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Renaud Morieux, *Une mer pour deux royaumes: La Manche, frontière franco-anglaise (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles)*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008. 384 pp. Maps, tables, figures, notes, bibliography, and indices. 20€ (pb). ISBN 978-2-7535-0545-2.

Review by Peter Sahlins, The University of California, Berkeley.

It has been twenty years since a revolutionary wave swept across Europe, forming in the summer of 1989 in Poland and Hungary, cresting with the fall of the Berlin wall in November, and rolling east over the next two years, dissolving the boundaries of the Eastern Bloc and the Soviet Union. Yet despite the grand symbolic gestures in Berlin, walls and boundaries have proliferated to an extraordinary extent in the last two decades, both politically and historiographically. True that 1989 coincided with the latest phase of globalization as an ever increasing flow of people, commodities, and information across state boundaries, a shrinking and flattening of the world that we might expect to make boundaries less and less relevant. And Europeanization—that is, the political construction of Europe and European integration, especially after Maastricht—also seemed to reinforce the idea that the boundaries separating the member states of the European Union were to be effaced. Yet the counterevidence is overwhelming: political boundaries, alongside cultural and ethnic ones, have become more salient, and the world has become more “obsessed” (in the word of Michel Foucher) with boundaries and walls. Foucher claims that states have delimited or negotiated nearly 30,000 miles of political boundaries since 1989.[1] At the same time (literally), ethnic and national conflicts have exploded, beginning in the Balkans during the 1990s; “Fortress Europe” and a vast security and surveillance mechanism form a wall (albeit permeable) around Europe; and beyond Europe, there are more walls being built in the Age of Globalization, especially in the post 9/11 world, than ever before. These include the US-Mexican border, where the inequities of global capitalism are revealed; the Israeli walling off of Palestine; and the less visible but no less real walls that dictate and are produced by the uneven spread of globalization itself. The world may be flat, but it is increasingly walled off.[2]

Meanwhile, boundaries have become valuable currency within the scholarly community, where renewed interest in border histories coincided with post-structuralist thinking about boundaries, identities, and counter-identities. (Full disclosure: my own *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* [Berkeley: University of California Press], is also twenty years old). The result was a steady and consistently high-quality stream of monographs in history and anthropology, too numerous to begin citing here, on borders and borderlands around the world. But nearly all of the work on boundaries, whether about their historical emergence or contemporary effects, has fixed on terrestrial demarcations: the land boundary negotiated among states, and especially the relations between borderland inhabitants and their respective political authorities.

Here is where Renaud Morieux offers a revelation. In *Une mer pour deux royaumes* (some puns are better left alone), Morieux forces a rethinking of a conventional wisdom— even one that is only twenty years old—by considering the English Channel (*La Manche*) as a (the?) French-English frontier in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He focuses on the period increasingly known as the “Second Hundred Years’ War” opposing the two great powers between 1689 and 1815. What a good idea this was. Not that the Channel has gone unnoticed in recent historiography, literary studies, or intellectual

history.[3] But by shifting our attention to a fluid political boundary (in a literal and metaphoric sense) of the two nascent nation-states, Morieux can test hypotheses about the periodization and modalities of territorialization and state-building, about the nature of frontiers in the eighteenth century and during the Revolution; and especially about state-society relations in the construction of the maritime boundary, including the problem of belonging and national identity in the emergence of modern world.

The book, a revised 2005 French doctoral thesis based on prodigious research in French and English archives, is classically divided into three parts, but in fact there are two main concerns that run through the text. One is to side with Lucien Febvre's geographic possibilism over Fernand Braudel's determinism, and to compare the different constructions of two nation-states on their shared maritime periphery, especially during the so-called "era of delimitation" in the second half of the eighteenth century. The second problem is to consider, beyond the discourse of Franco-English rivalry and hatred, the social relations of the Channel populations—their resistance, negotiation, and adaptation to the dictates of international rivalry (albeit half the time peaceful) in the period—and the construction "from below" of the frontier according to a different chronology and set of interests.

Morieux's introduction moves perhaps too rapidly over the brittle "discourse" of rivalry itself. He cites but doesn't engage the older work of Frances Acomb and the newer works of Linda Colley and David Bell and others that take this discursive work of defining the nation as counter-identity seriously. Instead, Morieux uses the image of a sempiternal Franco-English rivalry as a foil against which to consider "The Invented Frontier (part one). Unexpectedly, he begins with an ethno-geological account of the Channel from the early seventeenth century to the 1770s (chapter one). In the interest of countering the discourse of eternal enmity, he points out how the thesis of a lost terrestrial bridge was inseparable from Christian conceptions of time in the seventeenth century, structured by ideas of the unity and subsequent dispersal of the human race. That idea lost its appeal after the 1750s in the Enlightenment attack on Christianity, opening the door to a "conventional" and historical understanding of the reasons for rivalry and cooperation. The chapter, mechanically argued without much original research, should have been cut by an alert editor.

The book takes off in chapters two ("Noms de Mer") and three ("Situer la Manche"), a remarkable study of an important corpus of maps. Morieux has constituted a significant database of 217 English and French maps of the boundary in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and if his efforts to exploit the data statistically fall short, the maps (a dozen of which illustrate this book) are highly revealing, and the author makes good use of them. Only in the sixteenth century did French and English terminologies of the body of water begin to distinguish themselves, leading to a "symbolic territorialisation of the Channel" (p. 345) that resulted in the double nomenclature that we recognize today: the (English) Channel. In retrospect, this "anchoring of names" in the later eighteenth century was not inevitable, and the tension between Atlantic corridor or continental sea is nicely described by Morieux.

Part two, "La Frontière imposée," considers the comparative efforts of France and Great Britain to define the maritime frontier in military terms. Although the bulk of the research in chapter four, "La Frontière militaire," is French, Morieux can nonetheless point to a significant contrast: the French maritime border was an extension of its territorial one, requiring an extensive deployment of Vauban-built (or rebuilt) fortresses of port cities, while the English defense was based on the concept of naval superiority. France, in the beginning and the end, was a land-based power, while England was fundamentally maritime. The contrast is extended in chapter five, "To Whom does the Channel Belong?," where the author examines how the terrestrial politics of delimitation translated into a maritime contrast, and with contrasting juridical and spatial implications. There are some incisive moves in Morieux's construction of the two different models: he sees how English jurists cited Selden's *Mer Clausum* (1635), while the French brandished Grotius's *Mare Liberum* (1609) (pp. 150-151). The

struggle over natural resources, mainly fishing rights, is the subject of chapter six, the final chapter in this section. Here Morieux offers a rich understanding of “territorialisation,” especially in its juridical sense, pointing to a further contrast between the two nascent nation-states: while the English sought to fix the boundary on the French coast, the French diplomats developed the idea of “territorial waters” and a set of policies evolved over the seizure of fishing boats that remained in place during the revolutionary decades.

Still, the heart of the book is its last section, “The Frontier Abolished.” Morieux shifts perspectives here, from the center to the peripher(ies), and considers a gamut of social relations and practices—from “gens de mer” and their parallel diplomacy (chapter seven)[4]; to the smugglers and their games of counterfeit goods and identities (chapter eight); to the travelers (or at least some of them) from Calais-Douvre (chapter nine); to the ever increasing migration of workers in England from the Cambrésis and of merchants “with a foot in France and the other in England” (chapter ten). This is rich, illuminating social history, with lots of fine detail and always a larger picture in mind. It is a revealing portrait of a “local society” deeply connected by networks of alliance and rivalry among themselves as well as across the Channel. In the tradition of Alan Cabantous,[5] Morieux emphasizes contiguity and horizontal alliances of a “maritime identity,” against the divisive efforts of the state, but he stops short of romanticizing the resistance of local society. He is not at all persuaded of the applicability of the “Cerdanya model,” where local interests make use of the “national” in pre-existence rivalries over resources, nor does he see an application of the other “models” outlined by Daniel Nordman.[6] Rather, Morieux sidesteps the question of “typicality” or “exemplarity” while he insists on the flexible and multiple frames of belonging beyond (or below) those of the nation.

This monograph is an important intervention in a scholarly conversation about borders and belonging, and will be of interest across a range of disciplinary boundaries. It’s a shame that the author doesn’t concern himself more deeply with the construction of the French-English rivalry in the eighteenth century, accepting it as a given. Still, there is much to applaud: the research is extensive (seventeen archives and libraries in France and Great Britain) and used well; and the monograph tacks gracefully between empirical detail and general conclusions. Attentive to an abundant historiography, this book makes a signal contribution to the ever-fertile field of border and borderland studies. It is to be hoped that a shorter and modestly-restructured version will soon find its English translation.

NOTES

[1] Michel Foucher, *L’Obsession des frontières* (Paris: Perrin, 2007).

[2] Cases included in Paul Ganster and David E. Lorey, eds., *Borders and Border Politics in a Globalizing World* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Oxford: SR Books, 2005); and Vera Pavlakovich-Kochi, Barbara J. Morehouse, Doris Wastl-Walter, eds., *Challenged Borderlands: Transcending Political And Cultural Boundaries* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2004).

[3] John Falvey and William Brooks, eds., *The Channel in the Eighteenth Century: Bridge, Barrier, and Gateway* (Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 1991); Margaret Cohen and Carolyn Dever, *The Literary Channel: The Inter-National Invention of the Novel* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2002); Jean-Philippe Genet and François-Joseph Ruggiu, eds., *Les idées passent-elles la Manche? Savoirs, représentations, pratiques, France-Angleterre, Xe-XXe siècles* (Paris: Presses de l’université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2007).

[4] About which Morieux has just published a companion article in Past & Present that nicely condenses his interests and findings: “Diplomacy from Below and Belonging: Fishermen and Cross-Channel Relations in the Eighteenth Century,” *Past and Present*, vol. 202, n°1, February 2009, pp. 83-125.

[5] Alain Cabantous, *Les citoyens du large. Les identités maritimes en France (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècle)* (Paris: Aubier, 1995).

[6] *Frontières de France. De l'espace au territoire, XVIe-XIXe siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998).

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