example, acknowledges that there are voices missing—but, when taken together, they present a somewhat hegemonic story of mobility. However, these missing pieces are small, and do not detract from the engaging and informative set of stories presented in the volume. As a proof-of-concept work showing new directions for Canadian environmental history-tinted studies of mobility (and vice versa,) this is an absolutely successful volume. Moving Natures presents an innovative approach to both mobility studies and environmental history, and there is plenty of room for these gaps to be filled by others. The field, like, Canada, certainly is big enough.

Blair Stein, University of Oklahoma