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INTRODUCTION
Culture, Politics, and the Canada-US Border

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The US-Canada border is long. Although it is the longest undefended land border between two countries in the world today, only few people in the US have thought much about that border over the years, and when they do, it is not likely they think of it in the same way that Canadians are known to, and certainly not in the same way that they think about the US-Mexico border. The Canadian government's de facto closure of the US-Canada border during much of the COVID-19 pandemic probably shocked many people in the US, and while the narrative about its closure certainly played out differently in Canada, in both countries, it heightened focus on the border as a limit more than a uniting zone. It made the border politically visible.

In this thematic issue of *RIAS,* we address several issues about the border, drawing on perspectives from multiple disciplines in the social sciences and humanities, anthropology to political science, economics, and literature, and including the works of scholars based in Canada, the US, and Germany. Their works engage issues of Indigeneity, African-descendant populations, Franco-Canadians, Gender and Race, Colonialisms, and the more-than-human world. Topics include hunting, cross-border Indigenous relations, treaties, oil protests, immigration, domestic workers, historical memory, creative fiction, and the notions of borders as textures, zones, lines, connections, and cultural imaginaries. Our emphasis on combining social science and humanities approaches is essential to this work. Much previous work on the Canada-US border has tended to focus either on political/legal issues or on literary/media studies. Instead, we strive to bring multiple disciplinary perspectives into conversation and include artistic/visual work. This volume thus contributes to a broader project

than one that would center on nationalist interests—either the US or Canada's—and rather brings to the study of bordering practices and border theory a continental approach, one that attends to the places and spaces that are and/or become the border.[1]

One critical perspective—which the very title of our issue alerts the reader to—is that the US-Canada border is considered, from the perspective of most in the US, to be the *other* border. In this sense, it has been "othered" as a border that, until relatively recently anyway, was not envisioned or imagined as one that separated an "us" from "them" (the US from Canada) in ways that the US-Mexico border has become a trope for differentiating the US from its "other," Mexico and countries to its south. In fact, when one explores the US "Border Studies" literature, much, if not all, of the attention focuses on the US-Mexican border, although it is a much shorter international border than the US-Canada border. However, in some respects, the US-Canada border is not necessarily less politically contentious (from the perspective of trade and the harmonization of security but also on immigration policies, for example). To bring the study of these borders together, our final piece in this thematic issue is by Alejandro Lugo, who has made significant contributions specifically to US-Mexico Border Studies in his many groundbreaking works. He will close this issue with an Afterword and a photo essay.

An important question that frames our approach to the question of the other border is this: What marks the US-Canada border as less *problematic* when the reality is more complex? One could also add: in what ways has the US-Canada border been othered in its *perception* as a *non-border,* and in what ways does shifting our perspective to non-borders also shift the grounds upon which some earlier border theories have developed? If we shift from the popular perspective that

1 We especially want to recognize the important contribution, both conceptually and in terms of drafting this Introduction, by our colleague Dr. Virginia R. Dominguez, who was involved in the project from the beginning and whose words and ideas permeate this Introduction in numerous ways. In addition, Dr. Alice Balestrino drafted several of the article summaries as an IFUSS program assistant. Dr. David Schrag helped coordinate the original IFUSS symposium at the University of Illinois in Champaign, Illinois, out of which the project ultimately grew and which also benefited from the intellectual contributions of the University of Illinois colleagues in Anthropology/American Indian Studies, Dr. Jenny Davis and in Anthropology/Latina/Latino Studies, Dr. Gilberto Rosas. We also thank IFUSS assistants Joe Coyle and Dr. Emily Metzner, who contributed to formatting and correspondence in the final stages of the publishing process. Above all, of course, we thank our contributors who maintained their enthusiasm for this project even when COVID-19 slowed the pace considerably.

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most citizens living in the US and Canada have, namely, that this is not a *real* border or that crossing that border should not pose any real problems, what then of border theories that conventionally approached borders as demarcation lines, as checkpoints that alert security officials to who does and does not belong, who can and cannot cross, who is and who is not welcome? These reflections have broad implications not only for thinking about borders, including the relationship of Canada to the US but, for that matter, for thinking about the relationship between Mexico and the United States. Should we think of borders as processes as much as places, as concepts as much as spaces, as "sutures" holding disparate parts together as Mark Salter has suggested, as hybrid zones of exchange, like Anzaldua's "borderlands"? Which of these models best captures the lived experiences of the "other" border? What other models might be needed? What contributions to wider border theories might a further consideration of the Canada-US border provide?

When some challenge us to put this into the context of rising populisms around the globe (as Homer Dixon did in December 2021, more below), we need to think otherwise about the future of this border and much of the taken-for-grantedness in those relationships. Might it be that, in the future, Canada and the US will together envision the end of a border between them, or might a more militarized relationship emerge, wherein those in Canada and the US imagine greater fortifications are necessary in order to secure their country's futures? We will return to this issue at the end of this essay.

Some of the pieces in this thematic issue engage the cultural imaginary of Canada held by US Americans. In co-editor Jane Desmond's opening remarks to the 2018 IFUSS (International Forum for US Studies)[2] conference, which engaged in some of the preliminary discussions that led to this volume, she noted as follows:

> In US academic circles and in US public discourse, "Canada" often has a muted presence. Many in the US, I suspect, think that Canada is just like the United States, except full of "nicer" people: less arrogant, less puffed up with their own sense of exceptionalism, and living out there in the colder regions with the polar bears. In the US imaginary, I suspect that Canada is tacitly assumed to be a largely "white" nation—full of people from England who still revere a queen. (Desmond)

This framing named at least one of the issues we consider significant, namely, that, despite its many racially and ethnically diverse

2 See Virginia R. Dominguez's explanation of the mission of the IFUSS in her "Preface" to the present issue (page 22-23).

populations, we think that Canada is often tacitly assumed by white Americans to be a predominantly "white" nation. However, with more than 20% ("The Canadian People") percent of its population being born outside Canada (and in cosmopolitan Toronto, that figure is over 45%), and with the majority of these newer arrivals coming from Asia in the past several decades, and with its substantial populations of Indigenous peoples including First Nations, Metis and Inuit communities, as well as African descendent residents, this is far from the case.

While this perception benefits many people in Canada, it clearly does not benefit Canadians who are racialized as non-White and, as a consequence, often approached as though doubly displaced, not belonging on *either* side of the border. It is as though US and Canadian border security does not expect a Canadian to be racialized as anything but "white" (Habib's own experiences crossing the border highlight this. She has many experiences of being pulled aside at the border, even prior to the 9/11 attacks, her Arab family name appearing to be a "red flag" for US border security when she tries to enter or depart the US for academic work.) This only reinforces racist assumptions in many parts of the US that the US is a (European) "nation of immigrants" whose citizens' ancestors voluntarily crossed the Atlantic Ocean (and not the Pacific) to settle in the United States and who remain faithful to their sense of European "whiteness."

Of course, counter-discourses contest this implicit notion of the US nation, highlighting Native American history pasts and presents in the US and the long-standing legacies of anti-Black racism built on a history of slavery. The latter surged following the Minnesota murder by white police of African American citizen George Floyd in 2020, with the expansion of the Black Lives Matter movement. Nevertheless, rising populism in the US counters this political force and reinforces this set of assumptions with tropes of "invasion" and "criminals" referring to new arrivals, especially from the Southern border, as evidenced during the recent Trump presidential campaign, which is the broader context in which this volume emerges.

The fact is that most people in the US know little about Canada, sometimes in shocking ways, although the opposite is not usually true. IFUSS Co-founder Virginia Dominguez recalls being amazed when a young contestant on a contemporary US television quiz show failed to answer a relatively simple factual question about Canada correctly. Hailing from California, he had been introduced to viewers as a highly regarded and successful student, but when he faced a multiple-choice question asking him to identify the capital of Canada, he clearly had no idea and guessed it wrong. That a "well-educated" US resident

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did not know the capital of Canada represents anecdotally the larger imbalance between the two nations—the *need* to know about the other. For most in the US, ignorance about Canada has little cost.

On the other hand, Canadians tend to expect that of people on their southern border, and they clearly know much more about the US than people in the US know about Canada. Imagine Canadians not knowing that California and New York are in the US, that Donald Trump was president of the US from January 2017 to January 2021, or that Joe Biden beat him in the 2020 election. Imagine they do not know that Trump has been re-elected to serve from 2025–2029 and that he and the (as we write this) soon-to-step-down Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau were often at odds. Why does this differential luxury of ignorance exist, and what are its effects? Here, we want to consider some of the likely assumptions readers may make and explain why we are not convinced that any of them work.

One possibility is that it has to do with the substantial difference in the size of our respective populations and the sense that the US is both insular and imperialistic in some respects. Scholars like Ulf Hannerz and Andre Gingrich have focused on this issue of differences in population size between countries and the consequences of that inequality. Their book *Small Countries: Structures and Sensibilities* looks at precisely this issue from the perspective of countries with populations under 15 million, but it is also true that the Russian invasion of Ukraine can be seen from that perspective, even though Ukraine's population was about 42 million before the invasion and Russia's was about 146 million. Clearly, Ukraine is not a small country—neither in land area nor in population size—but it is absolutely true that it is much smaller than Russia both in land area and population size. We are seeing how deliberate Russia is with respect to Ukraine, how Ukrainians think, and what they say about Russia.

The emphasis on large countries—military and political powers like Russia—making assumptions about smaller countries is well-known, though it is interesting that the US typically treats its northern neighbor as an ally rather than an enemy—so much so that Michael Moore's only fictional movie, *Canadian Bacon*, is a comedic take on a US invasion of Canada. It is true that the population of Canada is just over a tenth of the population of the US and that the population of Mexico is larger, though still not even close to the size of the population of the United States. So, why does the US treat Canada as an ally rather than an enemy or a rival while viewing Mexico as a problem—if not exactly an enemy? Although the difference in population size in both cases is substantial, after all, it alone does not account for the discrepancy.

Another possibility is the familiarity of the US with people in Canada. Because such a large proportion of the Canadian population lives within 100 miles of the US-Canada border, US media channels easily reach them. However, this explanation is problematic because there are many cases of countries whose populations are close enough to watch each other's television shows, both news shows and typical entertainment shows, and it does not produce that evident benevolence and familiarity. This includes Israel and Jordan, France and Germany, and obviously the US and Mexico. Therefore, should it not apply in both directions? To what extent do people in the US find Canada familiar because Canadian people and media cross the border quite a bit? One could ask how often US television programming even mentions Canada.

A third possibility is that Canadians have chosen over the years not to highlight being foreign in the US, but does not that, too, beg the question? Many Canadians visit the US or even live in the US, and some are indeed superstars. Among them are Ryan Reynolds, Ryan Gosling, Celine Dion, Justin Bieber, and, until his recent death, Alex Trebek. Some Canadians make a point of saying they are Canadian when they are in the US, while many do not. Do they find it useful to "pass" as Americans? There are also many US-born people who have moved to Canada and now live and work there.[3] Do people in either country know that? Is it just a matter of language, given that in both countries, despite their multilingual populations, English remains the dominant and shared language?

Each of these dimensions may contribute to the differential in knowledge between residents of one country and those of another. Desmond foreshadowed this question of differential knowledge in those 2018 opening remarks as well, noting:

> There is little public acknowledgement in national US public discourse of the vibrant urban life of Toronto, the substantial Chinese populations in Vancouver, the long standing and growing South Asian communities, the Francophone politics, and the extensive First Nations communities

3 Gillian Roberts notes that Canada has been seen as a possible "escape" for US residents—similar but different, and providing sanctuary for some populations—from the influx of African Americans who arrived via the Underground Railroad to the US draft resisters in the Vietnam War period. (*Discrepant Parallels* 14). While not all were welcome, of course, this notion of "sanctuary" survives. We can note the fact that, on the night of Trump's first election, when it became clear that he was to defeat Hilary Clinton, a Google search by US folks for "how to move to Canada" apparently crashed the Canadian government's immigration website, as reported on BBC News ("Canada's Immigration Website").

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and public presence. We do note, however, that they (you) [addressing the colleagues from Canada who participated in that Symposium] seem to have gotten the hang of national health insurance and, of course, there are those Mounties in those smart red jackets on horseback [although we know that Mounties' red jackets symbolize something very different in western Canada, especially for Metis and First Nations for whom they symbolize repression]. Most US-Americans, scholars or not, unless they live in the border region themselves, know little about the deeply imbricated lives of these two nations and the multiple nations within them. Having what is touted as the world's longest undefended border between two nations means, largely, that we here [in the US] don't have to think much about Canada daily or in the daily news cycle. (Desmond)

We suggest that what we call a "freedom (or luxury) to not know" shapes US academic discourse and everyday perceptions. Most of the writing in several important books and journal issues on the US-Canada border and bordering practices (discussed below) is written by Canadian and UK-based scholars. Only occasionally do we find a US-based scholar or scholars from other countries included among the contributors, even though many configurations of "American Studies"—especially in Europe—construct their object of study as "North American Studies." Importantly, all these books discussed below are published outside the US. To our knowledge, books from these presses do not, unfortunately, circulate as widely as they should in the US academy. Nor, despite a few exceptions, do we find a concomitant series of publications about the Canada-US border issues coming from US-based scholarly presses doing "American Studies" or US Studies work.[4] We think this reflects an important differential in scholarly engagement—again, the presumed stakes of knowing. We hope this issue of *RIAS*, in its open access format, will be read not only by scholars in Canada, the UK, Europe, and far beyond, but also in the US itself, thus contributing to discussions of "Border Studies" within the US academy, too.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Like all academic writing, this volume takes shape in a specific historical moment and converses with the events of its time. For us,

4 There are exceptions, of course. See Claudia Sadowski-Smith (*Border Fictions*). Furthermore, tensions between notions of "American Studies," "Hemispheric Studies," and "Inter-American Studies" also emerge in *foci* of the work done by members of the International American Studies Association and have from its beginning.

this context includes especially the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise, fall, and rise again of the Trump presidency and Justin Trudeau's tenure. In turn, the political and social landscapes within each country are key, including changing relations with each country's Indigenous and Native American populations, immigrants, and global economic, cultural, and political trends, and natural and human-sparked disasters and conflicts abroad. Most currently, Trump's threats to start his second presidency in 2025 by slapping massive tariffs on Canadian goods imported into the US and his disrespectful joking about "erasing the border" and accumulating Canada as the fifty-first state set the stage for a heightened level of discourse about the Canadian-US border over the next four years.[5]

In the recent past, US media attention to Canada has often been sparked by incidents that disrupt the stereotype of the "non-border border." One example is the way much of the US media and US government misrepresented the hijackers on September 11, 2001, as people who had entered the US from Canada. Another example is the US coverage of the oil pipeline protests on both sides of the Canada-US border (something Paul Bowles discusses at length in this issue). Other recent examples include exchanges between Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and President Donald Trump during his first term, which were often characterized as petulant but had enormous economic and political effects on citizens on both sides of the divide.

Moreover, there is, of course, the so-called Trucker's Convoy, which snaked its way across Canada in 2022, blockading cities like its capital, Ottawa, and key bridges into Ontario and Alberta. The US and Canada are each other's most important trading partners, and the movement of goods across the border, so often invisible except to those who live on the border or those companies whose bottom lines depend on it, was also halted. Frustrations that had been building throughout the pandemic resulted in a surprisingly intransigent and, for some, frightening blockade of downtown Ottawa. This was ostensibly led by a group of truckers who supported the self-titled "Freedom Convoy," who claimed COVID-19 regulations had suspended their livelihoods and which, by order of the Canadian national government, required all truckers crossing from Canada into the US to be fully vaccinated or to quarantine for two weeks. The movement soon spread from a protest against pandemic restrictions to a more generalized, right-populist protest against Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

5 For two reports from the Canadian press on these issues of tariffs and absorbing Canada into the US, see Crawley and Major.

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While semi-trucks (known in the US simply as semis) blocked roads and halted all regular business and travel in and around Ottawa's core (with growing protests popping up in other Canadian cities and towns), the result was an unprecedented public disruption in the seat of power in Canada. For weeks, police stood by while citizens complained about the disruption of daily life. Ultimately, at least 100 protesters were arrested, although many were later released. These actions dogged the Trudeau government, which had invoked the Emergencies Act to clear the blockades.

In addition to the use of the Canadian flag as a way of (re)claiming their vision of the nation, truckers also flew US Confederate flags, adopting a form of populist refusal directly imported from the United States. In turn, a couple of weeks later, a convoy of US truckers tried to disrupt traffic in Washington, DC, to protest pandemic restrictions. The largely fizzled event was unlike the dramatic multi-week-long standoff with police in Canada.[6]

While the truckers' convoy was dramatic, perhaps the most poignant media attention to the border comes with death. An especially mournful eruption of the border took place in January 2022 when an Indian family froze to death trying to cross from Canada into the United States. Jagdish Baldevbhai Patel, a 39-year-old man; Vaishaliben Jagdishkumar Patel, a 37-year-old woman; Vihangi Jagdishkumar Patel, an 11-year-old girl, and Dharmik Jagdishkumar Patel, a three-year-old boy, froze to death in the attempt. Authorities believe they were part of an illegal human trafficking scheme preying on those wishing to immigrate from India. However, in most cases, the travel of desired immigration is from the US into Canada. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police, for example, apprehended more than 16,000 asylum seekers crossing north between border crossings in 2019 ("Indian Family that Froze to Death.").

In ways that surprised some viewers, the US media at the time seemed to have developed a newly compassionate response to immigration politics, informed by a visceral reaction to President Donald Trump's more explicitly racist anti-immigration stance. Obama's policies had been no less racist, having introduced cages at the border and a ban on many majority Muslim countries long before Trump came into office, but that was perceived as different. In that period, Canada was represented as a safe haven for Syrians escaping the war, with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau draping them in warm winter

6 Among the extensive coverage, see "Canada protests." See also Noakes and Coletta et al.

coats upon their arrival at Toronto's Pearson International Airport. Nevertheless, while the 2022 dramatic deaths of those trying to reach the Canadian border did make it to the news, far more attention focused on the detention of asylum seekers at the US-Mexican border.

Trump's re-election has stirred fears in Canada that his hardline immigration policies on the US Southern border will push more migrants northward. Even before the January 20, 2025 inauguration, Canadian officials were drawing up plans to "add patrols, buy new vehicles and set up emergency reception facilities at the border between New York State and the province of Quebec," for what is expected to be a surge in immigrants once Trump is again in office (Stevis-Gridneff and Aleaziz).

At the same time, this corresponds to a significant shift in Canada's traditionally welcoming attitude toward immigrants. In October 2024, Trudeau's government announced new restrictions, characterized as a "pause" for rebalancing, saying not that immigrants were not welcome but that there had simply been too many of them in recent years. This announcement comes as public support for immigration has declined overall in Canada.

Meanwhile, a surge of arrivals moving the other way, from Canada to the United States, has prompted concern, with US Borders and Customs Protection showing more than 19,300 undocumented migrants apprehended by US authorities at the border between Quebec and Vermont, New York State, and New Hampshire—nearly three times the number of the previous year, and compared to just 365 people in 2021 (Stevis-Gridneff and Aleaziz).

The mythic "hospitality" of the border, as Gillian Roberts might note, is here profoundly disrupted, laying bare what a border that is always there does, although it is only actuated under certain conditions and for specific individuals—reminders as well of the power of the border to contain, to restrain, to refuse, and to defy the simultaneous fluidity of transnational flows of people, ideas, goods, and cultural products that anthropologist Arjun Appadurai famously labeled "'scapes."

Like the Ottawa truckers' protests, these highly visible and sometimes tragic cases are part of a larger tapestry of legal and illegal, documented or undocumented, easy or hard, mundane or exceptional crossings of the US-Canada border. However, their stark costs in devastating human terms help us see the operations of the border with all its promises and prohibitions in ways that, more often than not, remain invisible. The border, always with us, both enabling and constraining, productive and disruptive, is skirted and re-asserted and lived in multiple ways, as the articles in this issue mark out in detail.

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While much media coverage of the border emphasizes conflict, there are other ways in which it captures some salient differences between the two nations, which have disparate histories and economic priorities. In the opening symposium mentioned earlier, Desmond noted the US stereotype that Canadians are "nice," citing a striking story from *Newsweek Magazine* about Canadian physicians in Quebec who were protesting their salaries, which had just been re-negotiated by their professional federations (unions). Hundreds had signed a petition stating their salaries were too high and should not be increased. Instead of the promised raises, they want the money to go to nurses and needy patients (Sit).

This surely must fall into the category of "never in America!"—a way of distinguishing life in the two nations, each with its distinctive history, despite many similarities. Canadians might not find this anecdote particularly remarkable or amusing, but they are likely to understand why *Newsweek* included it. In an infamous exchange with US President Richard Nixon, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau (Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's father) is known to have said: "living next to you is in some ways like sleeping with an elephant. No matter how friendly and even-tempered is the beast, if I can call it that, one is affected by every twitch and grunt." This statement was made in Washington, DC, in 1969. Many journalists and political scientists think it has come to define Canada-US relations (at least on the Canadian side) for much of the past 50 years. So, another question we delve into here is whether these words still resonate, and if so, how, moving into the second quarter of the twenty-first century.

INTELLECTUAL PRECEDENTS

Blooming roughly in the 1990s and especially accelerating in the 2010s, we see the emergence of works that argue for the importance of the Canada-US border as a site of inquiry for studies in Border/Borderlands/Border Cultures Theory, Transnational American Studies, and Hemispheric American Studies. Each of these intellectual communities has a somewhat different focus, and each evolved with perceived omissions in previous intellectual formations—for example, of "American Studies," with its highly-US centric formulations, or theories of "globalization," which can be seen as undervaluing the function of national identities in favor of an emphasis on a cosmopolitanism of flows.[7]

7 Roberts cautions that when US-based scholars approach "hemispheric studies," they may simply enlarge their object of study without engaging with the substantial body of work coming out of Canadian studies. If so, it would reinscribe

While it is beyond the scope of this Introduction to map all these arenas fully, four key books and several special issues of journals help paint the picture. Special issues/special sections on the Canadian-US border appeared, for example, in 2011 in the journal *Geopolitics*, which featured a section dedicated to Borders and Borderlands, edited by Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, focusing on how border cultures link nation states. The following year, *Geopolitics* devoted an entire volume to "Critical Border Studies" (Vaughan-Williams and Parker), which was later gathered into a book published by Routledge in 2014 and reissued in 2024, indicating the continuing impact of those formulations (Parker and Vaughan-Williams).[8] Collectively, these pieces invited theorizations that went beyond seeing borders as a "line in the sand," a given entity, and argued instead for multi-perspectival approaches. Summing up their vision of the challenges for emerging "critical border studies," the editors called on scholars to: "develop tools for identifying and interrogating what and where borders are and how they function in different settings, with what consequences, and for whose benefit." They urged two twinned moves: a *shift from the concept of the border* to the *notion of bordering practice*; and the adoption of the lens of *performance* through which bordering practices are produced, and reproduced" (3, italics in original). Both these initiatives are seen in the articles collected in this thematic *RIAS* issue.

In 2011, the journal *Comparative American Studies* featured a special issue on Comparative Border Studies edited by Claudia Sadowski-Smith, intending to move beyond the US-centric focus on the Mexican border to discuss border maintenance and their rewritings in different parts of the world. Two years later, the same journal hosted another special issue, this time explicitly on the US-Canada border, edited by David Stirrup and Jan Clarke. An emphasis on Indigenous experiences of borders and conceptions of nationality, community belonging, and borders anchored that volume.

As this intellectual momentum accelerated, two key books also appeared between 2013 and 2015, underlining the growing interest outside of the discipline of political science in the Canada-US border. *Parallel Encounters: Culture at the Canada-US Border*, co-edited by Gillian

the differential size of the two nations' scholarly communities to the detriment of the complexity of the work (*Discrepant Parallels* 18). For publications in the US regarding the expansion of transnational American Studies, see also Desmond and Dominguez. See also later works, such as Rowe, ed., and Pease and Wiegman, eds., among others.

8 The editors and many contributors identified their disciplinary homes as political science.

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Roberts and David Stirrup, featured articles arising from an international working group, mainly from the UK and Canada, and with expertise especially in literary texts and visual culture. That book highlights an analysis of popular culture and literature, along with a number of articles on Indigenous cultures and the border. Noting that transnational American Studies often merely takes an additive approach (3), adding "Canada" to a US-dominated formulation, the editors make the border itself central to their theorizations.

Two years later, in 2015, Gillian Roberts' important book *Discrepant Parallels: Cultural Implications of the Canada-US Border* built further on these works.[9] Roberts focused on the impact of the border through analyses of Canadian cultural texts from the 1980s to the mid-2000s, during the time of NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement)'s enactment, and then with the fallout from 9/11, which heightened border security. This in-depth book focused mainly on Canadian cultural productions, such as literature by Indigenous and non-Indigenous novelists in Canada, television series, and works of drama and poetry. It drew on the mythic notions of Canadian "hospitality" and questioned them through the lenses of Indigenous and Black Canadian perspectives. At the same time, by engaging with hemispheric approaches, which, as Roberts notes, can have their own attendant pitfalls of intellectual imperialism that could ignore the contributions of Canadian studies, Roberts warns that Canadians may find their sense of positive Canadian-ness rearticulated and potentially transformed (18–19).

The most recent book to appear comes from the University of Edinburgh Press: *The Canada-US Border: Cultures and Theory*, edited by David Stirrup and Jeffrey Orr, and emphasizes work mainly by literary and media scholars, working explicitly to bring US-Canada border studies into conversation with US-Mexican border studies. Chapters emphasize the interplay of state infrastructure, social identities, and cultural imaginaries in specific case studies ranging from the Canadian TV series *Border Security*: *Canada's Front Line* to a study of the history of the Detroit River and its imbrication with the logic of border crossing as an "interface of empire" (54).

Like Roberts, Stirrup, Orr, and others, we, too, hope to emphasize and contribute to an understanding of the complexity of the Canadian-US border as a place, process, cultural imaginary and lived experience and have approached this through strategies of multiple expansion in comparison with some of these key preceding works.

9 See also Roberts, *Reading Between*.

The "Other" Border, then, expands the range of contributors to include scholars from the UK, Germany, the US, and Canada of multiple disciplinary and social backgrounds. It unites literary cultural studies with qualitative social sciences approaches. Topics of inquiry include not only the literary (including mobile borders in Francophone literature) and media studies but also embrace considerations of protests, bird migration treaties, trophy hunting, historical memory, as well as diasporic Indigeneity, and labor migration across multiple borders by African diasporic populations.

While no collection can possibly be inclusive of all disciplines and perspectives, we find that combining analyses based on literary, performative, political, legal, anthropological, and media studies approaches can point to the multiple ways that borders function as complicated, flexible, and transformative territorial inscriptions and cultural imaginaries with lived effects. To that end, rather than simply adding "more," we hope to model the challenge of, and potential impact of, multi-faceted approaches that take the necessity of this multiplicity of methods as a starting point. Finally, to help place this work directly in conversation with border studies, especially with that anchored in the study of the southern border of the US with Mexico, we close our issue with a photo essay by US Border Studies expert Alejandro Lugo, whose work has long focused on that region.

WHY THIS THEMATIC ISSUE NOW

Trump's re-ascendancy to the US Presidency and Justin Trudeau's departure from the Canadian Prime Minister's post make this an especially trenchant moment to embrace and extend work on the Canada-US border. Most recent policy shifts indicate that the "soft" border is becoming increasingly rigid, with anger on both sides towards flows from the other. Thus, we expect that border issues will be more salient in public discourse in both countries during the coming four years, highlighting the need for more scholarly work on the Canadian-US borders.

It is impossible to predict what the new leadership in Canada and the US will bring, much less how the broader global reconfigurations will shape that relationship in the coming years. However, some scholars have already sounded an alarm, noting rising populism.

As early as the end of 2021, on New Year's Eve, no less, one of Canada's most eminent scholars published a piece in the *Globe and Mail* entitled, "The American polity is cracked, and might collapse. Canada must prepare." In it, Professor Thomas Homer-Dixon warned:

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> A terrible storm is coming from the south, and Canada is woefully unprepared. Over the past year we've turned our attention inward, distracted by the challenges of COVID-19, reconciliation, and the accelerating effects of climate change. But now we must focus on the urgent problem of what to do about the likely unravelling of democracy in the United States. […] [And] non-partisan Parliamentary committee with representatives from the five sitting parties, all with full security clearances. It should be understood that this committee will continue to operate in coming years, regardless of changes in federal government. It should receive regular intelligence analyses and briefings by Canadian experts on political and social developments in the United States and their implications for democratic failure there. And it should be charged with providing the federal government with continuing, specific guidance as to how to prepare for and respond to that failure, should it occur. (Homer-Dickson 2021)

In all the research conducted for this thematic issue, we have not come across a more dystopian nor threatening reflection on what has been developing in the relationship between the US and Canada.[10]

Just days before Trump's second inauguration on January 20, 2025, Thomas Homer-Dixon issued another warning, writing again in an extensive essay in the Canadian *Globe and Mail* to forecast that Trump during his second term "is likely to become one of history's most consequential figures," operating in a period of rising populism in many countries, and with a weakened Democratic opposition in Washington, DC. He warns that the nation of Canada itself is "in grave peril." "Mr. Trump," he continues,

> seems intent on fracturing our federation, by using tariffs and other measures to create an economic crisis severe enough to stimulate secessionist movements, particularly in Alberta, where polling indicates that 30 percent of the population already thinks the province would be better off as a US state. (Homer-Dickson 2025).

This attitude creates an unlikely synergy between Trump's offhand statements about erasing the border and annexing Canada and some Canadians' assessment that rewriting national boundaries could actually have positive effects.

While such forecasts may seem extreme, such discourse may well signal the end of the period of accord between Elephant and Mouse

10 While not mentioning Canada specifically, outgoing President Joe Biden's live, televised farewell address to the nation on Wednesday, January 16, 2025, sounded a similar dystopian sense of alarm and call to vigilance when he warned against the dangers of an ultra-rich, ultra-powerful oligarchy and disdain for democracy-sustaining institutions, urging Americans to "stand guard." For a text of that speech, see "Remarks by President Biden in a Farewell Address" at www.whitehouse.gov.

that the elder Trudeau so famously alluded to and the beginning of a period of heightened protectionism and boundary-marking. It is too soon to tell how such threats and ruminations will be interpreted by legislators and scholars or in the everyday lives of residents in both nations. However, it is safe to say that interest in Canada-US bordering practices, whether rendered metaphorically or materially, will continue well into the future.

THE ISSUE'S ORGANIZATION AND ARTICLES

This thematic issue prides itself on raising questions about the Canada-US border in multiple ways. It includes politics in the way most people think of politics and also cultural politics, that is, issues that many people (in both countries) think are outside politics—the arts (including visual arts and creative writing), the humanities (including historical accounts and philosophical discussion), museums and representations in many arenas, from advertising to films. Issues related to differences between the two countries are included here, but so are issues that link the two countries in significant ways. We have chosen not to order the essays by the country of residence of individual scholars nor by discipline itself. Instead, we have ordered essays provocatively, hoping to spur debate and discussion and encourage reading across separate articles.

Rowland Keshena Robinson's essay, for example, here called "Indigenous Diaspora, Identity, and Settler Colonial Borders," is based on the centrality of telling stories in Indigenous epistemology and methodology. It is a contribution that tells a story about and across settler colonial borders and the development of Indigenous identity against them. The essay's argument focuses on the division of the Gdoo-Naaganinaa, the Dish With One Spoon Territory, between Canada and the US, and the experience of the author's crossing it as a Wisconsin Menominee, born in Bermuda, who lives amongst his Anishinaabeg kin in Ontario. The author dwells on US and Canadian sovereignty over the regulation of movements across the border, particularly the asymmetric application of immigration protocols for Indigenous individuals. The application of the Jay Treaty, for example, demonstrates that Indigenous sovereignty is fundamentally of a secondary order and the settler's sovereign border concerns over security and citizenship overwrites any pretense, even in the wake of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, that Indigenous people possess any kind of meaningful sovereignty. As a Menominee, Robinson dreams of a world where he can once again live and move

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freely on the lands of the Anishinaabe according to their traditions and protocols.

Adina Balint's essay called "Mobile Borders in Contemporary Francophone Canadian Literature" stresses that much of current spatial thinking emphasizes the porousness of borders, the hybridity of cultures, and non-essential identities (Braidotti 1994; Deleuze and Guattari 1980). Nonetheless, it argues that it is crucial to step beyond simple dichotomies according to which spaces should be understood either as territorially bounded or open. According to the author, even the most fixed borders transform, are crossed, and are partly "mobile" (Ouellet 2005). Balint asks us to consider how literature leads us to think and act beyond the limitations of the border metaphor and, more specifically, how Francophone Canadian contemporary writers represent borders and migrant nomadic subjects. This essay explores these questions through the analysis of texts by the Québécois writers Dany Laferrière and Catherine Mavrikakis.

If the two previous essays address different ways to address borders and border mobility in the arts, Paul Bowles's "Oil Pipeline Resistance in Canada and the US: Similarities, Cross Border Alliances and Border Effects" addresses oil pipeline resistance from an economic and political perspective. Bowles is interested in the fact that the construction of new oil pipelines and the expansion of existing ones have been met with sustained resistance in both the US and Canada. He argues that pipeline expansion has been justified for economic reasons but has emerged as a "chokepoint" for the industry since popular resistance has sought to protect land and water resources. According to Bowles, this resistance has both national and cross-border continental dimensions, and he aims to analyze the nature of the opposition to oil pipelines in both countries.

Specifically, this essay addresses three questions. The first is whether pipeline opposition shares similar characteristics in both countries. The second is how resistance has flowed across the border. The third is whether "border effects" suggest that national resistance strategies are likely to persist and even dominate, notwithstanding the continental structure of the pipeline networks. This essay also documents some major similarities in the resistance movements in both countries, notwithstanding their different political economics and histories and, ultimately, suggests that regulatory frameworks, government actions, and state characteristics all point to the existence of "border effects" and the continued relevance of national-level resistance even in the presence of continental pipeline networks.

Jane Desmond's essay titled "Border Crossings and Polar Bears: How Indigenous Hunting Rights in Canada Become Part of a Transnational Economy" also addresses the border, ecological concerns, and the role of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, but it does so from a combined visual, economic, and political perspective. She is interested in ecotourism both in terms of wider global issues and in terms of US-Canadian relations. The broader context is the global travel of „Big Game" hunters from "First World" nations to kill megafauna to put on their walls. Caribou, elephants, rhinoceros, polar bears, and many other rare or even endangered species are involved. She reminds us that the death of "Cecil the lion," illegally killed in Zimbabwe by a US American dentist, is a recent rendition of this phenomenon and that this drew significant international condemnation. US President Trump's backpedaling on a ban on imports of such „trophies" to the US, she argues, has caused outrage among animal protectionists, but that, she believes, is just a symptom of a broader global phenomenon of the sale of the right to kill, sometimes in the name of conservation, sometimes in the name of supporting local communities, and sometimes in the name of tradition and of continuing Indigenous hunting rights. Here is where Canada comes in. She is specifically interested in a uniquely Canadian phenomenon of the sale of killing rights by Indigenous Canadians to non-Indigenous, non-Canadian trophy hunters who want to hunt polar bears in Canada. Canada is the only country in the world that allows the sale of these rights. These hunters, of European ancestry, come mainly from the United S tates and, more recently, from Western Europe, which is not a simple case. It involves Indigeneity's intermeshed politics, the Canadian state's role, US-Canada relations, and the philosophical constitution of a more-than-human world in both Indigenous and European-derived epistemologies.

In this context, reading an Indigenous leader's words is interesting. Here, we note the essay written collaboratively by Philip Awashish and Jasmin Habib. Awashish is a prominent Indigenous elder from Mistassini First Nation who was directly involved in negotiating the amendments to the Migratory Birds Convention, a cross-border treaty that was initially signed between the US and the British and which needed to be amended not only because Canada had repatriated its constitution which included indigenous rights in its Section 35, but also because Canada had guaranteed a number of hunting rights in the signing of the James Bay Cree and Northern Quebec Agreement in 1975. It is not the only international treaty that Indigenous leaders have been directly involved in negotiating, of course, but it is among

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those that are critically important to Indigenous livelihoods, as well as cultural and spiritual well-being.

Astrid M. Fellner's essay, "Drawing the Medicine Line: Sketching Bordertextures in Whoop-Up Country," explores the multiple dimensions of the Forty-Ninth Parallel in what she calls "Whoop-Up Country." Carving out the interwoven histories of labor and violence, this essay retraces the US-Canada border's function in forming and consolidating the two North American nations. The meaning of the Whoop-Up Trail may have faded into obscurity over time, but the hidden histories, geographies, and knowledges of this border zone have survived and continue to resurface in the cultural imaginary. A number of writers have engaged in "deep mapping the Plains," capturing "within their narrative structures a complex web of information, interpretation, and storytelling," including Paul F. Sharp (*Whoop-Up Country: The Canadian-American West, 1865–1885*), Wallace Stegner (*Wolf Willow*) and, most recently, Thomas King ("Borders"), each of whom constitute heterogeneous border voices that have charted multidimensional (hi)stories of the northern Plains.

Analyzing these multilayered cartographic texts through the lens of bordertextures, the essay proposes a view of borders that allows for an analysis of what Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks call the "details of memory," that is, "anecdotal, fragmentary, speculative ... all those things which we might never regard as authentic history but which go to make up the deep map of the locale" (Pearson and Shanks, 144). Drawing attention to the formation of territories and bodies that are inherently interwoven, the act of bordertexturing turns the Canada-US border into a texture whose analysis necessarily requires a theorization of socioeconomic structures, institutions, and flows that have shaped this border as an instrument of colonial fantasies of nation-building.

If Astrid Fellner leads us to think about institutions and flows that have shaped the US-Canada border as an instrument of colonial fantasies of nation-building, Karen Flynn's essay, "Rethinking the 'Other' Border: Caribbean Migration to Canada," tackles head-on the question of race and questions Canada's self-representation as a socially just and multicultural society. It argues that Canada's response to Black bodies entering its borders has hardly been convivial and that this has been reflected, in particular, by the measures undertaken by Immigration Canada to restrict Caribbean migration. Relying on archival and secondary sources, her essay focuses primarily on Caribbean domestic workers to reimagine who is involved in and what counts as nation-building. In this essay, Flynn argues that domestic workers directly contributed to Canada's nation-building

in two ways. First, they assumed the reproductive tasks on behalf of middle-class white women in Canada and their families, and second, they did so through their activism against deportation from Canada. The essay is divided into two sections: the first begins with examining immigration officials' response to mostly male migrants recruited to work in Canada, and the second focuses on two domestic schemes. It thus offers a critical race and feminist approach to our understanding of bordering practices—domestic and international.

We close with Alejandro Lugo's "Afterword," including photo reflections on the "Freedom Convoys" at the Canada-US border. Lugo's work helps to frame our approach: it captures, from the US side, representations of the border and thus also its limits. That is, the Freedom Convoys had disrupted the lives of Ottawans for months by the time US media began to pay serious attention to them, and one could argue that the shutdown concerned the US primarily because it involved trade and commerce. It signaled, even if for only a few flickering televisual seconds, that, despite long histories of political and cultural engagement, some quite conflicted, others collaborative—and despite claims to cultural affinity and identification between the two states and nations—the US-Canada border is also a heavily guarded one. *This* is what really made it *news*. Lugo's closing essay also assesses the potential impact of this volume in terms of its contributions to "the borders of border theory." It emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinary approaches across the arts, humanities, and social sciences in attempting to capture and theorize some of the complexities of time and space, peoples, non-humans, and place on the move in complex political, cultural, and physical terrains.

Abstract: In this thematic issue of *RIAS,* we address a number of issues about the border, drawing on perspectives from multiple disciplines in the social sciences and humanities, from anthropology to political science, economics, and literature, and including the works of scholars based in Canada, the US, and Germany. Their works engage issues of Indigeneity, African-descendant populations, Franco-Canadians, Gender and Race, Colonialisms, and the more-than-human world. Topics include hunting, cross-border Indigenous relations, treaties, oil protests, immigration, domestic workers, historical memory, creative fiction, and the notions of borders as textures, zones, lines, connections, and cultural imaginaries. Our emphasis on combining social science and humanities approaches is essential to this work. Much previous work on the Canada-US border has tended to focus either on political/legal issues or on literary/media studies. Instead, we strive instead to bring multiple disciplinary perspectives into conversation and include artistic/visual work. This volume thus contributes to a broader project than one that would center on nationalist interests—either the US or Canada's—and rather brings

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to the study of bordering practices and border theory a continental approach, one that attends to the places and spaces that are and/or become the border.

Keywords: Border Studies, Borderlands, US-Canada Border, Canada-US Border, Interdisciplinarity

Bios: Jasmin Habib is the Chair of the Political Science Department at the University of Waterloo, former Director of the PhD Global Governance at the Balsillie School of International Affairs (2019–2022), and founding Director of the Global Engagement Seminar Program (2016–2019). She holds a Ph.D. in Anthropology (McMaster University) and an M.A. in International Peace Studies (University of Notre Dame). Her publications include *Israel, Diaspora and the Routes of National Belonging* and *America Observed: On an Anthropology of the United States* (co-edited with Virginia Dominguez). Her research and publications focus on the politics of empire and the practices of decolonization with a primary interest in the experiences of war-affected refugees now living in Israel, Palestine, Canada, and the United States; indigenous practices and relations of autonomy in North America; and the architecture of consent for contemporary state violence (systemic and direct). Her work is primarily ethnographic and collaborative. Her research methodologies and practices are informed by postcolonial, diaspora, Indigenous, and feminist theories of the state, as well as the theories of spatial and visual cultures of violence/non-violence. Her work is primarily ethnographic and collaborative. In 2022, she was honored to receive the Weaver-Tremblay Award, which is presented annually to an anthropologist who has made extraordinary contributions to Canadian applied anthropology.

Jane Desmond, past IASA President, is a Professor in Anthropology and Gender and Women's Studies and Co-founder and current Director of the International Forum for US Studies, a center for the Transnational Study of the United States. She also holds appointments in the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory, the Center for Global Studies, and the College of Veterinary Medicine. Her primary areas of interest focus on issues of embodiment, display, and social identity, as well as the transnational dimensions of US Studies. Her areas of expertise include performance studies, critical theory, visual culture (including museum studies and tourism studies), the critical analysis of the US from a global perspective, and, most recently, the political economy of human/animal relations. She has previously worked as a professional modern dancer and choreographer, and in film, video, and the academy. She is the Founding Resident Director of the international Summer Institute in Animal Studies at UIUC and the "Animal Lives" Book Series at the University of Chicago Press. In addition to academic publications, she has written for a number of public publications such as CNN.com, *The Washington Post*.com, and the *Huffington Post*, and her creative work has appeared on PBS and at numerous film festivals.

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