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Introduction by Dustin Walcher

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Introduction by Dustin Walcher, Southern Oregon University

In *Borderland on the Isthmus* Michael Donoghue thoroughly examines of the lives of the diverse peoples who populated the Panama Canal Zone and its surrounding environs throughout the course of the twentieth century. From the time the United States constructed the canal, numerous Americans working in both civilian and military capacities populated the Zone. Those Americans came into frequent, often daily, contact with Panamanians from nearly all walks of life. Additionally, substantial numbers of West Indians immigrated to the region, initially as construction workers on the canal. Many remained. As a result, the Zone possessed the characteristics of a frontier region – an area where people from different cultures come into contact.

At the same time, the Canal Zone embodied the hallmarks of an imperial enclave. The U.S.-Panamanian relationship was marked by the asymmetric distribution of power. While nationalist Panamanians from various backgrounds resisted U.S. hegemony in the area – employing diverse techniques ranging from riots to celebrating social banditry – their means of resistance ultimately fit into the category of weapons of the weak. Of course, not all contacts between Americans and Panamanians were mired in conflict. As was generally true of frontier-imperial enclaves, cross-cultural relationships were also forged on the basis of employment, commerce, love, sex, and friendship. Relationships of power were constantly renegotiated. Donoghue's narrative emphasizes complexity.

The reviewers find much to praise. Alan McPherson finds that "Donoghue has produced perhaps the most fascinating and complete account of relations between the [Canal Zone's] inhabitants and Panamanians." He concludes that the book "is a marvel of research, one of the most skillful cobblings of anecdotes about empire ever gathered in a single book." Darlene Rivas calls *Borderlands on the Isthmus* "a very fine book." Jana Lipman concludes that "Donoghue's book makes a strong contribution to histories of U.S. empire, transnational social histories, and borderland social relations." David M. K. Sheinin's review offers the highest praise, using words such as "great," "innovative," and "masterfully" to describe Donoghue's research and book.

Donoghue takes two trends that have existed in the historiography since the 1990s to their logical conclusions. First, the scope of *Borderlands on the Isthmus* is fully international. As Sheinin writes, "[i]t is not simply that Donoghue knows Spanish, has done due diligence in Panamanian archives and libraries, and has found ways to round out his study of U.S. foreign relations with attention to Panamanian agency. It is that in writing the social history of U.S. Empire at the isthmian borderland, Donoghue has also written Panamanian histories of colonialism, race, sexualities, and popular cultures." As a result, *Borderlands on the Isthmus* will have as much value to Latin Americanists as it does to historians of U.S. foreign relations.

Second, while Donoghue explains political and economic interactions at points in the narrative, he is fundamentally an international socio-cultural historian. As Sheinin again observes, "[t]his is a book about sex, love, violence, family, and their intersections in the

social construction of an imperial borderland.” Donoghue examines the lives of diverse people – Panamanians and Americans – who populated the Canal Zone and its surrounding communities. The book is about race, class, and gender.

In light of the diverse array of historical actors under examination, Donoghue carefully addresses issues of identity formation. He also makes clear that individual identities – and the perceived place of those individuals in the larger society – were contingent on a number of factors including the person’s race, social class, gender, nationality, status as a member the military, and status as a Zonian. As people from such varied backgrounds interacted in the Canal Zone, but did so under political, economic, and social frameworks that established significant asymmetries of power, Donoghue’s analysis demonstrates the ways in which, as Rivas summarizes, “borderland meets empire.”

Similarly, McPherson is perhaps most impressed by Donoghue’s incorporation of theory. “*Borderlands on the Isthmus*,” he explains, “usefully demonstrates how the Panama Canal Zone fostered imperial relationships conditioned largely by frontier areas separating a large, powerful nation from a small, weak one. Donoghue has done his homework, citing borderlands and subalternity experts” McPherson goes on to highlight Donoghue’s analysis of gender in the Canal Zone, pointing out that his explanation of the lives of women and of the significance of gendered identities constitutes the book’s most original substantive contribution.

Although the reviewers find much to praise, they also identify some concerns. The criticism that recurs throughout these reviews centers on Donoghue’s organizational choices. The book’s six substantive chapters adopt a thematic rather than chronological focus. The first chapter situates the Canal Zone in an imperial and borderlands context. The next two chapters examine issues of race and identity. Chapter four explores sex, sexuality, and gender. The fifth chapter concentrates on U.S. military personnel. Finally, Donoghue dedicates a chapter to crime. Structuring the book in this way offers inherent advantages and disadvantages. It offers the benefit of focusing the reader’s attention on the key thematic issues Donoghue explores, and carrying the analysis through to its conclusion. But most histories are written chronologically in order to explain cause-and-effect relationships. A clear sense of change over time, the participants in this roundtable argue, is often lost – or at least obscured. Moreover, adopting a thematic organization means that a certain degree of repetition between chapters becomes necessary. Lipman expresses the most reservations along these (and other) lines, explaining that she “grew frustrated with Donoghue’s book because of its schematic structure and limited analysis of citizenship or U.S.-Panamanian relations.”

Indeed, among the participants in this roundtable Lipman is most critical of *Borderland on the Isthmus*. In addition to critiquing the book’s structure, she would like to have seen the political issues inherent in the Canal Zone’s existence more fully and effectively analyzed. Lipman returns to her critique of Donoghue’s organizational structure in identifying at least part of the root of this shortcoming. “Donoghue’s schematic, almost picaresque structure,” she explains, “detracts from an overall argument and analysis of the *politics* alongside the identities on the borderlands. As a result, U.S.-Panamanian relations operate

at the margins of Donoghue's work, rather than being constitutive of the making of this borderland."

Ultimately *Borderland on the Isthmus* contributes to the broader historiography in three important ways. First, Donoghue provides the most thorough analysis of the socio-cultural history of the Canal Zone available. He provides detailed attention to the lived experience of empire in a twentieth-century frontier enclave. Second, the book offers one model for researching and writing international socio-cultural history. It will be an indispensable blueprint for future scholars who research these questions. Finally, as the sometimes lively comments in this roundtable demonstrate, Donoghue's book encourages international historians to consider chapter organization by showcasing the advantages and disadvantages of organizing a book topically rather than chronologically. For all of these reasons, *Borderland on the Isthmus* is an important book that should be widely read by historians of U.S. foreign relations, Latin America, frontier, and empire.

Participants:

Michael Donoghue is Associate Professor of history at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He received his BA (1993) and MA (1996) at the University of Rhode Island and his Ph.D. (2005) from the University of Connecticut. Michael has written "Murder and Rape in the Canal Zone" in Jessica Gienow-Hecht (ed.) *Decentering America: Culture and International History II* (2008); "Race, Labor, and Security in the Panama Canal Zone," in Philip Muehlenbeck (ed.) *Race, Ethnicity, and the Cold War: A Global Perspective* (2012); "Harry S. Truman's Latin America Foreign Policy 1945-1953," in Daniel S. Margolies (ed.) *A Companion for Harry S. Truman* (2012) and "Roberto Duran, Omar Torrijos, and the Rise of Panamanian Machismo 1964-1989" in David M.K. Sheinin (ed.) *Sports Culture in Latin America* (2015). His book *Borderland on the Isthmus: Race, Culture, and the Struggle for the Canal Zone* (2014) was recently published by Duke University Press. He is also one of the co-authors along with Thomas G. Paterson, J. Garry Clifford, and Robert Brigham of *American Foreign Relations, Volumes I & II*, 8th edition (2014). He is currently working on a monograph project entitled: Race, Identity and Gender in U.S. Military-Cuban Relations 1941-1964 which deals with the intersections of culture between the U.S. military and the Cuban people from the outbreak of the Second World War until the final closure of Cuban contact with the Guantánamo Naval base in 1964.

Dustin Walcher is Associate Professor and Chair of History and Political Science at Southern Oregon University. A specialist in international history, the history of U.S. foreign relations, and inter-American affairs, his scholarship analyzes international economic policy, global capitalism, and social disruption. He is currently revising a manuscript that examines the link between the failure of U.S.-led economic initiatives and the rise of social revolution in Argentina during the 1950s and 1960s.

Jana K. Lipman is an Associate Professor in the History Department at Tulane University. Lipman is the author of *Guantanamo: A Working-Class History of Empire and Revolution* (University of California Press, 2009), which was the 2009 Co-Winner of the Taft Prize in Labor History. She is co-editing a volume with Daniel E. Bender (University of

Toronto) "Making the Empire Work: Labor and United States Imperialism" (forthcoming NYU Press 2015). Her work has also appeared in *American Quarterly*, the *Journal of Asian American Studies*, the *Journal of American Ethnic History*, and *Radical History Review*. Her current research project examines Vietnamese refugee camps in Southeast Asia in the late Cold War.

Alan McPherson is Professor of International and Area Studies and Director of the Center for the Americas at the University of Oklahoma. He is the author, most recently, of *The Invaded: How Latin Americans and their Allies Fought and Ended U.S. Occupations* (Oxford, 2014).

Darlene Rivas is Professor of History at Pepperdine University. Her book, *Missionary Capitalist: Nelson Rockefeller in Venezuela* (University of North Carolina Press, 2002) explored U.S. and Latin American public and private efforts to promote economic development. She has also published on humanitarianism and anti-Americanism and is currently writing a biography of Rockefeller

David M. K. Sheinin is Professor of History at Trent University (Canada) and Académico Correspondiente of the Academia Nacional de la Historia de la República Argentina. He was awarded the 2013 Arthur P. Whitaker Prize (Best Book) from the Middle Atlantic Council of Latin American Studies for *Consent of the Damned: Ordinary Argentines in the Dirty War* (University Press of Florida, 2012). Alongside Lester D. Langley, David co-edits the updated and expanded University of Georgia Press "United States and the Americas" series.

Review by Jana K. Lipman, Tulane University

On August 29, 1936, John McCain was born in the Coco Solo Naval Air Station in the Panama Canal Zone. In 2008, when he ran for the Republican presidential nomination, the *New York Times* published a story questioning the constitutionality of his presidential bid based on language which requires the U.S. president to be a “natural born citizen.” While the blogosphere (and the Democratic Party’s) response was underwhelming and affirmed McCain’s citizenship and credentials, the brief media buzz placed unusual focus on the role of U.S. empire and extraterritorial spaces in contemporary politics, even if the word “empire” was conspicuously missing from most media accounts.¹ In this flurry of stories, the media analysts and legal scholars did not question the U.S. role in the Panama Canal Zone or the longer history of U.S. military, economic, and cultural power in Panama.² Moreover, commentators never questioned the presence of U.S. military bases in the Canal Zone or the complex American community that populated the Canal Zone and bisected Panama. What had daily life been like for McCain’s mother in the Canal Zone? Who were her doctors, her friends, and her community? Who cleaned the house, did the laundry, or helped care for the McCain family? Who were the Americans in the Canal Zone and what were their relationships with the Panamanians and West Indians who also worked and traversed this international and imperial space? Michael Donoghue’s *Borderland on the Isthmus: Race, Culture, and the Struggle for the Canal Zone* fills this vacuum, and it provides the first comprehensive social and cultural history of the multi-vocal and multinational communities in the Zone.

Donoghue argues that the Canal Zone must be seen as an “imperial borderland” (1). He writes a history which includes Zonians, U.S. military personnel, West Indians, and Panamanians, arguing that their encounters “provide both a social history of the American Empire in Panama and an analysis of the Zone and its frontiers as sites of contestation over race, identity, gender, and power” (3). Working with the language of borderlands scholars, his work is also strongly influenced by recent scholarship that interrogates transnational

¹ Carl Hulse, “McCain’s Canal Zone Birth Prompts Queries about Whether that Rules him Out,” *New York Times*, February 28, 2008; Mike Madden, “John McCain’s Panama Problem,” *Salon*, February 28, 2008, http://www.salon.com/2008/02/28/panama_3/ (accessed October 22, 2014); Alex Koppelman, “A Solution to McCain’s Panama Problem, with Obama’s Support,” *Salon*, February 29, 2008, http://www.salon.com/2008/02/29/mccain_panama/ (accessed October 22, 2014); In *Slate*, Michael Weiss mocks the supposed controversy, and argues that even the blogosphere can’t find a real ‘story’ in McCain’s Panamanian birth. In short, no one was seriously arguing that McCain’s birth on a U.S. naval air station in Panama disqualified him for the presidency. Michael Weiss, “Panama John,” *Slate*, February 28, 2008, http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/todays_blogs/2008/02/panama_john.html (accessed October 22, 2014).

² As a side note, in the face of relentless conspiracy theories and ‘birthers’ who claimed without evidence that Barack Obama was *not* born Hawai’i, and therefore not eligible for the presidency, there were few who questioned the U.S. imperial legacies in Hawai’i or asked why Hawai’i was in fact part of the United States.

and imperial spaces.³ In many ways, Donoghue's work acts as a sequel to Julie Greene's ground-breaking *Canal Builders*.⁴ While her book excavates the working-class history of the canal in the early twentieth century, Donoghue narrates the social history of the Canal Zone *after* the canal was built and opened to trade and maritime traffic. Donoghue emphasizes the racial, social, and sexual relationships between Zonians, West Indians, and local Panamanians after World War II, and he argues that these social identities and local politics were constitutive of the Zone's political landscape (5).

Donoghue's book is most powerful when recovering lost stories and legal cases, such as those of Lester Greaves and Roxanna Hermosillo. The book draws from an impressive range of previously untapped legal sources, which provide new perspectives on crime and sexuality between the Canal Zone and Panama. Donoghue organizes his book thematically with chapters on Zonians, West Indians, the U.S. military, sexuality, and crime. However, Donoghue's strength, an analysis of the social specificity of the Canal Zone, in the end, also leaves too many questions unanswered about the international dynamics between the United States and Panama. As a result, it is difficult to recognize the changing political relationship between the United States and Panama, particularly after the 1964 protests.⁵ To this end, the book is a valuable analysis of intercultural relations, but it does not explain *when* and *why* these social relations mattered in the heart of Cold War U.S.-Latin American relations.

Donoghue's book centers on the social and economic stratifications between the U.S. military, U.S. civilian, and West Indian communities. Donoghue analyzes the Zonian communities and their often micro-status disputes about elite clubs, preferred neighborhoods, and drinking establishments. He also recognizes the contradiction of the Zonians' hyper-patriotic, Cold War anti-communism and their "near socialist lifestyle," whereby they received and expected ample benefits and demanded few democratic rights (69). In one of the book's best chapters, "The U.S. Military: Armed Guardians of the Borderland," Donoghue also teases apart the distinctions and resentment between U.S. Zonians and U.S. military personnel. He recognizes that these Americans constituted two separate populations each with its own hierarchy. He argues that the Zonians embraced

³ While Donoghue's citations include books that interrogate borderlands in regions as diverse as South Africa and Malaysia, his work is firmly situated in the Latin American scholarship and seems strongly influenced by Gilbert Joseph and older scholarship on the Canal Zone. Gilbert Joseph et al. eds., *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Michael Conniff, *Black Labor on a White Canal: Panama, 1904-1981* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985); and Walter LaFeber, *The Panama Canal: The Crisis in Historical Perspective* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁴ Julie Greene, *The Canal Builders: Making America's Empire at the Panama Canal* (New York: Penguin, 2009).

⁵ Alan McPherson's account remains the strongest analysis of the 1964 protests, see Alan McPherson, "Courts of World Opinion: Trying the Panama Flag Riots of 1964," *Diplomatic History* 28:1 (January 2004): 83-112; "Rioting for Dignity: Masculinity, National Identity, and Anti-U.S. Resistance in Panama," *Gender & History* 19: 2 (August 2007): 219-241.

America's consumerist middle class lifestyle, while military personnel often came from working-class backgrounds. In particular, he highlights the role of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. military and their ambiguous position as Spanish-speaking U.S. military personnel who often faced racial discrimination within the U.S. military (186-91). A deeper analysis and study of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. military, particularly in Latin American outposts, is far overdue, and Donoghue's work points to the richness that such a study could provide. However, Donoghue also establishes that the U.S. military ultimately defended the privileged position of the Zonians, regardless of interpersonal resentments. In this way, he demonstrates how military power underscored and supported the civilian Zonian community. Cocktail parties and golfing came with the full force and power of the U.S. military.

Donoghue also succeeds in uncovering rich and detailed cases that brought men and women across the borderlands of the Isthmus. For example, he uncovers the case of Greaves, a Panamanian man of West Indian descent who pled guilty to raping a young white American woman. A U.S. District Court in Balboa sentenced Greaves to fifty years of hard labor in the Gamboa Penitentiary, and because of the severity of his sentence and the history of racial prejudice in the Zone, Greaves case became celebrated within Panama and the black diaspora as a case of U.S. injustice (50-51). Greaves later recanted his confessions, and Paul Robeson, a leading African American performer and activist, Harlem Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, and the NAACP all called for Greaves' release (116-17). Donoghue concludes that the "collective memory surrounding the Greaves case reveals volumes about differing gender and racial perceptions among West Indians" (118). I took issue with Donoghue's definition of "Latin" Panamanians, who spoke Spanish and identified as Catholics, as compared to West Indians, who were Anglophone and Protestant, because it seemed to continue to exclude West Indians and their descendants from a "Panamanian" identity. However, overall, Donoghue's book explores how even generations in, West Indians and their descendants occupied a nebulous and contested place both in the Canal Zone and in Panama. As one worker commented, "There is a prejudice against us because we speak English. But rich Panamanians send their kids to US schools in the Zone to learn English. We are discriminated against not because they think we are inferior, but because they resent blacks being here. Panamanians are strange." (120)

Despite these contributions, I grew frustrated with Donoghue's book because of its schematic structure and limited analysis of citizenship or U.S.-Panama relations. First, Donoghue assumes a great deal of knowledge of Panamanian politics and the status of individuals living in the zone. Rather than interrogating how the Panamanian government and the U.S. government both sought to define and limit who could claim Panamanian or U.S. citizenship, this question remains an undercurrent throughout the book rather than analyzed head-on. For example, while Donoghue includes a section entitled "What Constituted a Zonian?" and emphasizes that a "true Zonian" had been *born* in the Canal Zone (54), he only lays out the political language which granted U.S. citizenship to the children of U.S. civilians and military personnel born in the Canal Zone much later in the chapter (88). This becomes even more jarring in the West Indian case. Donoghue documents the Panamanian hostility against West Indians, which reached a climax in 1941 when the Panamanian government denied West Indians' claims to Panamanian citizenship.

Then after World War II, the Panamanian government reversed course and restored West Indians' claims in 1946. Still, the status of West Indians in the Canal Zone remained ambiguous at best (95). While Donoghue rightly wants to explore the West Indians' "borderland identities," the legal framework of this borderland remains unclear (95). How did West Indians (often British subjects) make claims on the Panamanian, the British, the U.S., or island governments? What was the process of naturalization for those who wished to become U.S. or Panamanian citizens? And what citizenship choices did men and women make?

As a result, when Donoghue notes substantial changes in citizenship law, he does not situate them in historical context. For example, in 1972, General Omar Torrijó's government declared that everyone born in the Canal Zone would now be a Panamanian citizen (88). Donoghue writes that "This law affected hundreds of Zonians and threw into disarray the whole issue of national identity along the borderland. The law required that those Americans born in the Zone apply for Panamanian *cedulas* (ID cards) and Panamanian passports. Without these documents, Americans born in the Canal Zone could not leave Panama from the national airport." (88) However, we do not learn what happened next. Did these individuals in fact become Panamanian citizens? Gain Panamanian passports? Did the U.S. government recognize the Zonians as Panamanians and U.S. citizens? Or did the Zonians ignore this new requirement? Given the fine-grained nature of this monograph, answers to these questions would help tease out the thorny, yet pivotal, legal questions about citizenship and identity, and the messiness of these borderland politics. Moreover, how did the 1972 announcement correlate with U.S.-Panamanian relations, which changed significantly in the wake of the 1964 riots and eventually resulted in the 1978 treaty?

This leads to my second concern with Donoghue's book. I feel disappointed writing this, because in general I appreciate works which aim for a thematic, rather than traditional, chronological approach. However, in this instance, I believe Donoghue's schematic, almost picaresque structure, detracts from an overall argument and analysis of the *politics* alongside the identities on the borderlands. As a result, U.S.-Panamanian relations operate at the margins of Donoghue's work, rather than being constitutive of the making of this borderland. Donoghue's work jumps back and forth chronologically in each chapter, stretching from the 1930s through the 1970s in almost each instance. While the stories in and of themselves are often quite illuminating, the constant back and forth make it far more difficult to recognize the key political forces of each era, whether it was World War II, the Cold War, the politics of decolonization, or the 1977-78 treaty negotiations. For example, Donoghue does not explain the politics of the 1968 military coup within Panama or the eventual 1977 negotiations with the Carter Administration. The framework and variables governing the Panamanian economy are also left unexplored. Donoghue only notes the Zone's importance within the Panamanian economy in the book's conclusion, leaving open questions about competition, dependency, and economic alternatives (216). How did the Cold War politics shift from the 1950s through the 1960s? How did the Zonians react to the 1968 military coup? West Indians? Panamanians who had businesses that depended on Zonian customers? What preparations did Zonians, Panamanians, and West Indians make in the 1970s as the treaty negotiations were coming to a conclusion?

Despite my desire for a stronger political framework, Donoghue's book makes a strong contribution to histories of U.S. empire, transnational social histories, and borderland social relations. It provides multiple avenues for further research, as it explores new archives, asks questions about the daily life of empire, and charts out new territory for U.S.-Panamanian history.

Review by Alan McPherson, University of Oklahoma

Just when I thought nothing new could be written about the Panama Canal Zone, Michael Donoghue has produced perhaps the most fascinating and complete account of relations between its inhabitants and Panamanians. And *Borderland on the Isthmus* is so much more than that, observing as it does the cleavages of race, gender, nationality, geography, and more that defined identities and set up a century of struggles between individuals and groups.

While Donoghue's book chapters and conference presentations were always as replete with colorful anecdotes as this book is, his work up to now has been somewhat under-theorized.¹ No longer. *Borderland on the Isthmus* usefully demonstrates how the Panama Canal Zone fostered imperial relationships conditioned largely by frontier areas separating a large, powerful nation from a small, weak one. Donoghue has done his homework, citing borderlands and subalternity experts such as Emily Rosenberg and James Scott, respectively.² He even cites Foucault (9).

The book begins by explaining the many ways that the U.S. presence in Panama built borders that organized people's lives while they also primed them for conflict. Its next two chapters tackle racial borders and categories—and these were legion in Panama. Donoghue is careful to recognize not only race and racism between U.S. white, West Indians, blacks, and Panamanians, but also throws in the mix the racial diversity among Spanish-speaking Panamanians, divisions between Barbadians and Jamaicans, the many foreigners—Jews, Arabs, Chinese, Colombians, Spaniards, etc.—who lived in the Zone and Panama, and, of course, Puerto Ricans, African Americans, and other nonwhite U.S. citizens.

While the racism of the Zone and the struggles of West Indians for justice and recognition had previously been explored by Michael Conniff and others, Donoghue ventures into newer territory with his analysis of gender.³ Anywhere young male soldiers are stationed,

¹ "Murder and Rape in the Canal Zone: Cultural Conflict and the U.S. Military Presence in Panama 1955-1956" in *Decentering America: Culture and International History II*, ed. Jessica Gienow-Hecht (New York: Berghahn Press, 2007), 277-311. "Race, Labor, and Security in the Panama Canal Zone: The Greaves Rape Case and the Isthmian Cold War Crackdown," in *Race, Ethnicity, and the Cold War: A Global Perspective*, ed. Philip Muehlenbeck (Nashville, Tenn: Vanderbilt University Press, 2012), 63-90; and "Boxing and Panamanian Nationalism: Roberto Duran and the Machismo Factor in U.S.-Panamanian Sports Rivalries," in *Sports and Identity in Modern Latin America*, ed. David Sheinin (Pittsburgh, Penn.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013).

² Emily Rosenberg, "Considering Borders," in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, ed. Michael Hogan and Thomas Paterson, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 176- 193; James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985).

³ Michael Conniff, *Black Labor on a White Canal: Panama, 1904-1981* (Pittsburgh, Penn.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985); John Biesanz, "Cultural and Economic Factors in Panamanian Race Relations,"

sex will be a major concern, and Panama was no exception. Donoghue presents what could have been a simple tale of sexual exploitation through imperial power into a much more complex story, replete with often tragic, sometimes comic tales of debauchery and abuse.

The next chapter covers the role of the U.S. military, whose presence was qualitatively different from that of civilian Zonians because soldiers were short-timers, working class, and overwhelmingly men. They caused their share of trouble, to be sure, but Donoghue argues that, overall, they had better relations with Panamanians because they were more willing to mix with them. “Better to beat me, to fight with me, to make love to me rather than to have nothing to do with me, to keep oneself separate and apart from me—like most of the Zonians did. The military at least had human relations with the people,” explained a Panamanian (170). Donoghue’s treasure trove of such interviews with a diverse array of US citizens and Panamanians yields scores of hilarious or revolting but always revealing quotes, which in many ways are the heart of this book.

The last chapter is the most theoretically rich, as it takes the question of whether criminality represented, in the eyes of Zonians, an offense against imperial hegemony, or else an articulation of resistance, as Panamanians sometimes saw it. Donoghue is happy to entertain the possibility, yet notes that much crime was in no way political.

A perhaps understated additional theme is the difficulty of managing the Zone. The myriad laws and other systems of control—and the necessity of adapting them to changing societies and geopolitics—are the other side of the coin in this story, and it is understandable that Donoghue prefers to focus on ordinary people rather than government officials. But historian Julie Greene highlighted the challenge of managing tens of thousands of transient human beings toward the focused task of building the waterway in her magisterial *The Canal Builders*, and Donoghue implicitly carries the story into the subsequent decades.⁴

Beautifully written and carefully researched, the book does not have many faults. But let me suggest a few areas where the author might opt to defend his choices. First is organization. The book’s chapters focus on race, gender, militarism, and crime—all important markers along most borderlands, and they certainly pervaded Panama’s. But somewhat lost in this thematic organization is the opportunity to focus on change over time. Would it not have been more conducive to understanding “the struggle for the Canal Zone” if Donoghue had attempted instead to understand primarily the impact of external geopolitics and internal laws on these markers? What would he now identify as the four or five most important factors in changing relations between Panamanians, U.S. citizens, and West Indians?

American Sociological Review 14 (1949): 772-79; Omar Jaen Juarez, *La población del istmo de Panamá: Estudio de geohistoria* (Madrid: Agencia Española de Cooperación, 1978).

⁴ Julie Greene, *The Canal Builders: Making America’s Empire at the Panama Canal* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009).

A second issue is the danger of overstating criminality. Among the book's themes, crime stands out most: it not only merits its own chapter, but every chapter also begins with a criminal vignette. Such may be the result of reviewing sensationalistic newspapers. This sustained attention to crime might in the end be misleading. To be sure, it shows the seedy underbelly of a pristine-looking colony, and these stories of street-level lawlessness are a welcome break from the many studies of U.S.-Panamanian diplomatic tussles. But the Zone, in the end, was still a place that worked: it ran the Canal efficiently and enhanced the security and prosperity of the United States—and, one might argue, of Panama, too.

A third issue is how unusual Panama really was. The author claims that Panama was a "typical" borderland, yet also, in the following sentence, that it was "unique" in that its borders were noncontiguous (2). Not only is it not clear how noncontiguousness contributed substantively to Zone social history, but also, isn't this a contradiction?

All in all, *Borderland on the Isthmus* is a marvel of research, one of the most skillful cobblings of anecdotes about empire ever gathered in a single book. Donoghue's capacity for detail and his storytelling skills are delightful and awe-inspiring. All students of U.S. foreign relations, Latin American history, and empire should read this book.

Review by Darlene Rivas, Pepperdine University

Buttressed by thorough English and Spanish research, including public documents in the United States and Panama, popular literature, and oral interviews, Michael Donoghue's *Borderland on the Isthmus* offers a fresh examination of a unique locus of U.S. empire, the borderland of Panama and the Canal Zone. He plumbs the day-to-day interactions among 'ordinary' peoples—diverse Panamanians and U.S. Americans. He contextualizes these interactions by providing frequent reference to political and diplomatic developments and through occasional pertinent global comparisons, yet the body of this book and its strength are his descriptions and analyses of how these interactions occurred among people who forged their identities through the intersections of place/space and time, and power, race, class, and gender. The result is a book that is more expository than argumentative, and Donoghue's purpose is not to ask why the U.S. established the Canal Zone, or, except indirectly, why it was maintained. Accepting the premise that this borderland is an imperial zone, his descriptions of peoples' interactions and beliefs bear the weight of his conclusion that this unique contact zone on the isthmus, of which the Canal Zone was a part, illuminates the complexities of American empire.

Methodologically, Donoghue is in effect answering a call that was first made in the 1990s to bring linguistic and cultural studies to bear on U.S.-Latin American relations and later to woo historians of U.S. foreign relations to join together with Latin Americanists in such efforts. Bolstered by National Endowment of the Humanities funding, scholars began producing monographs and edited volumes of cultural analyses, and in one of the latter, offered the following advice to 'traditional' diplomatic historians: "If only to accomplish their core objectives of identifying the relevant interests and actors involved, and explaining the determinants and consequences of policy, these scholars should take note of newer work on the region's social and cultural history that has been produced over the past decade or so." Further, scholars of U.S. empire needed to "[take] seriously the actions, identities, and beliefs of ordinary people, as well as of elites."¹ Donoghue did more than "take note" and has produced a relevant and accessible social history that scholars of foreign relations will highly value, in part because he does accomplish at least some of the "core objectives" of diplomatic historians. Appropriately, his *Borderland on the Isthmus* is a volume in the Duke University Press series, *American Encounters/Global Interactions*, edited by Gilbert M. Joseph and Emily S. Rosenberg, that emerged from and expands globally what began in the 1990s as a U.S.-Latin American project.

Donoghue also owes an intellectual debt to another project from the 1990s, one that built on the early twentieth century work of Herbert Eugene Bolton, who sought to conceptualize a history of the Americas, integrating Spanish sources and focusing in

¹ See Joseph M. Gilbert, Catherine C. Legrand, and Ricardo D. Salvatore, eds., *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998) and Joseph and Daniela Spenser, *In from the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 18-19.

particular on place—the borderlands where empires encountered each other.² This revival of the borderlands concept has inspired scholars beyond examinations of the Spanish/Mexican-U.S. borderlands to diverse locations, most often at frontiers, where peoples and empires interact, whether in East Asia and the Pacific or in the Pyrenees or the Southern Cone and methodologically, by incorporating insights from cultural and linguistic studies (like Mary Louise Pratt’s concept of contact zones).³ Borderlands provide a lens for analyzing social and cultural relations among diverse peoples, at frontiers where state power is often projected less effectively than in the Canal Zone. Whether or not the label is necessary, and it is unusual to define the isthmus of Panama, which is non-contiguous to the United States, as a borderland, Donoghue successfully uses insights from this flexible concept to help readers understand the relative (and elusive) roles of place, power, and people in an important contact zone of American empire and the Panamanian nation.

Donoghue’s opening chapter, “Changing Boundaries and Frontiers,” sets the stage by orienting the reader in place and time and to his methods. The locus of American empire, the Canal Zone, a space ten miles by roughly 50 miles that splits the nation of Panama in two, had delineated geographical boundaries (although the precise geographical extent of direct U.S. control varied over time). Donoghue points out that the geographic frontiers were not generally marked along the Zone’s borders except in populated areas, where the most visible demarcation came to be an actual boundary wall built along the busy Fourth of July Avenue, a mile-and-a-half long fence built in December 1959 that became known as the Berlin Wall after 1961. But beyond physical boundaries, he describes fluctuating “frontiers of influence” (13) extending into Panama proper that were imagined and experienced. Thus, Donoghue’s scope includes the Panamanian isthmus, always in relation to the Canal Zone, a sphere akin in some respects to military bases or colonies, yet also unique—he later calls it a “super enclave” (248). This larger scope offers both promise and a potential problem (more on that later).

“Frontiers of influence” shifted depending on the context and the perspectives of peoples who lived there as well as through the assertion of power by the U.S. or Panamanian states. During the establishment of the Canal Zone and into the protectorate era, the U.S. exerted far-reaching power throughout Panama (including through military intervention) but after the repudiation of extensive rights in the terminal cities under the Hull-Alfaro Treaty of 1936, the frontiers of U.S. influence (and actual physical control of properties outside the Zone) ebbed and flowed. This power as an extension of the U.S. presence in the Canal Zone officially ended with its turnover in 1979 and 1999 (per the 1977 Carter-Torrijos Treaty). Regardless of how U.S. power might have been deployed after that, the “borderland” was no longer. Shifting frontiers of influence could also reflect assertions of Panamanian power, not only through treaty revisions. For example, under the Panamanian nationalism of President Arnulfo Arias “the frontiers of the Zone’s influence shrank briefly” as he

² Herbert Eugene Bolton, “The Epic of Greater America,” Annual Address of the President of the American Historical Association, *American Historical Review*, 38 (3) April 1933, 448-474.

³ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London: Routledge, 1992.

“attempted . . . to take back the borderland” by demanding Spanish speaking and signage in Panama City and Colón, among other measures (13). Changing global contexts also impacted unofficial “frontiers of influence” as well as official frontiers, such as when strategic imperatives of World War II expanded U.S. American influence, making Panama City and Colón come to look like “American base towns” for the duration and temporarily increasing the number and size of military installations both inside and outside the zone (14).

Donoghue draws explicit links between the Canal Zone and Panamanian state formation and nation building. From the Arias example above, state capacity and a spirit of nationalism in the 1930s and 1940s contributed to treaty revision as well as racist sentiments against West Indians. The shift from oligarchical control to the populist authoritarian National Guard era, concomitant with international criticism of American imperialism, provided Panama’s new leaders with opportunities to gain popular support by opposing U.S. control of the Zone and as a result, also gave them some reason to appreciate its usefulness; Donoghue notes that Torrijos did not want the U.S. to tear down the “Berlin Wall” (21). Still, Panamanian pressure plus the increasing U.S. willingness to exit an increasingly strategically and commercially irrelevant imperial outpost culminated in the Torrijos’s regime’s successful termination of the Zone. Clearly, Donoghue does not neglect state power, providing political and diplomatic context for his social history.

Yet Donoghue’s “struggle for the Canal Zone” (will it be U.S. or Panamanian or how much U.S. or Panamanian?) showcases less high politics and more often groups and individuals’ struggles over identity and their relations with each other. Three chapters (two, three, and five) focus on groups of people, one on the Zonians, one on West Indians, and another on the U.S. military. Two chapters (four and six) explore types of interactions among these ‘ordinary people,’ with one assessing the role of sexuality and gender, including intermarriage, and the other focusing on crime and resistance. Military and court records, and many periodicals from Panama, the Canal Zone, and the United States provide a basis for description of reactions to events (like Panamanians responses to crimes by American GIs) and the attitudes and values such responses reveal. Oral interviews offer both the predictable (Zonian nostalgia for a lost world) and unexpected insight (tales of Panamanian taxi drivers making sure that drunk GIs or Americans caught up in popular disturbances got safely home). In these chapters, Donoghue describes the development of these varied peoples’ communities and values, some economic activities -- purchasing of goods and services whether in Zone commissaries or in Panamanian communities adjacent to the zone -- their sexual and marital relations, and crime, policing and justice. Most striking is how these complex relations with each other contributed to identity formation—not just how others’ perceived a group, but how the group came to understand itself.

It is here that Donoghue’s borderland meets empire. Donoghue describes the isthmian borderland as characterized by colonial relations -- most marked between the Zonians and Panamanians--with classic roles played by ‘collaborators’ like West Indians and the Kuna and some Panamanian elites. The ordinary people whose stories he tells, and who are impacted by their relations with each other, may be divided into such groups, but Donoghue topples stereotypes quickly and makes clear there are no neat binaries between

colonizer and colonized or imperialist and imperial subject. He complicates most groupings, describing significant fissures within them. His Latin Panamanians are divided not just by class but also by shades of brown and more. The West Indians identified themselves by diverse island origins, by generational arrival on the isthmus, affiliation or non-affiliation with the Canal Zone, and extent of assimilation, to name a few. The Americans, while having much in common (Donoghue is careful to point out that differences can be exaggerated) were hardly a monolithic group, as American Zonians' differed with other civilians and Zone government, and with U.S. military personnel, who were themselves divided among officers with families and from diverse GIs, including whites and significant numbers of Puerto Ricans and African Americans (in the later years). Some groups do not receive such detailed analysis (like the Kuna) but the point Donoghue is making about the nature of empire is that while power differentials existed, relations among all these peoples were characterized by a complex set of alliances and confrontations forged by people making choices out of a stew of expedience, common and conflicting interests, and human appetites for sex, love, vengeance, material welfare, status, security, autonomy, community, and identity. And all of this took place in the context of a tension between U.S. efforts to maintain perceived interests while Panamanians engaged in a project of nation building.

Identity formation for Zonians (colonials, yet not settler colonials in the classic sense of property owners) is intriguing, but particularly poignant is Donoghue's portrayal of Panama's West Indians, especially those living in the Canal Zone. Though some of this is familiar from other scholarship on labor and the Zone,⁴ Donoghue mines cultural sources, court records, and personal interviews to tell rich stories of resistance, accommodation, and identity formation. Drawn to American popular culture, speaking English, often enjoying economic advantages in the Zone, West Indians identified in some ways with U.S. Americans, despite discrimination against them socially and through segregated housing, education, and work opportunities. West Indians in contrast initially defined themselves in strong opposition to Latin Panamanians who viewed them as outside the Panamanian national project (even stripping them of Panamanian citizenship between 1941-1946). West Indians thus crafted identities that integrated African and Caribbean island traditions, including speaking in an English dialect called *bajan*, while also embracing a level of Americanization that was reinforced through the workplace and in the Zone's segregated public schools, at least until the 1950s, when Panama required that West Indian Panamanians receive Spanish instruction and learn the Panamanian curriculum. Presumably, the guerrilla general Victoriano Lorenzo, who fought the Colombian government until his death in 1903, replaced George Washington, the hero from far off Virginia.

Suspicious of white racism, some West Indians came to see 'resistors' like Lester Leon Greaves, a black Panamanian convicted of raping a white woman from a prominent family

⁴ For accounts of labor after 1914, see for example, Michael L. Conniff, *Black Labor on a White Canal: Panama, 1904-1981*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985 and Phillippe I. Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work: Divided Labor on a Central America Banana Plantation*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1989.

in the Zone and sentenced to 50 years in Gamboa Penitentiary, as a victim of bigotry rather than a perpetrator of a crime. West Indians (not just from the Canal Zone, as Donoghue notes) increasingly impacted Panamanian culture, as Latin Panamanians assimilated West Indians' favored foods, music, and even resistance stories like that of Greaves (whom Donoghue interviewed). While tensions remained among West Indians and Panamanians and to some extent Americans, Donoghue suggests that throughout the Canal Zone era, West Indians typically crossed boundaries, mingling with people outside the Zone more easily than did Zonians, and experiencing the Zone with less anxiety than poor Panamanians who feared the Zone's police force.

As he did for the West Indian 'collaborators,' Donoghue similarly documents the experience of empire for Latin Panamanians and for U.S. Americans, from GIs to Zonian children. This 'impact of policy' is a core objective of diplomatic historians, and as we have seen, the author also considers other such objectives, not so much by means of original research, but by incorporating insights from others on the role of state power, and providing diplomatic and political context. A final question is whether the thematic, social, and cultural history approach sacrifices attention to changes over time and chronology?

The overall structure of the book is less focused on temporal development than most histories of U.S. foreign relations, but Donoghue is sensitive to chronology and change over time. This is no linear narrative, and while he focuses much of his analysis on the less well-understood post-World War II era, he ranges back and forth from the early twentieth century to the 1970s and even 1990s. He notes turning points, such as the flag riots of 1964, which he notes contributed not only to Panamanian nationalism and a growing commitment in the U.S. to substantially revise the treaties, but also to Zonian defensiveness and a sense of victimhood. The riots are also explained in the context of the growing global critique of imperialism, not insignificantly including in the U.S., where Zonians gained a reputation as privileged, spoiled colonials. Donoghue also traces cultural change, noting the development of enduring myths, like the innocence of Lester Leon Greaves, or changing values of status, such as the shift in the Zone when 1970s college and engineering degrees counted more than being a descendant of the "ditch diggers" in the relatively flat Zonian hierarchy (73). The story of John Peter Williams, who committed a series of burglaries and escaped from Gamboa Penitentiary in the 1910s and 1920s is illustrative of how Donoghue documents cultural change and handles issues of chronology. Williams was Panamanian—born in Panama City—and neither Latin Panamanians nor U.S. Americans considered him a hero for his antics, but over time West Indians came to imagine him as a "hero-outlaw," both criminal and resistor (107). The initial event is outside the scope of Donoghue's primary chronological focus, yet the legend emerged in West Indian culture as West Indian identity evolved. Donoghue spends eight pages (107-114) to relate the tale and its persistent retelling in order to show the evolution and complexity of West Indian identity and the West Indians' ambivalent relationship to Americans.

Donoghue deserves much credit for this sensitivity to context and change, although he faces a common dilemma with the thematic approach, which is the need for some necessary repetition of events or issues. Most of the time, this is necessary and works, but occasionally confused readers may wish the pieces of the puzzle were more fully put

together (e.g., the episode of the 1964 flag riots, while well documented in various locations, is poorly narrated on 82-84). Occasionally, this hopping about also leaves the significance of some events lost on the reader (e.g., the 1951 creation of the Panama Canal Company).

This is a small quibble for a superior book, and more could be made. Donoghue suggests that cultural diffusion was significant, as American popular culture impacted the isthmus, (like jazz, Santa Claus, and Thanksgiving turkeys), but the description of West Indian cultural diffusion is given more space than American cultural influence—perhaps this cultural diffusion was richer because West Indians were Panamanian, and if so, what might that say about American Empire? Also, despite noting the international character of the isthmus as a global crossroads, Donoghue has little to say about other groups that bear on the issue of U.S. influence (like Chinese grocers, whose commercial relationships with the Zonian commissaries became a target of Panamanian ire).⁵ Nor does he elaborate on attitudes toward American businesses outside the Zone, intriguingly referred to as the American business colony, which seemingly had a relatively cozy relationship with Panama's elite. In general, the emphasis of cultural studies methods on issues like crime and sex means that economic relations, while included especially in discussions related to the commissary, are less well documented by Donoghue. I also wondered, based on my own research, about the interactions of American technical experts who were not tied to the Zone, but who worked with Panamanians in fields as diverse as aviation, agriculture, and education. One can hardly complain about the need to circumscribe the scope of the book, but the borderland concept opens up these areas as relevant to Donoghue's inquiry. Do such interactions, technically in the larger 'borderland' of the isthmus, also have lessons for us about the nature of U.S. empire? To come back to the issue of the elusiveness of borderlands as a concept, what are the outer boundaries of a borderland? These are valid questions, but they should not obscure the fact that this is a very fine book. It integrates social and cultural history in ways that historians of U.S. foreign relations, 'traditional' or not, will welcome.

⁵ See John Major, *Prize Possession: The United States and the Panama Canal, 1903-1979*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 241.

Review by David M. K. Sheinin, Trent University, Canada

In his recent essay, "Marching Ahead (Forthrightly): The Historiography of Inter-American Relations," the historian Stephen G. Rabe points to the "great" Piero Gleijeses (and his book *Conflicting Missions: Washington, Havana, and Africa, 1959-1976*) as a model for how a scholar might effectively integrate problems of "agency, international history, multi-archival, [and] multilingual research."¹ Fine-tuning Rabe's categories, *Borderland on the Isthmus* belongs in that same stratosphere, explaining U.S. empire as a conjunction of military authority, an obsessive social ordering of the Canal Zone, violent intimacies, racial hierarchies, and the connections of resistance and colonial repression across a borderland.

Donoghue's theoretical framework on the construction of borders will mark the most lasting contribution of this book. It likely explains in some measure *Borderland's* appearance in the Duke University Press American Encounters/Global Interactions series and will generate a much broader readership than works by most historians of U.S. foreign relations. His approach and methodology remind me of Ricardo Piglia's 1992 novel, *La ciudad ausente*² where the physical geography of a futuristic Buenos Aires is eerily hard to pin down. Donoghue posits an imperial borderland that is defined only to a point by the military's physical ordering of Canal Zone space, armed guards, and fences. Where Piglia's urban geography shifts continually in the shadow of brutal authoritarian rule, the imperial borderland in Panama moves constantly as a function of social relations, racial hierarchies, rigid and shifting moralities, as well as the everyday violence of how Zonians (the American residents of the Canal Zone), U.S. servicemen, and Panamanians interact.

No example is more poignant or better illustrates the author's innovative use of archival and oral history sources in positing a shifting borderlands than the 'strange sight' along the line dividing the Canal Zone and the Republic of Panama in January 1964. After days of violent anti-American rioting in Panama, the U.S. military had closed the border. Several nights later, U.S. soldiers began lining up on one side of the border fence while Panamanian sex trade workers assembled on the other and "fellated the GIs through the chain-link apertures." These incidents "spoke volumes about the Canal Zone's sexual hunger for Panama" and underline the complexity of "conflict and accommodation an imperial borderland represents" (8).

This book is about sex, love, violence, family, and their intersections in the social construction of an imperial borderland. In a 2004 review of *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (University of California Press, 2002), the legal scholar Kimani Paul-Emile took author Laura Briggs to task for not having found ways to draw directly on the testimony of working women subject to racialized, medicalized, and

¹ Stephen G. Rabe, "Marching Ahead (Forthrightly): The Historiography of Inter-American Relations," *Passport: The Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations Review*, 45.2 (September 2014): 27.

² Ricardo Piglia, *La ciudad ausente* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1992).

sexualized imperial violence. “The silence,” Paul-Emile writes, “left by the absence of these women’s stories is deafening.”³ In stark contrast, Donoghue has set a new research gold standard by identifying and drawing masterfully on the Panamanian equivalents of those stories.

Many historians of U.S. foreign relations trained in the United States produce excellent monographs that advance our understanding of bilateral relations while shedding light on Cold War inter-American affairs more broadly. Drawing on an extensive review of archival and manuscript collections, they combine analyses of policy, decision-making, and diplomacy, with a mastery of problems in U.S. political, economic, and at times, cultural and social histories. With various levels of second language abilities, some conduct multilingual and transnational archival research. I know of no study that, while dispassionate about Washington policy-making and the economics of empire as methodological organizing principles, reflects all the same so strong an appreciation of those problem sets as a crucial backdrop for a work of social and cultural histories. In addition, there is no historian of U.S. foreign relations with so deep (even, intimate) an understanding of a non-United States set of political and popular national cultures (in this case, Panamanian). It is not simply that Donoghue knows Spanish, has done due diligence in Panamanian archives and libraries, and has found ways to round out his study of U.S. foreign relations with attention to Panamanian agency. It is that in writing the social history of U.S. Empire at the isthmian borderland, Donoghue has also rewritten Panamanian histories of colonialism, race, sexualities, and popular cultures. In addition, two exceptional factors set this volume apart from most in the field.

First, figuratively and literally, Donoghue has gone where no scholar – American or Panamanian -- has gone before. His hunt for answers (and oral history subjects) on the violent military components of U.S. Empire in the 1960s, for example, took him on successful searches for former sex trade workers in neighbourhoods many working Panamanians find prohibitively dangerous. Moreover, he sought out dozens of other people with vital stories to tell, including U.S. servicemen stationed decades ago in Panama (some charged and/or convicted of violent crimes) and their family members, as well as Canal pilots, among many who were ‘there.’ Not only did Donoghue, as a *yanqui* in Panama, do much more than trudge a daily path from his hotel to the archives; he has the rare oral historian’s ability to inspire confidence and openness in a formidable array of interview subjects, willing to talk to him about everything from U.S. military policy to the sexual proclivities of U.S. servicemen. Perhaps a reflection of how unusual it is for an American historian of U.S. foreign relations to embed himself for months in working class urban Panama, the layout of the book’s back matter makes it hard to grasp the significance of those oral histories to the analysis; while many of Donoghue’s interviews are referenced in the endnotes, the book is capped by a bibliography which, of course, has no place for interview sources.

³ Kimani Paul-Emile, Review of *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico*, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 46.4 (October 2004): 854-55.

A second remarkable strength of *Borderland* is reminiscent of the works of the historian Louis A. Pérez⁴, Jr. (though Pérez would likely not cast himself as a historian of U.S. foreign relations): Donoghue knows Panama. His analyses of racial and class hierarchies are both compelling, and essential to understanding U.S. control on the isthmus. In one of many approaches to structuring a rich theoretical case for the isthmian borderland as an imperial social construction that was all at once impenetrable and porous, *Borderland* explains crime and criminality as social exchange. Some of the thousands of cases of theft from the U.S. military reflected a range of interactions between American soldiers and Panamanians that became a window for the author into family ties, cross-border (or borderland) community, and gendered hierarchies. Soldiers, Zonians, and Panamanians often worked together. “Soldiers driving trucks out of the Zone would drop off ‘liberated’ construction materials, tires, auto parts, tool sets, even entire vehicles to the families of their Panamanian girlfriends, wives, or favourite prostitutes” (219). That so much of what was taken could be so easily replaced reflected a United States tolerance for theft as a component of empire. That larceny, in turn, helped define social relations (sometimes over the long term) between U.S. soldiers and Panamanian women; U.S. officers often built and furnished weekend homes across the border with stolen material.

I suspect that the meaning of those weekend homes and what *Borderlands* draws from them on family, race, class, and empire is where Donoghue may face reproach (though I find his line both convincing and novel), perhaps for reasons similar to why Laura Briggs was taken to task for her book *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico*,⁵ by some a decade ago. Donoghue never hedges on the relevance of violent empire to sex, racial cultural ordering, and evolving social relations among GIs, Zonians, and Panamanians. At times, though, he sometimes juxtaposes violence and intimacy: “For all the ugliness and violence that marked borderland interactions between Panamanians and U.S. soldiers, friendships, love affairs, and economic accommodation also shaped their associations” (170). In this case, the author follows the contrast with a quotation from a Panamanian who contemplated favourably the difference between aloof and openly discriminatory middle-class Zonians and the working-class American soldiers who engaged with Panamanians: “‘Better to beat me, to fight with me, to make love to me rather than to have nothing to do with me... like most of the Zonians did’” (170).

What Donoghue describes as the “love-hate syndrome of U.S.-Panamanian interactions” (171) defined “‘everyday forms’ of resistance and accommodation that so frequently occur astride imperial frontiers” (171). Part of what makes *Borderland* a fascinating study is Donoghue’s analysis of empire as more nuanced methodologically and more disturbingly complex on how U.S. empire has shaped non-U.S. cultures than parallel historical scenarios

⁴ See Louis A. Pérez, Jr., *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003) and Louis A. Pérez, Jr., *Cuba in the Imperial Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

⁵ Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

that include Nicole M. Guidotti-Hernández's "racialized capitalist reproduction" along the nineteenth-century Arizona-Sonora borderlands; Lisa Yoneyama's trope of women's liberation in the U.S. occupation of Japan (1945-1952); and Roland Sintos Coloma's notion of "white women's imperial feminism" as a form of moral and racial discipline in U.S.-occupied Philippines.⁶

⁶ Nicole M. Guidotti-Hernández, "Petra Santa Cruz Stevens and the Sexual and Racial Modalities of Property Relations in the Nineteenth-Century Arizona-Sonora Borderlands," *Cultural Dynamics*, 26:3 (2014): 350; Lisa Yoneyama, "Liberation under Siege: U.S. Military Occupation and Japanese Women's Enfranchisement," *American Quarterly*, 57:3 (2005): 890-891; Roland Sintos Coloma, "White Gazes, brown Breasts: Imperial Feminism and Disciplining Desires and Bodies in Colonial Encounters," *Pedagogica Historica*, 48:2 (April 2012): 247-248.

Author's Response by Michael E. Donoghue, Marquette University

First I would like to thank Tom Maddux for organizing this roundtable and also extend my thanks to all of the reviewers for the time and energy they put into reviewing and making comments on and criticisms of *Borderland on the Isthmus*. All of the remarks and critiques were most helpful and constructive and I will respond to them in the order in which I received them in the review package.

I will first address Jana K. Lipman's review. Lipman finds many strengths in the book's emphasis on identity, race, juridical, and gender conflicts among the competing subaltern and dominant groups who lived in transisthmian Panama and the Canal Zone. She especially finds value in the book's use of borderland analysis. But she also notes some problems with the book's overall approach in a couple of key areas. Lipman does not feel that the book adequately connects its narrative of interpersonal and cultural conflicts within the larger context of U.S.-Panamanian political relations and developments during the Cold War. Indeed, she would like to see more on the internal power dynamics within the enclave itself regarding the Zone, the Panamanian government, and the various inhabitants' status and/or notions of citizenship. There is merit to these criticisms, as I deliberately avoided writing a diplomatic/political history of the Canal Zone that focused on state-to-state relations and high status actors from Washington, Panama, and Balboa Heights (the Zone's administrative center). I felt that Walter LaFeber in his classic, *The Panama Canal*, Michael L. Conniff in *The United States and Panama*, and especially John Major in *Prize Possession*¹ which really focused on the internal politics of the Zone, had already covered this terrain, and I wanted to write a social and cultural history on the 'lived experience' of U.S. empire in Panama 'from the bottom up' that addressed events and subjects never before written about in U.S.-Panamanian relations. But Lipman makes a very good point that I could have connected some of narratives I wove more concretely to how citizenship and identity worked vis á vis the power structure of the Zone and nearby Panama - and also how the U.S. and Panamanian governments intervened and/or viewed these conflicts. Spatial limitations played a role here as I had page and word limits from Duke University Press that I exceeded in many sections. I also had some problems in that D.C. officials tended to ignore, downplay, or blame many of these scandals on local bureaucratic failures, the inability of the military to control its troops, or in the case of Zonian administrators, what they saw as Panamanian tendencies to exaggerate troubles for political gains. Above all, as I stated in the book, U.S. leaders strove to maintain as much control as possible over all encounters within this borderland regarding sex, crime, and notions of status - and they managed to do so with much success, utilizing their police, courts, prison, their ability to hire and fire, and the ultimate sanction of U.S. military power. More so even than D.C. leaders, Zonian and Southern Command chiefs saw any concession or diminution of U.S. domination, status, extraterritoriality, military force, and Panamanian sexual subordination as a threat to the overall U.S. treaty position

¹ Walter La Feber, *The Panama Canal: The Crisis in Historical Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Michael L. Conniff, *Panama and the United States: The Forced Alliance* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012); and John Major, *Prize Possession: The United States and the Panama Canal, 1903-1979*. (New York and London: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

that granted U.S. rights 'as if sovereign,' within the Zone – and at times over other parts of Panama. For them, by 1914 with the completion of the Canal, the Zone was virtually the 49th state. (It is telling that both the 47th and 48th states, New Mexico and Arizona, were also anglo/hispanic borderland states).

I actually had some more analysis on citizenship in some of the various drafts of the manuscript but the Duke readers and editors felt that I tried to employ too many different theoretical approaches. They felt that the central borderland theory, resistance theory, gender theory and references to Michal Foucault, Karl Marx, Clifford Geertz, James C. Scott, Mary Louise Pratt, and Benedict Andersen² were enough and that I needed to streamline my analysis within a workable format that did not take the reader down too many alleys, as fascinating as they might be. But I agree with Lipman that a study of the various markers of citizenship within this borderland and how they operated needs more development. For instance in answer to one of her questions, Panamanian leader Omar Torrijos's 1972 grant of Panamanian citizenship as a kind of ploy to all U.S. citizens born in the Zone had unintended consequences in early 2000 when Panama gained full control of the Canal and tried to institute an understandable hiring preference for Panamanians. When they tried to lay off a remnant of the English-speaking Zonians still working for the canal, they discovered to their horror that they could not do so since Torrijos's decree made them all bona fide Panamanian citizens. Many Zonians initially regarded this 'citizenship' as a joke, even an insult, and preferred initially to use Albrook Airforce base when flying to and from the States rather than the national airport at Tocumen where they had to show their Panamanian passports. But beginning in 2000 for those employed by ACP (the Panama Canal Authority), this 'dual citizenship' came in handy. It saved their jobs.

On another point that Lipman makes regarding identity politics, as I stated in the text, the term 'Latin Panamanian' is a problematic one. But for the period I concentrated on, 1939-1979, a majority of Panamanian *mestizos* and *mulattos* did not regard most West Indian Panamanians as authentic fellow citizens due to cultural differences and their view of them as servants and 'allies' of the gringos. West Indian resentment toward the 1955 treaty that subjected those who worked for the Canal to the Panamanian income tax for the first time and changed their Zone schools to a Panamanian curriculum in Spanish seemed to confirm this. All this started to change in the early 1970s when Torrijos made a real effort to form a multi-racial popular base for his regime and reached out to the West Indian community. With the initial enactment of the treaty on Oct. 1, 1979, this whole issue began to evaporate as all the Zone's silver towns were incorporated into Panama and even more so after the U.S. exit on December 31, 1999 when all U.S preferential hiring of West Indians ended. Panamanian West Indians were now fully recognized as part of the national family despite the fact that they still faced some discrimination. Lipman also notes that the decision to

² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1995); Richard Quinney, *Critique of Legal Order: Crime Control in Capitalist Society* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1974); Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Readings* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990); Mary Louise Pratt, "The Arts of the Contact Zone," *Profession* (1991): 33-40; and Benedict Andersen, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on The Birth and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Books, 2nd edition, 1991)

concentrate on themes and identity groups rather than a more linear narrative led to repetition in areas and not a strong enough sense of change, an argument which I will address later as other reviewers gave a similar critique.

Alan McPherson, who had written some outstanding work on Panama and served as a role model to me when I began this project, finds my use of oral interviews which I accumulated over many years as the great strength of the book – in that they include so many voices of the ordinary people who worked and lived in this borderland rather than those of presidents and officials. He also feels that I employed a sufficient theoretical framework to most of my narrative that was lacking in the presentations I gave of portions of the book at conferences. Echoing Lipman's concerns, McPherson notes that more attention should have been given to the politics of the Zone, to the task of managing this complex enclave in the face of so many challenges. Like Lipman, he also wonders about the lack of focus on change in the Zone, which is in part due to the thematic arrangement of the book. This was something with which I wrestled considerably. When President Dwight D. Eisenhower visited Panama and the Zone in 1956, he noted privately how little the enclave had changed since he served there in the early 1920s. Various Zonians and U.S. military also pointed out to me that in the 1970s that the place seemed more like early 1950s America than the counterculture of the States at that time. There was always this timeless quality to the Zone, especially for its American inhabitants. Its racial segregation did not end until the enclave did, and the use of local servants, and the Zone's adjacent sex industry continued until December 1999. I commented on this in a couple of areas of the text but should have emphasized more the key focal points of change. I think that the 1947, 1959 and especially the 1964 anti-American riots provided key periods where the resurgence of Panamanian nationalism put pressure on the enclave and won some modest though important concessions regarding the structure and activities of the Zone and some aspects of the treatment of its non-American inhabitants. Also the overall demographic pressures on Panama City and Colón, which increased so much in population from World War II until the Carter-Torrijos negotiations, put more stress on the enclave. There were other vital periods of transition within this time frame. The 1951 reorganization of the Canal's operating structure meant that there would be less and less hiring in gross numbers of West Indian and Latin Panamanians, and even U.S. citizens in the canal work force. The 1955 treaty finally introduced after a delay of several years, a fairly large-scale apprentice program that gradually but steadily increased the percentages of Panamanians who held 'gold' or U.S.-rate jobs from around 5% to 38% of the overall workforce over a twenty-year period. But the Zonians' dominance, especially in managerial and administrative decision-making positions and the preponderance of the U.S. military, persevered despite these important yet gradual changes. Just when the deployment of Soviet missiles that could knock out the locks and the building of U.S. warships too large to transit the waterway rendered the Canal obsolete, the Cuban Revolution provided a new threat and purpose for U.S. military training facilities in the Zone. The Panamanian people became more fully aware from the mid-1950s through the early 1960s of the growing power of decolonization and Third World nationalism to leverage the great powers out of vital strategic places (in Suez, for example). But much of the colonial structure and daily life in the Zone remained the same. There was an increase in drug use among younger Zonians and the U.S. military from the late-1960s through the late 1970s when my study ends. The formation of a couple of wife-swapping clubs, an increase in teen-aged pregnancies, and a

limited penetration of the enclave by counterculture influences from the States via U.S. military dependents also ensued. But the place always operated in a kind of time warp that gave comfort to Americans and understandable frustration to West Indian and Latin Panamanians. Indeed one of the central tasks of imperial machinery throughout the ages is to 'keep things the same,' although certainly considerable adjustments are needed to accomplish this by 'successful' imperialists. I always loved Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's line in his novel *Il Gattopardo* (*The Leopard*) spoken by a nineteenth-century Italian aristocrat: "If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change."³ This sums up the attitude of the Zone's managers but the line ended up on the cutting room floor.

McPherson also wonders if the impact of crime in the narrative might be exaggerated. Again, there is merit to this critique. In order to get a 'street level' sense of the borderland's history, I went over decades and decades of Panamanians newspapers and periodicals, which featured some sensationalized accounts of borderland crime. I was also the first scholar to examine the court records of the Canal Zone. The archivists and I opened the original file boxes that came up from Panama to the Washington National Records Center. Some of them even contained physical evidence from murder cases: in one box we found an axe with dried blood on it wrapped in cellophane.⁴ I spent so much time going through all this stuff that it no doubt led to some overemphasis on my part regarding crime. One colleague who read an earlier draft of the book said it read like the '*National Enquirer* version of U.S.-Panamanian relations.' But more seriously, in my interviews with older Panamanians, many of them remembered these famous crimes and trials which were front page news in every newspaper for weeks on end and provoked violent demonstrations in front of court buildings. And yet not one word on any of these cases can be found in any of the excellent monographs on U.S.-Panamanian relations by both U.S. and Panamanian scholars. It is as if someone wrote a history of the United States in the 1990s and failed to mention the O.J. Simpson trial. As I noted at the end of the crime chapter, these crimes did not shut down the Zone; larger geopolitics and diplomacy accomplished this. But crime was one of the many factors that kept wearing at the machinery of the Zone, its already tarnished reputation, and its sense of moral superiority. If this enclave was supposed to serve as a model to uplift Panama to 'civilization' yet only engendered more and more crime, then was the project even worth it? Crime certainly exacerbated binational tensions during key periods. Most of day-to-day crime was fairly petty by U.S. standards. But what Americans considered 'petty crime' enabled many poorer Panamanians to eke out a living – and drew more and more of them into the orbit of the Zone, its judicial system, its extralegal networks of contraband, and into conflicts with its hated police force.

McPherson also notes that in different places I claim that the isthmian borderland was both typical and unique. I know this sounds like I'm dodging the question but I think it was both.

³ Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, *Il Gattopardo*, (London: Fontana, 1963), 29.

⁴ Government of the Canal Zone v. Samuel Winston, 5 November 1937, Criminal Case No. 1653, Ascension Number 11-23-27/ 12-4-22-3.3, Box 15, District Court Records of the Canal Zone, RG 21, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, MD.

It was typical in that it revealed the conflicts and accommodations that occur over identity, crime, economics, and gender whenever unequal states and peoples live in close proximity. But the Canal Zone/isthmian corridor was unique, not necessarily due to its non-contiguous nature vis à vis the American metropole, but rather due to the rich variety of people who lived there given its centuries-long role as a global transit point for many nationalities: Panamanians, Colombians, Europeans, Americans, West Indians, Chinese, Arabs, Jews, Hindustanis, indigenous, and a host of other Latin American and Western expatriates. The building of the Canal and its later base structure only enriched this ethnic and racial mix that included military cadets from all over South and Central America at the School of the Americas. This complexity made it a more difficult borderland to manage, say in contrast to Germany's running the Alsace-Lorraine borderland 1870-1918 that mostly contained only white German and French inhabitants. What also made this borderland more special (granted along with Suez) was that it was a canal enclave, surrounding a key strategic asset with a globalized function. But the conflicts and interactions that occurred there were similar to those that unfolded in lots of other borderland locales.

Darlene Rivas is complimentary in her overall analysis of the book. She notes that it is a good example of the cultural turn in U.S. foreign relations studies that critics called for following the end of the Cold War. She also holds that cultural studies of the U.S. presence and of U.S. 'contact zones' overseas have a legitimacy in their own right without having always to be connected to causation and larger strategic contexts (although she feels I did so in many areas). Rivas correctly acknowledges the debt owed by all border scholars to Herbert Eugene Bolton's path-breaking work on the Spanish borderlands of North America that I did not emphasize enough.⁵ She writes that the focus on conflicted and fractured identities among the peoples who inhabited the borderland, especially the West Indians, bore the most fruitful analysis in my study. The narratives of Lester Leon Greaves and John Peter Williams's impact on West Indians' identity formation were a component in the book that Rivas finds particularly persuasive. But like McPherson and Lipman, Rivas also detected some problems with the issues of the thematic and identity structure in my monograph. The tendency to move from the analysis of one group or issue sometimes led to repetition. She found evidence in the work of gradual but important change yet notes that it was sometimes obscured by the tendency to 'hop about,' i.e. move onto other topics and themes without fully resolving some central issues addressed in the various chapters. Rivas also points out that more analysis was required in some key areas: the diffusion of U.S. popular culture from the Zone into Panama, the importance of the 1951 canal reorganization and creation of the Panama Canal Company, and the role of the Chinese and the Kunas in the borderland. She notes that further inquiry was required on the economic dependencies and alliances of the various parties in play, especially the U.S. business colony in Panama that did not live in the Zone and felt that Zonian arrogance hurt its reputation and businesses.

I agree that several more paragraphs, probably pages should have been devoted to these important components of the story, and many were in the original 550-page monster

⁵ Herbert Eugene Bolton, *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1921)

doctoral version of this book (my dissertation committee is probably still a little miffed at me for that). But in the end, it was up to me to choose what was most important and what should be emphasized in the roughly 250 pages in which I had to condense all my material. I'm sure I made some judgments of focus and priority that left some important things out. As scholars know from their own work, sometimes one has to be ruthless and put aside some favorite material for the exigencies of space, priority, and structure. If in the future, Duke University Press wants a second edition and will give me another thirty pages, I will certainly address some of the key omissions or lack of development that the reviewers note. At one point, I tried to organize my material in a single narrative line but found that the constant switching back and forth to different groups and issues and the need to introduce their origins really killed the flow and made the structure of the book look like one of those experimental buildings with sections jutting out at various levels and no clear lines or rationality.

David Sheinin writes an enthusiastic review of my work. He sees my use of borderland theory and its incorporation with recent approaches in U.S. imperialism studies as key virtues of the work. He especially likes my use of oral interviews and the many years I spent in Panama trying to understand exactly how the borderland operated for so many people who lived within its sway. I always feel frustrated reading books on subjects that never actually explain how places or institutions operated, or what the day-to-day mechanics of conflicts entailed in a detailed manner. So I was determined to do this when it came to Panama and the Zone. Sheinin correctly points out the importance of intimacy in my work: horrific intimacy that included violence and more normalized forms that operated via friendships, marriages, concubinage, and contraband. Empire is often a more intimate, face-to-face confrontation than scholars who concentrate on structure admit. Intimacy also played a role in my need to understand the lives of hundreds of Latin and West Indian Panamanians, Zonians, and U.S. service personnel. One of the reasons this study took so long to complete was that I found I had to get to know people over a number of interviews, experiences, and years before they would trust me enough to open up to me. I think the secret to interviewing people is to re-interview them several times over a period of years. Also I admit that after hours of talking, mostly mundane material emerged (though this too was important), but then occasionally great quotes, details, or epiphanies. I must also pay tribute to my Panamanian, West Indian, Zonian and retired GIs friends who took me into dangerous areas and introduced me to contrabanders, ex-prostitutes, former drug dealers, and numerous canal retirees living in tough conditions. Repeated efforts to hunt down Lester Leon Greaves, the infamous convicted rapist of a white Zonian woman, by my good friends and Panama Canal Authority (APC) archivists, Albert Brown and Sam Edwards, finally paid off in my interviewing Mr. Greaves, who lives in wretched conditions near San Miguelito. I devoted years to trying to understand Panama as a society and mix of cultures and to Sheinin this paid off in the authenticity of my narrative.

In his critique, Sheinin also places importance on the often amorphous geography of empire. This geography extends not just to territorial markers but also to the psyche, to music, to class relations, to the realm of sexuality, to consumer product outlets, to crime, and to notions of morality. When trying to delineate these, I often discovered complexity piled upon complexity and at times despaired of being able to put all of this together. I

deliberately chose to begin each chapter with a fairly shocking event, as McPherson notes, in order to draw the reader in, and then used some microhistory and Geertzian techniques to tease out the various meanings and perspectives that all the players brought to these transgressions. While theoretical constructs were important in framing each chapter, I did not want to get too bogged down in them as I sought to produce a narrative that would be accessible to more than just an academic audience, one that would let Panamanians, West Indians, Zonians, and GIs from many walks of life speak, in a way that brought the Zone borderland alive again. I preferred to get in more of the material I found in popular sources and in the voices and stories of those who bore the pain of this empire. It was demoralizing to me - and to them - that their narratives had rarely been considered to that point. (McPherson also got many of these Panamanian voices into his narrative of the 1964 uprising in his wonderful *Yankee No!*)⁶

I extend my thanks again to everyone who participated. The reviewers have all made me reconsider much of what I thought I knew. And I hope that I and future scholars can further explore some of the avenues they have suggested for deeper inquiry on this complex subject.

⁶ Alan McPherson, *Yankee No!: Anti-Americanism in U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003)