**CULTURE AND THE CANADA-US BORDER**

**Straddling Boundaries:**

**Hemispherism, Cultural Identity and Indigeneity**

**Algoma University, Canada**

**May 24th – 26th, 2013**

***Panels & Abstracts***



**FRIDAY, MAY 24**

**PANEL 1 1.30 – 3.00pm**

**Panel 1A -** **Negotiating the Ambassador: Border Cities of Windsor and Detroit.**

**Moderator: Jeffrey Orr**

**Thomas KLUG (Marygrove College). Citizens of the Borderland: Political Responses to Excluding Canadian Commuters from the United States during the 1920s and 1930s.**

The practice of cross-border commuting for work along the US-Canada border, particularly where local labor markets straddle the border, extends well back into the 19th century, long before either country passed significant bodies of immigration law. By 1927, nearly 20,000 Canadian commuters made their homes in Windsor, Ontario, while holding down jobs at Detroit’s factories, construction sites, and retail stores. However, that very spring, due to relentless pressure from the Detroit Federation of Labor (DFL), the United States Department of Labor issued General Order No 86 which, for the first time, defined the status of thousands of Canadian (or “alien”) commuters under U.S. law as “immigrants.” Over the next decade, the DFL intensified its assault on border commuters. Friendly politicians responded, and twice the U.S. House of Representatives passed bills to prohibit commuting. Leading the way in mobilizing against efforts to regulate or ban commuting were commuters themselves. They organized, rallied, and sought allies near and far and on both sides of the border. Invoking “custom,” “reciprocity,” and even the Jay Treaty of 1794, they argued that commuters had a well-founded right to seek work and hold jobs in Detroit, Buffalo, and other American border cities. The notion of a shared borderland citizenship helps explain the ideological drive and relative success of the pro-commuter movement. Sensitivity toward integrated borderland communities and the rights of commuters perhaps also explains why the United States continues to tolerate commuting under the regulatory framework established by General Order No. 86 of 1927.

**Paul M. TYRELL (Universität Bielefeld). The ‘border vice’ of the metropolitan area Detroit-Windsor in historical perspective.**

The metropolitan area Detroit‐Windsor offers a unique perspective on the dynamics of cross‐border entanglement in the US‐Canadian borderlands. This is especially true with regard to the development of the vice based culture of leisure in the cross‐border metropolitan area. In many borderlands –historical and current ‐ we can observe a phenomenon called „border vice“ (Bowman 2005). This refers to economic formations which are constituted by differences in law (or its enforcement) regarding the vice businesses on either side of the border. Typical examples for vice businesses are underage drinking, gambling and prostitution. Thus, a border may be considered as a locator and innovator of vice. These economic formations may cause certain follow‐up cultural phenomena. In this regard the metropolitan area Detroit‐Windsor tells an informative tale, especially if a historical view back to the Prohibition Era is included.

The numerous prohibition laws in the US and Canada, but most importantly the Volstead Act from 1919, not only created a very profitable field of business but also revolutionized the American culture of leisure (Welskopp 2010). Yet contrary to what some contemporaries thought Canada did not become the barroom of the United States. While production and exportation of alcohol were legal in Ontario, selling was not (at least until 1927). Since serious enforcement of the prohibition laws in Detroit was sporadic, there was usually little need to leave the country just to have a drink. Yet in one important niche a profitable and lively “border vice” could thrive: A number of illustrious roadhouses emerged along the Canadian side of the Detroit River. These roadhouses led to the description that “the shoreline of the Detroit River was like a diamond‐studded bracelet with each glittering jewel a roadhouse” (Gervais 2010: 39). Here the Michigan upper class, which accessed the roadhouses by boat, was provided with rich opportunities to drink and gamble.

The utility of the “border vice” approach is not limited to the Prohibition Era. When, for example, in 1994 the Caesar’s Windsor Casino in Windsor, Ontario opened it was very close to the Ambassador Bridge which is the most important traffic link between the US and Canada. Its shiny front side was build to overlook the Detroit River and to be well visible from Detroit. However, the steady flow of Michigan residents and US Dollars across the river led to a dramatic change in Detroit’s public opinion about gambling and ultimately to having gambling legalized in Detroit as well.

These two examples show how the US‐Canadian border acted (and acts) as a locator and innovator of vice. Thus it shows the opportunities of the “border vice” approach for a deeper understanding of the metropolitan borderlands of Detroit‐Windsor. Furthermore it hints at the chances of an economic and historical perspective on the borderlands between the US and Canada.

**Tor H. OIAMO and Joy PARR (Western University). Two Windsor Bridges and the contrasting Canada-US political economies which made them.**

We are health geographers interested in the borderlands of Essex-Kent as living space. Our research includes empirical studies of air quality by both the Ambassador Bridge and the construction site of the Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC) and a newspaper analysis of the continuing clashes between Canadian Keynesians and US Republicans over whether the Windsor-Detroit crossing, a key infrastructure component which carries half of Canada/US trade, should be a public or private good. The militarisation of the border by slowing the pace of traffic, increasing the toxicity and the health burden of the crossing for neighbours, like the delays in construction occasioned by deadlocks in the Michigan legislature, are cultural differences with health and economic ramifications. As a result Windsor and its cultural heritage, once closely resembling that of their auto-manufacturing neighbours across the Detroit River, have become alienated within a region that previously transcended the international border, as well as within the much larger North American geopolitical landscape. The outcomes of nation-building on both sides of the border and cultural cross-pollination across the Detroit River suggest that the Canada-US border is far from a passive space.

**Panel 1B - Reconstructing Border and Refuge.**

**Moderator: Gillian Roberts**

**Zalfa FEGHALI (University of Nottingham). The International Boundary: Resituating the Canada-US Border**

In *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.–Mexico Border* (2011), Rachel St. John focuses on what she sees as an often neglected aspect of the U.S. borderlands, the boundary line itself, considering its historical emergence and its subsequent centrality in the processes of “market expansion, conquest, state building, and identity formation” in the United States.(1) Ironically, and like many border historians, St. John’s focus on the U.S.-Mexico boundary line ignores the centrality of the Canada–U.S. boundary line, generally only considered in clichéd terms by border historians, and its importance in the very same processes in both the United States and Canada. Using a comparative approach, this paper resituates the Canada-U.S. boundary line, focusing specifically on its historical emergence as *the* International Boundary line and its role in creating U.S. and Canadian *borderlands* identities.

If, as we have learned from scholarship on the U.S.-Mexico border, borderlands identities can unsettle and subvert the border itself, what role(s) do border communities play on the Canada-US border? How different are these roles from those played by US-Mexico border communities?

1. Rachel St. John, *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2011), p.5.

**Micah DONOHUE (Pennsylvania State University). Elegies for the “Vanishers”: Native Americans in the Poetry of Esteban Echeverría, Antônio Gonçalves Dias, and John Greenleaf Whittier**

“Indians,” Margaret Atwood writes in *Survival* (1972), “can be idealized only when they are about to vanish.” Later in the same chapter, Atwood studies how Canadian writers turned to Indian myths and mythologized Indians “for source material for stories and poems.” Indigenous legends became “mythological material which would function for Canadian writers much as the Greek myths and the Bible long functioned for European;” as narratives of origin, in other words, and touchstones for self (and national) identity. Atwood’s analysis exposes the relationship between the Indian as legendary precursor to the Canadian citizen, a relationship figured through literature, and the historical fate of the Americas’ First Nations: the Indians were idealized even as they were made to vanish. Idealization has dropped to a minor key, and become elegy.

This paper expands Atwood’s analysis, which zeroes in on Canadian wilderness and Canadian poets such as George Bowering and John Newlove, to the Americas as a whole. The idealizing she describes, as well as the vanishing, are hemispheric phenomena, and both have occurred and reoccurred throughout American history. Here I focus on three nineteenth-century American poets: the Argentinian Esteban Echeverría, the Brazilian Antônio Gonçalves Dias, and the North American John Greenleaf Whittier. Through readings of poems by each, I argue that these “mystic Vanishers” (Whittier’s phrase for Native Americans) are subsumed into nationalist discourse, becoming the “mythological material” Atwood has discussed. The need for such myths was especially keen in the nineteenth century, as Argentina, Brazil, and the United States struggled to define and maintain a national identity. But the Indian’s discursive value, to contemporary nationally-minded writers, derived from their historic displacement and marginalization. By the time Gonçalves Dias praised the valiant Tupi and Timbiri warriors in his poem “I-Juca Pirama” and Echeverría wrote *La cautiva*, the Indians they spilt so much ink describing had suffered through centuries of dispossession, enslavement, and exploitation. At risk of vanishing altogether, the Indians could be safely idealized.

**Maggie BOWERS (University of Portsmouth). Uncanny Canada?**

Where in the theories of mainstream postcolonial and border theories we have become accustomed to the figure of the global migrant moving across vast geographical space and/or cultural difference to enter into an ‘inbetween’ identity, the short and quick journeys that we witness in contemporary North American fiction of characters crossing the United States/Canada border seem barely applicable to the same theories. However, what becomes clear when analysing contemporary novels set along the US/Canada border, such as Louise Erdirch’s *The Master Butchers Singing Club* (2004) Thomas King’s *Truth and Bright Water* (2001), Jane Urquhart’s *The Underpainter* (1998) and Richard Ford’s *Canada* (2012), is that even though characters such as Cyprien, Tecumseh, Austin and Dell move only across the US/Canada border they do so in order to make use of the possibilities that can be formed and examined in the inbetween space created by the disruption of identity in migration between nation states and their cultures.

While the trope of the ‘escape to Canada’ has been long established in African American slavery literature and in accounts of Vietnam War protestors, this paper sets out to examine what is less established in the trope of the movement of Canadians to America, and vice-versa, in search of identity re-construction. Although this paper has a clear starting point in the key principals of theories of migration, the article itself swiftly moves to examining the specific cases of each of these characters in terms of their need to find a space to work through trauma (of war or abandonment), to make use of being ‘out of place’ in order to work through experience and re-imagine themselves. Erdrich and Urquhart’s pieces are particularly linked by the trope of the returning soldier from European wars—where the ex-soldiers seem only to be able to manage the trauma of their experiences in a location across the border.

Intriguingly Ford, King and Urquhart’s novels are connected by the production of art by the characters for the conception and examination of the emotional residue of trauma, considering the use of style as an emotive aesthetic element. What is revealed in the discussion of art is that the migration to either side of the border is an uncanny experience. It involves a move to a similar place that is ‘askew’(as noted by Jane Urquhart reviewing John Ford’s *Canada* in the Globe and Mail, 25 May 2012)—the same geography but with uncanny difference. Whilst the uncanny can be unsettling it also functions to disrupt previous concepts and recast identity. What appears to be the case, however, is that American conceptions of Canada appear to reinforce a Canadian uncanny ‘otherness’ more frequently than a Canadian conception of America. This association will be the final aspect explored in this essay.

**Panel 1C - Representation over Time and Space**

**Moderator: Kelly Hewson**

**Laura SCHAEFLI (Queen’s University). Contested Sovereignties in Historical Context: The Haudenosaunee and the US-Canada Border.**

The focus of this paper is on the border between Canada and the United States from St. Regis to Lake of the Woods, which bisects, amongst others, Haudenosaunee territory. This border was surveyed and established by the International Boundary Commission (1817-27) soon after the war of 1812 between the United States and British North America. David Thompson, the celebrated “Canadian” explorer and cartographer (1770-1857), a remarkable figure whose knowledge of Indigenous languages allowed close relationships with Indigenous groups that controlled the territory, was a key figure on this Commission. Relatively little has been written about the work of this Commission and what exists has been written exclusively in a nationalist vein: concern with the national history of mapping and with the border as a national border between two countries, with no recognition that there are other sovereignties involved. But the modern border is far from simple or untroubled. This paper will explore the troubled image of the boundary that emerges from conflicts between the Haudenosaunee and the Canadian and American governments in the press and reflect on how a richer history of this border might be written.

**Megan DeROOVER (University of Guelph/Arizona State University). Living the Border.**

The border, while undoubtedly rooted in a geopolitical location, is also any moment of cultural, ideological and political confrontation that seeks to express itself through the individual’s body or consciousness. Examining Guillermo Verdecchia’s Fronteras Americanas, Monique Mojica’s Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots and Thomas King’s short story “Borders,” this paper will examine textual and dramatic examples of the internalized border impacting individual identity. Performance, resistance, name modification and identity shifts in these texts all indicate that “we now inhabit a social universe in constant motion, a moving cartography with a floating culture and a fluctuating sense of self” (Guillermo Gómez-Peña quoted in Fronteras Americanas, 70). Literal and metaphorical border crossings cause individuals to perform identity within social contexts and ideologies that seek to define and even police them. If Rachel Adams’ assertion in Continental Divides that the “entire continent has become a contact zone” (227) is correct, then then performances of border culture and bordered identity must also be adapted to suit this flexible territory. By creatively addressing the concept of living the border, these authors/playwrights analyze and perform the manipulation of identity that is created in this transformative space.

**PANEL 2 3.15 – 4.45pm**

**Panel 2A - Feminine Indigeneity Negotiating Border**

**Moderator: Jennifer Andrews**

**Rachel BRYANT (University of New Brunswick). “A wigwam on the hill”: Meeting Rita Joe in Native Space.**

In this paper, I argue that hemispheric perspectives allow for the reconciliation of Indigenous voices across time and space and challenge the ways in which regional frameworks have used physical and temporal borders, and especially the Canada/U.S. border, to (de)contextualize and (de)historicize Native literatures. Through the years, for example, and as recently as 2011, the Mi’kmaw poet Rita Joe has been classified within Atlantic Canadian literary scholarship as a Nova Scotian writer. Such readings are based on an established regionalist project that seeks to identify and articulate what makes Atlantic Canadian literature distinctive within a specifically Canadian context. These frameworks, which ultimately seek to contain and regulate dominant cultural narratives, cannot privilege or empower Indigenous nationalities and perspectives; thus, this paper disrupts the east-west axis upon which such readings are based, turning instead for historical and cultural context to eighteenth-century Connecticut and specifically to the Mohegan writer Samson Occom’s meditations on the principle of “neighbourliness.” In this sense, the paper reflects my ongoing engagement with Lisa Brooks’s powerful conceptualization of northeastern North America as “native space,” or as an undivided, interconnected, and cooperative environment in which all beings – human and non – can be sustained.

**Maureen KINCAID SPELLER (University of Kent). Dissolving – Resolving – Connecting: Navigating Cultural and Colonial Boundaries in Jeanette Armstrong’s *Slash***

Jeannette Armstrong's Slash maps the attempts of the eponymous protagonist to negotiate the borders of the competing cultural and colonial discourses of North America, in order to find a space for himself as an individual and as part of a community. These attempts are framed as a quest for greater knowledge and a journey into  
adulthood, during which Slash will test a series of possibilities for a new, maybe better, way of life. In this paper I shall examine his journey in the light of writings by Taiaiake Alfred and other indigenous critics and commentators, and attempt to evaluate Slash's strategies for survival.

**Jason HOMER. (Asian University for Women). O Canada! Maria Monk, Nativism and the Abject Catholic: Perverse Sexuality, Disability and the Argument against Canadian Annexation in the 1830s**.

From the period of the American Revolutionary War to the height of U.S. imperialism at the turn of the twentieth century, the sweep of United States expansionism frequently looked northward to Canada as its next great territorial acquisition. Scholarly studies on nineteenth century U.S. expansionist projects, however, rarely examine the historical importance of Canadian annexation at all, let alone the means by which the “Canadian question” was debated and contested in political chambers, popular literature, and the international press.

Against a backdrop of U.S. – Canadian relations during the early nineteenth century, this paper will focus on the impact that one best-selling book written in 1836 – Maria Monk’s sensationalist anti-Catholic text *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery –* had in turning French Canadians into an abject population – disabled both morally and physically – and thus formulated a strong argument for the United States to reject annexation. Arriving on the literary scene in the midst of a wave of Irish immigration to industrial northern states such as Massachusetts and New York, *Awful Disclosures* tapped into a rising anti-Catholic and nativist sentiment at a time when the question of annexation was far from resolved.

Through Monk’s narrative, French Canadians became marked as unassimilable through the deployment of several U.S. ideological narratives on race, sexuality, bodily normativity, religion, and economy that called for increased vigilance on the boundaries between Catholics and Protestants, natives and immigrants, communalism and capitalism, male and female roles in the family economy, and ultimately between the United States and Canada. In short, it is my assertion that before the United States dipped its feet into the waters of empire-building, its expansionist project was shaped almost as much by those lands that it was *not* interested in bringing into its borders as those lands that it was.

**Panel 2B - Great Lakes Communities: Evolving Cultures and Identities in Times of Insecurity.**

**Moderator: Gayle Broad**

**Susan HARE (M’Chigeeng First Nation). Relatives and Relationships on the Great Lakes**.

The culture and identity of this region’s inhabitants has been shaped in the last two hundred years by the War of 1812-14, when Anishinaabe peoples were forced to protect their territorial rights through alliances with either the US or the British, and a new boundary emerged, drawn by the colonizing powers through the waters of Lake Huron and Superior. Colonization and its economic hegemony divided a thriving sustainable regional economy into small, one-industry towns dependent on extractive multi-national corporations on the one hand, and isolated Anishinaabe communities lacking access to the multiple sources of wild foods upon which their livelihoods depended, on the other. Susan Hare will outline some of the legacy of the imposition of a contested colonial border through the lens of an Anishinaabe-kwe rooted in the area, providing a traditional perspective on the region prior to the signing of the Jay Treaty; an outline of the present-day meaning of the Jay Treaty to Anishinaabe peoples; and a discussion of relatives and relationships in a cross-border context.

**Sheila GRUNER (Algoma University). Borders and Consciousness: Security, Property, and Landscapes of the North.**

The presentation will represent a sketch of emerging research that looks into discourses and texts of property and security, and their material consequences for landscapes and people, particularly Indigenous people, living in places that come under the gaze of development and environmental protection policy. I will explore the ‘border’ as a problem of ideological consciousness, where territorial boundaries within settler societies are deeply shaped by concepts of private property and, increasingly, discourses of economic and national security. This is the ideological terrain upon which the production of environmental and development policy and practice unfolds, with deep implications for the lives of people in the North, and the lands within which they live. I will argue that exploring consciousness in this way is pivotal to understanding the contemporary expressions of accumulation by dispossession in the North, the frontline of a discursive battlefield that is largely off the radar to mainstream Canada. The recent rush in development policy and extractive large scale projects and proposals in Northern Ontario is surprisingly, yet not surprisingly, still largely unexamined in terms of its implications for Indigenous-settler relations and society as a whole.

**Linda SAVORY-GORDON (Algoma University), Ruth AGAWA and Joanie McGUFFIN. Lake Superior Heritage Coast Tourism: A Cross-Border and Across-Cultures Initiative.**

This presentation examines ‘cultural cross-fertilization’, ‘Indigeneity and the border’, and ‘the culture of leisure on and across the border’ between Canada and the United States through the Lake Superior watershed.   The focus will be on the Lake Superior Heritage Coast (LSHC) initiative place-based, cultural tourism initiative.

The waters of the Great Lakes and St. Mary’s River provided a bountiful food source and a key transportation route for the Anishinaabe peoples for thousands of years, long before rail lines, shipping lanes and roads existed, and today is world renowned for its social and ecological significance. Surrounded by pristine wilderness and at the heart of Anishinaabe territories, the coastal region provides spectacular views, sandy beaches, abundant wildlife, and a tremendous cultural history.

The presentation will examine the grass roots efforts to develop a Lake Superior Heritage Coast world class tourism corridor. The corridor development aims to realize the lake’s potential to provide social, economic and environmental benefits. It recognizes the important role of culture and heritage in achieving this goal. The presentation will explore what is shared by the various communities, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, in the Lake Superior watershed as well as what is different. While they all share the fact that they reside on the lake that is the largest (by area) freshwater body in the world, they have cultural, social, political, economic and geographic differences.  The circum-lake relationships involved in the LSHC initiative that are developing across those differences will be described.  The cross-border impact of current neo-liberal government policies, on the one hand, and decolonization and progressive community development movements, on the other, will also be explored.

**Panel 2C - Heading North/Seeking Refuge**

**Moderator: Heidrun Moertl**

**Art REDDING (York University). The Niagara Corridor and Canadian/American Radicalism in the 19th Century**.

Despite (and in some sense in coordination with) its early over-coding as a tourist and honeymoon destination, alongside the history of labor struggles in industrial towns and cities across the Great Lakes region, coupled with the rapid settlement of the “northwest” occasioned by the building of canals and railroads, and due in large part to its important position on the Underground Railroad, as fugitive slaves moved up into Canada (and back), the Niagara corridor became a transnational matrix of radicalism all through the nineteenth and well into the 20th century. Indeed the region might be termed the cradle of progressivism. A few well-known examples: the crusading journalist and radical reformer William Lyon Mackenzie launched his Upper Canada Rebellion in 1837 in this area, and lived for a decade afterwards in exile in Rochester, attempting to convince Americans to annex the country; Rochester was home too to Frederick Douglass’ *The North Star*, and Douglass himself attended the Seneca Falls women’s rights convention in 1848; in 1905 the NAACP would be founded by W. E. B. Du Bois and his allies in the Niagara Movement, so termed because the attendees could not be housed in an integrated hotel on the US side of the border. Taking a transnational approach, emphasizing the mutual crosspollination of ideas among different political and national projects and formations (feminism, labor, abolition, etc.), and contending that progressive-ere radicalism worked in some measure to counter the yoking of both subjectivity and emancipatory politics to ideologies and narratives of “nation” after 1812, this paper will briefly consider these and other examples of the networking and exchange of radical and progressive ideas and activities along the Niagara corridor.

**Brandon DIMMEL (University of Windsor). The Border Bandits: Tracking the Sedro-Woolley Bank Robbers.**

In the late summer of 1914 criminals known as the “Sedro-Woolley Bandits” robbed banks in a number of Canadian and American border communities in the Pacific Northwest before being confronted by police in the town of White Rock, British Columbia. During the ensuing stand-off on the morning of October 27, 1914, the bandits shot and killed Canadian customs collector Clifford Adams before fleeing into the nearby woods. In the days that followed, Canadian and American police, politicians, and militia groups paid little heed to the international boundary in their quest to find and eliminate members of the Sedro-Woolley gang.

This paper will place the confrontation with the Sedro-Woolley bandits in context by examining the historical development of the Canada-U.S. international boundary dividing British Columbia from Washington State. It will discuss local attitudes towards this particular section of the border and examine how the robberies influenced perceptions of the international boundary in the ensuing years. Finally, it will draw parallels between cross-border police work in other parts of the continent, including Windsor, Ontario, and Detroit, Michigan. I believe this paper will provide a unique perspective of borderlands culture by focusing on a section of the 49th parallel where government attempts to bureaucratize the international boundary were made challenging by primitive frontier infrastructure and the absence of modern communications links.

**Klára KOLINSKÁ (Charles U). “Borders to Freedom”: Sitting Bull’s Precarious Canadian Refuge in Sharon Pollock’s Play *Walsh*.**

In a 1979 interview, Sharon Pollock, one of the most outstanding contemporary Canadian playwrights, asserted that: “Canadians have this view of themselves as nice civilized people who have never participated in historical crimes and atrocities ... But that view is false.” In her plays Pollock has repeatedly challenged the above described prevalent view among her fellow Canadians, and displayed its implied controversies. In her 1973 play *Walsh*, she thus dramatized the history of chief Sitting Bull and his tragically failed attempt at finding retreat in Canada after the battle at Little Bighorn. The play focuses on Sitting Bull’s interchange with the NWMP officer Major Walsh, and at the causes for the eventual disaster of the Sioux: while Sitting Bull claimed that the Sioux were as much Canadian Indians as American, given that the Great Plains were their traditional hunting grounds, the Canadian authorities saw the Sioux as American Indians who had trespassed the international boundary into Canada and should be persuaded to leave. The paper proposes to discuss Pollock’s *Walsh* as an example of “historiographic metadrama” (Knowles), and as an important contribution to reconstructing a crucial episode in Canadian Indigenous history that has proven requisite for the country’s own valid self-definition.

***BUFFET DINNER – 5.30pm - Speakeasy on AU Campus***

***Keynote – 7 – 9 pm - Margaret Noodin – AU Great West Life Theatre***

**SATURDAY, MAY 25**

**PANEL 3 9.00 – 10.30am**

**Panel 3A - Border Teachings**

**Moderator: Peter Krats**

**Lee EASTON and Kelly HEWSON (Mount Royal University). Reading for Class and Race in Courtney Hunt’s *Frozen River*, or What Would you do for a Double-Wide Trailer?**

We encountered Hunt’s film *Frozen River* (2008) at a screening organized at the inaugural Culture and the Canada-US Border conference in Kent 2009. At the time we were provoked by the film’s nuanced representations of a transborder space, offering what we thought was the promise of a utopia and heterotopia (Raussert 21). And indeed, we put this film on the curriculum of our introductory film studies class in Calgary, Alberta, hoping to prompt our students to enter into a critical dialogue about race and representation along and across the border.

This paper focuses on students’ responses to Hunt’s film and our hypotheses about them.. Among other findings, we will analyse what surprised us most : how the majority of respondents resisted and/or appropriated ‘the trailer’ – that signifier of race and class -- to construct some startling meanings. We end with some thoughts about the resiliency of white privilege and the interpretive strategies that support it.

Work cited

Raussert, Wilfred. “Inter-American Border Discourses, Heterotopia, And Translocal Communities In Courtney Hunt’s Film *Frozen River*.” *NORTEAMÉRICA.* 6.1 (January-June 2011): 15-33.

**Marie VAUTIER (University of Victoria). Neologisms, Place Names and the Border: a provocative point of view**.

This paper will examine neologisms and expressions originating from the American side of the Canadian-American border in southern British Columbia and the American “Pacific North West” in recent years, with a focus on “Cascadia”­­­­ and “the Salish Sea.” It argues that ideas move out from academia to the general public, and that the American-based promotion of place-names in recent years has a specific agenda, namely, to erase the border. This agenda can be examined critically by tools usually deployed by cultural and­­­ literary critics. In my paper (which can be 20 minutes or longer, 40 or so), I will trace the history of how I was invited to present my ideas about these matters to an international conference of geographers in Victoria, BC, and then to develop these ideas as a guest speaker in the Huxley Speaker Series at the University of Western Washington, Bellingham, Washington, USA. My talk will most probably be accompanied by maps and a contextualization of the situation, given that this particular border issue is situated far to the west of Ontario.

**Gavan LENNON (University of Nottingham). Above North: A Brief History of Canada in the New Southern Studies.**

In his 1964 speech “The Ballot or the Bullet” Malcolm X famously and provocatively said “If you’re black you were born in jail. In the North as well as the South. Stop talking about the South. Long as you’re south of the Canada border, you’re South”. In doing so, the controversial thinker and activist rhetorically established the US-Canada border as a dividing line between racial violence and relative racial harmony.

Time and again when Canada is invoked in texts pertaining to the US South, by both southerners and non-southerners, it is as an alternative egalitarian space. Canada provides an extreme alternative to the racist structures of the US South and as an imaginative external space that works in counterpoint to the South.

The link between Canada and the South has yet to be explored under the rubric of what Houston A. Baker Jr. and Dana Nelson have termed The New Southern Studies. The sub-discipline puts a stronger focus on hemispheric American studies and on the South’s place within a global cultural context. Until now, however, the New Southern Studies has tended to focus on the South’s southern neighbours. My paper intervenes in recent trends in the study of the global South in order to resituate the imaginative border between the United States and Canada as a space of transition into relative egalitarianism.

**Panel 3B - Repositioning Canada-US Border Culture**

**Moderator: Hannah Jocelyn**

**Lee RODNEY (University of Windsor). The Border Bookmobile Project.**

Lee Rodney is Associate Professor of Art History and Visual Culture. She holds a PhD in Visual Culture from Goldsmiths College (University of London), an MA in Art History (York University) and a BFA (Nova Scotia College of Art and Design). In 2008 she was a visiting Fulbright Research Fellow at Arizona State University where she began a project investigating the fragmented cultural geography of border regions in North America.

Currently, she is research director of the Border Bookmobile project, an urban research platform and traveling exhibition of books, artist projects, photographs and ephemera about the urban history of the Windsor-Detroit region and other border cities around the world. It is in part a memory project charting the changing relationship between Detroit and Windsor as border cities in the industrial heartland of North America. But it is also a social platform to discuss borders within and between cities, and the production of space within borderlands in more heterogeneous and contested parts of the world:borderbookmobile.net

**Michael DARROCH (University of Windsor) Creative Research in Detroit/Windsor.**

This paper treats Detroit/Windsor as an integrated urban environment in which cross-border circulation—neglected in histories of Detroit’s racial, economic, and infrastructural struggles—is integral to each city’s character. The border’s many spaces and forms of circulation of people, things, and information yield creative energies that work against the overwhelming sense of stasis associated with empty landscapes and ruins. The Detroit/Windsor urban environment is thus marked by a tension between, on the one hand, an aura of stasis and, on the other hand, cross-border mobilities of trade and tourism, circuits of nightlife and hospitality industries, as well as shifting public policy and regulatory regimes of border security and travel. Attentive to this tension is an emerging scene of creative arts collectives and site-specific projects: in Detroit the *Heidelberg Project*, *Unreal Estate Agency*, *Imagination Station*, *PowerHouse Project* and *ArtsCorps Detroit*, and in Windsor *In/Terminus*, *Green Corridor Project,* *Broken City Lab*, and *Border Bookmobile*, all work through urban interventions to reconceptualise the detritus of urban cultures and spaces, including the border itself, as transformable and transformative. Empty spaces, low rents, the circulation of discarded objects, the shifting economic conditions of skilled labour and “making” cultures, and the availability of academic institutions and training have all contributed to these creative initiatives at the same historical moment. At the same time, the activities transpiring within these projects work to disorder the material character of urban spaces and the built environment, the people, things and media that pass through them, and even their legal and institutional frameworks.

**Ryan WESTON. A Home in Beulah Land: Borders, Migration, and Canadian Gospel Music**.

Gospel music is often presented as a musical tradition developed primarily in the pews of American Black Churches, drawing on the spirituals of enslaved Americans, white Christian hymnody, and the popular music idioms of jazz and blues. This paper examines the history of gospel music in Canada and the central role the border as theoretical concept plays in this history. Drawing on archival research, participant observation, and interview data as well as border theories from literary studies, cultural studies and black studies, I argue that gospel music should be seen as a transnational tradition and that an analysis of border crossing and straddling offers distinct insight into contemporary black Canadian identity.

**Panel 3C - Border Stories**

**Moderator: Joanne Elvy**

**Don JACKSON (Algoma University), Terry ROSS (Algoma University) and Gary JOHNSON (Lake Superior State University). Can-Am Poli Sci Exchange between Algoma University and Lake Superior State University.**

Since the Canada-US border settlement made shortly after the War of 1812-14, and the resulting partition of the Anishinaabe Homeland and the thriving outpost of Sault Ste. Marie which straddled the St. Mary's River at the foot of the Rapids, the establishment and acceptance of the partition of the region by the "international border" has been problematic. Water, depending upon its character and proportions, can join as much as separate people and communities, and the once Ojibway village ("Ojibwe Gitchi Gumee Odena") at Bawating, the hub of the upper Great Lakes in the heart of the Turtle Island Continent of North America, has been a natural gathering place and cross-roads for thousands of years, easily accessible by water and land from the four directions. Accordingly, during the post-settlement industrial period it was natural that the "Twin Saults" remain family in countless ways. One of these has been the twice-yearly CAN-AM POLI SCI EXCHANGE that Algoma University and Lake Superior State University have sustained for the past thirty years that has brought students and faculty of both schools together to discuss issues of common concern, a tradition that we hope will continue until unnatural borders are no more. What we as faculty present is a series of reflections of these thirty-years of sharing and learning together across a border that as the more daunting and impervious it is made to appear with time, the less relevant and sustainable it seems to become.

**PANEL 4 10.45 – 12.15pm**

**Panel 4A - Borderlands Culture and Technology**

**Moderator: Victor Konrad**

**Sarah E. K. SMITH (Queen’s University). Unsettling Narratives of the Passive Border: Examining Responses to North American Integration in Canadian Video Art.**

In this paper, I suggest that artistic production provides valuable insights into the nature of the 49th parallel during the late twentieth century when significant changes were occurring to dominant understandings of Canada in relation to North America. Focusing on the medium of video art, I trace the sustained engagement of Canadian contemporary artists to respond to and comment on the move towards continental integration through free trade. I contextualize my discussion in relation to trade developments that opened Canada’s border with the United States, such as the 1989 implementation of the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement. This agreement, along with the later North American Free Trade Agreement, led to increasing continental integration at the end of the twentieth century, as well as a hope for hemispheric integration with the subsequent negotiations towards the Free Trade Area of the Americas. I focus my discussion on three works of video art from this period: *White Dawn* (1988) by Lisa Steel and Kim Tomczak, *The Winning of the North* (1989) by Eva Manly and *Trade Winds (Canada) Ltd* (1992) by Clive Robertson and Frances Leeming. Through my examination, I chart the artists’ intent to speak back to narratives of the border’s porousness and passivity, and more broadly, to address the power dynamics between the Canadian state and its trade partners.

**Jude ORTIZ (Algoma University). Crafting Cultural Identity and Resilience: An artist’s boundary critique of ‘locally made’ within the context of a Northern Ontario border city.**

This image-based presentation explores the concept of ‘locally made’ from an artist’s perspective within the context of a Northern Ontario border city. It critiques the plurality of boundaries in a craft economy and its impact upon cultural identity and resilience, defined as the community’s ability to adapt, transition and prosper when faced with significant change while retaining core values (Colussi, 2000). The presentation examines the role of craft in identity re/formation; understanding of locality; and, a place-based economy while investigating sources of inspiration and materials.

The growing trend of Northern Ontario communities towards fostering place-based economies in mitigating social and economic destabilization due to recent industry restructuring is founded on the recognition that wealth is generated by developing local assets (e.g., people, financial, natural, cultural, and historical). Through the creative capitalization of locally made products, experiences and services, place is transformed from a geographical location into a community with a distinct identity that can be strategically marketed to attract and retain citizens and investment, and to promote tourism.

However, questions arise regarding cultural identity, the concept of ‘locally made’ and ‘resilience’ in a global economy where raw materials from around the world are currently available first hand in large urban centres, through internet sources, or in the case of Sault Ste. Marie a small remote urban border city, via a quick trip across the river to the United States of America.

Work Cited

Colussi, M. (2000). *Community Resilience Handbook*. Port Alberni: CCE Publications

**Peter KRATS. (Western University). Boundaries Exercise Power: Comparing Culture in the Keweenaw and Nickel Belts.**

Examination of the resource-industrial frontiers of the Keweenaw Peninsula, Michigan and the Sudbury Basin, Ontario leads inevitably to considering the impact of the Canadian-American border. In the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, rich copper reserves drew large investment; a very heterogeneous population exploited the natural wealth. A few hundred kilometres away – but **across an international border** – the world’s greatest nickel reserves saw even larger firms emerge; their expenditures helped build an equally mixed social setting in a resource hinterland.

These two settings saw difference blended with similarity – this paper, based upon early comparisons, offers tentative, suggestive thoughts about the cultural impact of the international border. At both sites very varied sets of cultural activities were at work – driven by ethnic heterogeneity, cultures emerging both because of and despite corporate influence, and perspectives borne of feeling both “northernness” and isolation from major cultural centres. Popular culture, in both cases, could lead in unique ways – take the first professional hockey league anywhere. But imitation was prevalent too: workers and farmers brought spiritual and political institutions, music, dance, writing and more. Meanwhile, local elites emphasized a more “correct” culture. In examining cultural imitation, inflection and originality in these two regions, many parallels emerge; so, too, differences. Examining two “northern, resource based” hinterlands helps us understand their role as outliers of established culture; inflectors of the same, *and* exemplars of cultural differences borne of an international border. Case studies of this sort can help us sort out linkages – real, imagined, and missing – between two nations sharing a long boundary.

**Panel 4B - Border images and metaphors**

**Moderator: Vijay Sheshadri**

**James Lancel McELHINNEY (Pratt Institute). Drawing Boundaries with Sword and Brush: The Military Origins of Landscape Art in the United States.**

The Hudson River School and Abstract Expressionism are widely two recognized as the two canonical movements in American Art. This paper will argue that the rise of American landscape painting was propelled in part by U.S. failures in the War of 1812—in ways similar to how Abstract and Modern art was used by the U.S. government as a propaganda tool during the Cold War.

Given the sprawling scope of the subject, this paper will frame concepts and pose questions about how the acceleration of scientific and cultural programs in a postwar society can achieve goals that were unattainable on the battlefield. In order to ameliorate losses suffered during the War of 1812, the United States embarked on an ambitious course of military exploration, scientific inquiry and artistic production that redefined national identity in positive terms and constructed a kind of victory by extending American intellectual, artistic and commercial influence across a border it had failed to relocate by force. This also rendered more absolute the defeat suffered by Indigenous Peoples who participated in the fighting, and paved the way for removals, relocations and another seventy-five years of warfare.

**Hannah JOCELYN (New York University). Liminal Fiction: Annie Proulx and the Canada/United States Border**.

Canada and the United States share over 5,500 miles of border, a line that represents a division of heritage and habits, facilitates cultural replication and appropriation, magnifies similarities and often downplays differences. There is an assumption of friendship and collaboration, ignoring an extended relationship of discord and adjustment, making the meeting point between nations fraught with tension. It is a charged space, anything but ‘passive’. Crossing the border, then, is an unsettling act. Annie Proulx is a border crosser. She was born and raised in New England to a father with Canadian roots but earned her M.A. and began her Ph.D. in Montreal. She now lives part of the year in Wyoming, part in Newfoundland. Her novels and short stories consistently depict protagonists and subjects in transit: the accordion of *Accordion Crimes*crafted by an immigrant traverses the continent over the course of a century, Loyal Blood of *Postcards* travels across the American West, Quoyle of *The Shipping News* returns to his ancestral home of Newfoundland from upstate New York in an attempt to regain control of his life, Bob Dollar of *That Old Ace in the Hole* finds himself a new home in Texas. This paper will investigate how Proulx's border crossing life is represented in her literature. It asks, are her characters forever liminal, constantly in motion, because Proulx herself has never fully settled in either Canada or the United States? Using her memoirs, interviews, and auto/biographical documents, I will expose the undercurrent of nomadicism in Proulx's fiction is a result of her own rootlessness, a result of the unsettling effect of the Canada/United States border.

**Catherine BATES (University of Huddersfield). Getting out of the frame: Brian Jungen, *The Edward Curtis Project* and the cross border ‘Indians’ who didn’t vanish**.

This paper will focus on two indigenous projects which straddle the Canada-US border: Brian Jungen’s sculptures, featured in his 2009-10 *Strange Comfort* exhibition at the National Museum of the American Indian; and The Edward Curtis Project, a multidisciplinary collaborative theatre and photojournalist project developed by Rita Leistner and Marie Clements in response to the pictorial photographs of indigenous Americans by early twentieth century photographer Edward Curtis.

Both works are Canadian but focus, as well, upon indigenous identity south of the Canada-US border; they also both interrogate the museumification of indigenous cultures: Leistner’s photographs, which emphasize the living and multiple diversity of the individual people and situations she portrays work to highlight problematic nature of Curtis’s aesthetically stunning, but dangerously objectivist catalogue; Clement’s play further explores this ethics of representation by putting Curtis and his photographs in a kind of dialogue with contemporary indigenous characters who directly challenge the ‘Vanishing Indian’ lens through which the former’s pictures were taken and viewed. Jungen’s sculptures take objects which signify Western consumer capitalism, commodification and the culture of disposal – such as Nike Jordan Airs, white plastic chairs, and green plastic bins – and turns them into sculptures which signify indigenous North American culture – such as Haisla masks, totems, whales and turtles. The works impel a questioning of what makes sculpture authentic and traditional, while the emphasis upon commodification, within a museum context works as a more than a reminder of the horrific extent to which indigenous peoples in the Americas (and beyond) have been more valued as things to be looked at it museums, or to be admired through their artefacts, than as living, diverse people. Moreover, Jungen’s work disrupts both the space of the art gallery and the museum (straddling the two). His work ‘shapeshifter’, which forms a whale skeleton out of plastic chairs, seems like a natural history piece and so would seem at home in a museum – except it is a piece of art. His art has often been displayed in museums rather than art galleries – his exhibition at the National Museum of the American Indian in New York placed his work alongside anthropological exhibits ultimately prompting an interrogation of the highly problematic colonial history Canada and the US shares of attempting to remove indigenous people and their traditions from the living world, while displaying their bodies, homes and art in the museum world.

In this paper, I intend to consider the potential of these two projects to affirm the living diversity of indigenous identity and art on both sides of the Canada-US border; they do this by emphasizing the damage the museumification of indigenous cultures is still doing to the ability of first peoples to live full and viable lives beyond the ‘vanishing Indian’ ethos which still hinders indigenous voices from being heard and actually listened to responsively.

**Panel 4C - Transcending Borders**

**Moderator: Alice Ridout**

**Rick BAKER (Mount Allison University). Representing the border: the 49th parallel and depictions of agency and passivity in the Hollywood ‘Northern’**.

The cinematic subgenre known as the ‘northern’ repackages the themes and stories of the traditional Hollywood western and relocates them to an exoticized Canadian setting. The 49th parallel looms large in this set of classical era films, regularly serving as both setting and plot device. The act of crossing this border is an integral feature of many of these films. While American characters come to Canada for a variety of reasons, the most common motivations relate to resource extraction and effecting justice or order. This paper examines the important role impressions of passivity play in framing the northern’s depiction of both the border and Canadians. Arguing from a critical geopolitics perspective, it contends that a persistent cinematic nod to Canadian passivity positions the country as an ambiguous extension of American dominion. It renders the country as a frontier zone, a nearly empty place where a lack of both industrious inhabitants and effective governance effectively demands American intervention. This patterned depiction of Canadian passivity works to imbue American characters – protagonists and antagonists alike – with a pronounced sense of agency in a Canadian landscape. Thus, while northerns purport to tell Canadian stories, they frequently end up simply using Canada as an exotic setting for Americans to make their fortune, meet their destiny and establish law and order. In this sense, cinematic representations of Canadian passivity have important implications for defining the place that Canada occupies in the broader US geopolitical imagination.

**Gillian ROBERTS (University of Nottingham). After 9/11: the Canada-US Border beyond the Hemisphere.**

This paper will examine the post-9/11 relationship between Canada and the United States as it is played out against non-North American locations, in particular in the context of Afghanistan. Focusing on Canada’s role in the Afghanistan mission, the paper will discuss how Canada-US border has been displaced and tested at a considerable remove from the 49th parallel itself. The paper will analyse representations of Canada’s involvement in Afghanistan in the CBC border-policing drama *The Border* (2008-2010) and Jane Urquhart’s novel *Sanctuary Line* (2010). In the “Enemy Contact” episode from Season 1, and “Missing in Action” from Season 3, *The Border* dramatises the fictional Immigration and Customs Security (ICS) agency’s attempts to distinguish Canadian from American involvement in Afghanistan while simultaneously giving voice to those who dispute the status of any meaningful distinction between the two countries. Much of Urquhart’s novel focuses on the narrator’s cousin, Mandy, who is dead by the time the narration begins, killed by an improvised explosive device in Afghanistan. On one level, Mandy, the product of an American mother and a Canadian father, presents an alignment of Canada and the United States, as she participates in the countries’ shared military objectives in Afghanistan. On another level, the ways in which the novel traces Mandy’s engagement with the military both seek to distinguish the Canadianness of this engagement and perhaps prove insufficient to carving real differences between Canada and its southern neighbour, not just in relation to the hemisphere but also to majority-world sites elsewhere. Implicit in *The Border* episodes and more explicit in *Sanctuary Line* is a sense of rupture of the Canadian public’s associations with their military as a peacekeeping force in the context of Afghanistan. However, not only will the paper draw on critiques of peacekeeping and the “imperialist fantasies” (Razack 69) that underpin such operations, but it will also demonstrate how *The Border* and *Sanctuary Line*, in displacing the border outside North America, test the Canadian nationalist association of the 49th parallel as a safeguard of Canadian values.

Work Cited

Razack, Sherene H. Dark Threats and White Knights: The Somalia Affair,

Peacekeeping, and the New Imperialism. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2004.

***LUNCH 12.30 – 1.15pm***

**PANEL 5 1.30 – 3.00pm**

**Panel 5A – Intersections of Policy and Wellbeing**

**Moderator: Lee Easton**

**Jeffrey ORR (Royal Roads University). True Stories of Crime and Innocence: Judging Truth at the Borders**

This paper examines the role of individual agents of the CBSA in determining trust, truth and falsehood at Canada’s borders. Immigration officials in Vancouver International Airport and officers at the Canada /US land border are given considerable training, and must ultimately embody the state as a part of their job. The personal judgement of the individuals is frequently a crucial deciding factor in assessing truth and trustworthiness of immigrants, visitors, and potential refugee status claimants. This paper examines ways in which those judgements enforce normative social codes and identities through the interpretation of stories and texts. It argues that the textualization of identity and the narrativization of life experiences are often viewed through the lens of realist narrative interpretation during the course of interviews and interactions, an interpretive approach with serious consequences not just for applicants, suspects, and clients of the CBSA, but for our collective national identity.

**Heidrun MOERTL (University of Graz). Intersection of Time and Aging. Anishinaabeg People Setting an Example.**

As indigenous societies living on both sides of the Canada-US border, the peoples belonging to the Anishinaabeg have been subject to the differing regulations imposed on their culture by the government of their nation states regarding the treatment of the elderly population. As a result of the current demographic change, policy makers in both countries are designing programs to deal with the ‘plight of the elderly’, largely neglecting indigenous societies, basing social and medical services on the needs of mainstream culture. Whereas the services in Canada are slightly more adequate, the Anishinaabeg across the nation border are forced to rely on their traditional ways in order to be able to approach the passage up the last four of the hills of life in a meaningful way.

**Jan CLARKE (Algoma University). Are Borders open to Donors?: Strange Contradictions of Live Kidney Donor Chains.**

Live organ donors confront strange contradictions when they offer their ‘spare kidney’ in paired and domino chain transplants that straddle the Canada-US border. The donors’ genuinely altruistic intentions to help a critically ill family member, friend or stranger usually motivates their ‘gift of life’, yet they may unintentionally become part of commodification of body parts linked to undersupply of live organs for transplantation surgery. In Canada live donors are ethically bound by confidentiality and they remain anonymous to the recipient, yet in the US this confidentiality is often breached so that donors and recipients meet to create communities of members from chain transplants. In the enthusiasm that encircles these acts of altruism, what is overlooked is how donors are assumed to thrive with just one kidney yet for critically ill recipients to survive they must have two kidneys. This paper attempts to unravel contradictions of live kidney donation by drawing on sociological analyses to link donor experiences with social structure, through critiques of news media reports about live kidney donors’ and recipients’ personal stories from different sides of the Canada-US border.

**Panel 5B - Representation through Time and Space**

**Moderator: Marie Vautier**

**Jennifer ANDREWS (University of New Brunswick). Revisioning *Evangeline* for the New Millenniun: Configuring English-Canadian, Anglo-American and Acadian Relations in the 21st Century**

If, as Winfried Siemerling argues in *The New North American Studies* (2005) that North America is a “relational designation” that “sheds light on ‘America’s’ shadows by evoking the limits of ‘nation’ and the liminal spaces of its borders,” how might contemporary American author Ben Farmer’s novelistic rendering of *Evangeline* (2010) be read as a reconfiguring relations between Canada and the United States in a post 9/11 context, especially given that Longfellow’s famous poem, *Evangeline* (1847) portrayed the story of the Acadian deportation from a distinctly Anglo-American perspective, becoming an internationally known and extremely popular representation of this historical moment in colonial politics.  Siemerling characterizes such rewriting as a form of re/cognition which, rather than sustaining stable and singular forms of reference, insists on vacillating between and among multiple frames of reference (and in this case, languages), thereby cultivating a sense of “doubling, [and] doubt” and ultimately ensuring a lack of resolution (4).  Farmer’s novel offers a provocative alterna(rr)ative to the Longfellow poem, by shifting genres and creating a story that fundamentally undermines the Romantic coupling of Evangeline and Gabriel as star-crossed lovers, who spend their lives clinging to memories of the “earthly paradise” where they were first engaged (Viau 45, my translation).  In doing so, *Evangeline* becomes a novel that revisions the Romanticized Anglophone version of Acadian womanhood and its strategic Americanization, creating a fall of Biblical proportions through Gabriel’s betrayal of Evangeline’s loyalty, while insisting upon Evangeline’s complexity as a character who both protects and employs her sexuality to ensure her survival.

**PANEL 6 3.15 – 4.45pm**

**Panel 6A - Geopolitical Borderlands**

**Moderator: Robert Zacharius**

**Alice RIDOUT (Algoma University). Margaret Atwood’s Straddling Environmentalism**.

In a lecture delivered at MIT on April 4, 2004 entitled “Oryx and Crake Revealed,” Margaret Atwood was asked a question about the link between *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and her earlier science fiction novel, *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985). She explained that *The Handmaid’s Tale* partly grew out of her “irritation when people say ‘it can’t happen here’” and discussed her decision to set the novel in Cambridge, Massachusetts as being related to that irritation. “’It can’t happen here,’” she explained, “should be placed in the most extreme ‘here.’” As the recent climate change event, Hurricane Sandy, made clear as it swept through the same geographic region as Atwood selected as her “extreme ‘here’” for *The Handmaid’s Tale*, climate change is just as impervious to borders and our assumptions about certain geographical and political areas being “safer” than others. (This is not to ignore that the effects of climate change are distributed unevenly across places and peoples.)

Understanding how environmental politics are located differently from the political dystopia Atwood explored in *The Handmaid’s Tale* helps us to make sense of why a famous Canadian cultural nationalist would decide to set her 2003 novel in a post-national world. This paper will examine two of Atwood’s boundary straddling environmental fictions – *Surfacing* (1972) and *Oryx and Crake* – to think through how environmentalism disrupts national borders. In *Surfacing* the border crossing is done by Americans coming up to Canada to hunt recreationally. The hunters who mindlessly kill a heron and leave it hanging by a portage are emphatically and incorrectly identified as American. Thus, this 1972 environmental fiction demonstrates Atwood’s early awareness of there being a close and problematic relationship between environmentalism and national borders. In *Oryx and Crake* the national border between Canada and the US has been eradicated and replaced by the new boundaries around corporate compounds which are policed by the vicious private security company, CorpSeCorps. Examining the border crossings in these two environmental novels raises key questions about the relationship between Atwood’s cultural nationalism and her environmentalism.

**Caleb BAILEY (University of Nottingham). Creating a Coyote Cartography: Critical Regionalism at the Border.**

Critical regionalism – a theory derived from influential critiques of architecture in the 70s and 80s – provides us with new and challenging ways in which we might approach cultural constructions of regions, regionalism and regionality. Focusing on the interaction between the local and the global, universality and specificity, material and mental landscapes, it seeks to reconstruct and reinstate a polyvocal and bifocal construction of regional palimpsests previously striated and subject to ideological appropriation. The liminal spaces of border regions are ideally suited to such analyses and this paper will explore how a critical regionalism which proceeds via the Deleuzoguattarian strategies of the rhizome, nomadism, and lines of flight, might accommodate a diverse range of theoretical approaches drawn from ethnography, human geography and cultural poetics, becoming both reflective of the diverse discursive constructions of border regions, and which can also better account for such cultural productions.

This paper argues for the construction of a *coyote cartography* – an approach to reading border regions derived from the principles of this expanded critically regionalist framework – which allows us to efface the centre as a privileged site of subjectivity, whereby the marginal spaces at the boundaries of the U.S. gain a paradoxical centrality in understandings of these borders and what might lie beyond them. Drawing upon both Coyote as the disruptive and disjunctive figure often found at work in Canadian texts, and coyote the facilitator of clandestine border crossings in Mexico, it redraws the cultural and theoretical maps of the border by drawing upon the characteristics of both tropes, interrupting binary and dualistic concepts and replacing them with a dialogical construction marked by a mediatory in-betweenness: between the local *and* global, universal *and* specific, and the real *and* imagined. Through this invocation of Coyote/coyote, a comparative paradigm emerges which can link moments of cultural struggle across territories and between border regions.

**María Cristina MANZANO-MUNGUÍA (Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla). Grassroots Epistemologies: Being TransNa or FirstNa in North America.**

Truett and Young (2004) stated that being a resident of the Mexican north (as well as the American-south and American-north) in the modern age meant to be entwined in the “web of transnational relationships”. The modern and postmodern “web of transnational relationships” must also include contemporary Indigenous Nations. The latter are caught in between their Nations and the nation-states of Mexico, United States, and Canada. For some Indigenous people being transnational across political borderlands might entail: being “FirstNa” or “TransNa” as Helen Abraham articulated while thinking about her experiences of migration as an Oneida First Nation member. This paper will first explore grassroots Indigenous contributions to conceptualize “transnationalism” as the outcome of migration stories of moving back and forth from Canada to the United States and vice versa, to visit relatives, attend community and religious events, and for educational purposes, among others. Second, to conceptualize “FirstNa” or “TransNa” as Indigenous transnational experiences of Indigenous people who crossed and continue to cross the border (lands) of the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

References

Samuel Truett and Elliott Young (Eds.), In *Continental Crossroads Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History.* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2004).

**Panel 6B - Straddling Gender and Identities**

**Moderator: Chandar Krishnamurthy**

**Felicity SKELTON (Sheffield Hallam University). ‘A very slightly foreign country’: cultural identity in the contemporary Canadian short story**.

From Alice Munro's 1988 story, 'Miles City, Montana' to Mark Jarman's 2008 'My White Planet', it is not hard to find discussion of Canada's southern border and her relationship with her neighbours in contemporary Canadian short fiction. In 'Miles City, Montana' a family travel from Vancouver to Ontario, but choose to drive through the United States. The wife, narrating, can no longer remember why they chose this route. 'I don't know […] if we just wanted the feeling of driving through a foreign, a very slightly foreign, country - that extra bit of interest and adventure.' (88)

In 'Plane People' by Rick Maddocks (2002), the Elias family arrive in Canada from Wales; they drive through southern Ontario in an American car, buy an American football shirt for their son, and watch American television. Parallels are drawn between the situation of Wales as a principality in relation to the United Kingdom (with Canadians they meet assuming they are English), and the relationship of Canada to the USA.

In 'My White Planet', Jarman describes a young girl arriving in the Canadian Arctic, on a lifeboat from an oil rig. She has no voice and no name, and is rescued and revived by Canadian scientists who are apparently stranded on the ice; she later leaves and they see her on their intermittently functioning television. 'She is shacked up with one of Jack Nicholson's sons.' (42) 'At the Emmy's she gives us a message. […] her tiny dress taped to her skin to keep it on.' (44) It is clear that she has become an American pop-culture icon, while the Canadians are still stuck in the wilderness.

Each of these stories explores the porosity of the border when it comes to culture and identity. In 1988, the year 'Miles City' was published, CUFTA (Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement) was a factor in the general election (Dean and Dehejia, 315). Since then many Canadian writers have examined the cultural traffic between the two countries. This paper will investigate the function of the Canada-US boundary in late twentieth and twenty-first century short fiction from Canada, and whether cultural contact with America is sometimes seen as a positive good or is always resented as neo-imperialism.

References

Dean, James W and Dehejia, Vivek H (2006) 'Would borderless North America kill Canadian culture?' *American*

*Review of Canadian Studies* 36:2, 313-327

Jarman, Mark A (2008) 'My White Planet' in *My White Planet* Toronto: Thomas Allen Publishers

Maddocks, Rick (2002) 'Plane People' in *Sputnik Diner* Toronto: Vintage Canada

Munro, Alice (1988) 'Miles City, Montana' in *The Progress of Love* London: Flamingo

**Susan BILLINGHAM (University of Nottingham). Teach the Children Well: Young Adult Literature and Queer Content.**

This paper forms part of a larger project interested equally in literary analysis of young adult texts with LGBTQ2 content, the institutional contexts within which such texts are produced, and what happens to the texts once they are published. Young adult (YA) literature can be defined as “books that are published for readers age twelve to eighteen, have a young adult protagonist, are told from a young adult perspective, and feature coming-of-age or other issues and concerns of interest to YA” (Cart and Jenkins). Taking Shyam Selvadurai’s *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* (Tundra 2005) as a point of departure, my paper poses questions about national boundaries and the bounds between adult and YA literature. As Perry Nodelman points out, “[b]order guarding—keeping out what is un-childlike, keeping children’s minds in a safely bounded place of limited access to knowledge and innocent security—has been the major function of children’s literature” at least since the late sixteenth century, when the practice of producing expurgated versions of the classics became popular. And if there is one hot-button issue guaranteed to provoke controversy and alarm, that issue is sexuality in children’s literature. In the U.S., books with LGBTQ2 content continue to dominate the top ten most challenged/banned list produced annually by the American Library Association’s Office for Intellectual Freedom. What possibilities exist for young lesbians or gay males in Canadian YA fiction?

As recently as 2002, when Paulette Rothbauer posed this question, she could find only fifteen YA Canadian books that include gay or lesbian characters, in contrast with more than one hundred titles available south of the border by that date. The first two novels appeared in 1989, twenty years after John Donovan’s *I’ll Get There. It Better Be Worth the Trip* (generally cited as the first YA novel published in the U.S. to deal openly with homosexuality). Of the twenty-six characters Rothbauer identifies, most are peripheral or secondary characters providing a ‘problem’ to be negotiated by a heterosexual protagonist, only six are lesbian, and there is not one gay male adolescent character who tells his own story. In 2005, perturbed by this continuing lack, Benjamin Lefebvre asks what conclusions can be drawn about a national literature that interpellates teen characters into homophobic discourses without providing a full spectrum of gay characters or convincing affirmative counter-discursive positions with which adolescent readers might identify. (His questions are all the more pertinent given that one of the texts discussed, Diana Wieler’s *Bad Boy*, won the Governor General’s literary award in the children’s category.) This situation was gradually improving, however, as indicated by the appearance of *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* later the same year. Although narrated in the third person, the story focuses on fourteen-year-old Amrith’s experience of first love, when he becomes attracted to his sixteen-year-old Canadian cousin Niresh. Comparison of this novel with *Funny Boy*, a coming-out/coming-of-age tale not specifically intended for young adults, is instructive. How does Selvadurai tailor his third novel to make it more accessible to younger readers? What do the differences or omissions signify (e.g. no cross-dressing, no references to the Sri Lankan civil war, an orphaned protagonist)? My project intersects with the CCUSB’s concern with issues such as cultural cross-fertilization and cultures of surveillance.

**Sarah GALLETLY (University of Strathclyde). ‘Writing with a man’s pen’: Gender and Transnational Identity in Winnifred Eaton Reeve’s Canadian novels.**

Despite attempts to (re)claim her as a Canadian author, Winnifred Eaton Reeve remains largely recognised today as an Asian-American author. By focusing on two of Reeve’s last novels, *Cattle* (1923/4) and *His Royal Nibs* (1925), this paper intends to explore how Reeve attempted to reinvent herself as a “Canadian” author after a successful career writing in the States. This presentation will explore the slippery questions of gender and transnationality that burdened Reeve’s attempts to write a “Canadian” novel, and the ways that her newly acquired “strong, hot pen” allowed Reeve to create new brutal, yet largely emancipatory, representations of women struggling to survive on the Alberta plains.

***CONFERENCE DINNER – 6pm - Bushplane Heritage Centre***

***Keynote – 7.30 – 9.30pm - Guillermo Verdecchia – Bushplane Heritage Centre***

**SUNDAY, MAY 26**

**PANEL 7 9.30 – 11.00am**

**Panel 7A - Im/migration**

**Moderator: Deborah Woodman**

**Robert ZACHARIAS (University of Toronto). Mennonite/s Writing in North America: Following *The Trail of the Conestoga.***

Mennonite literary critics in North America have, from the first considerations of the field some thirty years ago, self-consciously attempted to frame Mennonite literature in broad and international terms. When, in her recently released *A Cappella: Mennonite Voices in Poetry*, the American critic Ann Hostetler claims that the anthology can “represent the full range of North American poetry by writers of Mennonite origin” because for Mennonites, “religious, ethnic, and linguistic criteria cross national boundaries” (182), she is expressing a well established principle in the field. While the international context of Mennonite/s writing is well established, the critical frame itself has remained widely under-theorized. In practice, the field has struggled with how questions of inter-Mennonite difference—especially those surrounding ethnicity, race, and religion—have been negotiated through starkly different regional and national contexts. Drawing on the hemispheric critiques of Winfried Siemerling and Rachel Adams, I argue that literary critics must attend more closely to enduring impact of the political, religious, and cultural aspects of Mennonite identity that precede Canada and the U.S. as sovereign nation-states, and which continue to exceed them through a vast network of institutions and cultural production.

My paper for this conference explores the transnational network of economic, religious, and migration histories in Mabel Dunham’s *The Trail of the Conestoga* (1926). Dunham’s best-selling novel is a fictionalized account of the migration of Swiss Mennonites to Ontario following the American Revolutionary war. I trace Dunham’s portrait of the cross-border economics that lay behind the Mennonites’ early successes in the area (Franz), including how a set of wealthy U.S. Mennonites resolved a Canadian land dispute by purchasing a contested mortgage along the Grand River. The novel’s laudatory preface by the Prime Minister of Canada, W.L. Mackenzie King, takes on a distinct irony in light of the substantial U.S. involvement in the Mennonites’ settlement. The land in question was also part of the still-controversial Haldimand Tract granted to the Six Nations Confederacy, part of the complex Mennonite / Indigenous history that is thoroughly effaced in Dunham’s narrative (Martin). Given the novel’s longstanding popularity, it may be surprising that critics of Mennonite literature have widely ignored the text, with Rudy Wiebe’s *Peace Shall Destroy Many* (1962) routinely identified as the “first” novel in the field. Much like the lack of critical commentary on the novel, such a claim is possible only because Mennonite Canadian literary studies have drawn on the ideal of Canadian multiculturalism to construct a critical genealogy primarily through the discourse of ethnicity, where it has been dominated by the authors of Russian Mennonite descent. In a hemispheric context, where the discourse of religion and the longer history of the Swiss Mennonites in North America return to the fore, the novel’s absence from Mennonite literary studies becomes recognizable as a reflection of the gaps of nation-based critical paradigms.

Mennonite literature helps to introduce not only the Canadian context (including prominent authors like Rudy Wiebe, Di Brandt, and Miriam Toews) into hemispheric literary studies in North America, but also a new configuration of cultural difference into the field, one that includes a contested set of religious and ethnic markers that have emerged through the nationalized “genealogies of difference” in North America (Siemerling).

**Vijay SHESHADRI (University of Mysore). Between the Tropical and the Temperate: South Asian discourse in Canada.**

Globalization has arrived with a bang ushering in an era of hi-tech information systems blurring the boundaries- geographical and psychological.

Immigration, the resultant sign of human propensity to explore and acquire material wealth and possession in a way can be viewed as a paradigmatic symbol of Derridean Deconstruction that ushers in Transnationalism. With this ghettoisation of culture occurs and culture appears as contrapuntal, resulting in what is Origi-nation? As, the arrival of an immigrant can only be legal and not cultural, a common endeavour is always a suspect. Hence, Canada’s proclamation of Multicultural policy comes under severe scrutiny. This then pushes the immigrant to confront a paramount question, where do I belong? Since the host country’s nation/al tongue superimposes the immigrant’s mother tongue, nostalgia is the key and to which an immigrant buries himself into. The immigrant also experiences a strong memory of the cuisine that he relished back in his country. A journey that began as an adventure with romanticism ensconced in it, ends up as a less adventurous one.

The paper attempts to present South Asian Writing as an expression of a psyche and space in which the shared colonial and postcolonial experience has created a polyphonic dialogue between diverse cultures. In the choice of the texts, differences are manifested in the approaches and position taken by writers from diverse cultural contexts. The works of Joy Kogowa, Arnold Itwaaru, Himani Banerjee, Arun Mukerjhee, Yasmin Ladha, Uma Parameshwaran, Rohinton Mistry, Michael Ondaatjee, M. G. Vassanji, would be taken as case studies.

The fore-grounded consciousness which is frequently homeward in the selected texts could lead to questions such as, can Can-Asian writers index themselves as Canadian born writers do? Is Can- Asian writing a way of re-vision and sub-version? Or is it an attempt to challenge the orthodox view of a "national" literature? Has Can-Asian writing made an impact on conceptions of nation-state vis-a-vis Quebec and the first world and so forth? These and other related issues will be taken up for examination in the paper.

**K.M. CHANDAR (University of Mysore). Straddling Boundaries: Migration and Immigration in Vassanji’s *The Magic of Saida.***

“...it is pertinent to note that the writer’s dislocation-his removal from the environment that formed his imagination-is not just wished away. it has to be contended with, and is worked out in his writings if he continues to write, becoming part of his imaginative consciousness” wrote the celebrated Canadian(?) writer Vassanji more than fifteen years ago. Indeed this question is confronted by most of the writers who have made Canada( or for that matter, Australia or New Zealand) their own. The process, Vassanji asserts, continues throughout the writer’s life because ‘he will never arrive’. The problem has been addressed by writers like Vassanji and Rohinton Mistry in two ways- wherein the writer writes about the world he has left behind and that world is viewed through the kaleidoscope of history. Needless to assert such a choice is always a cul-de-sac as the writer continues to circumambulate the world he has left behind without getting into the epicenter of that world-or that the world the writer has left behind shuts its doors on him, the second choice is one where the novelist creates a myth and this myth is created out of the archetypal myth of exile. Vassanji returns to this problem time and again , particularly evident in his recent address which is interestingly titled ‘Am I a Canadian Writer?’. Vassanji says “We are the historians and myth-makers; the witnesses. We are essentially exiles, yet our home is Canada, because home is the past and the present as well as the future”.

M.G. Vassanji’s recent novel, ‘*The Magic of Sada*’(2012) addresses this question of ‘Straddling boundaries’ and the problems of cultural identity that is entailed in migration. Kamal Punja, the protagonist of this novel, having lived in Canada as a successful doctor for more than three decades sets forth to Tanzania in search of a girl named Saida he has left behind. This becomes an archetypal journey which interrogates the cultural implications of the phenomenon of migration and immigration. as he crisscrosses the borders of Canada and Africa and enters a world of magic filled with mysticism, poetry, intrigue and witchcraft, ‘Saida’ becomes the invisible ‘third who always walks beside’ him (T.S.Eliot).

This paper attempts to trace the journey of Kamal Punja into his inner self where the past and the present coalesce. It also tries to examine some key issues such as inter-racial and inter-communal relationships that have a bearing on individual destiny.

**Panel 7B: Conversations about North American Borders**

**Moderator: David Stirrup**

This discussion will feature three acknowledged scholars in literature, media and communications, and cultural geography in conversation about their perspectives on North American borders, the prospects for research on the culture of these borders and borderlands, and the insights emerging about Hemispherism, Cultural Identity, Indigeneity, and other apsects of Border Culture.

**Claudia SADOWSKI-SMITH (Arizona State University)**

Claudia Sadowski-Smith is Associate Professor of English at Arizona State University. She is the author of Border Fictions: Globalization, Empire, and Writing at the Boundaries of the United States (University of Virginia Press, 2008), which explores cultural productions about the U.S. borders with Canada and Mexico in the context of inter-American studies and theories of globalization.

**Will STRAW (McGill University). Reverse Moral Economies: The U.S.-Canadian Border.**

My paper will look at the production within Canada of cultural artefacts (films, for the most part) made to cross the U.S. border. The exploitative character of so many of those commodities works against the conventional smugness of the (English-) Canadian cultural critic, for whom English-Canadian culture is conventionally marked by restraint and the predominance of a middle-brow resistance to lurid sensationalism. Border cultures bind cultures of uneven status and differential character, but the activity of border-crossing occasionally possesses its own logic, one which stamps the cultural commodity with the marks of deception and exaggeration.

**Victor KONRAD (Carleton University). Borders and Culture: Geographical Perspectives on the Canada-United States Borderlands**

In the 21st century, both culture and borders remain overdetermined concepts in human efforts to imagine and comprehend a world that is increasingly characterized by both flows and barriers. Culture is everywhere yet nowhere; culture is an idea ever more produced and re-produced by society. Borders are expanding prodigiously worldwide yet people in global interaction are increasingly straddling borders. Geographers have contributed substantially to our understanding of how borders work in globalization and also to how borders and cultures interact. In this conversation about North American borders, I explore the intersection of borders and culture in three inherently geographical contexts. The first is that culture inhabits the borderlands as well as the borderlines to display and express increasingly extended zones of transition beyond borders between states, regions and communities. The zones of transition have spatial characteristics and cultural signatures. Secondly, these borderlands landscapes convey the dialectic of cultural continuity and cultural discontinuity in a zone of interaction that is neither here nor there to confront the meaning of border. And finally, in these borderlands, identity is formed and re-formed among those who claim indigeneity and others who cannot. Here, in the borderlands, pressures toward homogeneity in cultural identity vie with more extensive forces of heterogeneity to diffuse identities. Borderlands culture conveys plural expressions of identity and singular imperatives of belonging.

***Keynote and lunch – 11.30am – 1pm - Claudia Sadowski-Smith - AU Great West Life Auditorium***

***1 - 2pm – Lunch and Conference closing remarks – AU Great West Life Auditorium***