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**Hemispheric Regionalism:  
Border Discourse and the Boundaries of American Studies**

**By**

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### Abstract

This thesis engages with and intervenes in a number of insurgent, emergent, and re-emergent, pedagogies and theoretical frameworks of increasing relevance to area studies and, more broadly, challenges the discipline of American Studies to expand its theoretical and textual bases. Here the challenges of transnationalism (as a concern which all area studies need to address) and hemisphericism (a concern more specifically related to American Studies) are the key motivating factors for the proposed reconfiguration of the discipline outlined in the thesis. These are pervasive and important strands of political, economic, social, cultural, and academic life, but which the discipline of American Studies has been slow to recognise and incorporate in any meaningful way. The problem here lies in the fact that for American Studies the nation remains an unquestioned and seemingly immovable priority: studies of the U.S. become as exceptionalist as the object of their study. This project proposes that this subservience to the centre (the nation-state) at the expense of the periphery (the nation's borders) can be redressed by returning to a much narrower sphere of experience: the region. Paradoxically, this will allow for an expansion of the purview of American Studies, enabling centrifugal readings of American (in its continental sense) culture to develop, rather than the centripetal analyses which have been the subject of much vexed discussion amongst scholars over recent years. By focusing on borders – regions which are always already transnational – this thesis aims to demonstrate that in shifting our focus only slightly beyond national boundaries, new critical techniques might be developed which can revitalise American Studies.

The study's introductory chapter contextualises the theoretical framework from which the entire thesis proceeds, and develops and articulates the broader challenge to the discipline of American Studies which motivates the research. U.S. regionalism is introduced and interrogated through short case studies of New Mexico (the region considered the capital of early twentieth-century regionalism) and The Federal Writers Project (the New Deal venture that sought to tap into the potential of regionalism). Herein, regionalism is demonstrated to be far from autonomous of nation and nationalism. Woven alongside these studies is an overview of the founding principles of American Studies, demonstrating how the concept of region always collapses into the broader concept of nation in both regionalism and American Studies itself. In counterpoint to these homogenising moves, the real-and-imagined cross-border North American territories of Cascadia and Aztlán are introduced and make way for an examination of the concept and practise of regionalism in both Canada and Mexico, revealing its manifestations in these territories to be much closer to the supposedly oppositional stance which U.S. regionalism originally suggests as its primary intention.

With this potential oppositional regionalism outlined, the thesis moves to answer the various calls for new critical vocabularies to articulate the heterogeneous cultural life of North America and finds such

a language in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Taking their concepts of the rhizome, nomadism and minor literature – as ideas that are designed with the task of challenging binary and hierarchical theorising specifically in mind – the thesis demonstrates that such concepts are immanent in a number of literary texts that emerge from and engage with North America’s borders. Works by Américo Paredes, Laurie Ricou and Guillermo Verdecchia are thus positioned as texts that simultaneously produce and enact narrative strategies that give voice to alternative identities that are not beholden to singular national identities. Having thus dislodged the nation-state as the predominant determiner of identity and ideology the thesis, via an in-depth discussion of nomadism, then seeks to draw an alternative critical cartography through which the Mexican and Canadian borders with the U.S. can enter into dialogue with one another in ways that disrupt the privileged subjectivity that U.S. ideology holds over representations of these sites. Tracing the shared histories of the trickster Coyote, and coyote the people smuggler, the thesis gestures towards ways in which critics can subvert (in the manner of Coyote) understandings of border regions, and smuggle new perspectives on region into view (in the manner of the coyote). Finally the thesis moves to answer its key hypothesis: whether canonical material can be opened up to new avenues of interpretation if it is considered from a borderlands position and, relatedly, whether crossing the borders of North America can allow more marginal material to speak more loudly within the field of American Studies. Studying the music of Bruce Springsteen and The Band, the thesis argues that, in so doing, a multitude of alternative understandings of nation and unconventional regional affiliations can be uncovered. This has much to offer, in particular, to recently re-emergent considerations of Indigenous sovereignty in North America and the thesis concludes by gesturing towards possible further avenues of research that place regional considerations above those of nations.

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## Introduction

### Revitalising Regionalism: New Critical Territories

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In an era of historical inquiry in which the categories of race, ethnicity, class, and gender have taken centre stage ... in the midst of the campaign to write a version of American history that reckons with inequality and injustice and pays attention to the full diversity of the population, region has been auditioning for the part of the most dismissible category of all. Pulses race and pound in debates over ethnic history. To many scholars, regional [studies are] ... where one goes for a nap.

- Patricia Nelson Limerick, 'Region and Reason', 1996<sup>1</sup>

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Region, regional, regionalism: these are staid terms likely to conjure up images of parochial, rural idylls and unlikely to quicken the pulse. And yet, such was the original dynamism and radical potentiality of the U.S. regionalist movement of the early twentieth century – which saw regions as fertile ideological soil from which to cultivate a heterogeneous portrait of the United States – that, in one of the key foundational texts of the discipline of American Studies, region appears as the cornerstone of the three inter-related tenets of this emergent field. '[R]egion, nation, and world', proposed Tremaine McDowell, would proffer a 'three-tiered model' upon which American Studies would be built.<sup>2</sup> Pragmatic in its aims, McDowell's simply titled *American Studies* 'offer[ed] practical recommendations for the establishment of interdisciplinary American Studies programmes', which, in the late 1940s, could be interpreted as 'an academic experiment whose aim [was] to provide a meeting ground for the various disciplines within the humanities ... dealing with American subjects but most often separated by academic cloisterings'.<sup>3</sup> Such integrative possibilities mirrored the more broadly political and international mood following the Second

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<sup>1</sup> Patricia Nelson Limerick, 'Region and Reason'. In, Edward L. Ayers, Patricia Nelson Limerick, Stephen Nissenbaum & Peter S. Onuf (eds), *All Over the Map: Rethinking American Regions* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 84.

<sup>2</sup> Tremaine McDowell, *American Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1948), 93; Andre Kaenel 'After the Cold War: Region, Nation and World in American Studies'. In, Theo D'Haen & Hans Bertens (eds), *'Writing' Nation and 'Writing' Region in America* (Amsterdam: Vu University Press, 1996), 73.

<sup>3</sup> Kaenel, 'After the Cold War', 74.



World War, which ushered in a period of ‘decolonisation, international cooperation, rebuilding, and reconciliation’.<sup>4</sup> Just as the United States would be at the vanguard of ‘the creation of world order’, the nascent experiment in studying every facet of that country’s society, economy, and culture would become a ‘repository of valuable [U.S.] cultural and political principles ... and an instrument or channel for their planetary projection’.<sup>5</sup> In such terms, McDowell makes plain the ideological impetus involved in the inception of American Studies: alongside its drive for political, military and economic hegemony, the new discipline would complement such aims through the study of U.S. history and culture that came complete with its own – both explicit and implicit – ideological components.

As André Kaenel observes, even as American Studies founds itself upon these building blocks of region, nation, and world, the very purpose of this structure is undermined from the outset by the ‘collaps[e] [of] the regional and the international onto the national, the region thus becom[ing] a sub-category ... of the nation and the nation itself [becoming] a stepladder for international projection’.<sup>6</sup> This simultaneous opening outwards and closing inwards of both the study of the nation of the United States of America and the nation itself is undoubtedly paradoxical. Yet it also hints, quite clearly, at the national mood engendered in the wake of the early Cold War which is so perfectly captured in the work of another of the founding fathers of American Studies, R. W. B. Lewis, in his influential *The American Adam*: ‘Ours is an age of containment; we huddle together and shore up our defenses’.<sup>7</sup> Even as the threats against which these ‘defenses’ were erected have in some cases disappeared, in others dissolved, or, more widely, become increasingly diffuse and permeable, the flawed model on which American Studies was founded still persists: the nation ‘remain[s] the unquestioned priority’.<sup>8</sup> How, then, to restructure this model, pull down its defences and re-animate the ‘animating principle’ of the discipline in an age in which ‘the

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<sup>4</sup> Cees D. Eysberg, ‘Regionalism in North America’. In, D’Haen & Bertens (eds), *‘Writing’ Nation and ‘Writing’ Region in America*, 22.

<sup>5</sup> McDowell, *American Studies*, 93.

<sup>6</sup> Kaenel, *After the Cold War*, 76.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Warrington Baldwin Lewis, *The American Adam* (University of Chicago Press: London, 1955), 198.

<sup>8</sup> Kaenel, *After the Cold War*, 73.

“national culture” or “civilization” of the United States, appears increasingly porous and moot’?<sup>9</sup> This study proposes that we address that paradox through another apparent paradox: by broadening our disciplinary field of view to take in the entirety of North America, to approach its study in continental, hemispheric, and transnational ways, but to do so by returning to that seemingly much narrower sphere of experience: the region and, specifically, the border regions of North America.

The failure of regionalism as a project that announced the regional as a rehabilitative site for the national psyche coincided with the birth of American Studies as a field and was complicit in its own demise.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, were we to re-articulate regionalism in response to the aforementioned emergent strands of hemispheric and transnational scholarship *on* and *in* American Studies, regionalism’s founding principles offer opportunities to decentralise a field that, in attempting to project outwards from itself, has often succeeded in ever more vigorously defending its physical and psychological territories. To rouse regionalism from its slumber first requires an exploration of how it initially emerged as a disparate set of beliefs and goals, how it attempted to cohere under a banner of progress and authenticity, and ultimately how its guiding principles of local particularities against a universal singularity ended up being subsumed by the centre against which it was opposed. Furthermore, this will demonstrate how a similar process has taken place within our own field, where the radical potential for centrifugal readings of North American culture have all too often been superseded by the centripetal doctrine that ushered American Studies into the academy some sixty-five years ago: an almost exclusive focus upon the history and culture of the U.S.

Despite regions remaining a vibrant focal point for critical endeavour in a number of subareas of American Studies, regionalism fell into decline with the advent of the Cold War in the late 1940s. Outwardly, this may seem paradoxical: a movement that aimed to help Americans orient themselves within an increasingly industrialised and globally interconnected world would surely have been well

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 79.

<sup>10</sup> The palliative properties of regionalism at the height of the regionalist movement in the 1930s and 40s could be seen as attempting to soothe the national psyche in the wake of a number of major events in U.S. culture and history: the Civil War and Southern reconstruction, Turner’s ‘closing of the frontier’ and the Great Depression, following which, regionalism was taken up as a crucial ideological tool by the national government.

placed to assuage the concerns arising from the apocalyptic nadir of global industrialisation. Yet we should not be surprised at this as regionalism would ultimately prove to be an ideologically insular tool of the nation-state, a homogenising cultural barrier to complement geographical and territorial boundaries. What *is* paradoxical is that, in the near quarter-century since the Cold War began to thaw with the bringing down of that material manifestation of ideological barriers – the Berlin Wall – Americanists have not yet fully adjusted to the ‘world order’ as it exists now, a radically different vision to that plotted by Tremain McDowell in 1948. As this introduction will demonstrate, there is widespread academic cognizance of these changes and the challenges to disciplinary boundaries that they embody. Working in response to Patricia Nelson Limerick’s observations in this chapter’s epigraph, Krista Comer points to the possible renewed importance of the regional in American Studies, which this study develops:

[I]f we abandon the exceptionalist premises so crucial to the founding of American Studies ... would scholars not be obliged to figure regions and regionalism in far more comparative and multilingual ways than we are used to doing? ... Importantly, these new renderings of the regional show radical internationalist underpinnings not because the post-1989 moment is more global than previous ones, but because the post-1989 moment has forced a recasting of “the American experience” as more transcultural, multiply national, and internationally imbricated than Americanist critics, including canon-busters, had managed to impress upon historical memory.<sup>11</sup>

Despite various calls to embrace hemispheric and transnational approaches to American Studies in recent years, such attempts invariably founder on the borders of the nation-state and constitute an ‘inevitable bounce back’ in Comer’s eye. How, then, to remap studies of America (and I refer here, crucially, to America in its continental sense)? For Comer, ‘because of its curious liminality’, regionalism may be well suited to ‘reckon with and displace the centrality of the nation-state ... in interesting and productive ways’.<sup>12</sup> Where better to employ this ‘liminality’, then, than on the threshold of the nation-state, where

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<sup>11</sup> Krista Comer, ‘Taking Feminism and Regionalism toward the Third Wave’. In, Charles L. Crow (ed) *A Companion to the Regional Literatures of America* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 116-117.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 112-113.

it might ‘bounce’ in multiple directions? Roberto Dainatto would partially agree with this suggestion when he states that he ‘too, believe[s] that regionalism is a rhetorical figure of difference and opposition. Yet, I think that this figure is only at a superficial level pointing to the “margin”’.<sup>13</sup> ‘Liminal’ and ‘marginal’, thresholds, entrances, and exits: what if the *borders* of the nation-state provided a site of analysis for broadening the purview of the discipline; for providing the means by which a centrifugal analysis might be enacted; and for rediscovering the original promise of regionalism?

This introduction (re)visits some of the monolithic regions of the United States: namely, the Southwest as regionalism’s ‘capital’, to examine the negation and neutralisation of history inherent in regionalist productions; and the West, to scrutinise some of the ways in which this region and its study have been at the forefront of attempts to reconfigure regionalism and from which this study takes several of its cues. It will also take in the entire United States in a brief exploration of the reductive codification of regionalism as a broadly national project in the form of the New Deal’s Federal Writers Project: a process that provides early echoes of the unregenerate discipline that would continue much of the cultural work of the New Deal on a global scale. These instances all highlight both the promise and problematic of regionalism.

### **A Remedy Riddled With Maladies: Regionalism in the Early Twentieth Century**

The fundamental rubric of regionalism in its conservative and populist iteration – that regions should foster distinctive local cultures in opposition to the homogenising tendencies of an emergent capitalist nation – is, as Robert Dorman’s account of the movement makes clear, prone to paradox at every turn, not least in its failure to reconcile the tension it takes as its starting point. The most wide-ranging historiographical account of the regionalist movement’s heyday is Dorman’s *Revolt of the Provinces* (1993). Despite the revolutionary potential signalled in its title (notwithstanding the fact that it begins at the height of the U.S. War of Independence), it is characterised by a conservatism that mirrors the ideological

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<sup>13</sup> Roberto M. Dainatto, *Place in Literature: Regions, Cultures, Communities* (London: Cornell University Press, 2000), 9.

stagnation suffered by his subject matter. Dorman begins by imagining ‘a transhistorical discourse’ between two New Yorkers – J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur and Lewis Mumford – both of whom Dorman characterises as exponents of the idea of regionalism and enthusiastic champions of its attempts ‘to create a cultural order appropriate to America, with its centrifugal diversity, its continental immensity, a culture to fill the void of wilderness and modernity’.<sup>14</sup> Despite this conservatism and inertia of both subject matter and critique, Dorman’s densely woven introduction provides two important signposts for *this study*’s intervention in the analysis of regions and regionalism and their translation into paradigms for hemispheric study. First is Dorman’s use of the appropriating misnomer that designates ‘America’ as a singular national entity, thereby eliding the other nations of the continent. Second, the far more progressive idea of dialogue across temporal boundaries that the exchange between de Crèvecoeur and Mumford that Dorman constructs comes to facilitate. The former must be addressed whilst the latter offers promising opportunities for rethinking regions and regionalism. Characterised by Bell Chevigny and Gari Laguardia as a ‘rhetorical malpractice’, the location of the centre of what is broadly known as American Studies within the U.S. creates and perpetuates the kind of cultural order that Dorman points to as a fundamental axiom of regionalism, re-installing a hierarchical power structure against which the provincial outposts occupied by the likes of Crèvecoeur had vehemently fought.<sup>15</sup>

Deploying Crèvecoeur as an important antecedent for twentieth-century attempts to revive ‘local folkways and local environments’, whilst allowing the reader to discern temporal elements in what is often presented as a purely spatial project, serves only to emphasise the anti-modern – some might say *ahistorical* – response to the ‘nationalizing, homogenizing, urban-industrial complex’ that the interwar United States represented.<sup>16</sup> ‘[A]s Crèvecoeur learns to his sadness during the preview provided by the revolution,’ Dorman writes, ‘regional cultures would prove, over the course of subsequent history, to

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<sup>14</sup> Robert L. Dorman, *Revolt of the Provinces: The Regionalist Movement in America, 1920-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 1, 9.

<sup>15</sup> Bell Chevigny & Gari Laguardia, *Reinventing the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), viii.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, xii.

be fragile and unstable as repositories of values; the “dispersion” of culture would continue’.<sup>17</sup> And yet, with the aforementioned continual prefiguring and privileging of the myth of the frontier, the dispersal of a peculiarly white, masculine and exceptionalist culture and its values, which the nebulous notion of the frontier comes to stand for, is one that the interwar regionalists actively seek to sustain. In Dorman’s account of their supposed ‘ethic of pluralism’, these twentieth-century intellectuals, artists, and sociologists ‘interlace their regional portraits with powerful American myths, myths of exceptionalism, of the frontier, of the special virtue of people living close to the land’.<sup>18</sup> Such romanticist visions of broader *national* ideologies in the works of regionalism make explicit the implicit conservatism of the regionalist movement and its refusal to engage fully with the emergence of modernism – despite claims to be a response to this phenomenon – seeking, rather, a retreat from a modern world of which the U.S. was at the vanguard. Writing just a handful of years after Dorman, Patricia Nelson Limerick suggests that the brief interwar flourishing of regionalist thought was perfectly timed, as ‘in times of disorienting change ... regions stabilised the pulse, slowed down the heartbeat, and made life seem manageable again’.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, as Dorman concedes, the champions of regionalism at this time ‘conceptualize drastic social change as *incursions from outside their regions* ... allow[ing] the regionalist to define and reassert the values of the regional ... in opposition to an “alien” presence’.<sup>20</sup> Hence, despite laying claim to progressivism and pluralism as essential tenets of their creed, regionalism remained an ideology bound by exceptionalist and reductive reason that was inextricably wedded to binary notions of an inside and an outside.

Whilst it may be rhetorically commonplace to short-hand the U.S. as America, in such acts interpretative possibilities are denuded and interconnections between the cultures and histories of the nations of North America are overlooked or conveniently ignored to escape the complexities that doing so might introduce into discourse. Dorman’s monograph is consistently guilty of designating the U.S. as

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>19</sup> Limerick, ‘Reason’, 83.

<sup>20</sup> Dorman, *Revolt*, 17 (emphasis mine).

‘America’, shutting down the possibility of more expansive and pertinent critique. Despite his occasional focus on the region of the U.S. Southwest, for example, the insistence upon the equation of the U.S. as America elides and subsequently erases the importance of Mexico as a formative and important influence upon that region. This is all the more curious given that he claims a nominally pluralist configuration of culture is the key victory of the regionalist movement. No doubt this region of Dorman’s ‘America’ played a significant role in the development and definition of regionalism as a mode of thought and rationale for cultural production, but the author’s continual prefiguring of the ‘frontier’ as a physical and psychical remnant of the United States’ past which informs its present is mirrored in his reluctance to cross the arbitrary borders of the regions that regionalism held in such high-esteem. This retrograde refusal to challenge the spatial boundaries of regions and regionalism is highlighted further through Dorman’s willingness to play with temporal boundaries. In developing a dialogical narrative between the likes of Crèvecoeur and Mumford – and others throughout his account – Dorman’s survey of the development, entrenchment and final interment of regionalism attains a dynamism absent from his overall characterisation of his subject matter as ‘integrally conservative in orientation’.<sup>21</sup> Such paradoxes are noticeable throughout *Revolt of the Provinces* with its structural complexity in constant tension with the static – if not inert – subject matter of its focus.

Dorman’s dialogical paradigm is ripe with potential but the inherent rigidity of the brand of regionalism he addresses confounds any attempts to reimagine the subject matter in any radical ways. This is plainly further hindered by his choice of protagonists: Mumford and Crèvecoeur represent a distinctive strand of conservative thought. In other hands and using other voices, such transhistorical conversations have developed alternative narratives of regions and nations. María Cotera, for example, in *Native Speakers* takes her theoretical lead from a short story by Tejana folklorist Jovita González. In González’s ‘Shades of the Tenth Muse’, poets Anne Bradstreet and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz engage in conversation in the author’s own study. Both women were fêted as ‘the tenth muse’ of the Americas – Bradstreet in England,

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<sup>21</sup> Dorman, *Revolt*, 7.

de la Cruz in Spain – and, as Cotera suggests, González’s story places them ‘in uneasy and frequently conflictual relation, debating questions of race, nation, and history, while acknowledging key points of connection, in particular their social location ... within colonial cultures dominated by patriarchy’.<sup>22</sup> González’s dialogical conceit informs Cotera’s approach to analysing the work of the Tejana folklorist herself and that of Zora Neale Hurston and Ella Deloria, bringing their ‘distinct historical conditions and regional locations’ into discussion with one another.<sup>23</sup> Cotera readily admits that – just as is the case with Gonzalez’s short story – her three figures are not easily or complementarily aligned, but the possible contradictions that may arise within such a dialogical framework productively help to gesture towards alternative understandings ‘of history, identity, and, indeed, dialogue itself’.<sup>24</sup> The provisionality of the outcomes of Cotera’s imagined exchanges further demonstrate the ideological sterility of Dorman’s similarly oriented framework wherein Crèvecoeur and Mumford figure as a complementary pair of speakers to enable a singular idea to sustain. Furthermore, given the era in which Cotera’s triumvirate were working, it highlights the alternative regionalisms operating alongside the version that would come to dominate the cultural landscape of the U.S. It also highlights a significant blind spot in the historiography of regionalism and the regionalist movement, given that Deloria, Hurston and González were all actively involved in ethnographic and anthropological endeavours during the 1920s and ‘30s. The resurrection of such overlooked, forgotten or marginalised voices has been a vital weapon in the current rediscovery and rearticulation of regionalism. Much of that work has been undertaken in studies of the U.S. West, and Michael Steiner’s recent collection *Regionalists on the Left: Radical Voices from the American West* in its very title makes clear the revolutionary potential of taking up region and regionalism to counter longstanding discursively conservative constructions of specific territories; it, too, pursues a dialogical paradigm in José Limón’s contribution, pairing the outwardly incompatible duo of J. Frank Dobie and

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<sup>22</sup> María Cotera, *Native Speakers: Ella Deloria, Zora Neale Hurston, Jovita González, and the Poetics of Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 2.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.



Américo Paredes to contemplate what a transnational Texas regionalism might look like.<sup>25</sup> The breadth of material and plethora of speakers taken up by scholars in *Regionalists on the Left* reveals the sheer quantity of alternative regionalisms available for excavation and how they can be put to use not simply as oppositional understandings but also as artefacts that enable and encourage – in some cases, even demand – approaching and thinking regions and their extant regionalisms differently. Cotera clearly states the purpose of her own excavations and the unconventional framework necessary to accommodate what it brings to light:

[T]he intellectual contributions of ... Deloria, Hurston, and González have been “disappeared” from our national imaginary because the “border texts” produced in their travels in and between different sites of struggle challenge the disciplinary, aesthetic, and ideological norms of both dominant and counterhegemonic canons. Because their texts straddle multiple discursive domains and speak simultaneously to a variety of audiences and experiences, they do not fit comfortably within any one disciplinary, formal, or even ideological space. Their ethnographic novels offer particularly striking examples of the ways in which border texts surpass the disciplinary and ideological frameworks that constitute canons.<sup>26</sup>

As Cotera recognises, the fundamental ‘straddling’ that border texts engage in ensures that they cannot be easily contained, and their lack of formalised space would have made them anathema to mainstream regionalists of the early and mid-twentieth century. In bringing together ethnographers of the African American (Hurston), Mexican American (Gonzalez) and Native American (Deloria) experiences, Cotera’s work not only resurrects a polyphonic North America, but it also, through her choice of subjects, gestures toward another often unspoken problematic of regionalism: issues of alternative cultural and historical traditions and the matter of Indigeneity.

In beginning to address these factors it is worth returning to Dorman’s portrait of regionalism since it unveils another paradox: regionalists, he claims, viewed their cause as being ‘on behalf of the

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<sup>25</sup> José Limón, ‘Texas, the Transnational, and Regionalism: J. Frank Dobie and Américo Paredes’ In, Michael C. Steiner (ed) *Regionalists on the Left: Radical Voices from the American West* (Norman, OK.: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

survivals of older-stock and indigenous folk-rural cultures'.<sup>27</sup> Before we infer any progressive plurality from this reference to the 'indigenous' in regionalism's *raison d'être*, it should be noted that shortly after making this declaration, Dorman proposes that 'the emergence of distinct regional cultures' is intimately linked to 'the transformation of the immigrant into the indigenous'.<sup>28</sup> So, the indigenous element of regionalism's credo refers not to the reinstatement of the Native American into regional representations but to a recidivist tendency notable throughout regionalism's brief history in its desire to uncover 'what they [regionalists] perceived to be the last remnants of the older America in their modern world'.<sup>29</sup> Nowhere is this more apparent than in the constant privileging of the U.S. Southwest as a vision of an authentic 'American' region throughout *Revolt of the Provinces*. Suggesting that New Mexico has 'as good a claim as any to the oxymoronic title of regionalist capital', Dorman's focus upon the art colonies of Santa Fe and Taos demonstrates the convenient oversights and fictions of regionalism and motions towards some of the areas for intervention required to make region genuinely pluralist, ethical and hemispheric.<sup>30</sup>

Visited and periodically populated by canonical giants of early-twentieth-century art and literature, both Santa Fe and Taos acted as a 'nexus' or 'touchstone' for the regionalist movement at its height. These settlements, however, can also be seen as the sites of contradiction for the utopian assertions of regionalism and Dorman's account of them. The likes of D.H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley, Willa Cather, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Ansel Adams were all visitors to New Mexico, all popularisers of '[t]he stark beauty of [its] mesas and mountains'<sup>31</sup>; but were they not also, always, *outsiders*? Were such excursions not always, also, *incursions* from an outside, the resultant cultural constructions of the region purveyed by people who had only fleeting contact with the materiality of its territory? And, what of the *truly* Indigenous in this culturally diverse area of the U.S.? Only once is the problematically framed 'mysterious primitivism of the Pueblo tribes' mentioned, and then only in relation to its attractiveness

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<sup>27</sup> Dorman, *Revolt*, xii.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, xii.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

for ‘high-cultural luminaries’, its possible role within the regionalist reconstruction of ‘America’ at once denuded and dismissed.<sup>32</sup> Herein, regionalism’s maladies reach their apotheosis with the total failure, it would seem, to envisage any progressive social or cultural goal for their short-lived project. In passing – and without passing judgment – Dorman notes that ‘artists such as Cather ... largely avoided the political dimension of the regional settings their art so evocatively depicted’.<sup>33</sup> In giving renewed prominence to such ‘political dimensions’ – particularly as they manifest in geopolitical borders – regions and regionalism immediately become more complex and consistent with the material and historical conditions from which they emerge, not least when those politics encompass issues of Indigeneity.

Even when we consider the well-documented and widespread Anglo patronage of Indigenous art and artists which took place in New Mexico during this period of time – a cultural mixing perhaps unparalleled in this era – in failing to examine more deeply the cultures and histories that had given birth to the vernacular aesthetic that artists and their patrons were championing, another, arguably more oblique but no less relevant, element of regionalism’s subservience to the broader nation was still in operation. As Comer notes in her feminist remapping of regionalism, there are ‘certain habitual narratives about the region and nation’ within American Studies.<sup>34</sup> Chief amongst these, she suggests, is the ‘claim that the Civil War is *the* central fact of nineteenth-century nation-building efforts’.<sup>35</sup> In Comer’s terms, ‘the defeat of Mexico in 1848 and the annexation of its northern lands added over a third to the territorial mass of the evolving nation’.<sup>36</sup> Hence, even as regionalists extolled the virtues of Indigenous cultural artefacts as emblematic of a distinctly Southwestern consciousness, attempts to tie it to a specific territory with little regard for the impact of what lay beyond the border redrawn in 1848 implicitly legitimises not only the boundaries of the nation but also the normative narrative of the nation. Attempts to create a regional, spatial unconscious in this way invariably sanction a broader, national historical consciousness.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>34</sup> Comer, ‘Taking Feminism’, 113.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

Dainatto crystallises this ever-present dilemma for regionalism when arguing that ‘to claim ... culture springs from a place means [is], after all, to naturalize a process of historical formation, and along with history to negate the historical forces, struggles and tensions that made a culture what it is’.<sup>37</sup> The brand of Anglo regionalism fostered in New Mexico, for all of its good intentions, seems particularly guilty of a slavish – unconscious or otherwise – subordination to broader ideological components of the nation, a conservative brand of regionalism that ‘begins by celebrating difference only to erase it in service of creating or manufacturing a sense of indigenous belonging to the pre-existing architecture of a national narrative’.<sup>38</sup> Chris Wilson, in *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition*, remarks that ‘[a] city that buries its utility lines the better to sustain a historical fantasy, such as Santa Fe, is utterly dependent on tourists, who owe their leisure to the prosperity of industrialization’, suggesting that such habits persist today, even now manifest in the physical architecture of the built environment.<sup>39</sup>

The rapidity of the industrialising process and the speed at which corporate capitalism cemented its place as the dominant economic mode in the U.S. precipitated the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and marked the onset of the Great Depression. Just as Löthar Hönnighausen traces the origins of regionalism back to Europe at the time of the Industrial Revolution – wherein the population suffered the ‘loss of an assured sense of space’ – so too a similar groundswell of interest in the promise of regionalism would occur in the aftermath of this catastrophic economic downturn.<sup>40</sup> Periods of abrupt transition had already provided regionalism with fecund territory in which to grow: the shift from a rural to urban society with the inception of industrialisation; and the reconstruction, in Turner’s ‘Frontier Thesis’, of the U.S. frontier from one of wilderness to one of civilisation. Paying little heed to the oxymoronic fact that a ‘fixation on the survival of authentic cultural fragments diverts attention from the very modern

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<sup>37</sup> Dainatto, *Place*, 2.

<sup>38</sup> Lauren Coats and Nihad M. Firooq, ‘Regionalism in the Era of the New Deal’. In, Charles L. Crow (ed), *A Companion to the Regional Literatures of America* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 90.

<sup>39</sup> Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 7.

<sup>40</sup> Löthar Hönnighausen, ‘The Old and the New Regionalism’, In, D’Haen & Bertens (eds), *‘Writing’ Nation and ‘Writing’ Region in America*, 3.

dislocations that stimulated the desire for stability in the first place', regionalism's mitigating properties would rise once more.<sup>41</sup> As individuals, communities, indeed, the entire nation, found themselves in the grip of economic crisis, 'regionalist discourse seemingly would rescue the subject's ability to find and claim some "real place", some permanent and trustworthy identity'.<sup>42</sup> A year prior to his landslide victory over Herbert Hoover in the 37<sup>th</sup> U.S. presidential election, Franklin Delano Roosevelt addressed the University of Virginia Round-Table Conference on Regionalism in 1931, and would come to see the cultural work of regionalism as complementary to his later legislative attempts to address the widespread economic, social and cultural problems that the Wall Street Crash had precipitated.

### **In Service of the Centre: Regionalism and the New Deal**

Where regionalism had once been the preserve of artists and intellectuals secreted away in their preferred regional settings, regionalism found itself thrust to national prominence with the arrival of President Roosevelt's New Deal. Regionalism's 'effort[s] to locate the national psyche ... [in] the hope of ultimately reviving, and in some sense creating, an American folk culture' were ideally suited to alleviate the fraught collective mood in the wake of the latest crisis of national self-confidence.<sup>43</sup> I have already explored how such 'created' cultures, to some extent, generally invalidate regionalism's supposed commitment to an ultimately illusory local authenticity, but it bears further scrutiny here, since Roosevelt's co-option of regionalism for the purposes of national healing through centralised policy – despite the fact that 'the federal government's involvement with regionalism was never formalized or wholesale' – represents the clearest moment at which the regional was, it could be argued, formally codified as the national.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, in the Federal Writers Project – the closest thing to a formal link between regionalism and the New Deal – regionalist productions were filtered through the bureaucratic machinery of Washington.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Wilson, *Myth*, 7.

<sup>42</sup> Krista Comer, *Landscapes of the New West: Gender and Geography in Contemporary Women's Writing* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 3.

<sup>43</sup> Coats and Firooq, 'New Deal', 76.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 76.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*.

Created in 1935, the Federal Writers Project (FWP) was an arm of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Aimed at ‘provid[ing] employment for historians, teachers, writers, librarians, and other white-collar workers,’ its primary output was the *American Guide Series*.<sup>46</sup> With a guidebook dedicated to each of the then-48 states of the Union, the Guide was an impressive undertaking and provided employment to more than 6,000 writers, amongst them such nationally acclaimed figures as John Steinbeck, Ralph Ellison, Saul Bellow, Studs Terkel, and John Cheever.<sup>47</sup> The project’s director, Henry Alsberg, had lofty plans for the endeavour: ‘He wanted the WPA writers to document aspects of America that were fading ... his plan highlighted regionalism, the concept that America’s unique cultures grew out of its varied landscapes and its natural and man-made vistas’.<sup>48</sup> This would seem to address the regionalist aim ‘to convey the heterogeneity of American people through the documentation and preservation of traditions, customs, and languages that made each landscape “uniquely” American’.<sup>49</sup> Such ambitions grow from the regionalist root: each guide devoted to a particular state and covering its history, geography, and folklore, in many cases supplemented by oral testimonies and slave narratives, and their employment of writers indelibly linked in public consciousness to specific regions.

The *American Guide Series* has, rightfully, come in for criticism in the decades since Lewis Mumford declared them ‘the finest contribution to patriotism in our generation’, and even those critics who champion their achievements now concede that ‘quite a few of the guides are rife with stereotypes’.<sup>50</sup> Recent work by Christine Bold and Andrew Gross dissects these regionalist productions in terms that both highlight the panoply of fetishised stereotypes that they reproduce and, significantly, the importance of the trope of travel to the medium and message of the *Guides*. Gross suggests that the Guides ‘mobilized the idioms and strategies of corporate advertising to avert a crisis created by corporate capitalism itself’,

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<sup>46</sup> Library of Congress, *New Deal Programs: Federal Writers Project* [<http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/newdeal/fwp.html>]

<sup>47</sup> *The American Guide Series* [<http://www.senate.gov/reference/resources/pdf/WPAStateGuides.pdf>]

<sup>48</sup> David A. Taylor, *Soul of a People: The WPA Writers Project Uncovers Depression America* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 14.

<sup>49</sup> Coats & Firooq, ‘New Deal’, 86.

<sup>50</sup> Lewis Mumford, qtd: Jerrold Hirsch, *Portrait of America: A Cultural History of the Federal Writers’ Project* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 39; Taylor, *Soul of a People*, 20.

thus modelling themselves on the embryonic genre of automobile advertising that ‘combin[ed] symbolic and spatial registers into a single economic imperative: *drive*’.<sup>51</sup> Such observations reveal one of the prime motivations behind the *American Guide Series*: not only were they designed to provide gainful employment to those involved with the FWP, but they also served the practical purpose of turning affluent citizens away from Europe as a tourist destination by redirecting those economic resources back into the U.S. Bold’s book-length critique of the *Guides* locates their purpose in similar ways, as tourism-promoting material. In the orderly, linear travel itineraries that form a portion of each *Guide*, the seemingly benign form of the tourist guidebook was able to reverse the perception of movement in the Great Depression, transforming a disorderly mass migration into ‘orderly, purposeful movement along the main arteries and back roads of America’.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, the tours in the *Guides* performed another ordering function: in their taking in of select landscapes, monuments and landmarks, they attempted to interpellate U.S. citizens into a particular and partial national history that forged numerous cacophonous social and cultural registers into a harmonious national whole.

This mass interpolation, however, did not consider one particularly disenfranchised group: African Americans were well represented in the offices of the FWP and on the pages of their *Guide Series*; Native Americans were not. Given that the Indigenous population was specifically targeted by many New Deal policies and were the subject of something of a rapprochement with The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, their relative absence as a constituent part of the U.S. population in the *Guides* is curious. Through the FWP editors’ insistence upon the ‘employ[ment] [of] a passive voice in the essay[s] that . . . contributed to the sense that communities no longer existed as they once had’, when Native Americans do appear they do so as ahistorical artefacts or contemporary curiosities.<sup>53</sup> Mindy J. Morgan’s archival research also reveals another reason for the lack of Indigenous voices in the *Guides*. Focusing upon Gros Ventre and

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<sup>51</sup> Andrew S. Gross, ‘The American Guide Series: Patriotism as Brand-Name Identification’, *Arizona Quarterly* 62.1 (2006), 88, 87.

<sup>52</sup> Christine Bold, *The WPA Guides: Mapping America* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1999), 11.

<sup>53</sup> Mindy J. Morgan, ‘Constructions and Contestations of the Authoritative Voice: Native American Communities and the Federal Writers’ Project, 1935-41’ *American Indian Quarterly* 29.1&2 (2005), 61.

Assiniboine fieldworkers employed by the FWP's Montana regional office, Morgan excavates material that suggests that even where there might have existed a desire to incorporate Indigenous subjects into the Guides, the completely different epistemological standpoint that informed Native writers' output was at odds with that of their editors and, therefore, not so readily incorporated into their orderly, interpolative project. There is clear dissonance between the FWP's preferred 'objective', social-scientific approach and the Native view 'that locates knowledge in specific individuals'.<sup>54</sup> As such, the specificity of Indigenous writing in this regard did not comfortably tessellate with the overarching ideological goals of the broader project with its conjuring of a shared and homogenous national identity from its distinctive regions.

This examination of the FWP and its *American Guide Series* – as the most readily apparent and widespread regionalist productions of the movement's cultural and political zenith – demonstrates both the inadequacy of existing forms to recount, and account for, the diverse histories and geographies of North America, and the erosion and elision of alternative epistemologies that offer abundant opportunity to reconfigure studies of North American culture in its varied manifestations. Just as 'nation' would come to supersede 'region' as the principal object of Americanist study, the illusion of national stability ultimately realised by regionalism – at least as it was in the employ of the national – allowed that *e pluribus unum* would remain the perfect outward projection of the United States. 'It is a fiction that there is no victor at all,' Dainatto suggests, 'that a plurality of spaces coexist in space, and that writing *of* places is the writing *from* a place of freedom': nonetheless, this notion of 'freedom' would form the cornerstone of American Studies, a fundamental motivation for the study of the nation as a whole at the expense of its varied regions.<sup>55</sup> Despite the many reservations expressed vis-à-vis regionalism's suitability as a mode of study given its propensity for nostalgia and ideological conservatism, I maintain that its original promise as an approach to and inspiration for cultural productions that emphasise locality and difference can

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 72.

<sup>55</sup> Dainatto, *Place*, 2.



advance the concerns of that much larger sphere of experience: the hemisphere. And, equally paradoxically, those locations where the hemisphere is most clearly geopolitically delineated – North America’s border regions – are where the connectivities of hemispheric study can most usefully flourish.

### **North American Hemispheric Regionalism: A New America(s) Studies**

Just as Limerick’s remarks in this chapter’s epigraph – contemporaneous to Dorman’s – point to the stultifying effects and legacies of the regionalist project in a time of rapid social, cultural, economic, political, and demographic change, so too Comer draws similar conclusions. ‘In the onslaught of the 1960s’, she suggests, referring, perhaps, to the ever-greater rapidity of change within the U.S. at that time, ‘regionalism of the 1920s-40s variety, like the idea of the national mind, is rendered intellectually obsolete, considered inevitably productive of conservative literary nationalisms’.<sup>56</sup> This claim for the possible intellectual obsolescence of regionalism contradicts both Dorman’s survey of the movement *and* the remarkable persistence and survival of regionalist traits and tropes in cultural discourse in the decades since, and it is Comer’s observation that points to a resolution for these opposing outcomes. Alongside the dichotomous and irreconcilable paradoxes outlined thus far – the absurd claim made for ‘immigrant’ equating to ‘indigenous’ and the incongruity of outsiders invading and subsequently representing an inside whose borders regionalism sought to patrol and claim for its own population – Comer’s crystallising suggestion that ‘regionalism and nationalism would seem to be mutually exclusive discourses, [but] ... are in fact, mutually sustaining’ is the most important.<sup>57</sup>

John Muthyala challenges scholars to ‘re-world’ America in a field of American Studies that continues to incorporate both the regionalist tendencies – and characters – of Dorman’s view of regionalism, and Comer’s view of its intimate relationship with nationalism, and asks: ‘By what historical fiat, then, did the term “America” come to refer only to a certain region in North America, its history originating in New England, and the term “American” to refer solely to the English settlers in the

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<sup>56</sup> Comer, *Landscapes*, 1-5.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

seventeenth century and, later, to the people of the United States?’<sup>58</sup> Muthyala locates an answer to this question in the United States’ slavish reliance upon ‘Eurocentric thought’ which has ‘pervaded the American historical and cultural imagination’.<sup>59</sup> This reliance upon centrism for the goals of the original regionalist movement results in the playing out of longstanding and normative national ideologies and consequently affects a view of region that is simultaneously narrow and broad in its focus. Such contradictory representations must be unpicked and reconstructed since the ideologies within them perpetuate not cultural differentiation as the regionalists had hoped, but rather the story of ‘America’ in a form that, as Sacvan Bercovitch usefully puts it, ‘precludes dialogue ... imply[ing] a programmatic narrow-mindedness; a closed and exclusive system of ideas, usually developed in opposition to alternative explanations, and militantly committed to partiality, in the double sense of the term, as bias ... and as fragmentation’.<sup>60</sup> Certainly, regionalist modes of thought enclose spaces, endow them with privileged and uncontested meaning and patrol the borders of such endeavours. Similarly, there can be little doubt that a movement that sought, and failed, to extricate the regional from the national encapsulates Bercovitch’s ‘double sense partiality’: committed to a form of fragmentation to protect the local whilst always remaining biased towards the national, an imbalance that is never fully reconciled. And yet, in recent years, there has been something of reconciliation with regionalism in broader academic discourse in area studies. Even as scholars dismiss it as an outmoded school of thought unsuited to twenty-first century scholarship that must consider ideological and representational flows that go beyond the local and into the global sphere, many – including Comer and Limerick – have begun to rehabilitate regionalism. The ‘narrow-mindedness’ that Bercovitch identifies and the fractured ‘national mind’ to which Comer refers present problems inherent in regionalism which can be opened up and excavated, signposting directions for comprehending regions anew. As Limerick suggests, the concept of ‘region permit[s] one to adjust and train one’s vision in a way that uncover[s] connections, ties, and relations’, and, once these

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<sup>58</sup> John Muthyala, ‘Reworlding America: The Globalization of American Studies’ *Cultural Critique*, 47 (2001), 96.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Sacvan Bercovitch, ‘America as Canon and Context: Literary History in a Time of Dissensus’, *American Literature* 58.1 (1986), 106.

intersections spill beyond the arbitrary geographic boundaries of nations and their constituent regions, ‘particular people [can be] brought into focus, [and] one [can] build ... outward, from place to subregion to region to nation to hemisphere to planet’.<sup>61</sup>

These observations on the promise of a reinvigorated regionalism can move us beyond the dogmatic, faulty rhetoric that baptises the nation of the U.S. as ‘America’, and allows for challenging the concurrent hierarchy this creates within North American Studies. The geographic centrality of the U.S. need not be mirrored in the ways its broader regional setting is represented and interpreted: the dichotomy, imbalance and paradox this presents recalls the unwitting obedience to the powerful mythologies to which regionalism was in thrall. The questions posed by Muthyala in his search for ‘critical models that take into account the pan-American dimensions of the social, cultural, and intellectual commerce that link the Americas’ are both the questions regionalism must answer and, in a *critical* regionalism, the site where possible solutions might be found. Muthyala’s multivalent question – ‘What ideologies, histories, narratives, and symbols has it created and affirmed in order to gain hegemony, become a commonplace, as it were?’ – is directed at the U.S., but it can just as usefully be posed of that nation’s regions.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, in expanding this suggestion to ask the concomitant question – what ideologies, histories, narratives and symbols has it effaced, elided, or erased? – regionalism might effect an escape from the ‘reification ... involved [in] a projection of values onto reality’ that the so-called *Revolt of the Provinces* realised.<sup>63</sup>

Kenneth Frampton’s essay ‘Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance’ provides perhaps the most fully realised early exploration of the term ‘critical regionalism’ and argues that regionalism in architecture manifests in similar ways to the cultural and ideological versions outlined earlier. Frampton points to vernacular and populist aesthetics as being particularly prone to presenting ‘a compensatory façade’ that provides an illusion of stability designed to root society in a culture that

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<sup>61</sup> Limerick, ‘Reason’, 84.

<sup>62</sup> Muthyala, ‘Reworlding’, 93.

<sup>63</sup> Dorman, *Revolt*, 10-11.

'has become eroded by the rapacity of development.'<sup>64</sup> For Frampton, architecture, despite its inherent fixity, 'stillness ... sculptural depth ... [and] implied resistance', must be animated to become 'progressive and liberative'.<sup>65</sup> This comes about when we 'regard regional culture not as something given and relatively immutable but rather as something which has ... to be self-consciously cultivated' through a mediation between universal techniques and the specifics of the local site.<sup>66</sup> To remove architecture wholly from the effects of universal technique risks a return to that 'sentimental regionalism' which this introduction has observed in other arenas.<sup>67</sup> Frampton's critical regionalism produces a dialogue that 'mediates the impact of universal civilization with elements derived indirectly from the peculiarities of a particular place'.<sup>68</sup> This negotiation, Frampton argues, must provide a way forward for a regional architecture that recognises that we are 'subject to the impact of both' the global and the local, as well as developing a practice that dialogues within and between these oppositional positions, but that does not display 'the demagogic tendencies of Populism'.<sup>69</sup> For Kathleen Stewart – an early advocate of critical regionalism in cultural studies – regions have become 'frozen into essentialized "objects" with fixed identities; a prefab landscape of abstract "values" [that] puts an end to the story ... before it begins', and for regionalism to realise a more diverse, discursive and dialogical interpretation of the territories it represents it must re-animate these 'frozen objects' in an attempt to achieve what Frampton terms 'a self-conscious synthesis' between these prior *and* emergent understandings, between the real *and* imagined, and not simply writing them out since they are already a part of 'the story', elements that we 'inevitably inherit', according to Frampton.<sup>70</sup> The promise of heterogeneous portraits of regions that such a critical regionalism points toward has, over the last two decades, seen Frampton's original

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<sup>64</sup> Kenneth Frampton, 'Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance' In, Hal Foster (ed) *Postmodern Culture* (London: Pluto Press, 1983), 17.

<sup>65</sup> Mitchell Schwarzer, *Zoomscape: Architecture in Motion and Media* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004), 13; Frampton, 'Critical Regionalism', 18.

<sup>66</sup> Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson Books, 1992), 315.

<sup>67</sup> Frampton, 'Critical Regionalism', 20.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, 21.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>70</sup> Kathleen Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in an 'Other' America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 3; Frampton, 'Critical Regionalism', 22, 21.

architectural theory rearticulated in North American cultural studies by a number of critics.<sup>71</sup> For Neil Campbell, the vital importance of this concept lies in a ‘redefinition of regionalism that refuses to get to the border (of region or nation) and turn back, to simply close up on itself in some homely and familiar act of territorialization’.<sup>72</sup> And yet, many studies that adopt critical regionalism as a dialogical framework still construct regions as monologic and nationally inflected. In this study I apply Frampton’s dialogical approach to distinct and disparate regions – the borders of North America – in order to refashion it as a *hemispheric* regionalism that, because borders are writ large within its focus, can avoid neither the constructedness of borders nor the cultural constructions they elicit. Furthermore, as the contact zone of the border region comes to the forefront of our critical focus, so the nation and its arbitrary boundaries become subordinate.

The boundaries whose sanctity regionalism upheld – whether at local or national levels, whether operating as geographical, material borders that protect the nation-state, or as intellectual borders that separate the ‘real’ and ‘imagined’ status of regions – must be dismantled if regionalism is to be resuscitated. As scholars of a nation complex in its formation, and of a continent doubly so, we should ‘be compelled to not only question the logic governing the formation of [these] boundaries but also to cross these boundaries and perhaps recross them’.<sup>73</sup> Such acts of transgression render ‘nation’ obsolete in studies of ‘America’, and provide the opportunity to return to, and reconfigure, Tremaine McDowell’s ‘region’, ‘nation’, ‘world’ paradigm. I have demonstrated already how ‘nation’ has acted as a kind of black hole into which the related spheres of ‘region’ and ‘world’ have fallen. In the rest of this study, I facilitate the recovery of these two diminished categories of the field of American Studies. As Comer has rightly suggested, recent attempts to effect a rehabilitation of region as a viable object of study ‘dialogu[e]

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<sup>71</sup> Alongside Kathleen Stewart’s work, cf: Neil Campbell, *The Rhizomatic West: Representing the American West in a Transnational, Global, Media Age* (Lincoln, NE.: University of Nebraska Press, 2008); Douglas Reichert Powell, *Critical Regionalism: Connecting Politics and Culture in the American Landscape* (Chapel Hill, NC.: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); José Limón, ‘Border Literary Histories, Globalization, and Critical Regionalism’, *American Literary History* 20.1&2 (2008); Cheryl Temple Herr, *Critical Regionalism and Cultural Studies: From Ireland to the American Midwest*. (Gainesville, FL.: University Press of Florida, 1996); Jenny Rice (ed) *Regional Rhetorics: Real and Imagined Spaces* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>72</sup> Campbell, *Rhizomatic West*, 44.

<sup>73</sup> Muthyala, ‘Reworlding’, 97.

with the crisis of the National Symbolic, but from its earliest examples [they] dialogu[e] by means of critique'.<sup>74</sup> Hence, a hemispheric regionalism does not vacate the space of dialogue with nationalism and regionalism, but enters into that space equipped with the new 'critical vocabulary' that Muthyala proposes will 'foreground and address the multivalent complexity of transcontinental patterns of social and cultural interactions'.<sup>75</sup>

Just as regionalism originally envisioned and celebrated its marginal status, so too a return to these edges, or zones of intercultural mixing, can revitalise this maligned area of academic endeavour. Those very borders that regionalism, through nationalism, first erected, are precisely the areas where a hemispheric regionalism might now flourish and cultivate its 'new vocabulary'. Michiel Baud and Willem Van Schendel clarify my claim for such a tactic to rescue also that other vanished tenet of American Studies:

Borderland studies offer a way of correcting the distortions inherent in state-centered national histories. They can be powerful exactly because they dispute the territoriality to which modern states lay claim. It is with this conviction that we propose the study of borderlands, not as another historical super-specialization but as an indispensable focus on the modern world.<sup>76</sup>

Studying border regions, therefore, simultaneously addresses the imposition of a national culture upon these zones of cultural interpenetration – which ignores the 'border lingua franca [that] often comes into existence' – and ensures that the dominant nation within the Americas, "America" [,] would become at once internally fissured and externally relativized'.<sup>77</sup> Hence, to develop strategies by which regions of the U.S. can themselves be rearticulated – and, by extension, the field of American Studies– looking beyond

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<sup>74</sup> Comer, *Landscapes*, 6.

<sup>75</sup> Muthyala, 'Reworlding', 98.

<sup>76</sup> Michiel Baud & Willem Van Schendel, 'Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands', *Journal of World History*, 8.2 (1997), 242.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 234; Carolyn Porter, 'What We Know That We Don't Know: Remapping American Literary Studies', *American Literary History*, 3 (1994), 510.

its borders to 'externally relativize' the possible alternative enunciations of regionalism provides productive starting points.

### **Crossing Borders: Regionalism in Alternative American Contexts**

Joel Garreau's influential *The Nine Nations of North America* presents a provocative regional re-imagining of North America that encompasses all three nations of the continent and some islands of the Caribbean; it is perhaps something of a proto-hemispheric study. Garreau, in characteristically hyperbolic mode, outlines his motivations for redrawing the boundaries of North America: as a challenge to the solidified borders of nation-states that are perpetuated in arenas as diverse as the elementary school system and the upper echelons of political science, claiming that his study 'Consider[s], instead, the way North America really works'.<sup>78</sup> The popular rather than scholarly authority of *Nine Nations* presents a number of productive observations amongst its provocations. Rachel Adams' *Continental Divides* puts Garreau's remapping paradigm to good use in her attempts to reimagine North American cultural studies, suggesting that though his observations are 'filtered through a wishful fantasy about the triumph of local communities over national government' they still continue 'to be a compelling reminder of the power of maps to reframe our knowledge of familiar places'.<sup>79</sup> Garreau's de- and re-constructed imaginary nations also serve as a 'compelling reminder' of the ever-present danger of essentialisms re-emerging in what may begin and appear, outwardly, as anti-foundational projects.

Largely relegating cultural factors to the background, Garreau's nine nations are drawn predominantly along the lines of economic and social conditions. Throughout, there are prescient remarks that appear to hint at the later resurgence of transnational economic and industrial integration in North America. Using these economic and industrial factors as the guiding principle for the creation of his nine nations, however, serves to obfuscate culture as a key determinant in alternative iterations of the hemisphere. This basis is apparent from the very names of these 'nations': 'The Foundry' and

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<sup>78</sup> Joel Garreau, *The Nine Nations of North America* (New York: Avon Books, 1981), 1.

<sup>79</sup> Rachel Adams, *Continental Divides: Remapping the Cultures of North America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 1.

'Breadbasket', for example.<sup>80</sup> Even 'The Empty Quarter' finds its outline by tracing not wilderness, but abundant natural resources available for future financial gain. Even those 'nations' whose names hint at more cultural points of demarcation – 'Mexamerica' and 'Dixie' for example – still find their definitions in line with their predominant industries and shared concerns over the necessary importation of resources to support their populations. 'Québec', 'that part of North America that is so distinct from the rest, and against such odds, that it takes pride in serving to define what nation is – and can be', has large portions of its discursive construction given over to its strengths in the field of hydroelectric power.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, 'Ecotopia' as Garreau names the 'nation' he constructs on the Pacific coast of North America, despite its possible framing as a region with a shared ecology, as its name (borrowed from the title of Ernest Callenbach's 1975 novel) suggests, is nonetheless similarly constructed as a zone defined by economic imperatives.

When Garreau ventures into discursive territory beyond the financial interconnectedness of North America, his forays into the realm of identity politics further undermine the non-essentialist claims of his project. The question of the possible loss of cultural specificity in existing border regions that Garreau's thesis raises (but does not address) is framed in terms of exceptionalist rhetoric that suggests non-U.S. citizens will become subservient or, worse, assimilated, to U.S. culture: 'Canada, which is little save moose, Aleuts, and energy wealth north of the allegedly temperate strip along its border with the United States, has migraines about losing its "identity". It shouldn't ... Canada shares five perfectly respectable and different identities with the northern United States'.<sup>82</sup> Provocative, yes, but not surprising when we consider the author's prefatory remark: 'I found the United States impossible to understand

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<sup>80</sup> Garreau's 'The Foundry' is 'the declining industrial ... Northeast' (2), stretching westward inland from New York to Chicago, northward to Ottawa, and south to Washington DC; the 'Breadbasket' is '[t]he irrigated farm country' (3) to the east of 'The Foundry', taking in Indianapolis to the east, Denver to the west, as far south as Houston, and across the U.S.-Canada border to encompass the southern portions of Ontario and Manitoba. By far the largest of the 'nations', 'The Empty Quarter' traces the Rocky Mountains at its western edge all the way to Alaska, and finds its eastern boundary in those portions of the Canadian Shield sited in the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta before stretching north to incorporate the Northwest Territories, Yukon and what is now Nunavut.

<sup>81</sup> Garreau, *Nine Nations*, 365.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.



when it was presented to me as one great place, three thousand miles long, fifteen hundred miles deep, 3,615,122 square miles in area, ending mysteriously at some lines on the other side of which were voids called Canada and Mexico'.<sup>83</sup> Garreau's project emerges as an act of imaginative imperialism, appropriating the entirety of North America in order for him to understand the U.S. better, rather than as a project with liberating hemispheric possibilities.

If, as this thesis will argue, the development of a hemispheric regionalism can begin to initiate an alternatively configured American Studies, it is important to explore how regionalism has operated in those – as Garreau terms them – 'voids' of Mexico and Canada, to establish its differentiation from the largely dismissed and stultifying conservative brand dominant in the U.S. In these other North American contexts, regionalism has also been a key ideological current in historic and contemporary discourse. However, whereas in the U.S. cultural regionalism was harnessed by political nationalism, in Mexico and Canada, regionalism has managed to maintain its original particularistic promise and has done so largely through its insistence upon a politics clearly differentiated from the centre.

Canadian regionalism readily offers an alternative in which region attains and asserts cultural authority ahead of the broader nation of which it is a part. After all, as Northrop Frye observes, Canadian culture is 'not a national development but a series of regional ones'.<sup>84</sup> Recognising that searching for some all-encompassing national identity might be ultimately futile in the Canadian context, Frye clearly writes in much more discretely territorialised and regionalist ways when he suggests that understanding Canadian identity relies less on asking, 'Who am I?' and much more on querying, 'Where is here?'<sup>85</sup> Such a reinsertion of distinctly spatial considerations in understanding the politics of identity, I would argue, rediscovers some of that original promise of regionalism: premised upon distinctive cultural identities intimately linked to discrete local geographies and their populations. Roger Gibbins, in his transnational study of regionalism in both Canada and the U.S., suggests that the term has attracted and attained very

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid, xiv.

<sup>84</sup> Northrop Frye, 'Insight'. *The Toronto Star* (28<sup>th</sup> June 1980), 4.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

different connotations on either side of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. Gibbins demonstrates the extraordinary divergence of these definitions when he notes that regionalism in the United States represents an ‘integrative phenomenon’ in which regions, for all of their supposed distinctiveness and individuality, are incorporated into an integral national whole that supersedes sectionalism; Canadian regionalism appears predicated on the reverse of this ethos, both facilitating a geographic sectionalism *and* providing a framework in which motivations for such sectionalism can be understood.<sup>86</sup> Similarly divergent are the ways in which the region/nation paradigm has developed in both countries. As discussed earlier in this introduction, U.S. regionalism grows into a form of nationalism; the Canadian context inverts this process with regionalism growing out of nationalism. Andrew Nurse suggests that this trend begins in Canadian historiography even earlier than Frye’s insightful reordering of existential parameters, with the work of J.M.S. Careless and Ramsay Cook and the development of their ‘limited identities’ approach in the late 1960s.<sup>87</sup> Herein, Careless and Cook ‘begin to question the “national” focus of research into the dynamics of the Canadian experience’ and posit that Canada, as a ‘nation-state that lacked a strong, singular cultural identity’, necessitates its peoples to attach themselves to a diverse range of identity markers from which they can generate a more intensely localised and relevant sense of self.<sup>88</sup> Hence, region becomes a territory for the creation of an oppositional identity in Canada, explicitly against notions of a holistic national identity and therefore markedly different from region and regionalism’s uses in the U.S. context.

Whilst I read this development as a positive move in regionalist scholarship, it must also be acknowledged that this framework was quickly criticised – almost to the point of being totally discredited – because its suggestion that *limited* identities could be interpreted as hierarchical and inflexible, incapable of grasping and communicating the magnitude of possible identities across multicultural Canada.

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<sup>86</sup> Roger Gibbins, *Regionalism: Territorial Politics in Canada and the United States* (Toronto: Butterworths, 1982), 4.

<sup>87</sup> Andrew Nurse, *Rethinking the Canadian Archipelago: Research Trajectories in Region, Identity, and Diversity in Canada* (Canadian Heritage, 2002) [<http://canada.metropolis.net/events/Diversity/region.doc>], 8.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

However, Doug Owram's more recent critique of the limited identities approach, I believe, also announces revelatory observations for regionalism that point towards its rejuvenated revolutionary potential.<sup>89</sup> Nurse neatly summarises Owram's principal objection to Ramsay and Careless' approach: 'the actual implementation of this research agenda seemed to suggest something more on the order of social fragmentation than a richer understanding of the national experience'.<sup>90</sup> A hemispheric regionalism – one that engages with and rearticulates the assumptions bound up in the regionalism from which it grows – does not so much seek to create 'social fragmentation' but, rather, it recognises such dissolution as an inevitable by-product of our current era. Such by-products are represented in culture through a bricolage of shards and fragments of identity markers which may or may not be territorialised within a specific region or nation.

Whereas regionalism in the United States has remained a predominantly cultural concept – albeit one which has attained less validity and scrutiny since the middle of the last century – in Canada the term has departed, somewhat, from this original function and continues to animate discussion as a result. Whilst identity politics still forms the basis for a broad understanding of the purpose of regionalism and is therefore still attuned to its original function, dialogue surrounding the concept and its usefulness now takes place in Canada in the realm of 'political [and] policy mobilization'.<sup>91</sup> This divergence was set in motion by the problematic scholarship of Careless and Cook, but also out of their suggestions that the lack of a holistic national identity required people to adopt a range of other markers of identity; region came to be seen as not only a viable unit of academic analysis but also as a politically useful idea. Here, again, we observe a significant shift in the adoption and manipulation of regionalism on either side of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. As suggested earlier, when regionalism became aligned with the political apparatus of the U.S. – as a significant arm of New Deal policies – it lost its primary function as a symbol of cultural power to be found in the heterogeneous periphery rather than the homogeneous centre of the nation-state. At

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<sup>89</sup> Doug Owram, 'Narrow Circles: The Historiography of Recent Canadian History', *National History* 1.1 (1997).

<sup>90</sup> Nurse, *Archipelago*, 9.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

first glance we might also conclude that notions of region and regionalism have been pressed into service by governmental structures in Canada too. As Nurse has noted, the ‘character of Canadian capitalism produce[s] a national political economy organized along a metropolitan-hinterland dynamic’.<sup>92</sup> This mirrors the ‘dynamic’, when expressed in cultural terms, which precipitated the rise of the regionalist movement in the United States. For Nurse – and others – this political organisation of the nation constructed Canada ‘around a centre-periphery dynamic in which the regions were politically dependent upon, and to a large measure, exploited by, central Canadian capital’.<sup>93</sup>

The notion of a ‘central’ Canada – implicit here, but explicit elsewhere – refers mainly to the province of Ontario. This most populous of the provinces wields significant political power, having, as it does, 121 – a huge 36% – seats in the Canadian House of Commons. As Norman Knowles has suggested, such centralised power has been exercised not just economically, but also culturally through resistance to federal attempts to widen conceptions of Canadian identity.<sup>94</sup> Nurse goes further, and suggests ‘that Ontario projected its regional identity out onto the nation as a whole’.<sup>95</sup> Such an idealised Ontarian regional identity based upon its British heritage and Loyalist tendencies worked to assert itself nationally in a process that, in typically nationalist ways, simultaneously included and excluded based upon specific identity markers such as those identified by Careless and Cook: ‘foremost among these were ethnicity (British), religion (Protestant Christian), and language (English)’, Nurse explains, which served to marginalise other ‘linguistic (francophone), religious (Catholic Christian), and ethnic (First Nations and other visible minorities)’ elements of a national identity.<sup>96</sup> This represents a subtly different use of regionalism at the level of national politics to that seen in the New Deal-era U.S., but one that still reveals the enmeshing of regionalism and nationalism.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Norman Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists: The Ontario Loyalist Tradition and the Creation of Usable Pasts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

<sup>95</sup> Nurse, *Archipelago*, 19.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

The mobilisation of such regional myths in the cause of national identity and its revindication sees regionalism largely discarded as both theory and praxis in the U.S., a fact I find difficult to contend given its sometime insidious and cynical character. This has not been the case in Canada. The political, economic, and cultural regionalism that has shaped and informed national agendas has been met with ‘regional protest ... [and a] continued prevalence of regional discontent’.<sup>97</sup> Through reclamation of ideas of region as a fundamental facet of identity, a more intensely localised regionalism could develop as a political, economic, and cultural position of opposition against a spurious application of regionalism at the level of the nation-state. What was crucial in this process – and to the direction of this thesis – was the fact that the creation of such oppositional identities was intimately linked to the material dynamics of life within discrete Canadian regions. That is, these identities were constructed ‘by a dialectical interaction between human agents and broader social structures’ with the latter often controlled by a national, centralised power base able to exert economic and political power over these peripheries, whilst the former aligns with, and signposts the way ahead for, a critical regionalism that is attuned to the local, the national, and the transnational: this entails an oppositional stance that reinvigorates regionalism to combat its appropriated equivalent and that has its basis in the materiality of its spatial, regional conditions rather than the mythologised and homogenised projection implemented at the national level.<sup>98</sup>

Whilst there are instances of convergence and divergence in the development and deployment of regionalism across the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel, Mexican regionalism has attained an altogether different aspect intimately linked to an oppositional politics that has shaped the nation (rather than being shaped by it) far more fundamentally than is the case in the U.S. and, to a lesser extent, Canada. If regionalism rose to prominence in the early twentieth century in those other North American nations, in Mexico it could be seen to have emerged from the very earliest days of the Spanish conquest and the colonial structures it put in place. In settling ‘New Spain’ in the sixteenth century, the colonisers brought with them from

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 12.

Europe two key socio-economic systems that would facilitate the rise of regionalism in later years. The *hacienda* (estate) and *encomienda* (dependency relation) systems rewarded conquistadors with both land and labour, and ensured that the vast territory of the new nation was quickly but sparsely populated and occupied by the Spanish. In assessing the importance of Mexican regionalism in contemporary times, Paul Drake suggests that the '[t]hree major pillars of Mexican regionalism – latifundia, caudillismo, and a subservient peasantry of largely Indian stock' which, I would argue, result from the aforementioned colonial systems, 'gave [regionalism] even firmer support in the early nineteenth century. The giant haciendas ... were largely self-sufficient, hermetic communities'.<sup>99</sup> These *latifundia* (a parcel of land) and *caudillos* (a military landowner) ensured a propensity within Mexico towards jealously guarded private interests amongst the elite that bred suspicion of and unease with any attempts to foster greater national unity. As the nineteenth century progressed, Drake and others suggest, the outcome of the Mexican-American War illustrates the predominance of regional rather than national ties within Mexico. For Drake, '[o]ne of the most costly examples of the weakness of national bonds was the loss of the northern provinces to the United States when Mexican states failed to join in a committed defense of the national territory'.<sup>100</sup> Similarly, Edward Williams' examination of a re-emergent *norteño* regionalism towards the close of the twentieth century draws a corresponding link between a lack of national unity and the Texas Revolution (1835-36) as early evidence of 'Mexico City's inability to govern the far-flung northern territories'.<sup>101</sup> Much like the centre-periphery model found in the U.S., or the heartland-hinterland dynamic as it is sometimes expressed in Canada, Mexico also possesses a binary paradigm, but here the seemingly smaller locale of region attains greater significance than the all-encompassing nation. For Drake, the political climate in Mexico in 1970 'bears the imprint of regional fragmentation', and the attempted dissolution of the power of regionalism by successive revolutionary governments intent on national integration.<sup>102</sup> However, writing more recently, Williams suggests that '[a]lthough the evolution

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<sup>99</sup> Paul W. Drake, 'Mexican Regionalism Reconsidered', *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 12.3 (1970), 403.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Edward J. Williams, 'The Resurgent North and Contemporary Mexican Regionalism' *Mexican Studies* 6.2 (1990), 301.

<sup>102</sup> Drake, 'Mexican Regionalism', 401.

of Mexico's historical development reflects a broadly conceived secular trend towards increasing integration, regionalistic particularism constantly threatens national unity'.<sup>103</sup> As such, more so than in the other nations of the North American continent, Mexico's region-nation dynamic is characterised by flux and oscillation, waxing and waning but ensuring that 'regionalism is always a latent political force in Mexico'.<sup>104</sup> Nowhere is this better encapsulated than in the widespread use of the term *patria chica* in studies of Mexico's history and culture. Literally 'the little homeland', the *patria chica* highlights an individual's affinity for their local community over and above their attachment to the broader nation.

The concept of the *patria chica* is widespread across Latin America. In an era of migration and transnational flows of all descriptions, the term has undergone something of a transformation that points towards some of the key insights that this thesis will develop. Originally 'the articulation of the relationship between a local or regional area and the national', the *patria chica* – much like the fate that befell the U.S. regionalist movement – has often been invoked in attempted national consolidation projects since it 'embodies the qualities of the national in microcosm while also retaining its own cultural specificity'.<sup>105</sup> Such a negotiated position allows for a celebration of both region and nation in what Patricia Ybarra terms a 'nationally inscribed performative process'.<sup>106</sup> Ybarra's subject is the writer and playwright Miguel N. Lira who would have been working under the conditions of successive revolutionary governments intent, as Drake suggests, on weakening the strength of regionalism to encourage greater nationalism, and the *patrias chicas* of that time would have been negotiated under those conditions, hence becoming 'nationally inscribed'. In more recent times, Ybarra and others note a transformation of the term's meaning and utility, suggesting that '[a] new version of the *patria chica* removes it from its national consolidationist frame, articulating transnational forms of identity in the

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<sup>103</sup> Williams, 'Resurgent North', 299.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 322. It is worth noting that a privileging of regional-identification markers continues amongst the Mexican American population today, with identities such as Tejano, Californio and Hispano common parlance.

<sup>105</sup> Patricia A. Ybarra, *Performing Conquest: Five Centuries of Theater, History, and Identity in Tlaxcala, Mexico* (Ann Arbor, MI.: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 95.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 106.

postnationalist moment'.<sup>107</sup> Notwithstanding the geopolitical borders that were dramatically altered in 1848, the complexity of Mexican migration and diaspora within North America necessitates the *patria chica* becoming transnational and, in so doing, further excises its nationalist component and allows allegiance to one's 'little homeland' to become 'an ideological strategy to counter hegemonic nationalism'.<sup>108</sup> Richard Nostrand observes that the transnational Mexican American population, 'embraces a level of territorial consciousness or place identity that today is uncommon in mainstream American society'.<sup>109</sup> Furthermore, in our transnational epoch, this concept that emerges in fundamental ways from the distinctive character of Mexican regionalism has been loosened from its physical territory to become a 'relationship between locations rather than a locatable place'.<sup>110</sup> Hence, the *patria chica* epitomises the hemispheric connectivity of North America in its histories of colonialism, its attendant dispersal of populations and in the cultural reactions to those conditions.

These 'little homelands' also point us in the direction of a crucial but largely overlooked fact (at least in the American Studies that I deconstruct here): that places are both real *and* imagined. This adage has been largely accepted by all manner of academic disciplines since it became scholarly currency following the so-called 'spatial turn' of the early 1970s. However, the flexibility of both representation and interpretation to which it clearly hints is but one more readily available restructuring mechanism that an intransigent American Studies has failed to accommodate wholly. Certainly, numerous projects have relied on alternative vernaculars, provided revisionist histories and uncovered unconventional cultural productions, but their overwhelming motivation has been to situate them in extant academic terrain, offering up new texts for interpretation but seemingly always asking: "what does this reveal about *the nation*?" The *patria chica*, however, fundamentally troubles this intractable equation. A perceived connection, on the part of a Mexican American, to Guanajuato, Chiapas or Yucatán, for example, may

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 133.

<sup>108</sup> Ybarra, *Performing Conquest*, 234.

<sup>109</sup> Richard L. Nostrand, 'The Highland-Hispano Homeland' In, Richard L. Nostrand and Lawrence E. Estaville (eds) *Homelands: A Geography of Culture and Place across America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 167.

<sup>110</sup> Ybarra, *Performing Conquest*, 128.



no longer stem from a physical connection to those territories and their traditions. Indeed, the individual who constructs an idea of a *patria chica* may never have been corporeally present in that territory yet it remains a key and informative identity marker. The tension that a real-and-imagined territory creates cannot be reconciled in these terms: the transnational connection it generates must remain necessarily multiple and cannot become indicative of a singular nationality, even if the group and the possible territory they occupy emerge as oppositional. In this sense, borders, whether geopolitical or disciplinary, become futile constructs whose purposes at the level of culture are facile. In this regard, Sarah Radcliffe and Sallie Westwood suggest that '[r]eferring to a migrant's place of origin or a place where one feels at home, the notion of *patria chica* raises immediately the issue of overlapping affiliations to place'.<sup>111</sup> Nowhere is this 'overlap' more apparent than in the border regions of North America where shared histories and traditions, historic and contemporary social and cultural practices and political and economic systems intermingle and plainly figure the boundary-straddling terrain they both create and occupy as real-and-imagined. Two just such territories – two alternative transnational regions – extend their own boundaries across the geopolitical borders of North America and, in the middle of the U.S., connect and overlap.

### **Overlapping Nations: Cross-border Connective Regionalisms**

Cascadia is an *imagined* region that to some extent has become *real*. Crossing national borders to incorporate the province of British Columbia and the states of Washington and Oregon, in some definitions it stretches even further, incorporating Idaho, Montana, Alaska, Alberta and The Yukon. In tracing the Interstate 5 trade corridor, some argue that northern portions of Mexico should also be considered a constituent part of Cascadia.<sup>112</sup> This highway, hugging the Pacific coast of the United States, connects both of its nation's borders, from Blaine, Washington, to San Diego, California. Having reached

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<sup>111</sup> Sarah Radcliffe and Sallie Westwood, *Remaking the Nation: Place, Identity and Politics in Latin America* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 113.

<sup>112</sup> This is an argument most clearly outlined by Theodore H. Cohn in his discussion of the Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER): 'Transportation and Competitiveness in North America: The Cascadian and San Diego-Tijuana Border Regions' in, Heather N. Nicol & Ian Townsend-Gault (eds) *Holding the Line: Borders in a Global World* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005).

these borders, the only stretch of asphalt to connect both Canada and Mexico across U.S. territory continues on through these other nations: to Vancouver, British Columbia to the north (the Sea to Sky Highway 99), and Cabo San Lucas, Baja-California to the south (the Transpeninsular Highway 1). Using this 2,700-mile, meandering tarmac tract as a marker of region would seem to attenuate such a definition but, within the majority of scholarly discussion of Cascadia, the critical impetus derives primarily from considerations of economic factors and, post-NAFTA, the integration of the three national North American economies has often been presented as a regional strategy.

To extend the discussion of oppositional political and economic regionalisms – evident in the Canadian provinces – across borders made partially porous by NAFTA, provides an opportunity to explore the development of a nascent ‘peripheral centrality’ which this project takes as one of its concerns. Uppermost in my mind here is detailing the corrective that a critical and hemispheric regionalism can provide in terms of a re-articulation of misappropriated regional symbols, even within the context of a seemingly progressive imagining of a cross-border, post-national region such as Cascadia. The very *practical* project of NAFTA – the economic integration of North America consolidated in the centre of national governments – eschews the cultural complexity of North American regions. Such centralisation, one could argue, is self-evident: economy and culture are two seemingly separate spheres of interest and influence. However, and most obvious in the case of Cascadia, economic and cultural factors become intertwined at the regional level, with the pragmatic former subsuming the variability of the latter for its own ends. Outwardly distant from those centres of national influence and attempting to fashion its own version of transnational economic integration at a regional level, Cascadia nonetheless displays its own centralising and appropriative tendencies.

The origins of the idea of ‘Cascadia’ can be traced back to 1970 when David McCloskey, professor of Sociology at Seattle University, coined the term to refer to the region on the west of the continent bounded to the east by the Cascade Mountains range; the name was meant to refer not just to those mountains but also to the region’s abundant water that means Cascadia ‘contains more old growth forest

than any other part of North America and more temperate rain forest than anywhere else in the world'.<sup>113</sup> Cascadia is roughly contiguous with Garreau's aforementioned 'Ecotopia' which, he explains, when '[t]aken back to its Greek roots ... means home space, but the more obvious meaning lies in the contraction of Ecological Utopia'.<sup>114</sup> With this in mind, Garreau's own vision of 'Ecotopia' has, more than any of his other nine nations, a clear cultural identity: a *patria chica* of its own, we might say.

Herein, it is the constant stress placed upon the importance of the interaction between the inhabitants of Ecotopia and its landscape of natural environmental features that makes such a distinctive identity possible. Not only is this interaction recognisable in florid accounts of outdoor pursuits in the region, it also defines elements of the cultural and political apparatus that administers the region.<sup>115</sup> Garreau reports that even 'the [Washington] state Arts Council has reorganized itself administratively into "bioregions", arguing that ... the planet is going to influence your operations, so you may as well work with it, and not draw your political lines as if mountains and river barriers do not exist'.<sup>116</sup> Ecotopia, then, seems far more attuned to those natural boundary markers provided by the topographical features of the environment that, in turn, inform and shape people's actions and affiliations within these locales. In his discussion of 'postfoundational geographies', Matthew Sparke pays particular attention to Ecotopia's doppelganger – Cascadia – and suggests that the ecology of the region, with '[its] cascading waters, rainforests, and salmon' has enabled '[w]ithin this polity, bioregionalists [to] envisage ... a population of inhabitants that might one day live in harmony with the integrated cross-border ecosystem'.<sup>117</sup> Whilst such sentiments smack of some of the worst romanticism that regionalism represents, defining regions as *bioregions* allows us to begin to look beyond those political borders drawn by nation-states that, after all, fail to control the trans-border movement – inexorably slow or otherwise

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<sup>113</sup> Cascadia Institute [<http://cascadia-institute.org/name.html>]; James Loucky, Donald K. Alper, & J. C. Day, *Transboundary Policy Challenges in the Pacific Northwest Border Regions of North America* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2008), 26.

<sup>114</sup> Garreau, *Nine Nations*, 250.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, 254.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*, 252.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*.

– of mountains, tectonic plates, rivers, and flora and fauna. It has not been lost on theorists of border regions that incorporating an ecological perspective into discursive constructions of these regions allows the boundaries of the nation-state to be transgressed and, in line with the aims of this project, also allows for the creation of a comparative framework for the study of North American borders. As one recent study of the Pacific border regions of North America has suggested, '[s]imilarities in the northern and southern borders include a long history of cross-border population movement ... and overlapping ecological spaces in which species, marine waters, rivers, and mountain ranges are intermingled'.<sup>118</sup> Yet, even bioregionalism has – with Cascadia over recent years a particularly insidious case – been misappropriated to promote the neo-liberal ideology of free trade agreements within the North American context, serving to re-centralise what began as a de-centralising impulse.

As explored above, Cascadia traces shared bioregional and ecological landscapes across national borders, with humankind an integral part of its dynamic and ongoing construction. Such an arrangement of Cascadia offers intriguing possibilities for reconfiguring our understanding of region as something that spills beyond national borders, whether physically or mentally. However, in much of the existing scholarship in this area, there exists a curious conflation of nature and economics in examinations of transboundary regions such as Cascadia:

While the two major borders of North America run mainly east-west, sometimes in straight lines for hundreds of kilometres, economic and demographic flows run more naturally north-south. These correspond to what some observers have noted as the natural grain of North America, with obvious reference to mountain ranges, river valleys, agricultural zones, and transportation corridors.<sup>119</sup>

Here, as with Garreau's muddled account of the ways in which distinctive cultures emerge fully formed from economic and industrial circumstances, those topographical features found in the 'grain' and 'flow' of the continent, are equated with the conditions of the transnational free-market capitalism that NAFTA

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<sup>118</sup> Loucky, Alper, & Day, *Transboundary Policy*, 13.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*, 19.

ushered in two decades ago. Cascadia boosters have been quick to recognise the ideological power inherent in such naturalising rhetoric: according to Sparke such discourse has allowed Cascadia to promote itself through ‘evok[ing] a set of entrepreneurial possibilities as [being] rooted in the soil’.<sup>120</sup> Such appropriation of nature becomes, we might say, *second* nature, both in the sense in which such neoliberal appeals become accepted, but also in the ways in which this represents a ‘double gesture – [a] mixing [of] geographic mythmaking with a vista of financial gain’.<sup>121</sup> Returning to the claim made at the opening of this discussion – that the Interstate 5 corridor has been utilised to define Cascadia as much as its bioregional and ecological characteristics – there appears some confusion in existing literature as to whether or not these manmade and natural connections across borders are mutually exclusive. Loucky, Alper, and Day, for instance, suggest that ‘while bioregions and corridors connote spatial connectivity, functionality, and interactive information flows, borders represent linearity, disjunction, and artificial constraints’.<sup>122</sup> For all of its intent to outline a discernible difference between bioregions and the borders that cut through them, is it not possible to uncover a similar ‘mixing’ of geography, myth, and capital as Sparke uncovers in the popularising of Cascadia as a distinctive regional entity, the same problematic conflation of manmade and natural, therein? Some corrective to this observation is offered when Loucky et al. highlight the ‘disconnection between our understanding of bioregions and corridors’, with the former offered as ‘zones of ecological integrity, areas of integrated components such as species and inter-relationships involving growing human populations’, as opposed to the latter’s ‘emerge[nce] largely in context of linear connections, lines of flow between urban centres in an expanding global economic system’.<sup>123</sup> The problematic here is twofold, yet both of these dilemmas also provide ways forward for analyses of region.

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<sup>120</sup> Matthew Sparke, *In the Space of Theory: Postfoundational Geographies of the Nation-State* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 78.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, 79.

<sup>122</sup> Loucky, Alper, & Day, *Transboundary Policy*, 31.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, 30.

Firstly, there is the tension between notions of ‘disconnection’ and ‘integrity’ in attempts to redraw borders and boundaries when they also involve an effort to seek out ‘linear connections’. Herein, despite suggestions to the contrary from those doing the redrawing, there still exists the desire to operate in as scrupulously cartographic a way as those who have drawn the historic borders of provinces, states, and nations, to create geographic and conceptual edges that temper disconnections by providing ultimately illogical linear connections. The impulse here is a difficult one to shake. As Adams reminds us, borders ‘contours orient us in space ... [and] guide us in making distinctions between self and other, insiders and outsiders, the foreign and the domestic’.<sup>124</sup> These binaries are the precise function of borders, and if we are to break borders down to enable a fuller cultural understanding of regions that might straddle these lines, we must also break down these binaries and be willing to embrace the disconnects between them. The desire to redraw maps – whether of regions, nations, or disciplines – is well established within the humanities but the need felt for a continued integrity of what is created within these re-imagined borderlines overrides the usefulness of the project. ‘When [maps] are redrawn’, Adams continues, ‘unexpected things start to happen’, and it is in this unpredictability that new approaches to studies of region arise, so long as their lack of veracity is acknowledged and figured as the very starting point for analysis.<sup>125</sup>

The second problem grows from the first: the maps themselves. Whilst this project occasionally uses the notion of the palimpsest as an expedient way to excavate connections and disconnections, as the preceding discussion of constructions of Cascadia epitomises, overlaying a map that has similar motivations to the one that it replaces does little to advance an understanding of the functions and dysfunctions of re-imagined regions. Being beholden to those striations etched across territories – highways, trade corridors, communication lines, and borders themselves – no matter the revisionist motivations, results in the newly conceived map lacking transparency. It becomes a basic superimposition

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<sup>124</sup> Adams, *Continental Divides*, 1.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

that obscures the '[m]essy, tangled, and provisional' results that would be seen were it possible to see these maps in conjunction with one another.<sup>126</sup> The resultant vision, if these maps were to retain their transparency and multiplicity, creates 'networks [that] defy representation on a conventional map and challenge the ways scholars in the humanities have organized our knowledge ... [w]e do not yet have adequate vocabularies to account for their significance', according to Adams.<sup>127</sup> The aim of the project at hand is to develop a possible series of analytical techniques that will provide this missing critical vocabulary.

If Cascadia, as I argue above, is an imagined region that has become real through concrete economic imperatives that ride roughshod over its imagined identity, then Aztlán (notwithstanding its similar appropriation by nationalism) might be conceived of in the opposite configuration: a real region that has entered the illusory realm. This move from concrete to abstract has not resulted in a diminishing of the power of Aztlán. Indeed, the mythical homeland of the Mexica people was, it has been argued, always real-and-imagined. Dylan Miner (Métis), for example, suggests that

there are two general opinions on the historicity of Aztlán. One faction believes that Aztlán was a historic place from where the Mexica physically migrated south to the Valley of Mexico. The other camp hypothesizes that Aztlán operated primarily on the discursive level as a device to legitimate Mexica colonization and its political rule in Central Mexico.<sup>128</sup>

Conjecture on the real or imagined nature of Aztlán abounds: as a pre-Hispanic myth it is captured only in a handful of Aztec codices written in Nahuatl during the early years of Spanish colonisation and, accordingly, study and knowledge of it was, for many years, the preserve of historians, anthropologists and archaeologists. Not only is the history of Aztlán shrouded in mystery, but its geographical location is similarly veiled and contradictory as Luis Leal's 'In Search of Aztlán' attests: 'There was ... a book

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Dylan T. Miner, *Creating Aztlán: Chicano Art, Indigenous Sovereignty, and Lowriding Across Turtle Island* (Tucson, AZ.: University of Arizona Press, 2014), 26.

published in 1933 entitled *Aztlán*, trying to prove that Aztlán can be found in the lakes of Wisconsin. Others have said that it was in Florida; others believe that it was in New Mexico; and still others in California. It was even said that Aztlán was to be found in China'.<sup>129</sup> Past and present scholars have continued to postulate widely divergent locations for the homeland of the Aztecs with Mexican anthropologist Alfredo Chavero claiming in the late nineteenth century that Aztlán could be found on the Pacific coast of Nayarit state, whilst more recently archaeologist Eduardo Matos Moctezuma has suggested it is somewhere in the states of Guanajuato, Jalisco and Michoacán. For the Chicano/a population in the United States, however, Aztlán was to be found in the territories annexed by the U.S. in 1848.

In their collection of essays on the subject of Aztlán, Rudolfo Anaya and Francisco Lomelí suggest that '[t]he revival of [Aztlán] by Hispanicized mestizos attests to the role of myth in a culture where facts do not outweigh faith, beliefs, or the power of oral tradition. The legend of Aztlán never died; it was only dormant in the collective unconscious'.<sup>130</sup> With the publication of the Chicano/a movement's manifesto, 'El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán', in 1969, the mythical homeland of the Mexica people was no longer dormant: it became a powerful rallying point for disenfranchised Mexican Americans. A galvanising force within *El Movimiento*, Aztlán was no longer a historical and geographical curiosity; it was now, according to Michael Pina, a 'myth [that] spanned the diachronical chasm that separates the archaic contents of cultural memory from the contemporary struggle for cultural survival'.<sup>131</sup> It was also, in these terms, no longer an imagined region: it had become an imagined nation that now began to generate its own nationalism. This is made explicit in 'El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán', and in the numerous mentions of nationalism as a key weapon in the fight to establish a new Aztlán. Beginning by announcing that 'We do not recognize capricious frontiers on the bronze continent', the plan contends 'that the Chicanos (La Raza de Bronze) must use their nationalism as the key or common denominator for mass mobilization and

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<sup>129</sup> Luis Leal, 'In Search of Aztlán' [trans. Gladys Leal] In, Rudolfo A. Anaya and Francisco A. Lomelí (eds) *Aztlán: Essays on the Chicano Homeland* (Albuquerque, NM.: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 10.

<sup>130</sup> Rudolfo A. Anaya and Francisco A. Lomelí (eds) *Aztlán: Essays on the Chicano Homeland* (Albuquerque, NM.: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), iii.

<sup>131</sup> Michael Pina, 'The Archaic, Historical and Mythicized Dimensions of Aztlán' In, Anaya and Lomelí (eds), *Aztlán*, 36.



organization', before declaring that 'Nationalism is the common denominator that all members of La Raza can agree upon'.<sup>132</sup> Pina suggests that in repurposing the myth of Aztlán in this way, the central Chicano/a origin story – the wresting of the 'northern territories ... from Mexico in an imperialist war inspired by American "Manifest Destiny"' – became wedded to the original meaning of Aztlán.<sup>133</sup> Hence,

Chicanos interpreted their nationalist cause as more than a political movement; they were involved in the regeneration of sacred time and space, as the ultimate concern of Chicano nationalism sought to transcend the existent temporal and spacial [*sic*] barriers and establish a homeland patterned after the primordial homeland from where the Aztecs originated.<sup>134</sup>

Therefore, what began as a region with counter-hegemonic purposes directed towards liberation, transmogrified into a nation, leading to a hardening of its own borders, imagined or otherwise, and the pursuance of exclusionary and inclusionary policies that *El Movimiento* was conceived to challenge.

Aztlán continues to reverberate in enunciations of the Mexican American experience – in the work of Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Robert López (*El Vez*), for example – and, despite its perceived demise as a project of cultural nationalism, it remains 'a utopian space of belonging and strategy of resistance'.<sup>135</sup> The persistence of this idealistic and oppositional strategy is due to the inherent intangible mutability of the imagined region of Aztlán, a territory that might lie anywhere within the hemisphere. Such adaptability has ensured that whilst once Aztlán became a nationalist project that manifested in conservative male heteronormativity, it has been more recently rearticulated to 'include ... positions of difference [that were] previously omitted'.<sup>136</sup> This is most clearly evidenced in work by Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga who, in the words of Rafael Pérez-Torres, reject 'Aztlán as a fixed entity'.<sup>137</sup> Indeed,

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<sup>132</sup> El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán (1969) In, Anaya and Lomelí (eds), *Aztlán*, 1-2.

<sup>133</sup> Pina, 'Dimensions of Aztlán', 35.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*, 36.

<sup>135</sup> Marc Priewe, 'Resistance Without Borders: Shifting Cultural Politics in Chicana/o Narratives' In, Winfried Fluck, Donald E. Pease and John Carlos Rowe (eds) *Re-Framing the Transnational Turn in American Studies* (Hanover, NH.: Dartmouth College Press, 2011), 234.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>137</sup> Rafael Pérez-Torres, 'Refiguring Aztlán', *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 22.2 (1997), 31.

the work of Anzaldúa in particular, reconfigures Aztlán as the borderlands and, from there, projects it in multiple transnational directions. Indeed Chicano/a Studies has often been at the vanguard of attempts to broaden the scope of American Studies, envisioning the object of study as inherently transnational and, from the position of the real-and-imagined border, remapping the field in numerous ways.

### **Avoiding an Exceptionalist Collapse: Rhizomatic Hemispheric Regionalism**

Adams' call for revisionist scholarship in North American cultural studies has two facets: maps need redrawing and new critical vocabularies need developing. Key to both of these endeavours is dialogue, and in these necessary paradigmatic developments is where a critical regionalism provides the greatest possibility for the revision of regional study that Adams demands. As Adams demonstrates, maps have long been used to create imagined territories, and continue to serve this function. Contemporary maps of this oppositional type 'reflect longings for transnational communities with a shared sense of history and political purpose strong enough to override the current configuration of nation-states'.<sup>138</sup> Such impulses are apparent in the counterfactual geographies envisaged by the likes of Garreau, and proponents of imagined territorial entities such as Cascadia and Aztlán. But, can state-sanctioned maps be effectively countered through the creation of other maps? To work towards the creation of remapping strategies – of both region and 'American' Studies – I turn to the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

Whilst not commonplace, the adoption of a Deleuzian lens when critiquing North American culture is nonetheless a longstanding but marginal tradition. José David Saldívar's influential and provocative volume *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies*, for example, adds to Anzaldúa's equally indispensable *Borderlands/La Frontera*, the Deleuzian notion of the 'desiring machine' to complicate further the supposedly static meaning and function of the Mexico-U.S. border. Looking north, Erin Manning's *Ephemeral Territories: Representing Nation, Home, and Identity in Canada* utilises traditions of Deleuzian cinematic criticism to explore the defining of borders of exclusion and inclusion

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<sup>138</sup> Adams, *Continental Divides*, 3.

in Canadian cultural products. These texts offer important interventions in understanding the cultural construction of identity as it relates to borders, whether they are national or sub-national. It is this latter territory – the sub-national area of region – that Neil Campbell’s work tackles and, in so doing, offers the clearest and most sustained template for a mapping of Deleuzian concepts on to regional study, but one that is not without its own problems. In some respects, this study takes its lead from Campbell’s *The Rhizomatic West*, a volume that Krista Comer has recently suggested is ‘one of the most field-shaping books in recent memory’.<sup>139</sup> The key intervention which Campbell makes in his study of that monolithic real-and-imagined North American region of the West is the implementation of the concept of the rhizome as a guiding principle for both an approach to studying region and as a way in which we might theorise such region’s transnational existence. Derived from the works of Deleuze and Guattari, the rhizome offers an escape from overcoded representational structures and delimiting and arbitrary boundaries.

The rhizome is invoked for two reasons. Firstly, it stands, to some extent, in opposition to the arboreal: the way in which Deleuze and Guattari see knowledge and culture as hierarchical and rooted. Secondly, and somewhat paradoxically, the rhizome is also a characteristic of the same botanical life that can be expressed in arborescent form. Such distinctions then enable critique to proceed not in a wholly oppositional manner but in dialogue and concert with existing representations and understandings, supplementing and reshaping them rather than simply discarding them. To move beyond delimiting and limiting categories of critique in American Studies requires that the geopolitical and disciplinary maps that structure and reproduce regions and nations as supposedly coherent but ultimately redundant territories are, if not wholly erased, at least obscured. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that such ‘evolutionary schemas may be forced to abandon the old model of the tree and descent’ to enable us to question the value of roots and the existence of neat genealogical models as analytical constants.<sup>140</sup> Abandoning these ‘old models’ orients the critical gaze elsewhere within the existing ‘schema’, not

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<sup>139</sup> Comer, ‘Postwestern’, 8.

<sup>140</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013 [1987]), 10.

imparting redundancy to it, but following it more as an ever-changing organism: ‘Under certain conditions, a virus can connect to germ cells and transmit itself as the cellular gene of a complex species: moreover, it can take flight, move into the cells of an entirely different species, but not without bringing with it “genetic information” from the first host’.<sup>141</sup> This proposed rearticulation of existing information can be aligned with calls within American Studies to reorient the discipline toward alternative configurations that might give rise to new comparative possibilities. Adams summarises her project in very similar, if more straightforward, terms to those employed by Deleuze and Guattari, stating ‘that many of the things we think we know about “American” culture appear very different when examined through transnational frames that include portions of Canada, the United States, and Mexico’.<sup>142</sup> Herein, the ‘cells’ of Deleuzian thought become nation-states with their ‘genes’ rendered more ‘complex’ through the ‘line of flight’ that the ‘transnational frame’ affords us. Moreover, whilst Adams acknowledges that studies of these three nations have ‘their own discrete histories and intellectual traditions’ the possibility for comparative work on North America has previously foundered due to the fact that it ‘has often proceeded in terms of bilateral conversations between the United States and its neighbours, rather than an equitable dialogue involving many different parties’.<sup>143</sup> This absent polyvocal dialogue can be reinstated through ensuring that the ‘genetic information’ of discrete histories and traditions is carried over from its ‘original hosts’.

The persistent danger in such an approach is the possibility of a collapse back into the framework or mode of thinking that is being critiqued. This is clear in the narratives of Cascadia and Aztlán with their oppositional regional re-fashioning at points displaying many of the declamatory tendencies of nationalism. As Alex Trimble Young notes, such recidivism is an ever-present hazard that results directly from the interlaced nature of Deleuze and Guattari’s thinking wherein ‘countercultural formations or oppositional political movements do not represent dialectical negations of the status quo

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Adams, *Continental Divides*, 7.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, 6.

but rather potentialities at constant risk of becoming reified and co-opted', an observation that echoes the fate of regionalism in its prior U.S. incarnation.<sup>144</sup> Extricating the alternative imaginings of borders and border regions from national frames is key if a hemispheric approach to American Studies is to avoid yet another recapitulation. Furthermore, it also requires an extrication of Deleuze and Guattari's thinking from its own obfuscated exceptionalist bent. The potential in Deleuzian thought is clear: it enables the liberatory impulse at work in imagined territories such as Cascadia or Aztlán to take flight. But, it is not quite so adept at crossing boundaries: the widespread use of their concept of de- and re-territorialisation in examinations of geopolitical borders is suggestive of the border as a distinct break between different territories, an epistemological interruption that is still reconciled to a pre-existing teleology. Hence, whilst I adopt the brand of rhizomatic regionalism that Campbell develops in his study of the U.S. West, I modify it so that the 'American rhizome' that Deleuze and Guattari explicitly name becomes hemispheric in its orientation.

Campbell's work attempts to cross borders in the wide array of texts that it addresses: chapters are given over to considerations of, for example, Sergio Leone's 'Spaghetti Westerns', the 'Tex Mex' music of Calexico, Guy Vanderhaeghe's labyrinthine novel *The Englishman's Boy* and assorted works by Sherman Alexie. Campbell is keen throughout *The Rhizomatic West* to look beyond not only the borders of his chosen region but also those of the nation. However, the transnational figuring of the West that is the aim of his project is never fully realised as the 'roots and routes' model that it develops always results in a return to the West: it looks at the West from a series of transnational positions, rather than projecting outwards from it in transnational directions. As such, it privileges the U.S. even as it attempts to deconstruct its most mythical region. It is possible to argue that this collapse back into the regional – and therefore, national – frame stems almost directly from Campbell's point of departure, Deleuze and Guattari's rumination on the 'American rhizome':

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<sup>144</sup> Alex Trimble Young, 'Settler Sovereignty and the Rhizomatic West, or, The Significance of the Frontier in Postwestern Studies' *Western American Literature* 48.1&2 (2013), 121.

America is a special case. Of course it is not immune from domination by trees or the search for roots. This is evident even in the literature, in the quest for a national identity and even for a European ancestry or genealogy (Kerouac going off in search of his ancestors). Nevertheless, everything important that has happened or is happening takes the route of the American rhizome: the beatniks, the underground, bands and gangs, successive lateral offshoots in immediate connection with an outside. American books are different from European books, even when the American sets off in pursuit of trees. *Leaves of Grass*. The conception of the book is different: the search for arborescence and the return to the Old World occur in the East. But there is the rhizomatic West, with its Indians without ancestry, its ever-receding limit, its shifting and displaced frontiers. There is a whole American “map” in the West, where even the trees are rhizomes. America reversed directions: it put its Orient in the West, as if it were precisely in America that the earth came full circle; its West is the edge of the East.<sup>145</sup>

The exceptionalist version of the U.S. that Deleuze and Guattari present here offers the promise of a differentiated portrait of the nation with its recourse to cultural forms not yet comfortably housed in the popular imagination. However, in its ahistorical freezing of indigeneity, the ‘special case’ of America has its rhizomatic potential rendered arborescent. Hartwig Isernhagen suggests that ‘to consistently write The Indian in their contemporary present, as a historical (and hence political) animal’ renders any representation of them, however sensitively constructed, still as the romantic stereotypes that the very worst of regionalist portrayals presented, Deleuze and Guattari fall into a similar trap above when, in their attempts to write the Indigenous subject as a contemporary figure, Indigenous ancestry is denuded in an attempt to integrate them into the nation of the U.S.<sup>146</sup> Jodi Byrd (Chickasaw), in her critique of colonialism, makes a similar point when she notes that ‘*A Thousand Plateaus* performs a global, nomadic reframing in which the frontier becomes, again, Frederick Jackson Turner’s site of transformation, possibility, and mapping’: here it is the Indigenous subject that is ‘transformed’ from oppressed colonised

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<sup>145</sup> Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 19.

<sup>146</sup> Hartwig Isernhagen, ‘Identity and Exchange: The Representation of “The Indian” in the Federal Writers’ Project and Contemporary Native American Literature’ In, Gretchen M. Bataille (ed) *Native American Representations: First Encounters, Distorted Images, and Literary Appropriations* (Lincoln, NE.: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 173.

figure to participant in the possibilities of the contemporary United States.<sup>147</sup> Clearly, Deleuze and Guattari's 'America' is problematic when it comes to interpreting subaltern or Indigenous subjects and objects. Nonetheless, I maintain that the concepts they develop can, when shown to be immanent within those same subjects and objects, address the ideological and imperialist dominance of the United States in North American cultural studies. In developing a hemispheric regionalism that proceeds from a number of Deleuzian positions, I demonstrate how, when nation is not the privileged object of study, these same positions and ideas can lose their imperialist, exceptionalist bent and reinstate their own potential for remapping whilst reviving the original promise of regionalism and, ultimately, realising the potential of hemispheric American Studies.

In this study's first chapter I examine a number of texts that explicitly address and articulate the North American borders that a hemispheric regionalism seeks to interrogate. In work by Américo Paredes, Laurie Ricou and Guillermo Verdecchia I trace the ways in which a number of Deleuzian concepts – lines of flight, minor literature and nomadism – can be read into the alternative conceptions of national borders that these texts present and that provide a means by which a hemispheric regionalism can draw and highlight connections across borders. In further distancing the present study from the strangely exceptionalist and occasionally essentialist versions of 'America' that Deleuze and Guattari explicate and encourage in others' work, I also consider the pertinence of a reinstatement of the metaphorical function of their concepts so that they allow more freely the development of hemispheric connections that are mindful of, but not beholden to, the materiality of border regions.

Developing a comparative and dialogical paradigm for this proposed hemispheric regionalism, Chapter Two outlines strategies for drawing alternative cartographies that do not collapse into essentialisms as with Aztlán and Cascadia. Close reading of Charles Bowden's literary non-fiction and Thomas King's work engenders an approach to reading borders that undercuts the privileged subjectivity

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<sup>147</sup> Jodi Byrd, *Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 13.

that U.S. ideology has over their constructions. In tracing a confluence of hemispheric bioregional and mythological cross-border and border-crossing narratives, the resultant framework smoothes the striated territory of the colonial nation-state and begins simultaneously to indigenise Deleuzian thought and consider alternative and oppositional North American sovereignties as a key tenet of hemispheric regionalism.

Combining the previously developed frameworks and analytical gestures, the study's final chapter poses two complex and intertwined hypotheses. Firstly, can a focus upon discrete North American regions in both their cultural productions and theoretical frameworks pry open the boundaries of American Studies so that the discipline might interrogate, from hemispheric positions, a broader range of material that speaks to and from transnational rather than national regions? And, can looking just beyond the border effect a transformation of the disciplinary canon and a rehabilitation of more marginal materials lost in a discipline that has substituted region (with all of its implied – and materially felt – locality, tradition and heteroglossia) for nation (with all of its ideological obfuscation and monoglossia)? Analysing the border-crossing music of Bruce Springsteen and The Band, the chapter offers a number of examples of how a hemispheric regionalism can reconfigure understandings of national histories that draw connections across spatial and temporal borders, and how looking at material through a lens sited just beyond national territory can affect productive rearticulations of it.

Throughout, I aim to develop innovative paradigms through which hemispheric analysis might be re-routed. Their pertinence for this task lies in the fact that the frameworks they advance are already present in the texts under consideration here. Texts that figure North American borders alternatively have developed their own strategies for delivering their remapping and the task undertaken here is to refashion these strategies so that they might bring to light the possibility for dialogical and comparative theorising and critique. Boundaries loom large in American Studies and, like their literal geopolitical border counterparts, they serve to include and exclude. In offering up a paradigm that originates precisely from



the border, this thesis demonstrates how an incrementally small territorial shift can affect and alter the discipline in equitable, ethical and hemispheric ways.

## I

## Lines of Flight: History, Geography, Ecology, Cartography

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Make a map, not a tracing

- Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 1987<sup>1</sup>

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French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, unlike his compatriot and fellow theorist Jean Baudrillard, maintained, and drew upon, a fascination with U.S. culture throughout his career. This is evidenced in the frequent appearance of U.S. culture in many of his writings. Baudrillard's ironic detachment in his treatment of U.S. society and culture – a stylistic device possibly chosen to mirror the predominant character he saw in his subject matter – is almost diametrically opposed to Deleuze's enthusiastic embrace of the same focus. For Baudrillard, the U.S. 'lives in perpetual simulation', and as such, one might reason that this project would deploy his post-structuralist thought as the means by which to open up alternative interpretative avenues for American Studies.<sup>2</sup> However, in Deleuze (and particularly in his collaborative works with Félix Guattari) we have a figure for whom many key ideas were inspired by, or found their conceptual embodiment in, U.S. culture, a figure who was belatedly embraced by the U.S. academy as a key thinker and theorist of the modern condition. Despite this apparently reciprocal admiration, Deleuzian theory provides the concepts and the vocabulary to both critique U.S. culture more radically *and* to begin to dismantle that culture's privileged position as the dominant object of study within American Studies.

Many of these concepts – the rhizome, lines of flight, nomadicism, the minor – receive their fullest explication in Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. A volume conceived of and written following Deleuze's one and only trip to the U.S. in 1975, its introduction states

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<sup>1</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013 [1987]), 12.

<sup>2</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *America* (London: Verso Books, 1988 [1986]), front matter.

that they believe that ‘America is a special case’.<sup>3</sup> This should not be read as an echo of exceptionalist thought, but rather as a recognition of the undoubted heterogeneous complexity of U.S. society and culture to be found beneath the homogenous surface advanced by proponents of U.S. exceptionalism and that formed a founding ideal of American Studies. What made it ‘special’ for Deleuze and Guattari was its embodiment of the dichotomous yet simultaneous search for roots and routes, a quest that reached its apotheosis in New Deal regionalism and its use of the trope of travel to solidify identity. Whereas Baudrillard seized upon this dichotomy – evinced in his own travel narrative, *America* – as evidence of the U.S. having ‘no past and no founding truth ... no primitive accumulation of time ... liv[ing] in perpetual simulation’, Deleuze and Guattari’s iteration of these self-same opinions is suggestive of something more processual and productive that can be mined from these conditions.<sup>4</sup> Chiming with the counter-cultural character of the figures that they saw perform or exchanged ideas with in the mid-1970s, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that ‘everything important that has happened or is happening has taken the route of the American rhizome: the beatniks, the underground, bands and gangs, successive lateral offshoots in immediate connection with an outside’.<sup>5</sup> Hence, whilst they note that the U.S. is ‘not immune from domination by trees or the search for roots ... the quest for a national identity’, they are also steadfast in their belief that dynamism, potentiality and alternative imaginings need not be absent from such quests.<sup>6</sup>

In opening *A Thousand Plateaus* with ‘Introduction: Rhizome’, Deleuze and Guattari waste little time in establishing their mode of thinking and critique. To some extent, disillusioned with developments in the post-structuralist tradition with which he was associated, Deleuze in particular searched for new

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<sup>3</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 19: Following his appearance at the Schizo-Culture conference in New York that Guattari had specifically organised to entice his collaborator to the U.S., the two undertook a road trip across the nation, meeting, in the process, the likes of Allen Ginsberg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Bob Dylan, Patti Smith, John Cage and William S. Burroughs, all of whom make appearances in *A Thousand Plateaus* or other, later works. Jason Demers’ fascinating historical excavation of this road trip notes the eclectic itinerary for Deleuze and Guattari’s road trip and its echoes of the real-and-imagined travels of Jack Kerouac (of whom Deleuze was enamoured): they departed from Lowell, Massachusetts – Kerouac’s birthplace and burial site – and terminated their travels in Big Sur, California where Kerouac had written two of his novels. Demers argues that much of Deleuzian rhizomatic thinking emerges from all of these encounters. Jason Demers, ‘An American Excursion: Deleuze and Guattari from New York to Chicago’ *Theory & Event*, 14.1 (2011) [Online: DOI: 10.1353/tae.2011.0007].

<sup>4</sup> Baudrillard, *America*, front matter.

<sup>5</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 19.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 19-20.

ways to excavate, organise and explicate knowledge: the U.S., with its still embryonic history, culture and identity, provided an apt site to find and develop such a method. Reflecting, in conversation with another of his collaborators, Clare Parnet, on the rise of post-structuralist thought in France, Deleuze points to that school of thought's inadequacies as existing in its over-codification into 'a system of points and positions, which are supposedly significant instead of proceeding by thrusts and crackings'.<sup>7</sup> Herein, Deleuze echoes what he and Guattari wrote when they proposed following a rhizomatic method to counter hierarchical approaches to critique. The rhizome, they suggest in *A Thousand Plateaus*,

is made only of lines: lines of segmentarity and stratification as its dimensions, and the line of flight or deterritorialization as the maximum dimension after which the multiplicity undergoes metamorphosis, changes in nature. These lines, or lineaments, should not be confused with lineages of the arborescent type, which are merely localizable linkages between points and positions.<sup>8</sup>

Increasingly skeptical of the philosophical tradition in which they were operating – with all of its historical positioning and traditions – Deleuze and Guattari's encounters with, and within, the U.S. convinced them that something different was possible in that nation's cultural terrain. They argued that 'American books are different from European books, even when the American sets off in pursuit of trees. *Leaves of Grass*'.<sup>9</sup> Whilst I will turn later in this thesis to Walt Whitman and his legacy as exemplars of the inertia and perpetuity of conservative ideology in U.S. thought and culture, Deleuze and Guattari's invocation of one of his most celebrated works, in only its title, demonstrates a possible terrain for formal and stylistic experimentation in the U.S. context that, it is possible to argue, does not fully materialise and, indeed, is shunned by the mainstream regionalist movement of the early twentieth century.

This chapter will examine the ways in which writings from the margins of the U.S. – from North America's borders – enact and enable many Deleuzian strategies to think and articulate the boundaries of history, culture and identity differently. In so doing, it demonstrates the possibilities for refashioning

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<sup>7</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Clare Parnet, *Dialogues II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002 [1987]), 37.

<sup>8</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 22.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

American Studies within proposed hemispheric frameworks. Américo Paredes' *George Washington Gómez* is positioned as a striking example of nomadicism and minor literature in its fashioning of alternative histories and identities in Mexican American culture; Laurie Ricou's *Salal: Listening for the Pacific Northwest Understory* and *The Arbutus/Madrone Files* illustrate the utility of following lines of flight from the realm of nature to comprehend cross-border regions; and Guillermo Verdecchia's *Fronteras Americanas/American Borders* illuminates the porosity of the continent's historical boundaries and the potential for rhizomatic chronologies that offer heterodox understandings of physical and psychological territories. Although, as Keith Woodward and John Paul Jones have noted, Deleuze and Guattari's work is 'replete with the language of borders', the most common use of their philosophy in the arenas of Border and Borderlands Studies has been an invocation of their theory of deterritorialisation.<sup>10</sup> Whilst this has proved fruitful terrain, a consistent criticism of this work has been that it appears to valorise a borderless world that both loses its distinctiveness and complexity and undermines the very real everyday violence of the border. Part of the problem here is inherent in Deleuze and Guattari's painstaking positioning of their work as decidedly materialist in orientation despite its apparent abstraction. Such emphasis upon materiality tends to obscure the related position that borders are also ephemeral. In order to overcome this problem my readings of border texts rely less on deterritorialisation – since this would risk accusations of celebrating the territory of the border as a site of mythical metamorphosis – and more on the interrelated concepts mentioned above. In reinstating metaphor – disavowed by Deleuze and Guattari for its ideational function – as a way in which to conceive of both Deleuzian concepts and borders themselves, I respond to Neil Smith and Cindy Katz's suggestion that 'if a new spatialized politics is to be both coherent and effective, it will be necessary to comprehend the interconnectedness of material and metaphoric space'.<sup>11</sup> Since my claim in this thesis is that a hemispheric American Studies can be realised by looking to and through border regions, the paradigms

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<sup>10</sup> Keith Woodward and John Paul Jones III, 'On the Border with Deleuze and Guattari'. In, Henk van Houtum, Olivier Kramsch and Wolfgang Zierhofer (eds) *B/Ordering Space* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 237.

<sup>11</sup> Neil Smith and Cindy Katz, 'Grounding Metaphor: Towards a Spatialized Politics'. In, Michael Keith and Steve Pile (eds) *Place and the Politics of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 68.

it develops must function metaphorically when the material territory of the border is not present. Concomitantly, in claiming that canonical material within American Studies as it is most broadly conceived of, can be opened up to new interpretative avenues by seeing them from the 'other' side of the border (that is, in considering their connections to regions beyond the nation), then, again, the model must be able to function in this dual fashion: as a combination of material and metaphorical that enables the marginal to become central and vice versa. This oscillating movement – across multiple borders, into and out of the canon, from the local to the global – relies on the potentiality and dynamism, the ceaseless momentum, of Deleuze and Guattari's concepts and their ability to alter, continually, our mappings of territories, whether of geopolitical nations or of disciplinary axioms. As such, an examination of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* allows for a consideration of how my proposed framework functions to reinvigorate studies of North American culture by crossing borders *and* enables a characterisation of the key concepts I make use of whilst further developing the rationale for challenging American Studies to alter its approach and objects of study.

### ***On The Road: Minor – Major – Minor***

The line of flight – the primary and fundamental function of the rhizome in Deleuzian thought – is one that *On the Road* follows. In this respect it is also important to note that Deleuze and Guattari's suggestion that Kerouac's novel exemplifies this concept and its implementation is not a retroactive analysis, but, rather, theirs is an immanent reading: the vocabulary that they deploy in their reading – speed, movement, territory, line of flight – is already, both explicitly and implicitly, present in *On the Road*. Whilst Kerouac's novel has become, in many respects, a victim of the codification it sought to challenge (indeed, it is now definitively a part of the canon), it nonetheless provides a striking example of the function and outcomes of the line of flight in literature. Russel West-Pavlov suggests that

Lines of flight are lines which lead away from the centred site of gaze and out of the ordered picture. Lines of flight are vectors which lead over the horizon, towards that which cannot yet be represented. They are escape routes out of the

cage of codification – codification of social practice, rules of behaviour, modes of thought, axiomatic philosophies.<sup>12</sup>

This statement could no better describe Kerouac's narrative had it been directed at the text itself. *On the Road* and its constituent four journeys across the U.S. are all lines of flight in this regard and, furthermore, in the manner of the rhizome, they also ceaselessly seek points of connection across the disparate geographies that they describe. However, as with many other significant U.S. cultural artefacts, the lines of flight that critics and scholars have drawn from Kerouac's novel and into the realm of critique have all too often re-incarcerated it in the 'cage of codification' it had striven so hard to escape. In the hands of the majority of the academy, *On the Road* becomes emblematic of a singular moment in U.S. culture, isolated and fashioned as a zeitgeist text; it becomes a representative example of those seemingly immovable tropes of the nation, the westward quest with its attendant Turnerian implications, and the 'American Dream' (albeit in this latter case as a meditation on its failure, but embroiled in its inescapable intangibility nonetheless). In spite of its multiply layered movement and its ceaseless momentum, *On the Road* finds its place in the immutable canon of 'The Great American Novel' through a selective stilling of its dynamic potentiality. Though Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty never leave the territorial boundaries of the United States in the course of Kerouac's narrative, the lines of flight that it affords the literary scholar are more numerous when considerations of that narrative are shifted beyond the national frame: when Jean-Louis Lebris de K  rouac, the son of French-Canadian immigrants who spoke only French until the age of six and whose early drafts of *On the Road* were written in Quebec French – or better still, *joual* – is reinstated into the discourse.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the importance of Mexico to Kerouac's imagination – as highlighted by Rachel Adams in *Continental Divides* – provides another line of flight to the alternative imagined geographies and territories of translation that North America affords and which can reinvigorate studies

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<sup>12</sup> Russell West-Pavlov, *Space in Theory: Kristeva, Foucault, Deleuze* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2009), 203.

<sup>13</sup> In this respect I must acknowledge Pierre Anctil, Louis Dupont, Eric Waddell and R  mi Ferland's edited collection *Un Homme Grand: Jack Kerouac at the Crossroads of Many Cultures* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1990), which takes as its starting point an examination of cross-border connections between Qu  bec and New England through readings of Kerouac; cf. Gabriel Anctil 'Les 50 ans d'On the Road - Kerouac voulait   crire en fran  ais' *Le Devoir* 5<sup>th</sup> September 2007 (Online) [<http://www.ledevoir.com/culture/livres/155613/les-50-ans-d-on-the-road-kerouac-voulait-ecrire-en-francais>]

of Kerouac's iconic novel. In so doing, the critic will be drawing a line of flight since such an approach follows 'a path of mutation precipitated through the actualisation of connections among bodies that were previously only implicit ... that releases new powers in the capacities of those bodies to act and respond'.<sup>14</sup> In this respect, scholars would do well to avoid the propensity to take literally Sal Paradise's lament that, '[h]ere I was at the end of America – no more land – and now there was nowhere to go but back' in their approaches to *On the Road*.<sup>15</sup>

At the time of their trip to the U.S., Deleuze and Guattari were also fashioning another concept that will prove invaluable in rearticulating American Studies: minor literature. This idea would be most fully elucidated in their 1975 analysis of the work of Franz Kafka and is conceptually related to many facets of their philosophy. Just as the rhizome and the line of flight refuse binary choices and operations, so too the concept of the minor rejects despotic dualisms and operates in terms of addition rather than subtraction. In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, '[m]inor languages do not exist in themselves: they exist only in relation to a major language and are also investments of that language for the purpose of making it minor'.<sup>16</sup> In other words, a minor language – the constituent feature of a minor literature – is a necessary reinvention of an existing major (dominant) language to communicate a different experience to that which is most readily articulated by the prevailing culture: 'Minor authors are foreigners in their own tongue'.<sup>17</sup> Kafka provides Deleuze and Guattari with their most fully-realised exploration of this notion since he is 'a Prague Jew writing in German', though it is not simply the case that writing in a language other than one's mother tongue constitutes a minor practice (if that were the case it would be an exhaustive task, given North America's immigrant character, to define and analyse its minor literatures).<sup>18</sup> If, as is well established, language imposes power relations – at the levels of grammar and syntax but also as utterance

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<sup>14</sup> Tamsin Lorraine, 'Lines of Flight' in, Adrian Parr (ed) *The Deleuze Dictionary* [Revised Edition] (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 147.

<sup>15</sup> Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (New York: Viking Press, 2007 [1957]), 77.

<sup>16</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 122.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ronald Bogue, 'Minoritarian + Literature' in, Adrian Parr (ed) *The Deleuze Dictionary* [Revised Edition] (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 171.



and enunciation – then a minor use of them seeks to disrupt those apparently in-built lexical hierarchies that will, in turn, disrupt the social and cultural order that is replicated and perpetuated in the major use of language. If a key aim of this project is to produce theory and praxis simultaneously then it is important to align my challenge to the current configurations of American Studies with the practices of minor literature. The existing hierarchies that are propagated through the ‘major’ language of American Studies will be contested by using that discourse’s own idioms and axioms but articulated differently in order to disrupt them, in order to make them ‘minor’. This thesis will ‘[u]se the minor language to *send the major language racing*’ as Deleuze and Guattari put it.<sup>19</sup> To adopt such an approach realises the movement and dynamism necessary to reinvigorate the conservative character of the discipline.

Though Deleuze and Guattari do not state as much, it is apparent that we might reasonably place Kerouac alongside Kafka as an author of minor literature. In developing his spontaneous prose style, Kerouac’s prosody defies the rules of the major language and its literature and, by extension, challenges the asymmetrical power relations promulgated by the existing dialect and its discursive replication. As Marco Abel ably demonstrates, *On the Road* ‘carefully separates itself from an identity politics based on a representational economy’ and, by doing so, realises another of the functions of a minor literature: the attempted representation of an as-yet-unknown future.<sup>20</sup> Abel suggests that Kerouac’s ‘novel maps out in aesthetic terms how this new America *might* look ... rather than re-presenting a pre-existent America, *On The Road* invents a new country through its minor poetics’.<sup>21</sup> In this way, not only is Kerouac’s novel a rhizomatic line of flight and, by extension, an example of minor literature, it also aligns with Deleuze and Guattari’s important insights on maps and techniques of mapping and cartography. If we accept Abel’s suggestion regarding *On the Road* and its separation from a ‘representational economy’, then the novel’s position within the canon of U.S. literature and its subsequent discursive use as an emblematic text of a

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<sup>19</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 122 (emphasis in original).

<sup>20</sup> Marco Abel, ‘Speeding across the Rhizome: Deleuze Meets Kerouac on the Road’, *Modern Fiction Studies*, 48.2 (2002), 229.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 235 (emphasis in original).

particular historical and cultural moment represents an attempt to reinsert it into a system that it disavows and distances itself from at the textual level. In so doing, the alternative map that Kerouac constructs and communicates through *On the Road* is rendered, in Deleuzian terms, a tracing. In *A Thousand Plateaus* the tracing is constructed as the antithesis of the map: not tracing in the sense of genealogy or archaeology – the uncovering of precedents and antecedents – uncomfortable truths that we might prefer to remain hidden but expose nonetheless, but rather tracings of the flimsy and superficial variety: the kind that might require its creators to cover the original with a semi-transparent sheet on which to draw their lines. ‘It is our view’, Deleuze and Guattari suggest, ‘that genetic axis and profound structure’ – those key orienting and organising functions of traditional maps – ‘are above all infinitely reproducible principles of *tracing*’.<sup>22</sup> Here, the lines that delimit nations and regions, reproduced and over-signified in nationalism and regionalism, are mere ‘tracings’, etchings across geography that become rooted and function ‘to describe a de facto state [and] to maintain balance in intersubjective relations’.<sup>23</sup> Hence, in rearticulating *On the Road*, the canon constructors of the spuriously termed and defined ‘American Literature’ denude the alternate imaginaries that it espouses through taking its alternative map and attempting to root it in an extant territory rather than maintaining and exploring the potential territory to which it points. One of Deleuze and Guattari’s forebears, Paul Ricoeur, makes plain the motivation for such a move when he cautions against cultural nationalism and suggests that attempts to ‘nurture national revendication’ often attempt to ‘unearth a ... profound personality ... and plant it in its past’.<sup>24</sup> Such plantings are of trees rather than of rhizomes, graftings to an arborescent hierarchy rather than a subterranean system that can proliferate and send shoots upwards into any territory. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that ‘[t]here is always something genealogical about a tree’: a reflection of nationalism and regionalism’s attempts to provide roots and explain origins.<sup>25</sup> Recalling Benedict Anderson, Rachel Adams elucidates this invidious purpose of both regionalism and nationalism, stating that ‘imagined communities [are] drawn together through

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<sup>22</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 12.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *History and Truth* (Evanston, IL.: University of Illinois Press, 1965 [1956]), 277.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

shared stories of origin and consolidated around a teleological sense of shared identity'.<sup>26</sup> It is these elements of the 'tracing' – their appeals to genealogy and claims to self-evident reality – that obscure the likes of the map provided by Kerouac, and that leads Deleuze and Guattari to label them as 'dangerous' since they 'inject ... redundancies and propagate ... them'.<sup>27</sup>

It is not only in the geopolitical configuration of the nation-state that such productions are endlessly, slavishly, reproduced: its replication in the critical gaze directed at its cultural artefacts is also the primary challenge I take on here. Such is the pervasive and persuasive nature of these overcoded structures that they are also reproduced in other fora too, not least those scholarly pursuits that claim to deconstruct them. Here, in area studies, 'traces' remain, which are capable of dictating disciplinary boundaries and replicating those closed and hierarchical structures that borders represent. Adams makes this point forcibly when she observes that 'the political map of North America has long served as a template for organizing the study of culture into separate, nation-based categories'.<sup>28</sup> Whilst we might, in light of the Deleuzian conceptions introduced earlier, seek to question whether this is a map or, rather, a tracing, the organising principle she identifies can be clearly aligned with the nature of the latter. To move beyond these delimiting and limiting categories of critique requires that the tracings that structure and reproduce regions and nations as supposedly coherent but ultimately redundant territories be, if not wholly erased, at least, obscured. '[E]volutionary schemas may be forced to abandon the old model of the tree and descent', Deleuze and Guattari suggest; their ideas follow a line of flight once more to question the value of roots and the existence of neat genealogical models as analytical constants.<sup>29</sup> Abandoning these 'old models' orients the critical gaze elsewhere within the existing 'schema', not imparting redundancy to it, but following it more as an ever-changing organism:

Under certain conditions, a virus can connect to germ cells and transmit itself as the cellular gene of a complex species: moreover, it can take flight, move into the cells of

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<sup>26</sup> Adams, *Continental Divides: Remapping the Cultures of North America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 7.

<sup>27</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 13.

<sup>28</sup> Rachel Adams, *Continental Divides*, 6.

<sup>29</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 10.

an entirely different species, but not without bringing with it ‘genetic information’ from the first host.<sup>30</sup>

This proposed re-articulation of existing information can be aligned with the increasing calls within ‘American’ Studies to reorient the discipline toward alternative configurations that might give rise to new comparative possibilities. Adams summarises her project in very similar, if more straightforward, terms to those employed by Deleuze and Guattari, stating ‘that many of the things we think we know about “American” culture appear very different when examined through transnational frames that include portions of Canada, the United States, and Mexico’.<sup>31</sup> Herein, the cells of Deleuzian thought become nation-states with their genes rendered more complex through the line of flight that the ‘transnational frame’ affords us. Moreover, whilst Adams acknowledges that studies of these three nations have ‘their own discrete histories and intellectual traditions’, the possibility for comparative work on North America has previously foundered due to the fact that it ‘has often proceeded in terms of bilateral conversations between the United States and its neighbours, rather than an equitable dialogue involving many different parties’.<sup>32</sup> This absent polyvocal dialogue can be reinstated through ensuring that the ‘genetic information’ of discrete histories and traditions is carried over from its ‘original hosts’.

The ‘transnational frames’ that Adams points to and the growing calls for hemispheric approaches to North America have preoccupied recent scholarship. Yet the continental framework she develops is perhaps the most beneficial in establishing the possible links between Deleuzian thought and the expanded vision of ‘American’ Studies that this project seeks to develop. In Adams’ terms, ‘[c]ontinents are fluid and malleable assemblages whose boundaries have shifted over time’.<sup>33</sup> Here, the reinstatement of a geological conception of territory and the geographies it plays host to, alongside the implicit suggestion of the pliability of its histories, encapsulates the inherent instability of cultures and identities. It also allows us to recall *A Thousand Plateaus* and to understand the meticulous – though

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Adams, *Continental Divides*, 7.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 7.

obscured – reasoning Deleuze and Guattari employ in choosing this as their title and the aptness of the approach to developing a new approach to ‘American’ Studies. Brian Massumi’s foreword to *A Thousand Plateaus* arguably spends more time than its authors in outlining the purpose of this title and the form of the book that follows (rather than having conventional chapters, Deleuze and Guattari refer to theirs as ‘plateaus’). To Massumi’s mind,

a plateau is reached when circumstances combine to bring activity to a pitch of intensity that is not ultimately dissipated in a climax. The heightening of energies is sustained long enough to leave a kind of afterimage of its dynamism that can be reactivated or injected into other activities, creating a fabric of intensive states between which any number of connecting routes could exist.<sup>34</sup>

The dynamism that Massumi suggests the plateau represents reflects the desire outlined by Adams to move beyond the inertia and ‘impasse of nation-based models of cultural study’.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, it also echoes her suggestion that the North American continent – itself made up of *geological* plateaus – is ever-shifting and therefore incapable of translating this activity into a climactic state where provisional observations can become solidified. In addition, the ‘afterimage’ afforded by the plateau equates to the necessity for remnants of prior incarnations – be they of nation, region, or discipline – to be layered *in to* any new understanding or interpretation, or *on to* any new map. The ‘tracing’ that Deleuze and Guattari identify as the antithesis of the map, with its reductive returning to originating points, elides these extant and numerous ‘connecting routes’ and ‘provid[e] a false sense of homogeneity ... limiting the possibilities of comparison across time and space’.<sup>36</sup> The map, however, is as unstable as the tectonic plates of the continent and as heterogeneous in its uses as the territory it might provisionally depict. As Deleuze and Guattari suggest:

The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind

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<sup>34</sup> Brian Massumi, ‘Translator’s Foreword’. In, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Continuum Books, 1987), xiv.

<sup>35</sup> Adams, *Continental Divides*, 7.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation.<sup>37</sup>

The maps of the *American Guide Series* – as discussed in my introduction – resist such revisionism and thus reveal themselves as tracings. Similarly, those who follow these tracings are involved in the repelling of alternative imaginings since they are positioned as tourists travelling predetermined routes that interpellate them into both the landscape and the partial version of history that has been inscribed upon it. Kerouac's alternative tour of the U.S., originally composed less than a decade after the publication of the *Guide Series* ceased, provides the kind of map to which Deleuze and Guattari refer with its meandering, criss-crossing of the nation effectively tearing up the tracing that has preceded it and constructing a mobile and modifiable physical and psychological portrait of the nation. And it is in this regard that *On the Road* chimes, again, with a key conceptual tool that Deleuze and Guattari introduce in *A Thousand Plateaus* and that forms an integral part of the framework this thesis seeks to develop: Kerouac's narrative travels across a smooth rather than striated space and in so doing becomes nomadic.

If the so-called maps that orient the gaze – touristic or critical – are shown to be tracings, then they are constructed via striation. Such striations, Deleuze and Guattari suggest, apply the rational and geometric, to the arational and rhizomatic, such that it 'closes off a surface and allocates it according to determinate intervals'.<sup>38</sup> This is the approach that the Federal Writers Project took to its subject matter and guide to each state. With their structured touring itineraries the guides exemplify this approach since, as Deleuzian philosophy reasons, 'in striated space, lines or trajectories are subordinate to points: one goes from one point to another'.<sup>39</sup> Smooth space – not to be confused with the flatness or homogeneity that Deleuze and Guattari's phraseology might evoke in this case – reverses this equation with points becoming secondary to trajectory, wherein 'the dwelling is subordinate to the journey'.<sup>40</sup> In exploring

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<sup>37</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 12.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 559.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 556.

<sup>40</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 556.

the potentiality of such dynamic and constantly mobile smooth spaces, Deleuze and Guattari refer to Wim Wenders' film *Kings of the Road*. I would suggest, however, that it provides an equally apt theorising of *On the Road*, not simply because of their shared peripatetic subject matter but also since Kerouac's novel provides a succinct example of smooth space in both its form and content. In terms of its formal characteristics, consider Deleuze and Guattari's suggestion that '[t]he smooth is the continuous variation, continuous development of form; it is the fusion of harmony and melody in favour of the production of properly rhythmic values, the pure act of the drawing of the diagonal across the vertical and the horizontal'.<sup>41</sup> Kerouac's famed spontaneous prose style and the technique he adopted to facilitate it (typing on to a continuous roll of paper that he had constructed to ensure no interruptions to his writing), epitomise the continuity and relentless motion that support the rhythm of the prosody of *On the Road*. The content of the smooth poetics that eventually emerges as the narrative of the novel relates a complementary smooth space since such space 'is filled by events or haecceities, far more than by formed and perceived things', that is, it concerns itself with the minor details of a particularised U.S. geography and encounters with a multitude of its individual inhabitants rather than presenting an all-encompassing nation-based narrative whose broad brush strokes would eschew such heteroglossia.<sup>42</sup>

By way of demonstrating the ways in which a paradigmatic incorporation of the Deleuzian notions of the rhizome, lines of flight, minor literature and nomadicism can facilitate the creation of a new and adaptable map for a hemispheric American Studies, in the remainder of this chapter I turn to consider the work of authors and theorists who, unlike Kerouac, exist on the margins of the discipline in its current configuration. Furthermore, their writings focus on the margins of the U.S. and its physical borders with Canada and Mexico, relating marginalised experiences of identity, history, geography, geology and ecology that conjure alternative cartographies and chronologies more diverse than those sketched out in relation to the canonised Kerouac novel outline above. As such, they are well placed both to theorise and

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<sup>41</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 478.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 557.

to demonstrate the possibilities for a centrifugal reconfiguration of disciplinary boundaries when we consider the national borders of North America as more than geopolitical and cultural constructs that have enabled ‘American’ Studies to enact, maintain and ingrain a centripetal doctrine that privileges and perpetuates a unisonant experience wedded to a nationalist ideology embedded in both its founding axioms and its enduring objects of study.

### ***George Washington Gómez: Past – Present – Future***

Having built a reputation as a folklorist and scholar of the Texas borderlands, Américo Paredes, during the later period of his career, attained prominence in the field of fiction and poetry for works composed throughout the majority of the twentieth century. Of particular interest here, and subject of much critical attention, is his 1990 novel, *George Washington Gómez*, which has been described as a ‘true precursor of the modern Chicano novel’ and, in its idiosyncrasies and ironies, puts forth not only a narrative of borderlands subject formation, but also a series of possible new approaches to North American culture within its form.<sup>43</sup> Written in the 1930s, its plot beginning in the 1910s, but not published until the 1990s, *George Washington Gómez* is nonsynchronous in ways that are instructive and productive. Put another way, and as Saldívar notes, *George Washington Gómez* was written during the height of the Great Depression, sites its narrative in the period of the 1915 south Texas uprising of Mexican Americans – the *sediciosos* (seditionists) – and speaks directly to issues of identity construction that have come into even sharper focus with the rise of Chicano/a cultural nationalism towards the end of the last century. Thus, Paredes’ novel is ‘a curiously polytemporal text’ that provides ‘a prefigurative instance of a new form of subjectivity captured in the process of construction’; as Saldívar has remarked of Paredes’ fiction and poetry as a whole, it ‘show[s] the production of a modern American “nation-space” in process, *in media res*, half-made, “caught in the act of ‘composing’ its powerful image” on a regional and global scale’.<sup>44</sup> Paredes’ very title for his

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<sup>43</sup> Américo Paredes, *George Washington Gómez* (Houston, TX.: Arte Público Press, 1990), back matter. Further references to this text appear as *GWG* and in parentheses.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 149; Ramón Saldívar, ‘Introduction’ in, Américo Paredes, *The Hammon and the Beans and Other Stories* (Houston, TX.: Arte Público Press, 1994), xi.



epic novel reveals the contradiction that it so successfully mines: the social and cultural realities of the Mexican American. In his introduction of the eponymous character as an infant, Paredes demonstrates what Ramon Saldívar – perhaps the foremost Paredes scholar – characterises as ‘the abstract process of subjectification that has already configured the child before his birth’.<sup>45</sup> As the infant’s parents and other members of the familial group gather to consider naming the child, ‘[t]he baby, meanwhile, was feeding greedily at his mother’s breast. Born a foreigner in his native land, he was fated to a life controlled by others. At that very moment his life was being shaped, people were already running his affairs, but he did not know it’ (*GWG*, 15). With its allusions to the Mexico-U.S. War and the subsequent annexation of ancestral lands and the subordinate subject positions of those who found themselves on the ‘wrong’ side of the border in the aftermath, the moment of George’s naming is pregnant with historical memory and contemporary concerns. Amongst such prior and current concerns is Paredes’ echoing of Pablo de la Guerra’s address to the California State Senate in April 1855 in the wake of the Land Law of 1851 that effectively paved the way for the appropriation of Mexican owned land within the expanded U.S. territories after the Mexico-U.S. war. The address in question saw de la Guerra intone, in defence of the rights of Mexican Americans, that they had been ‘abandoned by our nation, and as it were, awoke from a dream, strangers on the very soil on which we were native and to the manor born’, referencing the internal colonialism that Mexican Americans were subject to in the wake of the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo and that is experienced, affectively, by Paredes’ character several decades later.<sup>46</sup> It is also, in the name that he finds himself given, entangled with an as-yet-unseen future as his parents attempt to alleviate the impending actions and effects of the ‘others’ who will ‘control’ his life. Having considered and rejected religious names, familial and ancestral names and appellations of revolutionary import, a decision is finally reached:

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<sup>45</sup> Ramón Saldívar, *The Borderlands of Culture: Américo Paredes and the Transnational Imaginary* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006), 157.

<sup>46</sup> Pablo de la Guerra, Address to the California State Senate (April 1855). Full transcript cited in: Josh Gottheimer (ed) *Ripples of Hope: Great American Civil Rights Speeches* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2003).

“I would like my son...” she began. She faltered and reddened. “I would like him to have a great man’s name. Because he is going to grow up to be a great man who will help his people”. “My son,” said Gumersindo playfully. “He is going to be a great man among the Gringos”... After a while Gumersindo said, “About the name. I was thinking of the great North American, he who was a general and fought the soldiers of the king ... Wachinton. Jorge Wachinton” (GWG, 16).

Present at the naming, George Washington Gómez’s grandmother is unable to say the strange name and it emerges as “Guálinto ... Guálinto Gómez” (GWG, 17), and becomes the name by which the character is known during his formative years. Saldívar argues that in so doing, the child and his family ‘forestall the complications of always having to legitimate Guálinto’s right as a Texas Mexican to the name of George Washington’.<sup>47</sup> In the grandmother’s transliteration of the Anglo name, the dialectical struggle that Guálinto will become embroiled in is concretised and immediately serves to undo the utopic hopes that motivate his parents’ choice of name, thus ensuring that Guálinto’s dual identity cannot be reconciled.

Proceeding as something of a *bildungsroman*, the novel follows Guálinto through his schooling and considers educational sites as central ideological tools that shape his identity. Much as my overarching purpose in this thesis is to interrogate canonical elements of American Studies in its theory and practice and the objects of its study, Paredes shows the effects that these very factors have upon an intensely localised territory: the subconscious of Guálinto Gomez. Describing an emerging shame of his Mexican heritage, the narrator relates the increasing influence of the classroom upon Guálinto’s identity: ‘It was he who fought the British with George Washington and Francis Marrion the Swamp Fox, discovered pirate treasure with Long John Silver and got lost in a cave with Tom Sawyer and Becky Thatcher’ (GWG, 148). Hence, even the seemingly benign syllabi of Guálinto’s elementary education is, in reality, slowly interpolating him into a supposedly pluralistic American modernity that Paredes’ novel suggests is just

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<sup>47</sup> Saldívar, *Borderlands of Culture*, 160; it also bears mentioning that Guálinto and his family like to explain that the name is “Indian” which represents another possible layer of meaning to the multiple names of the titular character given that the ‘Plan de San Diego’ – the manifesto of the seditionist uprising in Texas in 1915 – calls for a coalition between Texas Mexicans, African and Asian Americans, and, crucially, American Indians.

as damaging to Texas Mexican identity as was its historic violent repression. Much research exists that examines the education system that existed at the time in which Paredes was writing *George Washington Gómez* and focuses upon both the segregation in place in schools and the materials that they were taught, described by the Texas State Historical Association as ‘the three C’s: common cultural norms, civics instruction, and command of English’.<sup>48</sup> This effectively created a cultural gap between the private and public spheres – which we might conceive of as smooth and striated spaces, respectively – experienced by Mexican American children that, in turn created a divide between the generations of the Tejano population: concerns that are echoed throughout Paredes’ novel. For Saldívar, *George Washington Gómez* illustrates that ‘what is at stake for the children is not simply a lifestyle choice of mere preference between neatly opposed alternatives but a more fundamental epistemological crisis of subject formation’, and with this comes the implication that Paredes’ novel concerns itself not only with the identity formation of his eponymous protagonist, but also with the ways in which cultural knowledges are structured and presented more broadly and, ultimately, how they produce differentiated subjects.<sup>49</sup> For Guálinto this differentiation does irreparable damage to his psychic self:

So, at eight years of age, after having finished low first with Miss Josephine, Guálinto passed to high second with Miss Huff, and in so doing entered American school at last. Under Miss Huff’s guidance he began to acquire an Angloamerican self, and as the years passed ... he developed simultaneously in two widely divergent paths. In the schoolroom he was an American; at home and on the playground he was a Mexican ... It would be several years before he fully realized that there was not one single Guálinto Gómez. That in fact there were many Guálinto Gómezes ... The eternal conflict between two clashing forces within him produced a divided personality, made up of tight little cells independent and

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. Gilbert G. Gonzalez, *The Education of Mexican Children in the Era of de Jure Segregation* (Philadelphia: Balch Institute Press, 1991); Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., *"Let All of Them Take Heed": Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987); Jose E. Vega, *Education, Politics, and Bilingualism in Texas* (Washington: University Press of America, 1983); [<https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/khmmx>]

<sup>49</sup> Saldívar, *Borderlands of Culture*, 164.

almost entirely ignorant of each other, spread out all over his consciousness,  
mixed with one another like squares on a checkerboard (*GWG*, 147)

So significant is this closing statement that Saldívar titles his own interpretation of *George Washington Gómez*, 'The Checkerboard of Consciousness'.<sup>50</sup> Developing some of the insights advanced by Susan Gilman, Saldívar enters into dialogue with Paredes' novel via the philosophy of a figure from beyond the U.S.' national boundaries: C. L. R. James. Gilman's essay deftly demonstrates the different political uses that José Martí and Roberto Fernández Retamar – as Latin American intellectuals – make of Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona* and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in comparison to their treatment by, and within, the canon of American literature. According to Saldívar and Moya, in Gilman's transnational critique, these novels are transplanted 'from their somewhat devalued place within the canon of American literature and resituate[d] ... in a hemispheric framework' and, hence, 'go from being examples (albeit powerful ones) of a denigrated tradition of women's sentimental reform literature to being the central and originary texts of the canon of Our American literature'.<sup>51</sup> Saldívar, in his invocation of James – the revolutionary Caribbean thinker – attempts a similar re-situating of work that falls outside of, or, at best, resides within the margins of, the American literary canon. That he does so with an author and theorist associated with a very specific location, demonstrates the validity and vitality inherent in a method that intertwines the seemingly incompatible terms of regionalism and transnationalism. Indeed, in many ethnographic studies of migration – including those that focus upon the U.S.-Mexico border – these terms have become wholly compatible. If this is the case in studies of the corporeal migrant body as it crosses the border, then the culture and its circulation in artefacts might also reasonably reconsider regionalism and transnationalism as harmonious concepts too.

Saldívar's use of James as a way into an analysis of *George Washington Gómez* is striking in terms of another seeming incompatibility: it is both an unusual yet obvious tactic. For Saldívar, 'James's analyses

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<sup>50</sup>Saldívar, *Borderlands of Culture*.

<sup>51</sup>Paula M. L. Moya and Ramón Saldívar, 'Fictions of the Trans-American Imaginary', *Modern Fiction Studies* 49.1 (2003), 11.

of culture, writing, and politics are particularly instructive in the ways they consider issues of cultural production in relation to personal consciousness and across national boundaries and historical eras', and he considers – given his prominence in Caribbean Studies – that his relative absence from postcolonial and subaltern studies outside of that area, and its replication in the broader American Studies field, is a puzzling oversight.<sup>52</sup> Of particular pertinence to Saldívar's critique is James' concern 'with situating the past in relation to the present in order to extract from it a politics for a possible future', which is a strikingly ideal way in which to conceive of Paredes' novel and its purpose.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, in envisioning this 'possible future' it aligns with one facet of a minor literature since this 'concept anticipates and, in so doing, produces the future, an audience "yet-to-come"' using the past and the present as 'a collective assemblage of enunciation [that] makes possible the invention of a people to come'.<sup>54</sup> The alternative but unrealised outcome for Guálinto – the later insurgent Chicano/a identity – reflects this 'assemblage' but, in Paredes' novel, the assembling of identity is controlled not by the character's heritage in concert with his present but by the assimilative processes he is subjected to by the state.

It is in this 'process' of 'producing' identity that the titular character of *George Washington Gómez* finds himself in his reminiscing on his American schooling. Paredes' eponymous subject lays bare the interpolative process and its aetiology: 'George Washington Gómez secretly desired to be a full-fledged, complete American without the shameful encumbrance of his Mexican race. He was the product of his Anglo teachers and the books he read in school, which were all in English. He felt a pleasant warmth when he heard the "Star-Spangled Banner"' (*GWG*, 147-48). Here the 'checkerboard' of Guálinto's identity is brought into sharp relief, for as he is being 'gently prodded toward complete Americanization' in the state school system, 'he also heard from the lips of his elders songs and stories that were the history of his people, the Mexican people' (*GWG*, 148). But I would contend that the 'checkerboard' that Saldívar hones

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<sup>52</sup> Saldívar, *Borderlands of Culture*, 145: the point regarding James' absence from mainstream avenues of scholarship is more fully developed in his footnotes; James' appearance in Saldívar's critique could also be read as an act of academic rehabilitation for an overlooked thinker in much the same way as his broader focus on Paredes provides.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>54</sup> Abel, 'Speeding Across the Rhizome', 229; Ronald Bogue 'Minoritarian + Literature', 171.

in on is specifically designed and initiated by the state to accommodate the tensions between Guálinto's two identities, rather than as an internal and organic manifestation that emerges as a form of coping mechanism for the character.

That Paredes is celebrated in Steiner's *Regionalists on the Left*, which focuses its own gaze on the U.S. West, allows us to conceive of his south Texas borderlands as a constituent part of that region. Others might consider it to be a part of the south – further cementing the claim that regions are malleable entities – but, for my purposes here, its Western aspect is most useful. In so doing it is possible to begin to bring to bear some of the insights from New Western History and the later school of Postwestern Studies – remarked upon in my introduction – in considering what *George Washington Gómez* can provide us as an exemplar – both in terms of content and form – of a re-configured field of American Studies. In his Deleuzian-derived analysis of the U.S. West, Neil Campbell spends much time in his introductory remarks to *The Rhizomatic West* considering the role of 'the grid' in comprehending the multifaceted geography and polyvocal culture of the region:

One of the defining geometrical images of thought in the United States has been the grid as an organizing principle for settlement of towns and cities, then outward into the control, possession, and acculturation of nature itself, and more generally as a metaphor for contained, bounded ways of thinking. One cannot think of the West as rural or urban space without visualizing the *powerful checkerboard symmetries* of the meshlike grid as it arrests and orders space, seemingly cutting up and arranging nature into culture, ordering chaotic flows into a defined "schedule".<sup>55</sup>

Going undeveloped by Campbell, however, is the idea of the 'powerful checkerboard' and an understanding of where it derives its power, something that Paredes' novel, despite its one fleeting mention of the analogy, develops in meaningful ways. The checkerboard with its neat striations is echoed in Guálinto's 'divided personality' with its 'tight little cells independent ... of each other' (*GWG*, 147),

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<sup>55</sup> Neil Campbell, *The Rhizomatic West: Representing the American West in a Transnational, Global, Media Age* (Lincoln, NE.: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 8-9; emphasis mine.

and this checkerboard is created within him, deliberately, by the nation that is attempting to acculturate him. Deleuze and Guattari, in one of the constituent plateaus of their *A Thousand Plateaus* – ‘Treatise on Nomadology’ – demonstrate how this is accomplished in their rumination on the game of chess that makes use of just such a checkerboard as its basis for play. Chess, in Deleuze and Guattari’s terms, is ‘a game of State’ in which ‘it is a question of arranging a closed space for oneself, thus of going from one point to another, of occupying the maximum number of spaces with the minimum number of pieces’.<sup>56</sup> In this analogy, Guálinto’s checkerboard personality is the result of the ongoing colonisation of his identity enacted by the schooling he receives in the national mythology of the U.S. and the reliance upon it that he must develop in order to remain socially and culturally mobile. As the narrator of *George Washington Gómez* states: ‘Texas history is a cross that he must bear. In the written tests, if he expects to pass the course, he must put down in writing what he violently misbelieves’ (*GWG*, 149). Guálinto must play this game, and in so doing, more and more of his identity is ‘occupied’ whilst simultaneously keeping distinct the separation between his two identities, lest the new and hybrid subjectivity that is in its embryonic stages should emerge (as it would do later in the constructions of Chicano/a identity that Paredes foreshadows); his subconscious is consciously constructed, in part, by the nation-state. In counterpoint to Chess as a game reliant on striations, consolidations of territory and associated with the State, Deleuze and Guattari offer the game of ‘Go’ as an alternative vision for ordering space: an analogy that allows for and encourages hybridity and provides the basis for a mode of thinking apt to my aims in this thesis.

In an entry on ‘Nomadicism’ in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, Clare Colebrook notes that nomadic – or smooth, rather than striated – space is not ‘undifferentiated, but ... its differences are not those of a chessboard (cut up in advance, with prescribed moves)’.<sup>57</sup> For the player of ‘Go’, in Deleuze and Guattari’s terms, and in contrast to the Chess player, ‘it is a question of arraying oneself in an open space

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<sup>56</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 411.

<sup>57</sup> Clare Colebrook ‘Nomadicism’ in, Adrian Parr (ed) *The Deleuze Dictionary* [Revised Edition] (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 187.

... the movement is not from one point to another, but becomes perpetual, without aim or destination, without departure or arrival'.<sup>58</sup> We might suggest here that the counters – the game pieces – of 'Go' represent the ambulant mechanism that Deleuze and Guattari are seeking in their 'Treatise on Nomadology', in which things do not have determinate properties and are not subject to 'the despotic world of stratified meaning'.<sup>59</sup> In seeking other voices to supplement understandings of region, integrating such a nomadic doctrine into the wider reframing of regionalism and American Studies sought here, Goldman's observation that '[n]otwithstanding the myth of pilgrims' progress that animates both historiographic and literary understandings of the United States ... Americans have always traveled across the continent in more than one direction' seems particularly pertinent in.<sup>60</sup> To follow the striae of the national mythology, with its predetermined, prescribed destination, leads only to an undifferentiated interiority; to follow regional traffic, whether human, historical or cultural, 'in more than one direction', through those smooth spaces outside, inside and beyond the grid, or checkerboard, allows us to enter and rearticulate this privileged inside from the outside. Guálinto Gómez's eventual transformation into George G. Gómez after his disavowal of his Mexican heritage at the close of Paredes' novel represents the triumph of the striated U.S. ideology and national mythology that he has been subjected to, over the smooth space of the Mexican folklore present in the other half of his bifurcated upbringing. In these terms, Guálinto embraces the imposed subject position of migrant: an appellation that Deleuze and Guattari are at pains to differentiate from the nomad and that figure's association with smooth space. As literal figures, the migrant and the nomad are both defined by movement. Deleuze and Guattari, however, see a fundamental difference between the two. The migrant 'goes principally from one point to another, even if this second point is uncertain, unforeseen, or not well localized'; there is always a destination in their mind, a point at which their territory can be consolidated and in which they are

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<sup>58</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 411.

<sup>59</sup> Thomas Hugh Crawford, 'The *Paterson Plateau*: Deleuze, Guattari and William Carlos Williams', in Ian Buchanan and John Marks (eds) *Deleuze and Literature* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2000), 58.

<sup>60</sup> Anne E. Goldman, *Continental Divides: Revisioning American Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), xi.



subsumed into a hierarchy once more.<sup>61</sup> In contrast, ‘the nomad goes from point to point only as a consequence and as a factual necessity ... points for him [sic] are relays along a trajectory’: constant movement is his defining characteristic, he ‘has several base camps, temporary consolidations of territory’ and, in always moving, he resists incorporation into the striated space of the state through which he roams.<sup>62</sup> In his roaming, ‘[t]he life of the nomad is the intermezzo’, the ‘in-between’; by always being between points of striated space – of the gridded and geometrical – the nomad enters into smooth space, wherein his movement is no longer ‘confined as by gravity to a horizontal plane, and limited by the order of that plane to preset paths between fixed and identifiable points’.<sup>63</sup> Hence, in resisting traveling a prescribed path, which, as Deleuze and Guattari concede, ‘is always between two points’, the nomad’s chosen trajectory ‘give[s] that space its peculiar quality’.<sup>64</sup> The ‘peculiar qualities’ of both the nomad and the smooth space that he occupies can be understood in the ways in which it approaches and regards difference.

*George Washington Gómez* is a narrative full of spaces of just such peculiar quality. That I argue above that Guálinto accepts the striation of his identity and his imposed migrant positioning – in his transformation into the fully assimilated George G. Gómez and, at the novel’s close, a C.I.A. operative charged with overseeing ‘border security’ (*GWG*, 299) – is not to say that Paredes’ fiction does not also envisage entirely different outcomes for Chicano/a subjects. In this, I am in agreement with Saldívar’s statement that ‘[i]n the end, Guálinto’s individual fate is of less concern to the narrative than is the social significance of its articulation with the future’.<sup>65</sup> What Saldívar suggests throughout his analysis is that *George Washington Gómez* pre-empts the eventual emergence of a space for the articulation of borderlands

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<sup>61</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 443.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid; Simon O’Sullivan, ‘Cultural Studies as Rhizome: Rhizomes in Cultural Studies’ (2002) [Available online: <http://simonosullivan.net/articles/cultural-studies-as-rhizome.pdf>] (Accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> October 2011), 89.

<sup>63</sup> Brian Massumi, *A User’s Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari* (London: Massachusetts University Press, 1993), 6; Mexican migrants could be seen to trouble some of these distinctions not least in their frequent employment as farm labourers wherein work would be seasonal and therefore following, in some respects, a pre-planned route not dissimilar to the Deleuzian definition of the migrant. Concurrently, this migratory pattern also echoes the ‘factual necessity’ and ‘consequence’ of the nomad definition. Mexican migrants then seem to exist, paradoxically, in a liminal state within the liminal ‘intermezzo’.

<sup>64</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 380; Colebrook ‘Nomadicism’, 187.

<sup>65</sup> Saldívar, *Borderlands of Culture*, 185.

identities as embodied by Chicano/a subjects, decades before such terms began to carry any sustained ideological impulse. Paredes achieves this through the concurrent development of a smooth transhistorical space alongside the striations of the contemporary moment to which Guálinto, eventually, succumbs.

The smooth transhistorical space is what allows Paredes' work to project towards an ethno-nationalist future in which hybridity is an inevitable cornerstone of identity and its cultural inscription, and it is also invoked within the narrative as a not entirely oppositional but certainly more viable version of the past than the linear history that is fed to Guálinto and his fellow Texas Mexicans.<sup>66</sup> As the title character edges ever closer to his eventual full adoption of middle-class American values, a recurring dream begins to trouble him: Guálinto re-envision history as he finds himself in 1836 in the aftermath of the Battle of San Jacinto and Santa Anna's surrender: in this subconscious resurrection of his distaste for history lessons earlier in the book, the narrator intones 'The Mexicotexan knows about the Alamo, he is reminded of it often enough' (*GWG*, 149). In the dream, George Washington Gómez becomes 'the leader of his people' that his parents had hoped for as, under his military leadership, 'Texas and the Southwest will remain forever Mexican ... he would defeat not only the army of the United States but its navy as well. He would reconquer all the territory west of the Mississippi river and recover Florida as well' (*GWG*, 281-82). Herein, history becomes a smooth space – a space existing within the striated space of 'official' linear history – that can be configured as an alternative to those state histories that might seek to render the heteroglot zone of the border as but one more monologic U.S. region. That it is presented within the narrative as a dream should not detract from its power for future reconfigurations of (in this instance, but not exclusively as will be explored as this thesis develops) Chicano/a identity. Patricia Price, in her own contribution to considerations of the importance of story to definitions of place, builds her entire project from the fragments of a dream:

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<sup>66</sup> Though, of course, it is important to note that the Chicano Movement was also guilty of adopting an essentialist position in terms of its cultural nationalism that could be seen to preclude alternative forms of hybridity and which provides Gloria Anzaldúa with the motivation to later critique the movement.

As with dreams, the lines between fiction and nonfiction, truth and fantasy, reality and illusion become blurred and one wonders what the difference really is . . . the ontological status of the dream is not what makes it important. Rather, it is the way that this dream provides an entry point for thinking about place in general and claims to specific places – the epistemology of the dream, if you will – that makes it useful here.<sup>67</sup>

This ‘dream epistemology’ is what allows Paredes’ novel to be so successful in pre-empting the eventual development of Chicano/a cultural consciousness that Saldívar and others have noted, a site that provides a bridge between the real and the imagined. Therefore the space of the dream is nomadic, as it is not, recalling Colebrook’s comments earlier, subject to predetermined movements and it relates as much to the community as it does the individual. Deleuze and Guattari meditate on this point in their plateau ‘One or Several Wolves?’ wherein a patient undergoing schizoanalysis describes the unpredictability of her companions in a dream as ‘swirl[ing], go[ing] north, then suddenly east; none of the individuals in the crowd remains in the same place in relation to the others. So I too am in perpetual motion’.<sup>68</sup> Not only does this ‘perpetual motion’ recall the predominant state of the nomad and its attendant mode of thought, but it also points to the provisional nature of both Guálinto’s dream and the history upon which it is based, and the identity that it subsequently attempts (though it fails in Guálinto’s case) to produce within him and his wider community. Saldívar is particularly insightful in his reading of the function of the recurrent dream in the closing portion of *George Washington Gómez*:

In this return of the repressed, not of the classical unconscious but of historicity itself, Guálinto’s buried memories and childhood daydreams erase the apparently resolved identity crisis by reinscribing over that presumed resolution the provisional quality of its instrumental form. If history can be erased and overwritten, repressed and forgotten, then perhaps another kind of history, an anamnestic history, can be layered over prior ones, making them lose their forgetting.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Patricia L. Price, *Dry Place: Landscapes of Belonging and Exclusion* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), xvi.

<sup>68</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 33.

<sup>69</sup> Saldívar, *Borderlands of Culture*, 173.

This altered version of history with its ‘layers’ might be equated with the idea of the palimpsest: the overwriting of previous incarnations and something which has a long history – especially in imperial mapmaking – in colonial Mesoamerican history and culture.<sup>70</sup> However, in this instance the epistemological stance that the dream substantiates has more in common with the related concept of pentimento. Therein, the previous inscription is not always immediately obvious nor visible but, as time passes and the work begins to fade and age, what was beneath the surface reemerges. The dream of Guálinto – like the entire manifesto for Chicano/a identity construction that *George Washington Gómez* postulates – becomes transhistorical in just such fashion: the experiences of a previous epoch are transported to a new context. Guálinto’s dream recalls (though re-envisioning the outcome) the historical annexation of Mexican territory to remind him of the psychological colonisation he is undergoing in his present. Paredes’ novel explores the nascent politics of borderlands identity construction in the Depression-era United States, foreshadowing the fuller development of that vital paradigm decades in the future.

Deleuze and Guattari have much to say about history that can further develop our understanding of its ideological function and offer avenues for transgressing its boundaries: de-bordering it and American Studies simultaneously. In relation to the recurrent dream in *George Washington Gómez*, it is worth considering their suggestion that ‘[h]istory may try to break its ties to memory; it may make the schemas of memory more elaborate, superpose and shift coordinates, emphasize connections, or deepen breaks’.<sup>71</sup> We see this process enacted in Guálinto’s dream and we see its purpose – the creation of ‘punctual “history-memory” systems and diagonal or multilinear assemblages, which are in no way eternal’ – in the suggested provisionality of his developing identity.<sup>72</sup> Paredes’ novel, as I suggest above, is transhistorical in both its content and form and this cultural artifact encapsulates the Deleuzian belief that ‘[t]here is no

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<sup>70</sup> cf. Raymond B. Craib, *Cartographic Mexico: A History of State Fixations and Fugitive Landscapes* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004): Craib details many examples of traditional tribal maps being seized and rearticulated by Spanish colonists for their own ends.

<sup>71</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 345.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

act of creation which is not transhistorical and does not come up from behind or proceed by way of a liberated line'.<sup>73</sup> In other words, this encompasses the material from which an alternative vision of a past, a present or a future, already exists; it just requires liberating from its current position and made a line of flight to an alternative milieu. In addressing extant material in this way, the homogenising process that it has undergone can be undone and its heteroglossia reinstated. Looking to the border, or through it as a theoretical lens, provides the ideal territory from which to proceed in this endeavour since it allows for a reversal of the function of the border as a delimiting line in all of its forms. According to Deleuze and Guattari, '[m]ultiplicities are defined by the outside: by the abstract line, the line of flight or deterritorialisation according to which they change in nature and connect with other multiplicities'.<sup>74</sup> The border, as a fundamentally 'abstract line', that in its predominant ideological positioning engenders and perpetuates a myriad of binaries, can thus become a transversal territory that enables multiplicity. Making the border a smooth space – historically, geographically, culturally – as Paredes does so compellingly in *George Washington Gómez*, is but one way in which the border might be made a line of flight and function with greater visibility and vigour in a truly North American cultural studies. The figurative occupant of this smooth space – the nomad – with its perpetual peripateticism provides another line of flight into other ways in which altering our conception of borders might be employed to dismantle their entrenched dualism. In one more insight from Saldívar, there are the beginnings of another way in which the border might be made multiply mobile by returning to the natural features of ecology and geology that refuse to acquiesce to the ideologically 'naturalised' border:

In *George Washington Gómez*, we see the formlessness of this mobility figured in the instability of the hero's historical position, between social classes and racial communities, and between a past not yet done with and a future not yet differentiated from the past. In the trajectory of his life, the present does not appear as the end point of a seamless forward movement. Instead, the present flows riverlike in a slow and sometimes reversible course of swirls, eddies,

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 8.

cross- and countercurrents ... Guálinto's life is thus linked by metonymy in the most fundamental of ways to the bordering river.<sup>75</sup>

The Rio Grande – the demarcating line between Paredes' home town of Brownsville, Texas and Matamoros, Tamaulipas on the southern side of the river – despite its literally fluid character has, in typically regionalist ways, become solidified in its predominant characterisation. A reinstatement of the unpredictable character of the bordering river raises productive possibilities for articulating alternative understandings of North American borders. In order for these ideas to gain traction it is first necessary to create a bridge between a pair of seemingly incompatible terms: the material and the metaphorical.

### **Fluid Borders: Overcoming the Problem of Metaphor**

When the Rio Grande was codified as the border between the U.S. and Mexico after 1848 it was assumed that, alongside its history as a long-used territorial marker and the fact that it was, in most places, difficult to cross, the river would acquiesce to its bordering role: that nation might somehow harness nature. Major William Emory in his 1856 boundary survey had doubts, however: 'the bed of the river sometimes changes', he concluded, 'and transfers considerable portions of land from one side to the other'.<sup>76</sup> Hence, the river itself came to continue the rearranging of national territories in much the same way as the U.S.-Mexico war had done on a considerably larger scale. Despite this difference in the magnitude of its effect, it nonetheless ensured that portions of the border were dynamic and ever-changing, with devastating floods in 1860 and 1864 – particularly in the El Paso/Ciudad Juarez region – etching new channels for the river, serving to create greater distance between the 'solid ground' of the two nations in some areas, whilst bringing them into closer proximity in others. Such was the Rio Grande's refusal to play its stable bordering role that it wasn't until 1964 and the Chamizal Convention that the border was fully ratified in an agreement between the two nations. The Chamizal – an area of contested land that had been Mexican territory prior to the floods of the 1860s but then found itself attached to the

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<sup>75</sup> Saldivar, *Borderlands of Culture*, 186.

<sup>76</sup> Cited in: Paul Kramer, 'A Border Crosses', *The New Yorker* (September 20<sup>th</sup> 2014) [Online: <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/moving-mexican-border>] (Accessed September 27<sup>th</sup> 2014).

U.S. in the wake of the river's change of course – would become notorious through the first half of the twentieth century as its hazy and disputed boundary failed to stop Mexicans heading north nor U.S. citizens heading south during the prohibition era in search of alcohol. Paul Kramer, writing on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the agreement that finally brought the territory into line, suggests that

The Chamizal's early twentieth century was built on ambiguity and political stagnation; after 1960, everything changed. John F. Kennedy's Cold War efforts to win goodwill abroad, the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, Soviet intervention in the island, and Mexico's refusal to comply with a U.S.-led embargo opened American policymakers to reforms that could close old breaches and fasten the rest of the hemisphere to the capitalist North.<sup>77</sup>

This shoring up of breaches can be seen to be historically related to the nation-building exercise of the conflict that had chosen to use the river as the final statement of land ownership, though in the case of the 1960s this was as much about sealing breaches in the U.S.' imagined status as it was to do with the sealing of the physical border. Nonetheless, part of the Chamizal Convention called for the creation of a new trench for the Rio Grande to course through in an attempt to make the river more attentive to its role as the border marker. Kramer notes in his account that in 1967 at the opening of the jointly-constructed trench, a dam was exploded with great ceremony by engineers so that the new trough would be filled by the river. Unfortunately there was not sufficient water to fill the 160-foot-wide and 15-foot-deep concrete channel and a nearby irrigation ditch was required to increase the flow. Kramer remarks that this ensured that '[a] compelling illusion – that nature could be made to carve mankind's self-divisions into the earth – had for a moment been preserved'.<sup>78</sup> Hence, the river to which Saldívar links Guálinto's fractured identity is in constant competition with those who would wish to define it, in much the same way as Paredes' character is representative of the conflict between a possible fluid and dynamic hybrid identity and the more tightly controlled identity he is interpellated into by the nation-state.

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<sup>77</sup> Kramer, 'A Border Crosses', np.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

Such competing claims to the physical and psychological territories of the border I would suggest feed directly into Clare Fox's choice of title for her exploration of U.S.-Mexico border culture. *The Fence and The River* neatly encapsulates the duality of the border as something simultaneously fixed and fluid. In this way, the literal and metaphorical status of the border is foregrounded and follows Gloria Anzaldúa's own seminal metaphor for the U.S.-Mexico border: 'una herida abierta' [an open wound].<sup>79</sup> Similarly, Néstor García Canclini in *Hybrid Cultures* utilises metaphor to enunciate the effects of the border, describing Tijuana, for example, as 'one of the greatest laboratories of postmodernity', suffusing that metropolitan area that abuts the border with a metaphorical sense of it being a site of experimentation.<sup>80</sup> Metaphors as ways in to thinking about and theorising borders are becoming something of a commonplace tactic. Nearly two decades ago, in their call for a comparative historical approach to borderlands, Michiel Baud and Willem Van Schendel made liberal use of them and point to the ongoing pertinence of such rhetorical devices when stating that '[t]o highlight the temporal aspect of borders and borderlands, we may use an organic metaphor with a long tradition in border studies, that of the "life cycle"'.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, within the same essay they suggest that in 'us[ing] a musical metaphor, the borderland acts as an accordion that contracts and expands to the pressures of social, economic, and political developments on both sides of the border. In this way it produces, as it were, a complex melody over time. It is one of the challenges of border studies to capture and interpret this melody'.<sup>82</sup>

More recently, Heather Nicol has devoted an entire essay to the various 'border metaphors' that have, historically and contemporaneously, structured and informed depictions and understandings of the border at the 49th parallel. Herein, metonymic walls, fences, and gates function as "border metaphors" [that] have facilitated and resisted American hegemony ... [and] reflect broader hegemony discourses at

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<sup>79</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 2007), 19.

<sup>80</sup> Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. Trans. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. Lopez (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 225.

<sup>81</sup> Michiel Baud and Willem Van Schendel, 'Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands'. *Journal of World History* 8.2 (1997), 223.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, 225.



play in transnational spaces'.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, as Nicol notes, the border itself functions as a persistent metaphor in and of itself, when she states that 'the border – both as a metaphor and very tangible symbol of territorially referenced identity – remains embedded within the way in which American hegemony within North America is articulated, mobilized, and resisted'.<sup>84</sup> In all of its metaphorical manifestations, what is most interesting and productive in Nicol's analyses of representations of the border are the ways in which the 'resistance' to hegemony that she notes as one of a number of possible functions of such metaphors is achieved through a re-articulation of itself. This echoes Neil Campbell's project in *The Rhizomatic West* in its insistence upon working with extant discursive material but re-articulating it from differentiated ideological and historical positions.

Nicol presents a convincing argument detailing numerous historical and contemporary instances of the border metaphor. However, where the metaphors that arise from the Mexican border are almost exclusively tied to fluidity, those that emerge from the Canadian border – despite that border being almost entirely notional in places as it draws its line across vast bodies of water – tend to be tied more closely to notions of fixity. In spite of their mutable forms, the implicit inertia of metaphors such as 'wall' or 'fence' elide the constant flux and fluidity that the transformative functions of the physical and psychological border can effect. Borders and the borderlands that they produce are characterised by dynamism, potentiality, and, significantly, mobility, and thus, our approaches to comprehending them must reflect similar properties. This is something that Victor Konrad has of late begun to assess and implement as a starting point for analyses of such sites. He has recently stated that

constant motion occurs above, below, through, and beyond the lines that separate polities, states, cultures and societies, as these separated or divided entities converge in trade, vie for control of interstitial space, alter security parameters and perimeters between them, and negotiate interaction. Borders are born in dichotomies and fashioned in dialectics, and as constructs evolved from opposing forces, these dichotomies and dialectics produce energy which is translated into

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<sup>83</sup> Heather Nicol, 'The Wall, the Fence, and the Gate: Reflexive Metaphors along the Canada-US Border'. *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 27.2 (2012), 142.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, 141.

motion between separate entities. Accordingly, borders, viewed either as object or process, are born in motion, conduct motion and create motion. Yet, our images of and constructs of borders, and ultimately our theories about how borders work, are still engaged and evolved by the visible, often linear, and generally institutionalized lines, fences and walls that are the dominant manifestations of borders, the agencies and processes that permeate borders, and the statist positions that create them.<sup>85</sup>

There is something inherently Deleuzian in Konrad's meditation on the function of borders and the pressing need to reconfigure our understandings of, and approaches to, them. If borders are, as Konrad suggests above, 'born in dichotomies', then to approach them in terms that are similarly dichotomous serves merely to reinforce their inadequately evidenced teleological linearity that is the object of the debate at its outset: the dialectic itself needs disrupting. Better that the analytical gaze that falls upon borders and their functions is one that is imbued with the sense of motion that Konrad sees as deficient in our existing theories of them. The physical and psychological lines that the border inscribes on geographical and mental territories can be more usefully put to work in favour of a more radically dynamic framework were they to be conceived of as Deleuzian 'line[s] of flight ... [that are] part of the rhizome'.<sup>86</sup> The line of flight occurs whenever there is a rupture in the rhizome and, in adopting it as an organic and proliferative metaphor for the border, the unnaturalness of borders can be exposed by ascribing natural features to them. As Deleuze and Guattari state: 'in nature, roots are taproots with a more multiple, lateral, and circular system of ramification, rather than a dichotomous one'.<sup>87</sup> The rhizomatic line of flight thus becomes an ideal ambulatory tool to orient our 'focus ... on the complex ruptures that remain within but nonetheless constitute the national frame, while at the same time moving beyond the national frame to consider regions, areas, and diasporan affiliations that exist apart from or in conflicted relation to the

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<sup>85</sup> Victor Konrad, 'Toward a Theory of Borders in Motion' *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 30.1 (2015), 1.

<sup>86</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 9.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

nation'.<sup>88</sup> Further to the suggestion that Konrad's theorising carries echoes of Deleuzian paradigms, his suggestion that 'borders are now viewed as overdetermined concepts and constructs that are relativized and seeking equilibrium' clearly resonates with Deleuze and Guattari's sceptical approach to the map/tracing dichotomy whilst also recalling my earlier discussion of the interpolative techniques of the WPA *Guides* that demonstrate such relativizing equilibria.<sup>89</sup> As Konrad's theorising of 'borders in motion' develops, his case study of the Pacific Northwest draws heavily upon notions of 'breaking points' – which he derives from the realms of the social sciences and their own 'Catastrophe' and 'Chaos' theories – thereby reverberating once more with Deleuzian thinking in that tradition's insistence upon the rhizomatic rupture – the line of flight – as a site of innovative and productive critique.<sup>90</sup>

Via Konrad, it is pertinent here to begin to explore an inherent and problematic paradox in the use of metaphor with its tendency to float free from any referent. Just as the dynamism and uncontrollability of the Rio Grande figures in the potential and possibilities that arise from an ecological framing of the U.S.-Mexico border region, Konrad – not a literary scholar, it is worth noting – in his attempts to articulate other borders as mobile also relies heavily on such framings. In his examination of the evolution of borders in globalisation he states that

[b]order effects may be articulated through fluid dynamic analogies where a fluid meets a solid. Quite simply, the border may be envisioned as the liminal zone between water and land, where waves strike rocks and lap on beaches, rip-currents recoil, channels cut through dunes, rivers enter seas and create deltas, and tides roll in and out to define the zone of interaction. This metaphor is at once emphatic and elucidating of the spatial and temporal contexts of borders and the constant yet varied motions in the border zone.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine, 'Introduction: Essays Beyond the Nation'. In, Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine (eds) *Hemispheric American Studies* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 2.

<sup>89</sup> Konrad, 'Borders in Motion', 4.

<sup>90</sup> 'Pacific Northwest' is clearly a misnomer since once across the border from south to north the location is Canada's southwest. Nonetheless, large portions of the literature that considers the cross-border region comprising the state of Washington and the province of British Columbia persist in naming it as such.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

Where, previously, I discerned something of Deleuzian thought in Konrad's evaluation of borders in motion, in the above exist clear echoes of sociologist Zygmunt Bauman's theory of 'liquid modernity': a term coined by Bauman to encompass all manner of modern positions and conditions including perpetually disembedded and floating subject positions and an opposition to the solidity of previous incarnations of modernity.<sup>92</sup> In Antony Bryant's critique of Bauman's work in this area, he considers the validity of the liquid metaphor that is employed and usefully suggests that metaphors as a whole 'tend to [be] characterize[d] ... as 'figure[s] of speech' that ha[ve] a somewhat tenuous or distinctive relationship to reality'.<sup>93</sup> Outwardly, this might suggest that theorising borders via metaphors would be a productive approach since they similarly distort or, at least, obscure both their own artifice and the material effects that they produce. Furthermore, another explanation of metaphor from Joanna Rostek would seem to encapsulate the aims of this thesis when she states that 'the very basic and generally established supposition [is] that a metaphor describes a certain conceptual domain (often termed the target domain, the recipient field or the tenor) in terms of a different domain (known as the source domain, the donor field or the vehicle)'.<sup>94</sup> Based upon that definition it would be easy for me to make the case that metaphors when envisaged as critical and conceptual tools – as in Bauman's use of 'liquid' for example – are uniquely aligned with the larger goals of this project since it too takes the 'target domain' of American Studies and considers borders, borderlands, and Border Studies as 'donor fields' that enable a rearticulated description of the 'recipient field'. However, the danger in using metaphor – and one that Deleuze and Guattari were well aware of – is the possibility of complete detachment from the original referent. This is something that many critics of theirs have been keen to point out but that fundamentally misunderstands or, at best, overlooks the very pragmatic aims of the philosophy they espouse in *A Thousand Plateaus* and which, in turn, inform the approaches I advocate in this project. It also forms the territorial trap that American

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<sup>92</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

<sup>93</sup> Antony Bryant, 'Bauman's Challenge: Metaphors and Metamorphoses' In, Mark Davis (ed), *Classical and Contemporary Social Theory: Liquid Sociology: Metaphor in Zygmunt Bauman's Analysis of Modernity* (Burlington, VT.: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), 27.

<sup>94</sup> Joanna Rostek, *Sealing through the Past: Postmodern Histories and Maritime Metaphor in Contemporary Anglophone Fiction* (Boston, MA.: Editions Rodopi, 2011), 17.

Studies has fallen foul of, an often slavish reliance upon the floating referents that regionalism, nationalism and the influential founding ideology of the discipline – the so-called ‘Myth and Symbol School’ with all of the metaphorical flourishes that it employs – resulting in an ossified and intransigent approach and canon.

Paul Patton, in his interrogation of both Deleuze and Guattari’s oft-stated aversion to metaphor and the many misplaced criticisms of them that overlook that fact, suggests that ‘*A Thousand Plateaus* outlines an explicitly pragmatic conception of thought and language as means of intervention in, rather than representation of, the world’.<sup>95</sup> Time and again, Deleuze and Guattari have stated that their philosophy does not rely on metaphor, that the concepts that they develop, which I employ in this thesis – the rhizome, the nomad, minor literature, the line of flight – are not meant to be interpreted metaphorically but should be read as vehicles for approaching and comprehending concepts as inherently and perpetually mobile. For Patton, therefore, ‘In the terminology of *A Thousand Plateaus*, there is no metaphor but only the deterritorialisation of signs from one location and their reterritorialization in another’, and it is in this function of their concepts that my own intervention in the thought of American Studies resides.<sup>96</sup> But how might we reconcile the use of border metaphors and begin to extricate Deleuzian thought from that category in *this* project when it seems so closely related to that rhetorical device; how might they be conceived of not as linguistic devices but as valid and invigorating conceptual tools that do not suffer from a loss of referentiality and all of the problems that that presents? By way of answering that question it is useful to consider some of the illuminating insights that Maria Margaroni and Effie Yiannopoulou outline in their development of a politics of mobility, a project that I would contend is closely related to Deleuze and Guattari’s development of a mobile philosophy across their corpus. Key to Margaroni and Yiannopoulou’s project is the concept of ‘metaphoricity’, an idea that they state expands

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<sup>95</sup> Paul Patton, ‘Mobile Concepts, Metaphor, and the Problem of Referentiality in Deleuze and Guattari’ In, Maria Margaroni and Effie Yiannopoulou (eds) *Thamyris/Intersecting: Place Sex and Race, Volume 12: Metaphoricity and the Politics of Mobility* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2006), 29.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, 31.

upon the traditional meanings and uses of metaphors and that they claim lies at the heart of ‘a postmodern politics of mobility’.<sup>97</sup> In their definition of the term lies the key to understanding the proliferation of metaphors in studies of borders and, more crucially, to ensuring that they – even when conceived of as lines of flight – do not lose their original moorings in both the physical and psychological borders that they emerge from. In Margaroni and Yiannopoulou’s terms,

“Metaphoricity” draws on *metaphor* and its Ancient Greek root *metapherein*, the verb meaning to “transfer”, to “move” from one context to another. The term refers, then, to the action of a (decontextualizing as much as recontextualizing) movement that blurs conventional boundaries and introduces difference in the self-same, opening up the “one” to receive the “other”. Due to its connection with the rhetorical figure of metaphor, the term inscribes this action *within* the production of meaning, thus foregrounding the inextricable link between physical, social, conceptual and discursive movement.<sup>98</sup>

Hence, the scepticism that the authors outline as having become attached to metaphor as a way in which we understand the borders of our contemporary situation – since it tends to obscure difference – is rehabilitated through the maintenance of the links and interactions between discourse and the physical manifestations of movement in their theorising of metaphoricity. This lies at the heart of the textual critiques that form this thesis: the ability to rethink, or rearticulate, certain experiences as they are presented to us in discourse when examined from ‘within a new (and-no-less particular) signifying context’.<sup>99</sup> This defines the subtle but important difference between Deleuzian thought in its radical mobility and multiplicity, and the simple and obfuscating metaphors which they have often been mistaken to employ.

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<sup>97</sup> Maria Margaroni and Effie Yiannopoulou, ‘Theorizing Metaphoricity, Reconceptualizing Politics’ In, Maria Margaroni and Effie Yiannopoulou (eds) *Thamyris/Intersecting: Place Sex and Race, Volume 12: Metaphoricity and the Politics of Mobility* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2006), 10.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 12.

Invocations of ‘hemispheric’ or ‘transnational’ approaches have been vital but largely niche endeavours that have failed sufficiently to expand the purview of American Studies; often, in critiques of them, they are too easily equated with a neoimperialist expansion into other nations and their attendant realms of study and interpretation, or, to my mind, too expansive in their goals and aspirations. On this latter point it is worth recalling Rachel Adams’ suggestion that ‘we do not yet have adequate vocabularies’ and John Muthyala’s call for the ‘develop[ment] [of] critical vocabularies that ... foreground and address ... multivalen[cy]’ as evidence for the need for innovative new approaches to the study of North America.<sup>100</sup> Hemispheric study runs the risk of its object and outcomes becoming too unwieldy as its disparate territories and interpretative modes become distractingly cacophonous rather than productively polyphonic: for a field that has always struggled to move beyond a view of its national borders as correlative of its disciplinary boundaries, this may not seem an enticing proposition. To reconfigure American Studies, then, might be a project better suited to more specific, localised and particular objects of study that are defined and interrogated in terms that have similar properties. Mieke Bal’s suggestion that ‘metaphor is not a mere synonym of translation ... its starting point is not a particular language but a situation that needs adequate expression’ seems complementary to any attempt to create a critical vocabulary – in Adams’ and Muthyala’s entreaties – that is adequate for the task at hand whilst also being mindful of the practice of metaphoricity as a complementary extension of that rhetorical device.<sup>101</sup> Deleuzian philosophy might be conceived of as the bridging point between these two related-but-separate approaches since, as Patton suggests: ‘For Deleuze and Guattari, there are no metaphors, only concepts and occasions of their use which can involve either the unexpected extension, transformation or variation of an existing concept or, in extreme cases, the coinage of new words to express novel concepts’.<sup>102</sup> It is with these calls for innovative approaches to studies of North America that create new ways of conceiving

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<sup>100</sup> Rachel Adams, *Continental Divides*, 6; Muthyala, ‘Reworlding’, 98.

<sup>101</sup> Mieke Bal, ‘Metaphoring: Making a Niche of Negative Space’ In, Maria Margaroni and Effie Yiannopoulou (eds) *Thamyris/Intersecting: Place Sex and Race, Volume 12: Metaphoricity and the Politics of Mobility* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2006), 165.

<sup>102</sup> Patton, ‘Mobile Concepts’, 32.

of their objects of study that I turn once more to the Canada-U.S. border and the work of Laurie Ricou. These texts, I will demonstrate, construct an alternative border epistemology that relies on lines of flight to texts that are both material and metaphorical and that implicitly articulate the cross-border region of the U.S.' Pacific Northwest and the Canadian province of British Columbia in ways suggestive of many of the conceptual interventions I aim to develop.

### **Ricou's Rhizomes: A Guide to Cross-border Bio-Regional Frames**

Laurie Ricou's *Salal: Listening for the Pacific Northwest Understory* is, according to its author, a guidebook: '[t]he guidebook aspires both to simplicity and accuracy, ease of use and thoroughness', he suggests.<sup>103</sup> Ricou's methodology for putting together his own guidebook – ostensibly an ecological guide to a singular plant, more truthfully a guide to the broader region of the Pacific Northwest – does, however, immediately undercut this aspiration. Employing ecology as a guiding principle for the stories he uncovers and tells, a labyrinthine epistemology emerges that reverses the approach of other guidebooks, with Ricou suggesting 'the real place is just the fine details emerging. Leave the big story to come up on us from behind'.<sup>104</sup> Less concerned with these grand and all-encompassing narratives of place that the *American Guide Series* and their ilk espouse, Ricou traces place through that place's inhabitant's knowledge of, and relationship with, a seemingly insignificant plant, *Gaultheria shallon*: salal. Recalling the Assiniboine understanding of knowledge in the discussion in my introduction of the incompatibility of Native epistemologies and western conceptions and presentations of said knowledge, Ricou's approach to his

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<sup>103</sup> Laurie Ricou, *Salal: Listening for the Northwest Understory* (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 2007), 19: It is important to acknowledge again that the naming of the region as 'The Pacific Northwest' is inherently problematic: British Columbia clearly shares the same Pacific Ocean coast as do the U.S. states of Washington and Oregon, but within its own national territory is anything but Northwest. Nonetheless, I tend to employ the term in the ensuing analysis since it is the term that Ricou uses. His generally uncritical use of the term seems curious given the startling insights he develops about the region: insights that tend to smooth the striation of the international border. In an earlier essay (Laurie Ricou, 'The Pacific Northwest as a Cross-Border Region' In, Thomas J. Lyon (ed) *Updating the Literary West* (Fort Worth, TX.: Texas Christian University Press, 1997) he gives more thought to this problematic and offers the following quotation from a short story: 'Hadn't they found, whenever they approached the border driving north, that the shell of velvet sky over the Pacific Northwest suddenly cracked and left them pinched into the southwest corner of something else' (Paul de Barros, 'In a Draw' In, John Dudley Harris (ed) *Roothog: Contemporary B.C. Writing* (British Columbia: Repository Press, 1981). This extract illustrates the issue at stake, for sure, but appears to privilege the border even as it questions its function.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*, 17.



nominal guidebook espouses a similar approach to that of the unpublished FWP Montana materials and reasons through some of the tensions that discussion brought to light:

Although a single author's assimilation and retelling might have made the book easier to read, I decided during my first interview that the salal-tellers should "talk" with a minimum of mediation. I wanted the voices to be heard in their own distinctiveness . . . and with very little of the question-and-answer primness often found in printed interviews. This format attempts to disperse authority, allowing the integrity and specialness of different actors with concerns, commitments, and interests very different from mine.<sup>105</sup>

*Salal* – the text – is clearly a very different kind of guidebook. Whereas the 'mapped movement [of the *American Guides*] offers carefully demarcated travellers the opportunity to read themselves into a historically and culturally dense landscape in terms that are coherent, informed and contained', Ricou's guidebook and his rationale for its format explicitly entreats the reader to read *others'* experiences *out* of the landscape, thereby enabling its historical, cultural, and – crucially – polyphonic 'density' to remain present and active within its narrative. This is a bold, often gleeful, and fundamentally de-stratified approach that relies specifically upon the characteristics of the guiding subject matter itself: salal the plant.<sup>106</sup>

Salal is '[a]n evergreen, perennial shrub from 1 to 20 feet tall' that '[m]ay take the form of waist-high understory mats', its '[e]vergreen leaves are glossy . . . live three to four years and grow alternately on wiry stems. Waxy pink flowers hang in rows . . . Oval reddish-blue to purple-black berries about ¾ inch long hang like lanterns on a string'.<sup>107</sup> However, of more pertinence here – to myself *and* to Ricou, it would seem – is the inescapable ecological fact that '[s]alal spreads by rhizomes'.<sup>108</sup> Ricou has written often of how the literature of the Pacific Northwest – '[a] region . . . [that] is a convenient fiction' – might

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>106</sup> Bold, *Mapping America*, 12.

<sup>107</sup> Jennifer Hahn, *Pacific Feast: A Cook's Guide to West Coast Foraging and Cuisine* (Seattle, WA.: Skipstone, 2010), 55.

<sup>108</sup> Ricou, *Salal*, 5.

be defined, and has returned time and again to definitions that foreground ecology and geology as, not only observable natural facets of the region, but also as tropes that help articulate its identity.<sup>109</sup> The Cascade mountain range, Puget Sound and the Straits of Georgia and Juan de Fuca, the Pacific rainforest and its attendant flora and fauna are all examined as defining features of a region that was formally divided between two nations much later than any others along the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel.<sup>110</sup> Apparently guided by Gary Snyder's none-too-subtle remark about the arbitrariness of the border – 'the salmon don't give a fuck which border it is' – Ricou remarks that a 'trope figuring ecology is intimately connected to a search for native forms' in the Northwest and that, therefore, the 'bio-region will provide a framework' for uncovering and articulating them.<sup>111</sup>

In an analysis of Daphne Marlatt's 1974 poem *Steveston*, Ricou considers the salmon as one such possible bio-regional frame in which the cross-border connections of history and culture in Pacific Northwest literature might be understood.<sup>112</sup> The salmon, with its migratory lifecycle and its familiar and symbolic connection to the region does not, as Snyder memorably reminded us, adhere to the politics of the border; it is integral to many of the Indigenous cultures that would also regard the border as mere artifice, and furthermore, is integral to the economies of both nations that share that border. The method of harvesting this natural resource – the fisherman's net – becomes, in Ricou's hands, a perfectly apt biological and conceptual metaphor for articulating these connections between nature and culture that this cross-border region shares: 'The fishing nets are made of knots, and nots, of intricate interconnections and spaces that catch and release. Nets provide perhaps the most developed and elaborated pattern of metaphor for both poem and method'.<sup>113</sup> Metaphor here is crucial to my method and the alternative poetics it aims to articulate: in regionalist explications of culture, I would argue that that culture is

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<sup>109</sup> Laurie Ricou, 'Two Nations Own These Islands: Border and Region in Pacific-Northwest Writing' In, Camille R. La Bossière (ed) *Context North America: Canadian/U.S. Literary Relations* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1994), 55.

<sup>110</sup> The 49<sup>th</sup> parallel divided the Prairie Provinces from the U.S. Midwest in 1818; the border between what was to later become British Columbia and the U.S. was not legally drawn until 1846 and not until 1871 in the Georgia Basin.

<sup>111</sup> Gary Snyder (1987) cited in Ricou, 'Two Nations', 52; Laurie Ricou, 'The Pacific Northwest as a Cross-Border Region' In, Thomas J. Lyon (ed) *Updating the Literary West* (Fort Worth, TX.: Texas Christian University Press, 1997), 264, 266.

<sup>112</sup> Daphne Marlatt, *Steveston* (Edmonton: Longspoon, 1984 [1974]).

<sup>113</sup> Ricou, 'Two Nations', 58.

represented via the related concept of metonymy. In my previous examinations of regionalist productions, the metonymic *standing-in-for* that that linguistic device produces serves to suppress other understandings – one might say that ‘America’ is the grandest and yet also most subtly suppressive of metonyms in this regard – whereas, to take an approach that relies on metaphor allows for the possibility of combining, or uncovering heretofore unforeseen combinations of, cultures and their products. This seems something of great appeal to Ricou and his own linguistic playfulness – as well as that of his subjects – facilitating an alternative route through an extant culture in which ‘[t]he travel is random and slightly ludic’ and guided by the numerous metaphors he identifies as possible ways into thinking, writing and speaking the Northwest as a cross-border region.<sup>114</sup> It is this act that Ricou is enacting in his attempted naming and interrogating of the Pacific Northwest through *salal* which is replete with newly coined words and phrases such as his invention of a ‘salalamander’: a ‘cross between darting amphibian and fronding shrub’ that, despite its outward ridiculousness, epitomises his approach to his material, wherein ‘[l]ooking for the salalamander may be to stare at nothing’, but, he reasons, ‘coining a word from *salal* ... then [allows for] asking where that imaginary thing touches our inner circuits’ whilst at the same time remaining particularised and embedded in a local landscape with its human inhabitants and the flora and fauna that surround and inform their experience of it.<sup>115</sup>

So, in light of this discussion, a corrective: whilst Ricou, especially in the earlier essays explored here, is drawn to and driven by the metaphors employed by others in their literary enunciations of the Pacific Northwest – such as Daphne Marlatt, Paul DeBarros and Kim Stafford – his own employment of these metaphors for interrogating this cross-border region is an act of metaphoricity, an extrapolation from one side of the border to the other, a rhetorical device that allows for movement between different national contexts that nonetheless remain bounded within the more natural ecological and biological borders that frame the region from which the original metaphors derive. This move ensures the

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<sup>114</sup> Ricou, *Salal*, 12; Ricou suggests a number of useful metaphors for the Northwest as he finds them in others writings, including ‘island’ and ‘edge’ and always seems poised to announce *salal* – as a rhizome – as another.

<sup>115</sup> Ricou, *Salal*, 12.

maintaining of referentiality whilst also usefully and productively negotiating the problem identified by Adams as the ‘additive move’ that often imperil attempts to incorporate culture drawn from beyond the borders of the United States in American Studies.<sup>116</sup> Ricou’s unconventional ‘guidebook’ therefore enacts an entirely different epistemological standpoint than did the WPA *American Guides* addressed in my introduction, having more in common with the unpublished Native American-produced and oriented material than it does with the supposedly objective, linear and anthropological tone of the FWP’s tomes. This is due, in no small part, both to the informality of Ricou’s approach that enables different subjectivities to co-exist – key here his suggestion ‘that the salal-tellers should “talk” with a minimum of mediation’ – and his willingness, and ability, to read his region out of different contexts.

This approach had its genesis in an earlier book-length project of Ricou’s. Where *Salal* actively engages with the rhizome of its subject matter – with its many forays into horticultural minutiae – and replicates its characteristics in its rhizomatous form, *The Arbutus/Madrone Files: Reading the Pacific Northwest* of five years earlier contains some initial moves into rhizomatic territory that are perhaps even more telling in their exploration of the function of borders in cultural production and interpretation. Ricou’s organising principle for his exploration of the distinctiveness of literary production from North America’s west coast is, again, an ecological one: *Arbutus Menziesii*. A genus of tree known as arbutus in Canada and madrone in the United States, it is distributed across the province of British Columbia and the states of Washington, Oregon, and California, hugging the coastlines of these territories. Characterised as ‘a native broad-leaved evergreen ... [that is] always losing its papery bark to reveal a burnished, well-oiled salmon-coloured wood’, Ricou’s nationality as a Canadian would, we might assume, lead him to refer to this tree solely as arbutus rather than madrone.<sup>117</sup> However, the conflicting but complimentary nature of this tree’s dual identity is central to the author’s overarching thesis: ‘The slash separating and joining Arbutus and Madrone figures the artificial/real border that contributes to the region’s doubleness and fluidity’, he

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<sup>116</sup> Rachel Adams, ‘The Northern Borderlands and Latino Canadian Diaspora’ In, Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine (eds) *Hemispheric American Studies* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 314.

<sup>117</sup> Laurie Ricou, *The Arbutus/Madrone Files: Reading the Pacific Northwest* (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 2002), 1.

suggests.<sup>118</sup> Again, ‘fluidity’ – just as in Konrad’s metaphorical theorising of spatial and temporal contexts created by and manifested in borders – becomes key to articulating cross-border culture, and the specific regional focus of Ricou’s critical lens brings the root of that metaphor into sharper focus: the Columbia River that ‘courses northwesterly through British Columbia and then southerly for five hundred miles before crossing into the United States’ and the many other water borders that the two nations share, particularly in the west.<sup>119</sup> Through this ecological schemata Ricou is able to draw upon the many metaphors – what Konrad later characterises as ‘fluid dynamic analogies’ – that this enables:

[L]iving where an unwaveringly linear and visible border dissolves into a meandering hypothesis traced in water, I find the map harder to read ... A regional literature and culture might be discovered where the boundary becomes so indeterminate – perhaps it must be discovered in an eco-region far too international to claim for one country.<sup>120</sup>

Herein, water becomes key to the transportation of contexts across borders: the 259,000 square mile watershed of the Columbia River straddles the border and informs the specific and shared ecologies of both constituent nations of the region. It also echoes the related geological determinants that figure in Ricou’s developing comparative approach in his statement that ‘[t]o compare across political barriers in this region is first to be aware of the great power – emotional and imaginative, as well as climatic – of the barriers of rock, the coastal ranges, which run north/south’.<sup>121</sup> These alternative epistemologies based upon the naturally occurring landscape and habitat provide Ricou with the means to interject in the humanmade histories and cultures that inhabit the physical – and inhibit the psychological – territory. The aptness of such ‘bio-regional frames’ is ideal for the cross-border region that Ricou takes as his focus given its varied flora, fauna and geology. To return to his invention of the salamander in *Salal*, this could be yet further developed to be an ideal figure for border-crossings given its derivation from salamander: a

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> William G. Robbins and Katrine Barber, *Nature’s Northwest: the North Pacific Slope in the Twentieth Century* (Tucson, AZ.: University of Arizona Press, 2011), 1.

<sup>120</sup> Ricou, ‘Two Nations’, 49.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, 53.

creature that moves between land and water, which can regenerate lost limbs and has existed since the late-Jurassic era. The previously identified ‘life cycle’ as a way in which to theorise the border – as posited by Baud and Van Schendel – is relevant here too since all of the various bio-regional frames that Ricou identifies or develops have their own attendant cycles and through this they draw attention to a different version of temporality, that (particularly in the case of the salamander) require an entirely new way of mapping their territory since they precede human civilization. This might, in turn, allow Indigenous histories and cultures to become the starting point of a collective North American memory that broadens its temporal viewpoint, challenging traditional approaches to that history.

The stark binary operation of the Canada-U.S. border in the canonical historical and cultural positioning of it is so often mirrored in scholarship that coalesces around it. In the field of history, William Robbins and Katrine Barber suggest that ‘[h]istorians of the United States and Canada have been more interested in comparing each nation’s western parts with the East rather than comparing places north and south of the international boundary’, a point that resonates with Ricou’s own suggested geological and ecological reorientation of cross-border comparisons.<sup>122</sup> In the field of literary studies, Ricou himself suggests that ‘critics in Canada have either ignored American literature, or developed comparisons implicitly accepting, or determined to disseminate, neat binaries of difference’, demonstrating the entrenched and perpetuating polarity that the border facilitates. In contrast, the outwardly stark binary operation of the Canada-U.S. border – mirrored in the dual names given to the tree that guides Ricou’s study – is undercut by his refusal to acquiesce to a rhetorical or positional choice between arbutus/madrone, Canada/United States.<sup>123</sup> For him, the borders of the nation-state do not need to afford only a simple binary choice; the arbutus/madrone, likewise, need not be approached in terms of a dichotomous duality that requires reconciling. In both of these instances, Ricou argues for an alternative way to approach cultural productions of cross-border regions that ‘allows for either/or, and for a *both* that

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<sup>122</sup> Robbins and Barber, *Nature’s Northwest*, 5.

<sup>123</sup> Ricou, ‘Two Nations’, 49.

is a uniquely interdependent fusion'.<sup>124</sup> This refusal to be beholden to making a choice between oppositional alternatives gives *The Arbutus/Madrone Files* both its uniquely fluid framework for mapping the literature of the region *and* the experimental formal techniques it adopts in doing so. In this way – by creating a dialogue that simultaneously focuses on discreet regions whilst also allowing these territories to be transgressed in order to develop alternative configurations of them – Ricou's project reflects the foundational tenets of Deleuze and Guattari's call for rhizomatic thinking:

[S]tart by delimiting a first line consisting of concentric circles of convergence around successive singularities; then you see whether inside that line new circles of convergence establish themselves, with new points located outside the limits and in new directions.<sup>125</sup>

Furthermore, the tree that guides the creation of this twofold purpose for Ricou's project is, I would argue, similarly reconfigured: stripped of its arboreal appearance and function, and becoming, contradictorily, a rhizome.

Ricou's opening comments in *The Arbutus/Madrone Files* actually point the way in this regard. Arbutus, he suggests, 'is a strange tree, untree-like you might say'.<sup>126</sup> Outwardly, this might appear a somewhat flimsy justification for suggesting that the tree that figures the rhizomatic nature of this cross-border region is a rhizome itself. However, examining the Deleuzian derivations of rhizomatic thinking alongside the idiosyncratic form of Ricou's book and the observations contained within reveals how a new critical vocabulary – such as Adams calls for in *Continental Divides* – can arise from existing material being rearticulated rather than re-inscribed. In mapping the territory which *Arbutus menziesii* occupies, Ricou's book both establishes instances of 'convergence' *and* other 'directions' which the real-and-imagined Pacific Northwest is home to: from a singularity emerges a multiplicity. Furthermore, Ricou's volume successfully challenges the propensity of the centre to appropriate the periphery. Though there

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 11.

<sup>126</sup> Ricou, *Arbutus/Madrone*, 1.

is scant mention of the “Cascadia Initiative”, *The Arbutus/Madrone Files* does appear driven by a desire to develop an alternative imagining of that imagined cross-border region.<sup>127</sup> Where once Cascadia was envisaged as a region defined by the shared geology and ecology of the Cascade Mountain range taking no account of national borders, in the wake of NAFTA, even this bioregional cross-border demarcation has been appropriated by the centralising and neoliberally driven ideology of the U.S. and rearticulated for economic and political ends. Ricou’s book, in following the rhizome, has more in common with the founding bioregional ideas of the cross-border Pacific Northwest that is home to, and enacts, a more holistic transnational culture.

### **Verdecchia’s Version of Events: A Hemispheric History**

By way of further demonstrating how thinking rhizomatically can help engender a more transnational approach to American Studies – one which is not beholden to territorial or disciplinary borders – I now turn to one of the cornerstone texts for many Border Studies projects and programmes that I have encountered: Guillermo Verdecchia’s *Fronteras Americanas*. Not only does Verdecchia’s play provide a vehicle for the approach I am advocating here, it is also, itself, a rhizome. This is epitomised in another observation from Deleuze and Guattari when they state, ‘We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier; we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed’.<sup>128</sup> Verdecchia’s drama throws out rhizomatic lines of flight in every direction, creating surplus connectivities and proliferating multiplicities that demand to be followed, beyond the pages of the play, beyond the borders of the U.S., always metamorphosing. The Argentinean-Canadian playwright and protagonist in his exploration of the border as a physical and psychological territory looks not to the border that he is in closest proximity to in his struggle to define – or at least help him to define – his identity; bypassing the United States altogether, it is representations

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>128</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 4.



of the Mexican border for which he feels the greatest affinity. Hence, Canada and Mexico are brought into each other's critical orbit and these peripheral sites and objects of study become central. In so doing, the dominance of the U.S. in its discursive construction of these two borders is effaced and destabilised. The nation that geographically separates Mexico and Canada tends to denude the connections that might exist between them and so Verdecchia must mobilise their borders. As Maureen Kincaid Speller suggests: 'the border as conceptual territory needs to be constantly reinvented and kept moving in order to avoid its ossification, which in turn means it must be entirely cut loose from the fixed geographical border'.<sup>129</sup> In destabilising the border in this manner, the centrality of the U.S. in accounts of North American identities that rely upon the border as a mechanism for the articulation of identity is itself destabilised and a new centrality, less linear and dichotomous in its construction emerges, undercutting and offering an alternative to the previous centre.

Verdecchia's play effectively consumes this previous centre, bringing the margins of North America together and challenging the imbalance in representations of North American borders. This is not to say that the U.S. is entirely absent from the drama. But, again, it is the rhizome that best accounts for Verdecchia's use of the U.S. If, in connecting the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel with the Mexico-U.S. border, the plays protagonist's search for a meaningful identity goes underground, rhizomatically subterranean, to undercut the U.S.' privileged subjectivity, like the rhizome itself, it sends shoots upwards on its journey: irrupting into the previously constructed discursive plane. This allows Verdecchia to invert the imbalanced power relationships of North America. Invariably these rhizomatic irruptions occur in sites of popular cultural consumption – Taco Bell and McDonald's; theme parks and TV movies about 'the war on drugs'; magazine and Hollywood depictions of 'the Latin lover' – all consumed, rearticulated and regurgitated from outside the centralised site of their original production.

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<sup>129</sup> Maureen Kincaid Speller, "Some Borders Are More Easily Crossed Than Others": Negotiating Guillermo Verdecchia's *Fronteras Americanas*'. In, Gillian Roberts and David Stirrup (eds) *Parallel Encounters: Culture at the Canada-US Border* (Waterloo, ON.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2013), 239.

The rhizome, as it travels from Canada in the north and south to Mexico, cuts across the teleological linearity of U.S. exceptionalism that traversed the nation from east to west, guided by notions of ‘manifest destiny’ and enshrined in the all-pervading idea of the frontier. Those new frontiers of nationhood – the U.S. borders with Canada and Mexico – are permeated by the rhizome as it burrows through or under them. The rhizomes at work in *Fronteras Americanas* do not cease their journey when they reach Mexico: they continue to multiply indefinitely, through more and more borders, into central and South America. Here the rhizome lays down another challenge: this time to the linearity of history. Such a move into the realm of temporality is vital to destabilising the traditionally national focus of area studies and Verdecchia’s drama forces the reader/viewer to reckon with unsanctioned and unimagined rearticulations of historical memory. Levander and Levine, in their treatise on a hemispheric American Studies, highlight the problem thus: ‘Because area studies typically emphasize space (or geographical locale) over time, it has tended to uphold a constant, crystallized idea of national identity’.<sup>130</sup> In this respect *Fronteras Americanas* offers a further vital corrective to envisaging the border rhizomatically and one that cannot be subsumed by any of the ‘additive move[s]’ referenced earlier in this chapter.<sup>131</sup>

*Fronteras Americanas* is a multimedia one-person play that ‘re-creates one person’s struggle to construct a home between two cultures, while exploding the images and constructs built up around Latinos and Latin America’ (back matter). The person struggling to find a home is ‘Verdecchia’, an immigrant in Toronto striving to understand his place in the world and to comprehend the effects of its borders upon his psyche. Alongside ‘Verdecchia’ is the character of ‘Wideload’, a wildly-overplayed Latino stereotype who still manages to skewer the clichés from which he is constructed. The play is largely formed of monologues and soliloquies that are punctuated by a vast array of music and projected images and quotations that add layer upon layer of intertextual reference points to the onstage unravelling of both Latino stereotypes and Verdecchia’s identity. Herein, the play draws upon a panoply of writers,

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<sup>130</sup> Levander and Levine, ‘Beyond the Nation’, 5.

<sup>131</sup> Adams, ‘Northern Borderlands’, 314.

thinkers and theorists of the Americas: for example, Octavio Paz, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Federico García Lorca, Carlos Fuentes and Noam Chomsky. In so doing the play becomes as rhizomatous in its reference points as it is in its performance and structure, with ‘Verdecchia’ and Wideload constantly interrupting the other and interjecting into the discussions of borders and identities. Hence, *Fronteras Americanas* epitomises Deleuze and Guattari’s treatment of texts not as isolated artefacts but as the confluence of multiple connections and intensities.

Verdecchia signals this rhizomatic tactic early in the play when a slide is projected behind the performer and emblazoned with the title ‘An Idiosyncratic History of America’, and the ensuing monologue takes in a breathless plethora of events that occur, spatially, across the entirety of the American hemisphere and beyond, and include a dizzying collection of ‘high’ and ‘low’ cultural products.<sup>132</sup> That this is presented linearly – beginning ‘approximately 200 million years ago in the Triassic Period of the Mesozoic Era’ (29), and ending in 1969 when ‘I attend my first day of classes at Anne Hathaway Public School’ (32) – only serves to further highlight what happens later in the drama when Verdecchia attempts to locate himself and his identity within this proliferative, cumulative, and unfolding chronology. Later, having been diagnosed by the character ‘El Brujo’ with ‘a very bad border wound’ (71) (which has clear echoes of Gloria Anzaldúa’s pivotal articulation of the border), the play’s protagonist finds himself transported from ‘Bloor and Madison in Toronto’ (71) across time and space to events across the continent that have contributed to this ‘border wound’. It is surely no accident that the diagnostician that Verdecchia seeks out when conventional western therapies cannot locate the cause of his ‘feel[ing] [d]ifferent ... feel[ing] wrong, out of place’ (51), shares his name with the title of Gómez-Peña’s confrontational performance piece, *Border Brujo* or that that, in turn, takes its title from the practise of *brujería* (witchcraft).<sup>133</sup> Indeed, Verdecchia projects a slide during this particular portion of his

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<sup>132</sup> Guillermo Verdecchia, *Fronteras Americanas/American Borders* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1997 [1993]), 29. Further references to this text appear in parenthesis.

<sup>133</sup> Guillermo Gómez-Peña, ‘Border Brujo: A Performance Poem (From the series “Documented/Undocumented”)’ *TDR* 35.3 (1991).

performance that is taken from another of Gómez-Peña's works: 'The West is no longer west. The old binary models have been replaced by a border dialectic of ongoing flux. We now inhabit a social universe in constant motion, a moving cartography with a floating culture and a fluctuating sense of self'.<sup>134</sup> As such we are left in little doubt as to how history will be approached in *Fronteras Americanas*: as a field of endeavour and a facet of individual identity whose linearity will be disrupted, as a chronology whose progressive nature will be interrupted, as an approach to understanding self that is no longer beholden to national borders, as a rhizome. 'El Brujo' diagnoses the 'border wound' in the physical, material surroundings of contemporary Canada but traces its beginnings, rhizomatically, across spatial and temporal boundaries: to 'the night that Bolívar burned with fever and realized there was no way back to the capital' (71); 'the Zoot Suit Riots. [When] [w]e were beat up for our pointy shoes and fancy clothes' (72); 'the Alamo' (72); 'the French invasion of Mexico ... the Pastry War' (72). That this might, to some minds, suggest a worrying collapse of difference and a call for an essentialist Latinidad has already been undercut by the character of Wideload who, through his nullifying of Latin stereotypes via a gleeful embrace of them, simultaneously emphasises not only the inconsistency of these clichés but also the incompatibility of Latinidad essentialisms in an age of real and virtual transnationality. Verdecchia's 'border wound' and its pathology, becomes a rhizome: 'a virus [that] can connect to germ cells and transmit itself as the cellular gene of a complex species ... [that] can take flight, move into the cells of an entirely different species, but not without bringing with it "genetic information" from the first host'.<sup>135</sup> In light of this idea of the rhizome as a mode of transmission, the outwardly ridiculous notions of the impact of genetic descent and its effect upon Verdecchia is related thus: 'I am a direct descendant of two people who once ate an armadillo – armadillo has a half-life of 2,000 years – you can't tell me that isn't in my bloodstream. Evita Perón once kissed my mother and that night she felt her cheek begin to rot. You can't tell me that hasn't altered my DNA' (52), attains a greater significance as a way in which traditional approaches to lines of descent and the linearity of history can be challenged by thinking

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<sup>134</sup> Guillermo Gómez-Peña, 'The World According to Guillermo Gómez-Peña' *High Performance* 14.3 (1991), 20.

<sup>135</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 10.

rhizomatically and through understanding the lines of borders as ‘lines of flight’. Personal history and broader cultural history lose their demarcating properties as histories of the nation-state, and their citizens become intertwined across their artificial borders: a strategy reflected in the genre-mixing forms adopted by, for example, Gloria Anzaldúa and Américo Paredes who both employ autobiography in their theoretical works. If the rhizome is a useful metaphor for the border then it can also be usefully employed to interrogate the entirety of the American hemisphere and the ways in which the continent is explicated in the material cultural productions it inspires. As ‘Verdecchia’ himself puts it: ‘throw out the metaphor of Latin America as North America’s “backyard” because your backyard is now a border and the metaphor is now made flesh’ (77).

The paradox inherent in this project is neatly encapsulated in Konrad’s statement that ‘[w]e find ourselves and our boundaries in a more fluid and spatial and temporal context, and perhaps this makes it imperative for us to grasp borders more emphatically and attempt to reinforce their presence and visibility’.<sup>136</sup> Hence, to articulate the fluidity of spatiality and temporality that borders enable, my thesis simultaneously foregrounds the superfluity of borders whilst also arguing that they should be examined more closely to fashion a hemispheric American Studies, both in subject matter and critical gaze. The Deleuzian concepts outlined in this chapter clearly align with the form and content of the border-based literature analysed in this chapter and – as my analysis of *On the Road* demonstrates – provide the means by which canonical material might be opened up to hemispheric contemplation. In developing the ideas of the rhizome, lines of flight, nomadicism and minor literature, beyond their structuring function in the texts examined in this chapter, the following chapters translate the conceptual possibilities they present into a series of proposed paradigmatic approaches to materials that derive the power of their alternative imaginings of North America from their textual position on the other side of the United States’ borders. Existing in those marginal spaces – beyond the borders of the nation and the boundaries of the discipline – allows for alternative spatial and temporal constructions that challenge the linearity and insularity of

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<sup>136</sup> Konrad, ‘Borders in Motion’, 4.

American Studies, creating unconventional maps in specific regional contexts that, rather than being subsumed by the ideological power of the U.S., resist such incorporation through the dialogical nature of their discourse. In this way, an insistence upon a smooth theoretical space allows for differentiated representational economies to come to bear upon localised and particular material conditions as they are expressed in culture before those insights are then transported into a framework for hemispheric study. This functions to recognise the complex interplay of the regional, the national and the transnational without allowing any of those discursive constructions to dominate or homogenise the other. The next chapter moves to consider how such a smooth space might be constructed to enable such paradigms to challenge the ideological dominance of the U.S. in articulations of North American borders and the peoples, cultures and histories that are elided in such one-sided constructions.

## II

**Creating a Coyote Cartography**

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the artist him/her self: in the long run, given the choice of being God or Coyote, will, most mornings, choose to be Coyote

- Kroetsch, Neuman & Wilson, *Labyrinths of Voice*, 1982<sup>1</sup>

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In what ways might we develop a comparative and dialogical paradigm to interrogate discursive constructions of the territories under consideration here? Can we align them, invert them and foster a critical exchange between them? What existing models and frameworks need to be interrupted, intervened in, revised or destabilised? How can we facilitate the necessary crossing of geographical and theoretical boundaries to arrive at such a paradigm? What is necessary here is an effacement of the territory that separates both Canada and Mexico – the U.S. – so that we might draw these two nations and their borders into contact with one another and create a smooth space that subverts the striated spaces of borders, regions, and nations. This subversion requires us to be, as Robert Kroetsch suggests in the epigraph above, Coyote. Adopting such a persona as a theoretical guise and critical gesture enables a flexible approach that can accommodate Deleuzian notions of nomadic thought, leading to a new critical cartography in which margins and the marginalised ideas and peoples who reside there can claim a new centrality in revised conceptions of border regions.

Kroetsch's suggestion that the writer might 'choose to be Coyote' is a provocative and informative observation. What is hinted at here is the emergence of what some critics have labelled 'coyote aesthetics' in the writings of several Indigenous and non-indigenous authors, a style which 'has at its heart

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Kroetsch, Shirley Neuman & Robert Wilson, *Labyrinths of Voice: Conversations with Robert Kroetsch*. (Edmonton: NeWest Press. 1982), 99.

fragmentation, deconstruction and a refiguration of ideas that stretch beyond Western conceptions'.<sup>2</sup> If such deliberately disruptive tactics exist within the texts we might seek to analyse in an exploration of border discourses, then a new interpretive mode which mirrors this disjunctive and challenging material must surely be developed. If the author has become Coyote, can the critic become the same? Writings on both the Canadian and Mexican borderlands are replete with calls for the creation of just such strategies. Whilst Kroetsch is undoubtedly calling for an adoption of a trickster persona, in line with his own understanding of Coyote, broadening our definition of what this figure and its functions represent, presents abundant opportunity for developing innovative analytical tools with which to interrogate cultural constructions of border territories. Consider the zoological version of coyote – *Canis latrans* – for instance: an animal distributed across the North American continent and one that crosses borders without impediment. Considering coyote's canid cousin, the wolf (*Canis lupus*), Karen Jones suggests that 'learning to think like a wolf might also be useful, at least in allowing us to see the fictions and fixtures of the border', precisely because of the differing ways in which this creature is viewed on each side of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel.<sup>3</sup> Arguing that such 'movement patterns ... [operate] without thought to the border patrol', Jones posits that embracing a similarly defiant persona 'allow[s] for a productive comparison of frontier cultures and attitudes'.<sup>4</sup> And what of the other frontier under consideration here? If, as Jones speculates, a member of the animal kingdom can 'become political' because of its flouting of the legislative processes of the border, then exploring the deeply political actions of the coyotes employed by undocumented migrants seeking to cross the Mexican border into the U.S. reveals further ways in which assuming elements of this other incarnation of coyote might also prove beneficial in interrupting traditional border discourses and their interpretations. Coyote the smuggler is a complementary figure in this regard since, as Rafael Pérez-Torres notes, '[t]hose involved in the articulation of minority discourses of all kinds act like *coyotes*,

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<sup>2</sup> Heidi Slettedahl Macpherson, 'Coyote as Culprit: The Coyote Aesthetics of Gail Anderson-Dargatz's *The Cure for Death by Lightning*'. *British Journal of Canadian Studies*, 17:2 (2004), 182.

<sup>3</sup> Karen Jones, 'From Big Bad Wolf to Ecological Hero: *Canis Lupus* and the Culture(s) of Nature in the American Canadian West'. *American Review of Canadian Studies*, 40.3 (2010), 348.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 338.



smuggling across national, disciplinary, and methodological boundaries ... agents who already challenge the significance of those boundaries'.<sup>5</sup>

The animal coyote, the trickster Coyote, and the smuggler coyote all share certain characteristics but also diverge significantly in many respects. Many critics have addressed the origins of Coyote the trickster and sought to illuminate its relationship to its animal forebear. 'Is there, perhaps', William Bright asks, 'something about the behaviour of the biological coyote that makes him especially suitable for this [trickster] role?'<sup>6</sup> Examining many of the trickster's traits alongside the actions of *Canis latrans* in the wild leads Bright to what we might initially consider an unsatisfactory conclusion, that 'the answer to the question is, in fact, ambiguous'.<sup>7</sup> But this ambiguity is ideally suited to investment in a critically regionalist method for border studies, as Bright continues: 'it is precisely the marginality – or perhaps better the liminality of *Canis latrans* – that makes him fit to play the role of trickster'. Such margins and liminal spaces offer the possibility of both transformation or reinstatement of identity. This practice is one which Coyote is not unfamiliar with since the stories in which he figures 'challenge ideas of identity as they present a being with the ability to shape-shift, to embody aspects of other beings while remaining 'itself''.<sup>8</sup> Rafaella Savazzi suggests that this is the greatest trick the trickster is capable of performing, since 'he is someone, and at the same time his contrary, so that he cannot be classified as a static symbol'.<sup>9</sup> Such thoughts echo Paul Radin's earlier observation that 'the symbol which trickster embodies is not a static one ... [and] for this reason every generation occupies itself with interpreting trickster anew'.<sup>10</sup> My own version of this perpetual interpretation of Coyote is not merely cognizant of the fact that it 'is a signifier with many signifieds' but relies upon this very fact in order that it might affect not only a new

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<sup>5</sup> Rafael Pérez-Torres 'Chicano Culture Reclaiming Our America: Coyotes at the Border', *American Literature*, 67.4 (1995), 823.

<sup>6</sup> William Bright, 'Nature, Culture, and Old Man Coyote' (1999) [Online: [americanindianonline.org/bright/OLD\\_MAN\\_COYOTE.doc](http://americanindianonline.org/bright/OLD_MAN_COYOTE.doc)] (Accessed: 9<sup>th</sup> July 2013) np.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Shane Phelan, 'Coyote Politics: Trickster Tales and Feminist Futures', *Hypatia* 11:3 (1996), 131.

<sup>9</sup> Rafaella Savazzi, *Coyote: Il Trickster dei Karok* (Dissertation: University of Milano, 1997), 306.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Radin, *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology* (New York: Schocken Press, 1972), 158-59.

interpretation but also fashion an interpretive strategy from the ever-shifting conceptual ground of both Coyote and the spaces such a figure occupies.<sup>11</sup>

If the map under construction here – constructing a new and flexible critical cartography through which to interrogate the similarly flexible cartography of the borderlands – is guided by the principle of the rhizome, it cannot, as James Clifford identifies, merely provide an overview. If we are 'working with the notion of comparative knowledge' such an approach must always be 'marked by a “way in”, a history of locations and a location of histories'.<sup>12</sup> The 'way in' in this inquiry has, of course, multiple entryways and exits and, in order to comprehend the problems inherent in attempting to link experiences of border regions in the ways described thus far, we must first locate the different versions of the Coyote/coyote archetype before we can dislocate such tropes. A note on terminology is useful here: Coyote (with an uppercase 'C') is used, from this point, to refer to the mythological trickster figure of North American (predominantly Indigenous) myths and storytelling strategies; coyote (with a lowercase 'c') refers to those literal figures operating in the Mexico-U.S. border region, the facilitators of border crossings for those seeking passage from the nominal 'margin' to the putative 'centre'. This distinction is key as it is these two important and differentiating features in the popular imaginings of the archetype that provide the mechanism for inverting their geographical positions and for de- and re-territorialising them in their counterpart's borderland territory. This in turn enables the redrawing of the critical and cultural cartographies that seek to distinguish between, and separate cultural and ideological articulations of the borders between Canada, Mexico and the U.S.

### **(Dis)Locating Coyote**

Coyote, in the context of Native North American and Meso-American folkloric practice, is a constituent of the '[f]irst people, members of a race of mythic prototypes who lived before humans existed'.<sup>13</sup> This

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<sup>11</sup> MacPherson, 'Coyote as Culprit', 177.

<sup>12</sup> James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 31.

<sup>13</sup> William Bright, *A Coyote Reader* (Oxford: University of California Press, 1993), xi.

race includes a number of different biological progenitors drawn from the animal kingdom, such as Raven, Bluejay, Spider and Hare, often associated with certain regions and particular communities and groups. Such archetypal characters are most often referred to as *tricksters*, figures marked by their ‘embodiment of ambiguity and ambivalence, doubleness and duplicity, contradiction and paradox’ and responsible in the stories that centre on them for ‘recreat[ing], reshap[ing] something already in existence’.<sup>14</sup> It might be asked, why not appropriate an avian trickster figure to embody and allow the redrawing of the critical cartography of regionalism? Certainly, in Raven or Bluejay, there is an embodiment of the peregrinations inherent in following the lines of flight which Deleuze and Guattari identify as a key constituent of the rhizome, and a creature ideally suited to bypassing the central site of the U.S. and bringing Canada and Mexico into each other’s critical orbit. However, the peripatetic nature of the biological coyote lends itself much more readily to what I see as the ground-level nature of the rhizome, and avoids the possible reading of omnipotence in Kroetsch’s implicit suggestion that God is the antithesis of Coyote, which a bird’s eye view that Raven or Bluejay provide might be interpreted as. What Coyote provides is a way in which we can enact a rhizomatic cultural critique that accommodates ‘transnationalism from below’.<sup>15</sup> To provide merely an overview of the territory would reinforce the rootedness of the existing mental tracings which Deleuze and Guattari liken to the arboreal, tree-like and rooted structure of conventional knowledge, and to which the rhizome is deliberately invoked in opposition. As they put it themselves, ‘The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance’.<sup>16</sup> The botanical metaphor of the rhizome is summoned precisely because of its grounded nature, and its ability to dive beneath the surface, irrupt into planes of discourse, break and reform into new chains of meaning. Armand Ruffo’s claim that the myths that conjured Coyote into being were ‘forced to go underground to survive’, a fact that,

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<sup>14</sup> Lewis Hyde, *Trickster Makes this World: Mischief, Myth and Art* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1998), 7; Renate Eigenbrod, *Travelling Knowledges: Positioning the Im/Migrant Reader of Aboriginal Literatures in Canada* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2005), 170.

<sup>15</sup> Sarah J. Mahler, ‘Theoretical and Empirical Contributions toward a Research Agenda for Transnationalism’ (1998) Cited in, Françoise Lionnet & Shu-mei Shih (eds) *Minor Transnationalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005), 6.

<sup>16</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013 [1987]), 25.

somewhat ironically, 'offer[s] new possibilities for literary creation', also appears to call upon the rhizome as a resistant mechanism which offers the possibility of new interpretative modes.<sup>17</sup> The biological, mythological and illegal incarnations of coyote all echo these dispersive, diffusive and guileful characteristics of the rhizome and, more importantly, provide the means by which we might 'ally' them with one another in the service of a revitalised regional paradigm for borders.

Considering some of the biological and behavioural characteristics of the genus *Canis latrans*, Bright notes that 'coyotes have their home burrows but may range widely', leading to an increasing dispersal of the animal across the North American continent.<sup>18</sup> Such diffusion of the species and their haphazard distribution seems reflective of much Western discourse on its mythological counterpart who displays 'an uncontrollable urge to wander'.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, much anthropological analysis of the Coyote trope focuses upon the links between the animal's predatory instincts and cunning, and their translation into the 'trickery, thievery and creativity' on display in Indigenous storytelling.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the coyotes employed by those seeking to cross the U.S.-Mexico border illegally gain such an epithet as it 'refers to the wily ways of the[se] smugglers'.<sup>21</sup> There may be similarities between the origins of these twin deployments of the Coyote/coyote trope but their modern day incarnations – in myth at the United States' northern border, in illegal action to the south – and the strategies that they employ in both guises display a marked but subtle difference.

Coyote as a people smuggler is just the latest in a long line of invocations of the Meso-American mythic trope. Indeed, as Spener notes, coyotes, and the services they provide – *coyotaje* – are commonplace; their employment by others is very much an everyday occurrence. Generally employed to assist, illegally or otherwise, a person's passage through the bureaucracy of everyday life in Mexico, the

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<sup>17</sup> Armand Ruffo, (1999) cited in Eigenbrod, *Travelling Knowledges*, 163.

<sup>18</sup> Bright, *Coyote Reader*, 34.

<sup>19</sup> Paul Radin, *The Trickster: A study in American Indian Mythology* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 165.

<sup>20</sup> Marvin Harris (1979) cited in David Spener, *Clandestine Crossings: Migrants and Coyotes on the Texas-Mexico Border* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 90.

<sup>21</sup> Rubén Martínez, *Crossing Over: A Mexican Family on the Migrant Trail*. (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001), 27.

coyote is not merely involved in illegal migration but also acts as labour broker, forger and counterfeiter, a go-between or middleman. As such, a Mexican coyote is rarely an individual but a member of 'a loosely knit network in which different individuals play different roles'.<sup>22</sup> Such *coyotaje* practices are key to the low-level resistance enacted 'by the disinherited members of Mexican society', means by which to combat exclusion from power and wealth. This would seem particularly apt to those of a mestizo ancestry or identity, and it is little wonder that coyote has begun to feature heavily in such non-indigenous society and culture, a culture whose *mestizaje* identity is marked by hybridity and constantly negotiated.<sup>23</sup> As Wolf notes, 'the ever-shifting nature of the social conditions' that the mestizo is often subject to, forces them 'to move with guile and speed through the hidden passageways of society', never committing themselves to a particular site or territory.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, 'coyote' is also used, in similarly everyday circumstances to its illegal operative namesake, as a racial category discernible in much the same way as mestizo, by hybridity. These unstable categorisations and imaginings of terms etymologically related to manifestations of coyote are reflective of the folkloric origins of coyote as an ephemeral, almost temporary presence, 'the one that runs from one town to another and belongs to neither'.<sup>25</sup> Here we are moving towards the use of coyote that I aim to employ, a figure of constant motion: a nomad. Rubén Martínez's vibrant, investigative account of undocumented border crossings from Mexico into the U.S. traces many of these coyotes – and wetbacks (those who seek to cross the Rio Grande) – back to the Purepécha people, noting that the very word *purepécha* means 'a people who travel'.<sup>26</sup> In these travels, they are deeply involved in recreating and reshaping cultural, political and geographical power relations.

Coyote as the trickster figure often found at play in Indigenous Canadian literature is a similar shaper and creator of such power relations, but operates in subtly different ways. Where the Mexican

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<sup>22</sup> Spener, *Clandestine Crossings*, 91-96.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>24</sup> Wolf (1959) in, *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Hyde, *Trickster Makes this World*, 6.

<sup>26</sup> Martínez, *Crossing Over*, 31.

coyote is a literal cultural actor involved in negotiating a way through the striated space of the state, the North American Coyote remains a mythic archetype more often found in the smooth spaces between the striae of such state spaces. Gerald Vizenor, the prominent Anishinaabe writer and theorist, claims that such trickster figures – not only Coyote – represent and enact 'a "doing" in narrative points of view and outside the imposed structures'.<sup>27</sup> This clearly demonstrates Coyote's lack of subservience to striated space – which he exists outside. But what Vizenor's adjectival naming of Coyote's behavior also does is to note its creation as processive, as always shifting, always moving. Just as *Canis latrans* inhabits the entire North American continent, so too does its mythological trickster counterpart: they 'are not "rooted" to a specific place but are linked to a wider area or region', Eigenbrod notes, further enhancing the inherent mobility of 'these so-called culture heroes ... identified by their wanderlust'.<sup>28</sup> The identification of such itinerant traits mirrors the radical deterritorialisation of the nomad and, once more, ties the figure back to its biological forebear, for, like the guiding principle of the rhizome itself, *Canis Latrans* is always 'moving with a certain stealth [and is] powerful in its dispersion'.<sup>29</sup> In always moving, he resists incorporation into the striated space of the state through which he roams. In his roaming, '[t]he life of the nomad is the intermezzo', the in-between.<sup>30</sup> In this sense, the Mexican coyote whose principal folkloric trait is identified as a fundamental 'in-betweenness' can be aligned with the Canadian configuration of Coyote, wherein it functions as 'a figure of "open inter-relationship" between radically different "worlds"'.<sup>31</sup> Coyote/coyote, we might say, is always between points of striated space – of the gridded and geometrical – and is therefore able to gain access to the nomadic smooth space, wherein the chosen trajectory which the nomad constantly travels 'give[s] that space its peculiar quality'.<sup>32</sup> The 'peculiar qualities' of a coyote cartographic space that both tropes occupy are those in which such smooth spaces are overwritten,

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<sup>27</sup> Gerald Vizenor, 'A Postmodern Introduction' In, Gerald Vizenor (ed) *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992), 13.

<sup>28</sup> Eigenbrod, *Travelling Knowledges*, 165.

<sup>29</sup> Caren Kaplan, *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Travel* (London: Duke University Press, 1996), 87.

<sup>30</sup> Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 380.

<sup>31</sup> Spener, *Clandestine Crossings*, 100; Arnold E. Davidson, *Coyote Country: Fictions of the Canadian West* (London: Duke University Press, 1994), 93.

<sup>32</sup> Clare Colebrook, 'Deterritorialization' In, Adrian Parr (ed), *The Deleuze Dictionary*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 66-67.

palimpsest style, over the striations which boundary regions: ‘Coyote took smooth, straight rivers and made them twist and turn’, as Davidson suggests in his readings of Canadian prairie fictions.<sup>33</sup>

Our theoretical approach must mirror both the ‘disjunctive, disruptive, and potentially radically subversive’ characteristics of the mythological trickster Coyote, and we must also adopt the persona of the coyote at work in the Mexican borderlands, a vehicle for ‘migration ... evasion ... and clandestine crossing’ of territorial and theoretical boundaries.<sup>34</sup> By making both Coyote and the coyote nomadic subjects, the different interpretations, deployments and territories of these figures might be inverted and applied to their borderland opposite, making them both specific and localized but also inter-related. If we are able to effect a ‘cultural inversion’ of this kind, have them proceed nomadically across the territory which separates them, what kinds of effects might we be able to discern from such deterritorialisations?<sup>35</sup> What new strategies with which to read a critical region such as the border might emerge? Here we might push the limits of culture and the borders that nominally restrict them and effect, as Michaelson and Johnson suggest, a theory based upon ‘travelling logics [which] can give way to ... a recognition that cultural borders are effects produced in the mental operation that pulls two groups of people together ... (con)fusing them, in order to contrast them’.<sup>36</sup> Vizenor elucidates the function of Coyote in this regard when he states that ‘Silence and separation ... are the antitheses of [the] trickster’, and that this sign ‘wanders between narrative voices’.<sup>37</sup> These observations cut to the very heart of the need for coyote cartography as a means by which we might ‘swallow’ the centre that ‘separates’ the territorial margins of Canada and Mexico and allow a series of critical and theoretical gestures and exchanges to develop. Here

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<sup>33</sup> Davidson, *Coyote Country*, 198.

<sup>34</sup> Carlton Smith, *Coyote Kills John Wayne: Postmodernism and Contemporary Fictions of the Transcultural Frontier* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000), 59; Spener, *Clandestine Crossings*, 87.

<sup>35</sup> I borrow the term ‘cultural inversion’, consciously, from Arnold E. Davidson, Priscilla L. Walton and Jennifer Andrews’, *Border Crossings: Thomas King’s Cultural Inversions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), study of the works of Thomas King as they relate it, on several occasions as one of the functions of King’s incarnation of Coyote.

<sup>36</sup> Scott Michaelson and David E. Johnson, ‘Border Secrets: An Introduction’ In, Scott Michaelson and David E. Johnson (eds), *Border Theory: The Limits of Cultural Politics*. (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 9.

<sup>37</sup> Vizenor, ‘A Postmodern Introduction’, 13.

we can replace 'silence' with dialogue between the real-and-imagined statuses of these two borders, through the real-and-imagined figures of Coyote and coyote. Herein we can offer a vital divergence from regionalist discourse that takes no account of moments of convergence in the lived and cultural experiences of specific regions. If regionalism elides difference and striates space, the reinstatement of Indigenous voices rendered silent by the ideological appropriation and configuration of the physical and psychological borders erected around and between them can subvert these spaces and make them smooth once more.

### **Flattening the Map: Reinstating Smooth Space**

In order to strengthen the comparative paradigm that this study is seeking, we must develop and deploy a critical regionalist-inspired strategy that 'link[s] moments of cultural struggle to larger patterns of history, politics and culture ... not only in time but in the nebulous networks of discourse and also in space'.<sup>38</sup> The 'space' here is the border at both the Northern and Southern boundaries of the continental United States, and we must consider how we can draw these distinctive geographical and cultural entities into critical exchange and dialogue, identifying moments of both conjuncture and disjuncture in the ways in which they are understood and represented. As such, this study is engaged in a reframing of regionalism through critical regionalism, but it also seeks to reframe critical regionalism itself and make it hemispheric in its orientation. This undertaking is as mobile as the nomadism it derives from, as O'Sullivan posits in his suggestion that cultural studies itself should become rhizomatic, 'a journey which produces the terrain it maps', and which 'involves a *pragmatics*, the creation of 'psychic tools' with which to reorder our 'selves' and our world'.<sup>39</sup> Just as Campbell traces a line of flight from critical regionalism into the concept of the rhizome and agglomerates the two, what this study similarly seeks is to expand the framework to include related concepts that can further our understanding of critical regionalism itself, apply them to the specific

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<sup>38</sup> Douglas Reichert Powell, *Critical Regionalism: Connecting Politics and Culture in the American Landscape* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 97.

<sup>39</sup> Simon O'Sullivan, 'Cultural Studies as Rhizomes – Rhizomes in Cultural Studies' (2002) [online: <http://www.simonosullivan.net/articles/cultural-studies-as-rhizome.pdf>], 84.



regions at hand but also add to the methodology itself. If, as Campbell demonstrates, regions and their cultural construction can be theorised as rhizomatic, then Deleuze and Guattari's suggestion that 'the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight', provides justification for hybridising the cartographies of region and theory.<sup>40</sup> What is therefore proposed is the creation of a *coyote cartography* in which such a hybridised and comparative approach is embedded, and in which the originally envisaged function of critical regionalism as both process and product can maintain an influence in the ways the project progresses; the coyote archetype will guide the creation of this new map, whilst also being subject to its critical gaze. In many ways, this is a palimpsest as much as a map, and this is the very function of the rhizome in a transnational age with its suggestion of 'an uncontainable, invisible symbolic geography of relations that become the creative terrain on which minority subjects act and interact in fruitful, lateral ways'.<sup>41</sup> An invocation of the figure of the coyote makes visible the 'symbolic geography' that exists between the borderlands of Mexico and Canada, re-mapping a previously extant creative terrain.

This location, dislocation and relocation of Coyote/coyote mirror the de- and re-territorialising functions of Deleuze and Guattari's notions of nomadism and nomadic thought. Moreover, in the 'establish[ing] of critical footing via other genealogies' which the interweaving of the two tropes under consideration has so far achieved, Krista Comer's recent review of developments in both critical regionalism and post-regionalism also suggests that 'it might be advantageous to begin and remain critically deterritorialized'.<sup>42</sup> This is effectively achieved here as, not only does the deployment of a coyote cartography create a smooth geographical space, less subject to the imposition of the striations of the nation-state, it also effects a smooth theoretical space in which, in common with the rhizome, pertinent

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<sup>40</sup> Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 21.

<sup>41</sup> Lionnet & Shih, *Minor Transnationalism*, 2.

<sup>42</sup> Krista Comer, 'Introduction: Assessing the Postwestern' *Western American Literature*, 48.1 & 2 (2013), 5.

elements of a diverse range of disciplinary methodologies and their insights might irrupt into the planes of discourse both under construction and consideration.

Comer suggests that critical regionalism has the potential to become ‘the key body of thought our field might contribute to critical theory and Americanist or Américas literary studies’, in no small part ‘because of its longstanding regard for an ethics of place’.<sup>43</sup> The employment of Deleuzian philosophy and its related analytical techniques presents a substantial challenge to this ‘ethical’ element of critical regionalism, not least, here, because of the use of Indigenous figures. Warnings against the mixing of the Euro-American school of critique which Deleuze and Guattari come from and elements of indigeneity abound and continue to be debated in recent scholarship. Chickasaw scholar Jodi Byrd, in particular, seeks to question the overarching philosophy which motivates much of Deleuze and Guattari’s writings, especially their call for cultural studies to ‘Experiment!’ rather than to ‘signify and interpret’ in which she reads a danger, leading her to suggest that any ‘smoothing’ of space results in the field being transformed ‘once again into uncultivated wilderness that allows any trajectory or cultivation to enter it, but not arise from it’.<sup>44</sup> This suspicion that employing a rhizomatic reading which privileges smooth rather than striated spaces ‘metaphorically erases and replaces indigenous presence’ is a valid and widespread one.<sup>45</sup> As Heidi Slettedahl Macpherson notes, this is often motivated by the fact that ‘many critics are troubled by non-Amerindian writers’ utilisation of First Nations myths, and never more so than when the mythic personality in question becomes re-figured in dramatic ways’.<sup>46</sup> One such critic, Andrew Wiget, goes so far as to suggest that such reworkings of Indigenous figures represents a ‘lapse in integrity’.<sup>47</sup> No doubt then that the ground which a coyote cartography maps is a fraught and contested terrain akin to the very object of its study. Wrestling with such difficulties and responding to such criticisms is vital, not only to defend my own position but to go some way to addressing the closing anecdote regarding the further

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>44</sup> Jodi Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 18.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Macpherson, ‘Coyote as Culprit’, 175.

<sup>47</sup> In, Ibid.

development of critical regionalism which Krista Comer presents in a recent special edition of *Western American Literature*:

At a plenary session in 2010 ... on critical regionalism [at the Western Literature Association conference] in Prescott, Arizona, the scholar of Native Studies, Chadwick Allen, offered a concluding comment to our plenary papers. I had posed the following provocation at the end of my plenary talk: “How critical is a critical regionalism that is not actively feminist?” Allen’s rejoinder, and he had the final word, was, “How critical is a critical regionalism that does not center on indigeneity?”<sup>48</sup>

In order to develop a critical regionalism that adequately addresses and incorporates Indigeneity, it is necessary to consider the exceptionalism inherent in many of Deleuze’s theories. The rearticulation of the Deleuzian theories that a coyote cartography deploys also serves to demonstrate how the hemispheric regionalism proposed herein allows a less exceptional American Studies to emerge.

### **Points of Departure: Avoiding the Appropriation of Indigeneity**

Caren Kaplan, in particular, finds much to criticise in the philosophical projects of Deleuze and Guattari that shape this study. I would argue that, in many cases, these criticisms are misplaced. Nonetheless, some of the cautionary notes she sounds against a Euro-American poststructuralist tradition (which forms, if not the bedrock of my framework, at least one of a number of originating points) do provide a number of useful starting points to justify the creation of a coyote cartography as a viable means by which we might begin to indigenise the framework. Uppermost of Kaplan’s criticisms of Deleuze and Guattari’s conception and use of the nomad as a literal and metaphorical figure is that it ‘relies upon an opposition between a central site of subjectivity and zones of marginality’ wherein this marginal zone constitutes merely an ‘imaginary space rather than the location of theoretical production itself’.<sup>49</sup> The proposed coyote cartography in this study provides an approach to border regions that very much embeds its

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<sup>48</sup> Comer, ‘Assessing the Postwestern’, 14.

<sup>49</sup> Kaplan, *Questions of Travel*, 88.

theoretical production within the real-and-imagined space of the Mexican and Canadian borders with the United States.

By positioning both versions of the coyote trope as representative of nomadism, we distinguish the mode of their strategic deployment as a means of comparative critique from that of migration, enabling us to efface the central site of the U.S. and allowing for the margin itself to become central. Furthermore, in bypassing the centre that separates the margins, we might also avoid the suggestion that such spaces ‘function simply as a metaphorical margin for European oppositional strategies’.<sup>50</sup> Through the two coyote archetypes having their origins in similar trickster and creation myths embedded in the territories from which they originate – and are, in their importance to such creation stories, pre-duality and pre-binarity, therefore outside of oppositional constructions of borders – we are able to avoid ‘generat[ing] theory through binary oppositions and essentialisms’ and, instead, develop, in contradistinction to Kaplan’s argument, ‘new theoretical paradigms [that] explicitly articulate local and global processes in relational, non-teleological ways’.<sup>51</sup> These paradigms dwell precisely in the margins to which Kaplan suggests nomadic thought only travels for ‘a kind of theoretical tourism’.<sup>52</sup> In embedding the coyote figure within the paradigm that will interrogate the twin Coyote/coyote trope’s very construction and constructedness, we ensure that the marginal becomes central and avoid the problematic of merely moving a gaze which exists in – and remains subservient to – the centre, to a marginal position. Similarly, in positioning the trickster and the smuggler as nomadic, the centre – *any* centre – in which they reside and operate, becomes a smooth space *within* the striated space of a nation’s margins. This new cartography relies on mediation between any opposition which might arise, privileging neither.

Similarly, the perceived function of a coyote cartography works against the reductionist viewpoint associated with Western ideas of Indigenous peoples, which are so often ‘based on preconceived

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Clifford, *Routes*, 33.

<sup>52</sup> Kaplan, *Questions of Travel*, 88.

notions of Native cultures as “static” and on mystifications of a land-based ideology’.<sup>53</sup> The nomad is always on the move, continually ambulant and with only temporary consolidations of territory. Coyote’s congruent lack of fixity dispels the repetition of such reductionism. This deterritorialisation, as Comer reminds us, ‘is not, by default, a cause for celebration’.<sup>54</sup> Certainly, in the readings which follow, and which seek to enact the strategies of Coyote/coyote, this is something of which to be mindful, since ‘the globalist flows that are a fact of life under late capitalism may *require* of the subject a disembedded relation to place that is anything but freely chosen’.<sup>55</sup> Macpherson’s riposte to Wiget’s claim that non-indigenous use of Indigenous signs and symbols represents the ‘adoption of native themes, images, and literary forms to alien purposes’ is to suggest that ‘the utilization of Coyote as a structuring device in a non-Amerindian [work] ... can be variously interpreted as celebration [and] appropriation’.<sup>56</sup> To this ambiguous coupling I would add advocacy as a motivating factor in a coyote cartography for a hemispheric regionalism, thereby addressing a central element of this school of thought’s commitment to a ‘restructuring of space and power undertaken to forward a theory of community, ethics, and aesthetics’, in which ‘concern for the vulnerable and the Other is a central, explicit demand’.<sup>57</sup> In appropriating, celebrating *and* advocating through and between Indigenous voices, coyote cartography retains elements of the ambiguity of Coyote and, as Kimberly Blaeser remarks, ‘mediat[ing] between supposedly contradictory forces or elements by retaining aspects of both’, as an agglomeration of Coyote and coyote envisions, ‘reveal[s] them to be coexisting parts of one whole, interconnected, often indistinguishable elements of the one ... ambiguity approaches truth in a way clarity cannot’.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Akiwenzie-Damm (1993) In, Eigenbrod, *Travelling Knowledges*, 171.

<sup>54</sup> Comer, ‘Assessing the Postwestern’, 12.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Macpherson, ‘Coyote as Culprit’, 175.

<sup>57</sup> Comer, ‘Assessing the Postwestern’, 12.

<sup>58</sup> Kimberly Blaeser, ‘Trickster: A Compendium’, In Mark Allan Lindquist and Martin Zanger (eds) *Buried Roots and Indestructible Seeds: The Survival of American Indian Life in Story, History, and Spirit* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 51.

## Practicing Coyote Cartography

For an author and critic who can claim Cherokee, Greek and German descent, holds dual American-Canadian citizenship, whose life has included periods of time across the North American continent, and who spent several years in Australasia (including a spell as an undocumented worker in New Zealand), Thomas King's identity is, one would assume, multi-faceted – chaotic, confusing, ambiguous even – an ongoing and processive construction. The critical reception of his works has been equally disorientating along similar national identity lines: Jennifer Andrews, in a lengthy interview with King conducted in 1999, highlights this very point when she notes that Canadian reviewers claim King for their own, and American reviewers as theirs.<sup>59</sup> King appears characteristically amused by this, and this light-heartedness and humour from the man himself permeates his fictional works: a humour that belies – or, more usefully, *disguises* – the serious and weighty political issues with which his writings wrestle. What the critics whom Andrews refers to fail to address is the crucial hyphen in King's 'officially' designated nationality; King is a *dual* Canadian-American citizen, but one who refutes the duality which this suggests and refuses to be subjected to the oppositional binary this seeks to impose upon his infinitely more complex identity. King's own idea of his identity, and the territories in which his narratives are sited, I would suggest, dwell within and upon that crucial hyphen which attempts to bridge or straddle the border between these two nationalities. But, rather than the short, straight line which appears on the author's official documentation, the border bridging hyphen which King constructs on the pages of his novels and short stories is neither short nor straight. It is an altogether more complex, non-linear and less conclusive mechanism, prone to reinstate the ambiguity which that original hyphen might be read as representing were it not buttressed at either end by two powerful and normative national narratives.

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<sup>59</sup> Jennifer Andrews 'Border Trickery and Dog Bones: A Conversation with Thomas King' [Online: <http://journals.hil.unb.ca/index.php/SCL/article/view/14248>]

In this way, King seems acutely aware of the power of borders and that much better placed to undercut their construction: burrowing into the spurious foundations on which they are built and destabilising the privileged subjectivity they claim to represent. Key here is the recognition – not explicitly stated by King himself but certainly readable in his work – that any border has a dual identity much like his own. As New attests, ‘There is *borderline* ... and there is *borderland*. The one names and divides; the other is psychic, indeterminate’.<sup>60</sup> Further, we might suggest, one border is a geographical demarcation and cartographic mark which one might experience physically – a putative ‘reality’ – and the other is a psychological territory experienced mentally – an ‘imaginary’ landscape – a place *and* a space which are *both* constructs. These constructs exist in an interdependent relationship where one – the *borderline* – ‘construct[s] conceptual edges’, and the other – the *borderland* – ‘construct[s] territories of translation’.<sup>61</sup> This territory – in the works of Thomas King, predominantly the Alberta-Montana border region – as the opening to this chapter explored, might provide the site for the translation of Coyote into coyote, and, simultaneously afford the opportunity to probe the edges of the critically regionalist inspired *coyote cartography* concept outlined therein. King’s own literary constructions of these real-and-imagined border regions reflect New’s suggestion that such zones are ‘symptomatic of ... a condition of ‘interstitiality,’ in-betweenness, [and] an experiential territory of intervention and revision’, and as such, provide the setting in which we might not only *translate* Coyote but also *revise* the function of this figure and explore what such an *intervention* might reveal.<sup>62</sup> In this way a coyote cartography practice proceeds in a clearly critically regionalist manner, for, as Frampton proposes, a structure inspired by critical regionalism ensures that ‘meaning stems from a revealed conjunction between’.<sup>63</sup> This conjunction is not only that between the two coyote tropes but also between those real and imagined border regions which King, and others, construct in their narratives of such interstitial spaces.

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<sup>60</sup> William Herbert New *Borderlands: How we talk about Canada*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), 4.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, 27.

<sup>63</sup> Kenneth Frampton ‘Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance’. In, Hal Foster (ed) *Postmodern Culture*. (London: Pluto Press, 1983), 22.

If we recall Deleuze and Guattari's definitions of smooth and striated spaces, the interstitial sites of the border as it exists between places could also be equated with the space of the nomad as the interstice exists between these places and intervenes in their construction. New's monograph *Borderlands: How we talk about Canada* may address popular understandings of Canada as a whole, but his observations are particularly pertinent to any discussion of King's narratives of the border. In particular in regard to the attempted nomadic alignment and inversion of the two coyote tropes, his suggestion that 'the boundary rhetoric of inclusion and exclusion can perhaps be likened to the games of chess and checkers', clearly recalls the metaphorical definition of striated space which Deleuze and Guattari put forward and the oppositional smooth space that they conceive of as the territory of the nomad.<sup>64</sup> Naturally, to adhere to the principles of a critical regionalism, these oppositional spaces – real/imagined, smooth/striated, borderline/borderland – should not be read as part of a binary system; they co-exist and rely upon one another for their cultural and ideological sustainment. Again, King seems acutely aware of this need for dialogue and negotiation between these positions when he states that 'there are other ways of imagining the world, ways that do not rely so much on oppositions as they do on co-operations.'<sup>65</sup> The challenges which King's narratives present to normative border discourses might not seem, outwardly, to represent a co-operative stance but, when we view them through the lens of a hemispherically regionalist method, such challenges *can* be read as such. For example, Frampton refers to 'contradiction' as one means by which the 'double mediation' between the local and the global might be enacted and Deleuze and Guattari – whilst more forthright in their conceptualising of such mediatory techniques – speak of 'stammering' and 'stuttering', of becoming 'a foreigner but in one's own tongue ... be[coming] a bastard, a half-breed.'<sup>66</sup> Leaving aside, for the time being, the very real implications of such derogatory terminologies when applied to those who dwell within the marginal spaces of the nation-state, what is crucial in this suggestion from Deleuze and Guattari is that, whilst such critical gestures might appear as steadfastly oppositional, they

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<sup>64</sup> New, *Borderlands*, 18.

<sup>65</sup> Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 110.

<sup>66</sup> Frampton, 21; Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 116.



always also represent a dwelling *within* that which is being critiqued and *between* the supposed binary positions which are constructed in border regions.

Whether reading borders as lines *or* lands, real *or* imagined, striated *or* smooth, Canadian *or* American, Indigenous *or* colonial, King's writings erases the dichotomous, disjunctive 'or' and replaces it with the conjunctive 'and'. In doing so, and in speaking *of* and *to* both positions, the physical and psychical borders of King's narrative settings reinstate the articulating function of the 'joint' between the two – or, strictly speaking, more – nations which the boundary at the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel represents – granting it the ability to articulate not only its geographical permeability and malleability, but also its imaginative expository function. Furthermore, and to begin to reinstate critical voices from the Mexican-U.S. border, such re-articulations present opportunities for a reading of the parallel 'in terms of a north-south rather than east-west axis' which the latitudinal function of the arbitrary boundary between Canada and the United States subtly encourages.<sup>67</sup> This 'east-west axis' also implicitly leads towards discussions of borders to adopt a postcolonial theoretical stance in its use of the extrapolated occidental 'other' world. In re-orienting the axis of interpretation to north-south – especially in a study of America in its hemispheric context – a critique of North American borders which are predominantly traversed, physically, following these alternative (and opposing) compass points is better placed to equate experiences of these cartographic hierarchies. It also opens border studies to the call from José David Saldívar for 'finding historical, ideological and cultural simultaneity in the imaginative writings of the Americas'.<sup>68</sup> This is the fundamental purpose of a coyote cartography: seeking simultaneity in the real and imagined statuses of border regions through the inversion of the coyote trope.

Whilst I have been careful not to appropriate the trickster Coyote most commonly discussed as a character within, and external shaper of, King's writing, this figure's affinity for chaos and creativity,

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<sup>67</sup> Rafael Pérez-Torres 'Chicano Culture Reclaiming Our America: Coyotes at the Border'. (*American Literature*, Volume 67, Number 4, December 1995), 816.

<sup>68</sup> José David Saldívar *The Dialectics of Our America: Genealogy, Critique and Literary History*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 22.

these very characteristics are essential for contesting the cartographies of the real and imagined borders of real and imagined nations and the existing interpretative modes directed towards them. In moving beyond the dominant mode of critique applied to King's work – namely its trickster discourse functions and the related focus on his deployment of Coyote within the text – a critical regionalist method which accepts this position but also seeks to revise the derivation of Coyote's actions as akin to the *coyotaje* practised elsewhere, develops a 'strateg[y] specifically designed to counter Anglocentric hegemony in border disputes.'<sup>69</sup> Such an approach develops one way in which we might conceive of a 'transdisciplinary phantasm ... designed to transgress rigidly "border-patrolled" discursive boundaries', as Saldivar, following Paredes, envisages in his attempts to refashion American Studies in a more global image.<sup>70</sup> This seems particularly apt to the First Nations concerns to which King speaks, since, for them, the border is nothing if not an apparition and which automatically undermines its supposed objective reality.

### **Re-reading 'Borders'; Re-positioning Borders**

The story 'Borders' – appearing in *One Good Story, That One* – is perhaps Thomas King's most reviewed and analysed piece of short fiction.<sup>71</sup> Given its potent political dimension, rendering of literal border-crossing discourse as humorous, if not faintly ridiculous, and insistence upon Native authority in matters of identity and citizenship, this is no surprise. What *is* surprising is the fact that a narrative which details a border-crossing facilitated only through the tactical evasion and subversion of border bureaucracy has not included recourse to discussions of the 'illegality' of the techniques employed by the protagonists, nor their matter-of-fact deployment and the ways in which the necessity of these strategies is presented by the characters as nothing out-of-the-ordinary; in fact, as very much everyday occurrences. 'Borders' is narrated by a Blackfoot boy as he and his mother attempt to cross the border between Coutts, on the Canadian side, and Sweetgrass, on the American side, in order to visit his sister Laetitia in Salt Lake City.

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<sup>69</sup> José David Saldivar, *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 37.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Thomas King *One Good Story, That One*. (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1993) [Further references to this text appear in in-text parentheses].

At the border, when asked to declare their citizenship as either 'Canadian' or 'American', the mother character will only answer 'Blackfoot'. As a consequence they are unable to enter either country and find themselves sequestered at a duty free store in the space between the two dominant nations. The consistency of existing interpretations of 'Borders' also presents something which could be seen as making instantly problematic my insistence upon a 'nomadic' mode of thought to open up the boundaries of criticism available to a hemispheric regionalism. The interstitial setting of much of the narrative – a duty-free shop in the zone between Canada and the U.S. – has been claimed as a territory where King himself critiques the trend for triumphal readings of the figure of the nomad as a cultural agent not subject to the imposition of identity by the nation-state. Peters, for example, writes that in 'relegating his protagonists to the Duty Free zone between Canada and the US, King challenges the post-modern celebration of Western identities as decentered and nomadic.'<sup>72</sup> Yet I would argue that this setting, by its very nature – in-between two nations – offers only the temporary territorialisation which the nomad makes; certainly, the older female character's acceptance of this situation – 'my mother seemed in good spirits, and, all in all, it was as much an adventure as an inconvenience' (141) – speaks not of disenfranchisement but of an understanding that this territory is only temporary. Furthermore, the nomad, in my reading, is neither postmodern nor decentred: by occupying the in-between space of the duty-free store – in which Mel, the clerk, wears 'a name tag with a tiny American flag on one side and a tiny Canadian flag on the other' (140) – King creates a dialogical space which privileges neither position (Canadian, American, Blackfoot) and which negotiates between these diverse identities. This space provides a setting in which the bricolage of identities present in the *dramatis personae*, and *within* these same characters, are not decentred but are able to claim a new and revitalised centrality within the margin they are forced to occupy. The 'tiny' flags worn by Mel – whose citizenship is tellingly never revealed – diminish the dominant position of the two nation-states in understanding what the territory represents. Additionally, with the boy and his mother now the predominant population of the borderline in which the store is sited, this marginal territory is reclaimed

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<sup>72</sup> Laura Peters, 'Thomas King and Contemporary Indigenous Identities' In, Deborah L. Madsen (ed) *Beyond the Borders: American Literature and Post-colonial Theory* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), 196.

both physically and psychically as Blackfoot land, bridging the border which arbitrarily bisected the nation of which they claim citizenship. The Indigenous lineage which the maternal character insists upon redraws the cartographic hierarchy present at the border. As one border guard remarks: 'I know that we got Blackfeet on the American side and the Canadians got Blackfeet on their side'(135). The character's attempt to evade the bureaucracy of the border collapses this opposition and recreates the smooth space which the nation-state attempts to draw its own lines across. The characters thus become nomadic not in their not having a territory but in their insistence upon this smooth space where identity can be sanctioned outside of the reach of the state. This is not a postmodern 'decentring', it is the raising into being of a new centrality from within a hierarchical cartography, both real-and-imagined.

Peters further suggests that if we are to celebrate the indigene as a nomadic subject then such an action 'obliterates the misery of the colonial subjects who are relegated to such an in-between space, lacking in rights and stripped of their histories'.<sup>73</sup> However, if we read this assertion alongside Davidson, Walton and Andrews' suggestion that 'King's work revises and subverts the heroism and linear teleology of many border narratives', could it not be argued that a subversion of 'heroism' could be read as a reassertion or reinstatement of the tragic elements of Native identities that Peters alludes to in her references to the obliteration of the misery, and ahistorical positioning, of the Native subject?<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, does this not also mirror the purposes of a coyote cartographic reading of works such as 'Borders': an inversion of the culture hero trickster Coyote and the arguably more tragic figure of coyote and an assertion of the cooperative and coalitional strategy this envisages when read against a different linearity – north/south rather than the inherently othering axis of east/west.

If we were to transgress the borders of the narrative of 'Borders', to look beyond the few pages in which King constructs this dynamic border discourse – to proceed nomadically in our reading of the text by viewing it as merely one point along a relay, a temporary territory for interpretation – we could

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<sup>73</sup> Peters, 'King and Indigenous Identities', 196.

<sup>74</sup> Arnold E. Davidson, Priscilla L. Walton and Jennifer Andrews, *Border Crossings: Thomas King's Cultural Inversions*. (London: Duke University Press, 2003), 153.

build further this notion of the author and his characters as smugglers, as coyotes. Recourse to King's *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative* is hugely informative in this regard and to comprehend further the complex interweaving of the borderland and the borderline in 'Borders'. Tracing a line-of-flight to the essay 'What is it About Us That You Don't Like?' in *The Truth About Stories*, further highlights the cultural agency enacted by King's characters and the bureaucratic measures their attempts to cross the border also subvert.<sup>75</sup> Justification for this is contained in a simple 'disguise' worn by one of the characters who eventually helps to facilitate the protagonist's eventual crossing of the border: 'Around noon, a good-looking guy in a dark blue suit and an orange tie with little ducks on it ... talked to my mother for a little while, and, after they were done talking ... we got into our car' (143). The car drives to the border a final time, and, having declared once more their citizenship as 'Blackfoot', they are finally allowed to cross into the U.S., their identity as Blackfoot intact. Significantly, this exchange is preceded by the boy's mother spending the night in the duty free store parking lot telling stories about Coyote, and with the appearance of the 'duck' adorned tie-wearing man, it is possible to read a revealed conjunction between the narrative of 'Borders' and the musings King offers on the many pieces of legislation 'that can make Indians disappear in a twinkle' – in both Canada and the U.S. – in 'What is it About Us You Don't Like'. The framing device he uses in the latter is a 'Coyote stor[y] ... one of my favourites ... the one about Coyote and the Ducks.'<sup>76</sup>

The story King weaves here casts Coyote in his chaotic, mistake-making mode, convincing the ducks to slowly give up their feathers – ostensibly to keep them safe from 'Human Beings' – so he might have a coat to rival that of Raven, and the slow but inexorable march towards the point at which the ducks have been stripped of all of their feathers – of their very identity – mirrors what King goes on to explicate about the various pieces of legislation both Canada and the U.S. have developed in the past to attempt to similarly strip Native people of their land, their rights, their identities. King decries the many pieces of legislation that have been created by both the Canadian and American governments – most often with the

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<sup>75</sup> King, *The Truth About Stories*, 121-151.

<sup>76</sup> King, *The Truth About Stories*, 132, 122.

aim of assimilating the Native and clothed in paternalistic rhetoric – in a complex polemic which wanders with righteous anger between the two nation-states and their bureaucratic machinery which the protagonists in ‘Borders’ find themselves in-between: The Indian Act (1876); The General Allotment Act (1887); The Indian Reorganization Act (1934); The Termination Act (1953); Bill C-31, Amendment to the Indian Act (1985). Hence, in reading outside the linearity of the narrative, between two separate writings, across a north-south rather than east-west axis, the act of defiance at the border in the short story attains a much larger significance: it is no longer just ‘a legal technicality’ that detains the Blackfoot pair in the liminal no-mans-land between the borderline (136). Rather, their eventual passage across the physical boundary between Canada and the U.S. becomes a multifarious act of evasion within the narrative and a multifaceted act on the author’s part: a smuggling in to the fiction a number of undocumented intertexts which add to the psychic borderland which the boy and his mother must negotiate. The catalyst for this negotiation – whereby the Blackfoot identity remains intact even as it evades the legal machinery of the state – is the man with the duck-adorned tie. Is he Coyote? There is no trickster behaviour to detect in his actions. More likely, this is the Blackfoot actor’s coyote, his tie a simple reminder for the mother (and the reader) that ‘like the Ducks in the Coyote story ... Indians had to give up most of their feathers in order to keep some of their feathers for themselves’, and that to do so again, to acquiesce to the bureaucracy of the border – which would enable a more speedy crossing of the borderline – would be to become another occupant of the borderland of history and tragedy which King outlines in his examination of the various ‘Indian’ legislation. In this regard, the mother character seems to personify the legal counsel for the Sawridge, Tsuu T’ina and Ermineskin First Nations of Alberta who, in response to Bill C-31, stated: ‘It’s not just where you draw the line ... but who draws the line.’<sup>77</sup> The Blackfoot mother character in ‘Borders’ expands this cartographic border analogy yet further, erasing both borderlines and redrawing them in a fashion which displays traits that have more in common with coyote than Coyote.

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<sup>77</sup> Cited in King, *The Truth About Stories*, 150.

### **The One about Charles Bowden and Coyote**

My analysis of King's fiction demonstrates the possibilities of coyote cartography as a non-hierarchical means of critique that, through the re-inscription of Coyote as coyote and practitioner of *coyotaje*, enables a critical regionalist method to develop in which the global-local nexus of regional cultural production is brought more sharply into focus. Furthermore it re-draws not only the spatial limits of regions but also their temporal limits through the transgression of textual boundaries: 'Borders' thus becomes not only a text that challenges the notion of the spatial limits that national boundaries represent but also one that, through the re-insertion of inter- and intra-textual elements, effects a re-aligned and coalitional recovery of collective memory across temporal boundaries. This speaks directly to the aims and functions of hemispheric regionalism as both a theoretical framework and socio-cultural reality that demands and effects a complex interleaving of both the past and the present.

Where this routing of regional archetypes envisaged Coyote as coyote, its primary function was one of re-inscription: a means by which new readings might be realised and new avenues for interpretation might emerge. To invert this trajectory – to disrupt any notion that this is another, merely differentiated, hierarchy – and read coyote as Coyote requires less a re-inscription and more a reinstatement: a reinstatement of the origins of the folkloric and mythological functions of Coyote within the territory we now call Mexico. Just as Coyote's geographical reach and cultural dispersal across North America is widespread, its range also extends into Central America. And yet, since those who assist undocumented Mexican migrants to cross the border into the U.S. first came to be popularly known as 'coyotes' in the 1920s, these origins have been increasingly marginalised – if not lost altogether – in articulations of the geopolitical power struggle of which they are an integral part. Maybe this simply reflects the appropriation of the figure as it is understood in purely biological terms by the centre: a wily and cunning creature whose predatory and scavenging nature articulate, quite explicitly, the fears engendered in popular U.S. understandings of what the continued clandestine movements of Mexicans across the border represent. In one of Charles Bowden's most celebrated writings, *Blood Orchid: An Unnatural History of America*, the author

characterises the territory that such fears create as ‘a world left mumbling to itself, a perfect garden with the dreaded outside, the fabled Other held at bay and the neat rows of cultures and genes safe behind some hedgerow’.<sup>78</sup> The concern encapsulated here is one of miscegenation: suspicions about what the mixing of cultures – in whatever form – might represent to the U.S. One need only think of the avaricious nature of the villainous Wile E. Coyote as he pursues the innocent and blithely unaware Beep Beep the Roadrunner in the popular Warner Brothers cartoon to see a reflection of the creature that equates to the mainstream opinions of what undocumented migration means to U.S. society. Yet, even here, there lies the kernel of the origins of the trickster archetype: trickery, thievery, stupidity, and in a more Meso-American understanding of the traditions of Coyote, also tragedy. This paradoxical interplay of heroism and tragedy in stories of Coyote clearly reflects the similarly contradictory relationship between the coyotes and those who employ their services – the ‘pollo’ – characterised as ‘a love-hate relationship’ based on the fact that ‘coyotes perform a function that is in high demand, yet they also profit tremendously from poor people’s dreams and ambitions’.<sup>79</sup> Hence, coyotes in their human incarnation operating along the border function as heroic figures on the one hand, but benefit from the perceived tragedy of the socio-economic conditions of those who seek and employ their services on the other.

Re-orienting the gaze and practice of coyote cartography and considering the 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel alongside the Mexico-U.S. border allows for a further expansion of its critical functions in both spatial and temporal terms. Spatially, it now focuses upon a border whose inevitable porosity is patrolled far more militarily than its northern equivalent and whose material realities make literally concrete the protectionist and ideological desires of the centre. Temporally, the nomadic relay of Coyote/coyote that this cartography sets in motion also requires expansion; its trajectory now oscillating more widely between the past (the original trickster function of Indigenous Mexican myths of Coyote), the present (the modern day function of coyotes as social actors on a geopolitical boundary) and now also the future (the socio-

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<sup>78</sup> Charles Bowden, *Blood Orchid: An Unnatural History of America* (New York: Random House, 1995), 260.

<sup>79</sup> Rafaela Castro. *Chicano Folklore: A Guide to the Folktales, Traditions, Rituals and Religious Practices of Mexican Americans*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 70.



economic and cultural prospects of undocumented migrants). Herein, Bowden himself sees the significance of the frontier, not in Turnerian terms as a static sign of exceptionalist U.S. character and culture, but as a sign of how these static symbols of national ideology must be reconfigured: the frontier between Mexico and the U.S. as a portent, a portal through which a fundamentally altered, and always altering, culture and ideology might be glimpsed. In the aptly titled *Juarez: The Laboratory of Our Future*, this New Mexico cross-border town figures the boundary between the two nations as an experimental site not only for the amalgamation of cultures but also as a territory which currently exceeds understanding but which, nonetheless, and despite its marginal status, must become a centre for future understanding of borderlands cultures and their discursive construction. ‘The future has a way of coming from the edges’ he writes of this volatile site and the ‘future’ it represents will be ‘created not in the central plaza but on the blurry fringes of our peripheral vision [through] events in excess of our frames of reference’.<sup>80</sup> Our ‘frames of reference’ must therefore be developed to encompass a view of the periphery. A coyote cartography which challenges boundaries of both nations and discourse is designed to do just this. It also repositions critical regionalism itself outside of the disciplines it is most often associated with, and makes explicit Krista Comer’s assertion that formerly arboreal *branches* of learning might be made more rhizomatic: ‘indigenous studies, borderlands and Chicano studies’ she proposes, “live” ... today far less centrally in US studies than [they] did a decade ago’.<sup>81</sup> Following this, the rearticulation of critical regionalism as a repositioned hemispheric regionalism allows these geographically diffuse areas of study to align with one another whilst not losing the specificity of their terrains and the material effects that motivate them. The border and its concomitant borderland which Bowden has regularly focused his writing on reflect the rhizomatic leakages and breakages of both the regions under consideration here and the revitalised scholarly discourse which Comer notes. For Bowden the territory where Mexico and the

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<sup>80</sup> Charles Bowden, *Juarez: The Laboratory of Our Future* (New York: Aperture, 1998), 49.

<sup>81</sup> Comer, ‘Assessing the Postwestern’, 5.

U.S. collide is one imbued with ‘vitality’, its material and metaphorical construction filled with ‘rough edges, torn fences, broken walls, wild rivers [and] sweat-soaked sheets’.<sup>82</sup>

### **Testimonio from Texas: Charles Bowden, ‘Exodus’ and the Extinction of Coyote**

Bowden’s *Blue Desert*, a characteristically lyrical polemic and poetic explication of the author’s affinity for the Sonoran Desert, which straddles the boundary between the U.S. and Mexico, explores, in triptych form, the changing landscapes (social, cultural, economic, and environmental) of the Southwest region of the U.S. from which he hails. The opening section – entitled ‘Beasts’ – examines the attempts of a variety of the region’s fauna to survive in the face of the forces of late-capitalism: bats under threat from DDT; an endangered species of antelope that has the misfortune to roam a U.S. Air Force gunnery range; sedentary desert tortoises whose territory is increasingly encroached upon by growing urban sprawl; and the Yaqui topminnow, a species of fish which, under relentless assault from humankind, has seen its breeding grounds and numbers diminished.<sup>83</sup> One species is particularly conspicuous by its absence amongst this catalogue of animals found in the Southwest: *Canis Latrans*. The coyote is believed to have originated in the Southwest prior to its proliferative distribution across the entire North and Central American continents and, despite it too being under threat from human intervention in the landscape; *Canis Latrans* has shown a remarkable capacity for adaptability and survival.<sup>84</sup> Such adaptation and survival instincts reflect the trickster traits of Coyote once more.

Yet Coyote in its mythological incarnation appears to have vanished from much of the critical thinking and analysis directed at the Mexico-U.S. border and its discursive representations. Here, the entrenchment of a set of geopolitical ideologies and militaristic rhetoric appears to have made virtually extinct any founding relationship between coyote the people smuggler and Coyote the trickster. Coyote, as found in many popular articulations of the ongoing struggle by elements within the U.S. to shore up its

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<sup>82</sup> Bowden, *Blood Orchid*, 262.

<sup>83</sup> Charles Bowden, *Blue Desert* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986), 9-50.

<sup>84</sup> <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/3745/0>

southern border against ‘the exportation of brown flesh to the United States’, becomes simply a pejorative, a linguistic device which serves only to shore up the imaginative ideological border which is also imagined to require patrolling.<sup>85</sup> This fact reflects, to some extent, a trend noted recently by Marta Carminero-Santangelo in her essay ‘Narrating the Non-Nation: Literary Journalism and “Illegal” Border Crossings’ which examines the rhetorical construction of those who strive to cross the border via clandestine routes and means. Herein she suggests that the discursive construction of such ‘illegals’ and ‘aliens’, ‘suggests the degree to which this population has been narratively constructed as not fitting into the boundaries of the American “nation” – indeed, as fundamentally threatening that nation’.<sup>86</sup> The role of coyotes would seem to me to be a primary element of such narratives, even more so when we consider that their role in such border-crossings relies upon their erasure of both the physical and psychical manifestations of the border between nations. In addition, the narrative construction of coyotes within much of the literary journalistic discourse that Carminero-Santangelo critiques – and that which she does not – is similarly focused almost exclusively on their ‘threatening’ behaviours, both towards the integrity of the nation, its borders, and to the pollos who employ them. Such skewed rhetoric also belies the original meanings of both Coyote and *coyotaje*, which are inextricably bound to the figure of the coyote and their *modus operandi*: ‘it is at well-guarded barriers that these figures are especially tricksters’, Hyde reminds us, ‘god[s] of the threshold in all its forms’.<sup>87</sup>

This erasure of the trickster functions and origins of the coyote and its *coyotaje* belies the very etymological roots and subsequent deviations of the word ‘coyote’. Originating in the Nahautl dialect as *coyotl* – meaning ‘to make a hole or dugout’ – the biological coyote was, it has been suggested, so named for its perceived ‘swiftness and ability to hide in the bush’.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, Dobie states that the ‘Aztecs had a god called Coyotlinauatl ...whom they dressed in coyote skins’ and ‘another being called Tezcalipoca,

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<sup>85</sup> Charles Bowden. ‘Exodus: Border Crossers Forge a New America – Coyotes, pollos and the promised van’ [<http://www.motherjones.com/profiles/2006/09/exodus-border-crossers-forge-new-america>]

<sup>86</sup> Marta Carminero-Santangelo, ‘Narrating the Non-Nation: Literary Journalism and “Illegal” Border Crossings’. *Arizona Quarterly* 68.3 (2012), 158.

<sup>87</sup> Hyde. *Trickster Makes This World*, 7-8.

<sup>88</sup> Castro, *Chicano Folklore*, 20.

who was supposed to be able to transform himself into a coyote'. Hence, Coyote is deeply embedded in the region we now know as Mexico. Further uses of coyotl as a root for other words specific to this territory and the U.S. Southwest abound: genus of tomato, melon, prickly pear and other flora all noted for either their medicinal and healing qualities, or the appeal they hold for the omnivorous *Canis latrans*, are all native to the regions either side of the border.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, and perhaps most useful in this context, 'coyote' has also been used (alongside many other terms) to refer to mestizo subjects and the ways in which such people bestride cultures and exist in the in-between space that is subsequently created. Bowden sees his own craft as significant in this regard, in the ways in which he envisages his writing giving voice to the dispossessed and disenfranchised, seeking to 'speak for the mongrel, the mestizo, the half-breed, the bastard, the alley cat, the cur, the hybrid, the mule ... that pounds against all the safe and disgusting doors'.<sup>90</sup> Whilst such categorisations and terminology must be treated with care lest they reinscribe the imbalance of power found at the border and in the borderlands, Bowden's rhetoric nonetheless expresses a fundamental desire to ensure that such voices are heard, that the palimpsest of the Sonoran Desert be excavated far more deeply since there – and along the entire length of the Mexico-U.S. border – we might find 'tracks, everywhere tracks, marks racing up the arm, footprints pasted along the soil, tongues of air moving overhead rich with pollutants ... spore floating, seeds moving at will in the bellies of birds, everywhere tracks making their imprint and being ignored'.<sup>91</sup>

Again, recourse to the biological origins of Coyote – the suggested links between the figurative and metaphorical manifestations of the creature and the archetype respectively – are instructive in any attempt to reinstate the trickster elements of the coyote's undertakings in understanding the figure's function in both the border and the borderland. Much of William Bright's attempts to fashion a link between *Canis latrans* biology and taxonomy and Coyote's mythological function revolves around the

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<sup>89</sup> J. Frank Dobie, *The Voice of the Coyote*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), 253, 258.

<sup>90</sup> Bowden, *Blood Orchid*, 29.

<sup>91</sup> Charles Bowden & Virgil Hancock, *Chihuahua: Pictures from the Edge* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 7.

biological incarnation's 'primitive' nature. This primitiveness does not relate to the ways in which Western thought might often be accused of viewing Indigenous peoples and their literary cultures as somehow unenlightened; rather, it refers much more pragmatically to *Canis latrans*' 'relatively nonspecialized anatomy and paleontological antiquity' which marks the genus as 'a contemporary of the sabertooth'. Herein, Bright goes on to suggest, Native peoples may not only have drawn a link between the coyote's characteristics and their archetypal refashioning of it, but also understood its age and recognised, therefore, 'the coyote's talents for adaptation and survival'. Coyote has, Bright concludes, 'seen everything and tried everything – and if he has not learned everything, he has surely learned that the key to survival is to *keep trying*'.<sup>92</sup>

Clearly the coyote is as persistent as the Coyote from which it etymologically and rhetorically descends. It is also possible to determine a similar linguistic and rhetorical lineage – one that again redraws the critical cartography of border discourses – in the writing of Bowden. The journalistic device he employs, I would argue, reflects many elements of the Latin American genre of *testimonio*. Carminero-Santangelo employs this term in her analysis of border-crossing narratives and notes its underlying thematic concern as being one that seeks to engender 'identification, or empathy, [as] a crucial starting point in reorienting readers from an alienating distance to involvement'.<sup>93</sup> Such narratives seek the reader's 'complicity ... by engaging their sense of ethics and justice ... with a popular cause normally distant, not to say alien, from their immediate experience'.<sup>94</sup> Such calls to justice and empathy undergird much of Bowden's writing, a good deal of which has increasingly become intertwined with the structural inequalities of the experiences of the Mexican population, experiences which seem distant to the reading public despite their geographical proximity. It is difficult not to see such pleas even amidst the rhetorical flourishes of Bowden's passionate writing. 'I think this country already has too many people and that the ground under our feet is being murdered and the sky above our heads is being poisoned', he writes when

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<sup>92</sup> Bright, *A Coyote Reader*, 35.

<sup>93</sup> Carminero-Santangelo, 'Narrating the Non-Nation', 159.

<sup>94</sup> John Beverley, In *Ibid.*

considering the unrelenting tide of undocumented migration into the U.S. before suggesting that he, ‘find[s] these beliefs pointless when I stand on the line’.<sup>95</sup> Such attention to silent (or ignored) injustice and inequality reflects further the *testimonio* traits discernible in this text since ‘they call attention to an urgent crisis which requires intervention ... they ask us to hear the voices of the subaltern that are usually unheard’.<sup>96</sup> Curious, then, that the purveyor of such ‘subalterns’ across the line which separates two nations – the coyote – should also be barely perceptible in accounts of the lengths Mexican migrants will go to in crossing the border. However, reinstating those elements of Coyote – seemingly lost in the geopolitical obfuscation of the cultural debates that coalesce around the contested territory of the border – to the elusive figure of the coyote reveals the trickster at work in both mundane and mythical ways: a shaper of destinies and identities.

### **Absence Denotes Presence: Reinstating the Trickster in Charles Bowden’s Literary Journalism**

This surprising absence of recourse to the trickster lineage of the coyote operative in the low-level militarised conflict at the Mexico-U.S. border might be perceived as being further perpetrated in Charles Bowden’s dispatches from this geopolitically hostile territory. However, just as Gerald Vizenor has suggested that Coyote (and other trickster incarnations) acts both internally within Indigenous literatures as a visible element of the *dramatis personae* and externally as a shaper of the ensuing discourse, so too can we perceive this double function in Bowden’s own exploration of the culture of *coyotaje*. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina and the devastation wrought on New Orleans, Bowden muses in ‘Exodus: Border-Crossers Forge a New America’, on the possibilities for migrant workers that the necessary reconstruction work on the coast of Louisiana might present. This takes the author once more to the Sonoran Desert and a series of encounters with migrating Mexicans. That Bowden never meets nor converses with any of the coyotes might speak simply of their secretive and clandestine character of their work or their supposed

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<sup>95</sup> Bowden, ‘Exodus’, 3.

<sup>96</sup> Carminero-Santangelo, ‘Narrating the Non-Nation’, 160.

brutality and links to other illicit activities carried out back and forth across the border by organised crime syndicates, but the author's blunt, bellicose and confrontational prose style does not seem the voice of an individual who would fear meeting such characters. Rather, could not the coyote's very absence from the detail of the narrative denote the presence of Coyote as an ever-present 'creator of the world-as-it-is'?<sup>97</sup> Such elusiveness on the part of the coyote speaks quite directly to the intangible nature of Coyote. Such intangibility is applicable to the ambiguous nature of Coyote: is this figure a heroic, comic or tragic figure; a selfish or moral character; human or animal; male or female; wise or stupid? Coyote defies such categorisations and binary hierarchies of meaning and so too do the coyotes in both their moral ambiguity and in their attempted elimination of the hierarchy the border imposes. One such example occurs when Bowden describes the would-be-migrant's situation in a temporary residence on their journey known as a 'flophouse': 'Men with quick eyes look you over, the employees of coyotes, people smugglers...now you are a pollo, a chicken, and you need a pollero, a chicken herder" (4). Such allusions to livestock in the common parlance of the people-smuggling business clearly recall several of Thomas King's own articulations of the myths of Coyote (not least 'The One About Coyote and the Ducks', discussed previously) and therefore similarly recalls the ambivalence of the trickster and the moral dubiousness of the coyote. Amalgamating both tropes herein and reading them alongside other observations made by Bowden – such as the suggestion that coyotes 'in Mexico now earn at least \$10 billion a year' (8) – emphasise both the ambivalence and ambiguity that both figures demonstrate and their often fundamentally motivating material desires. As Paul Radin notes, the character of Coyote 'wills nothing consciously ... knows neither good nor evil yet is responsible for both ... [h]e possesses no values, moral or social, is at the mercy of his passions and appetites, yet through his actions all values come into being'.<sup>98</sup> This overtly detached view ascribed to Coyote meets its counterpart in the Mexican coyote, who is well aware that many of the pollos will be captured, deported, or simply die in their pursuit of work and wages in the U.S. An amalgamation of Coyote and coyote epitomises the negotiated positions that are both

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<sup>97</sup> Mac Linscott Ricketts (1965), in *Ibid*, 21.

<sup>98</sup> Paul Radin. *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology*. (New York: Schocken Books, 1956), xxii.

subject to, and in existence beyond or between, the hierarchies of both the border and the identities that are founded there.

Despite this lack of a first-hand account of an encounter with a coyote, the author acknowledges the guiding hand that they always seem to have in the negotiation of the treacherous terrain encountered on the arduous journey from Mexico into the U.S: 'The top coyote remains in the shadows' he writes, 'an intelligent, cunning and mysterious figure' (Bowden, 12). The coyote's shadow here extends not only over the anonymous migrant's progress from one side of the border to the other, but also into the realm of the negotiated identity formation of their *pollos*, and further in this regard into the territory of the mythological Coyote once more. Bowden traces his subject's exodus from the flophouse and closer to the border: 'There's a dirt road a short ways to the north. The *pollos* have walked two days to reach this spot to meet smugglers who've brought American clothing so they will look normal. They rapidly strip naked – bras, panties, blouses, shirts – everything is cast aside' (13). Here the mundane melds with the mythical as the everyday *coyotaje* provided by the coyote combines with the transformative powers offered by Coyote. The matter-of-fact action of the *pollos* as they divest themselves of their clothes – and the similarly dispassionate reporting of their actions – belies, once again, the presence of Coyote the trickster, not just in the deception that this almost ritualistic shedding of one identity and adoption of another will hope to enact, but also in the ways in which this superficial change, when read more deeply, epitomises Coyote's status as a *bricoleur*.

Again, scholars of the North American, rather than Meso-American, embodiment of Coyote have noted this facet of the figure's character, lost amidst the predominantly 'illegal' and 'criminal' portrayals of the coyote. For example, Ramsey has suggested that Coyote represents 'a sort of mythic handy-man who 'cobbles' reality in the form of a bricolage out of the available material'.<sup>99</sup> The material available to the coyotes in the Mexican border region may well fall short of the mythical, magical powers

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<sup>99</sup> In Bright, *A Coyote Reader*, 35.



of Coyote, but the reality that their bricolage seeks to create is one that is designed to assist in illegally entering another nation and further epitomises the constantly shifting identity politics at play in the borderland. Furthermore, this is not the only conversion that coyotes, when cast as Coyote, might effect, since ‘trickster frequently is also a transformer ... whose accomplishments may include ... the teaching of cultural skills’.<sup>100</sup> Here, the de-stratification inherent in coyote cartography intersects with the predominant geopolitical reading and positioning of undocumented migration discourse. This theoretical stance – reading across and between borders along a nomadic relay – mirrors ‘the circuits of capital and labor under late-twentieth century globalization’ that the fluidity of migratory identity is intertwined with and implicated in and that coyotes prey upon and profit from. Carminero-Santangelo posits that this circuitous trajectory ‘creat[es] deeply entrenched migration patterns ... “assimilating” indigenous peoples to “American” ways of life before they have even arrived in the United States’.<sup>101</sup> As a significant powerbroker in this shifting political and cultural landscape, coyotes play an integral role in this ‘assimilating’ process, negotiating not only the physical border but also the wider local-global nexus of regional identities. In this sense, the *coyotaje* – the evasion of border bureaucracy – takes on this other Coyote characteristic, imparting the ‘cultural skills’ deemed helpful in crossing the border and in remaining successfully on the other side of this boundary.

Is the ‘assimilation’ which Carminero-Santangelo identifies even a possibility for the undocumented migrant? Is it an effective tactic for the coyote to impart and the pollo to enact? Whilst the teaching of cultural skills which the trickster Coyote performs is crucial, in Bowden’s account, in gaining access to the U.S., to what extent is that performance a reflection of an ongoing reality? Bowden relates one incident of *coyotaje*:

The man sent a guide to bring him across the river. He spent two days in the coyote’s house waiting. Then the man came and said, Put on this soccer uniform. The man said, if the Border Patrol agent asks you where you are going, you say, “San Antonio.” If they

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<sup>100</sup> Bright, *A Coyote Reader*, 35.

<sup>101</sup> Carminero-Santangelo, *Narrating the Non-Nation*, 161.

ask you if you have papers, you say, “Yes,” in English. They practiced these simple answers. Then they rode up to the U.S. checkpoint. The Border Patrol agent asked the two questions, got his answers and waved them through. In San Antonio, the coyote took back the soccer uniform. The coyote has pulled the same stunt at least 50 times in the past year at the same checkpoint ... [h]e never fails.<sup>102</sup>

This performance of identity seems only as temporary as the various territories in which the undocumented migrant is required to locate themselves on their journey. Identity here is de- and re-territorialised at every turn: for the migrant as they perform ‘citizenship’ before becoming ‘illegal’ once more; and for the coyote who temporarily becomes the trickster before returning once more to the shadows of the geo-political battleground of the border. Yet, in both cases, we can read the re-emergence of the Meso-American mythology of Coyotlinauatl and this Aztec god’s ability to transform itself through the wearing of skins and masks, to pass itself off, through mimicry, as something other than itself. Such strategies are aligned with the comparative knowledges that coyote cartography might enable since they reveal the shared history of coyote and Coyote as pan-Indigenous figures who might enable us to interrogate the ramifications of transnational identities.

### **‘We just come from such different sets of circumstance’: Coyote Content, Coyote Form**

Aside from one passing mention in William Bright’s *A Coyote Reader*, one cultural manifestation of the figure of coyote – in both forms employed in this analysis – is notable for its absence from articulations of the trickster trope: Joni Mitchell’s song ‘Coyote’. The opening track of Canadian Mitchell’s 1976 album *Hejira*, a reading of ‘Coyote’ – and the wider thematic concerns of the album which it introduces – provides further ways in which Coyote/coyote might become an ambulant, and fundamentally and necessarily, erratic subject position which epitomises a hemispheric regionalism’s commitment to an unfixing and re-articulating of regional identity. Reflecting once more the importance of foregrounding hemispheric regionalism as theory *and* practice, the form *and* content of the song both epitomise the

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<sup>102</sup> Bowden, ‘Exodus’, np.

circumstantial tensions – of territory, identity and subjectivity – which the sites of Coyote/coyote’s actions also represent. Jim LeBlanc suggests that ‘[o]ne of the experiential motifs that Mitchell has sought to convey in her musical work is that of travel, movement and flight’ and, with *Hejira*, this motif reaches its apotheosis.<sup>103</sup> The title of the album on which ‘Coyote’ appears is a transliteration of *hejira*, an Arabic word that first referred to the flight of Mohammed from Mecca to Medina and whose meaning has since broadened to refer to a more general sense of human movement across territory. This movement can be individual or collective and relates to the positioning of both coyote incarnations related in my earlier analyses of border narratives from King and Bowden that showed how the coyote figure – as trickster or smuggler – is implicated in the subversion of the striation of national borders, enabling the remapping of the borderlands of individual and collective identities.

Alexandra Ganser’s exploration of American women’s road narratives – in which she briefly alludes to Mitchell’s ‘Coyote’ despite the songwriter’s Canadian nationality – focuses on the potential for a remapping of the road in terms of its gendered spatiality, and reflects this project’s desire to interrogate the relationships between spatiality, temporality, identity, and terrain in more multiplicitous ways, removing or rethinking the limitations which the striae of borders and boundaries impose. As was suggested earlier in this chapter, one such configuration of territorial striation occurs in the highway system which cuts across the landscape of North America and here, Ganser argues, ‘women’s road narratives are able to remap the road ... they question, subvert, and/or appropriate the trope of confined mobility by creating not “a road” but many “roads of their own” ... construct[ing] transient, fluid, and deterritorialized female subjectivities that repeatedly escape spatial confinement’.<sup>104</sup> In this recalling of Deleuze and Guattari’s deterritorialising function of the nomad and nomadic thought, the multiple, ‘transient’ and ‘fluid’ subjectivity to which I equate Coyote/coyote is echoed. To be released from the

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<sup>103</sup> Jim LeBlanc, ‘Facing Time and Other Thieves: Meaning as Freedom in Joni Mitchell’s *Hejira*’ (2005) [<http://ecommons.library.cornell.edu/handle/1813/11658>] 1.

<sup>104</sup> Alexandra Ganser, ‘On the Asphalt Frontier: American Women’s Road Narratives, Spatiality and Transgression’. *Journal of International Women’s Studies*, 7.4 (2006), 163.

‘spatial confinement’ that Ganser identifies in the American highway system and its articulation in road narratives, requires the creation – or rediscovery – of a smooth space within the striating and hierarchical forms of the road or the border. Ensuring that these hegemonic frontiers and their attendant cartographies do not maintain the privileged status that has been ascribed to them is an intrinsic function of both the coyote trope and the revised critical geography outlined herein and with which I have sought to ally the figure. Ganser’s essay notes a similar desire to revise scholarly discourse on notions of travel and flight and also notes the contradiction sometimes inherent in such endeavours where the materiality of place collides with the imaginary spaces it occupies. Hemispheric regionalism, with its insistence upon a position of in-betweenness and deliberate seeking of the conjunctive *and* disjunctive in representations of such regional identities, seeks to provide a model in which such seemingly contradictory positions can foster a productive tension. Ganser neatly summarises the dialogical relationships that she sees as crucial to a remapping of a critical territory and its interaction with a geographical terrain:

Any such analysis rests upon the intersections and cross-cuttings of all kinds of spaces: textual and contextual space ... the physical space of embodiment, as well as the mental space of textual characters and readers ... these spatial webs intersect; they create and potentially restrict each other; exterior(ized) and interior(ized) spaces appear in various configurations, sometimes dissolving into each other, sometimes affirming separation.<sup>105</sup>

The appearance of implied striations in theory and geography in these observations serve to create the productive smooth spaces in which, I have posited here, Coyote and coyote can be ‘dissolved’ into one another and in which exterior and interior spaces are made similarly soluble, enabling a nomadic discourse to develop in-between the ‘textual and contextual spaces’ of the Mexican and Canadian borders with the U.S.

Joni Mitchell’s own road narrative as expressed throughout her *Hejira* album is seen to clearly complement Ganser’s suggestion that ‘female road-heroes ... subvert public/private and center/margin

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<sup>105</sup> Ganser, ‘On the Asphalt Frontier’, 154.

dichotomies, by moving in a borderland of gender-roles as well as defying centerdness via remaining always in a state of transition'.<sup>106</sup> Whilst the project undertaken here concerns borderland identities in a broader configuration than simply gender roles, the transitional state which Ganser notes here evokes the nomadic figure which my own Deleuzean reading of Coyote/coyote becomes, and which a closer reading of *Hejira*'s opening track can illuminate further. In so doing, the unsettling and questioning function of the coyote figure as both a textual and contextual actor in the revised cartography called for here, can be further consolidated as a tropic iteration for associative discourse between representations of different regions which, whilst both viewed as margins separated by a dominant centre, like the opening lines of Mitchell's song, 'come from such different sets of circumstance'.<sup>107</sup>

Less analysed than many other Mitchell compositions, 'Coyote' nonetheless has received some attention when it comes to deciphering the meaning of both this individual track and the wider album of which it is a crucial, constituent part. The most favoured reading appears to be that the Coyote of the title and the actions ascribed to him throughout the song represent playwright and actor Sam Shephard, with whom Mitchell had had a relationship prior to the recording of *Hejira*. Similarly, a widespread reading of 'Coyote's chorus refrain – 'a prisoner of the white lines of the freeway' – holds that this line is a reference to Mitchell's allegedly burgeoning cocaine addiction. Whilst these interpretations may be perfectly valid, what I want to argue here is that Joni Mitchell's 'Coyote' provides another incarnation of the trope at the centre of this study which again epitomises a desire to enter the transitional, temporary territory of the nomad and, in so doing, to draw attention to the productive tension which such a tactic can engender; escaping the spatial limitations of the striated spaces of roads, highways, freeways – and other sanctioned and legitimised modes of travel – and of the borders at which they may ultimately arrive, which can, simultaneously, create a site for co-operative dialogue between these spaces.

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 163-4.

<sup>107</sup> Joni Mitchell, *Hejira* (Asylum Records, 1976)

In his monograph, *The Music of Joni Mitchell*, Lloyd Whitesell identifies *Hejira* as one of a series of Mitchell's albums wherein each individual song speaks to a singular thematic concern. What has become known, somewhat loosely – sometimes contentiously – as a 'concept album', Whitesell's analysis of *Hejira* suggests that 'every song reflects in some way the speaker's own feelings of rootlessness and transition ... flight for the purpose of survival'.<sup>108</sup> Hence, the album as a whole is evidently engaged in expressing similar concerns to those instincts evident in the deployment of Coyote the trickster and coyote the smuggler as figures that represent a desire for roots or cultural survival manifested through an exploration of routes. The motifs of trickster behaviour and clandestine border-crossing – which the analyses provided earlier in this chapter put forward as tactics through which identity could be reshaped or reclaimed through the inversion of these traits and the subversion of striated space – are mirrored in Mitchell's composition. As one of her contemporaries, David Crosby, has put it, Mitchell's musical output represents 'an effort to make the music sky-bound, to relieve the body of temporality ... a need for release and transcendence ... to ride above the culture ... to reflect'.<sup>109</sup> The 'release' sought by the narrator in 'Coyote' is from her confinement as 'a prisoner of the white lines of the freeway', from the striated space of the road networks of North America and into a space wherein she can simultaneously 'Still feel so alone/And still feel related/Like stations in some relay'. The lyrics here have a clear echo of Deleuze and Guattari's configuration of the nomad who 'goes from point to point only as a consequence and as a factual necessity ... points for him are like points on a trajectory'.<sup>110</sup> This constant movement of the nomad, in which a continuous state of transition is achieved through any territory being always only temporary, resonates further with, as Whitesell interprets it, 'verbs of motion – racing, rolling, driving, weaving – provid[ing] a constant backdrop. Moments of poetic reflection take place in temporary stops like motels, service stations, and cafés'. Furthermore, other elements of the itinerary that 'Coyote' sketches are not only spatially nomadic, but temporally too, recalling sites of Mitchell's early years growing up in Canada:

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<sup>108</sup> Lloyd Whitesell, *The Music of Joni Mitchell* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 204.

<sup>109</sup> David Crosby, in LeBlanc, 'Facing Time', 3.

<sup>110</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 353.

references to ‘Baljennie’ and ‘The Bay of Fundy’ suggesting ‘the present landscape in counterpoint with the geography of memory’.<sup>111</sup> Here, the Coyote of the title comes once more to the fore, both as a creator and shaper of identity across spatial and temporal boundaries; the indistinct site of the song’s narrative – ‘In the middle of nowhere’ – further reinstates the smooth space as a location for the enactment of identity which relies upon and is responsible to, in essentially critically regionalist ways, the past, present and future.

Crucially ‘Coyote’ not only speaks of the narrator’s desire for sanctuary from the captivity which the ‘white lines on the freeway’ come to represent and where identity cannot be ‘liberated by mere motion ... [when] confronted by spatial limitations’, but also – and to help us return to the opening suggestions of this chapter – reinstates elements of the biological antecedent of Coyote/coyote: *Canis latrans*.<sup>112</sup> Whitesell is again informative in this regard, stating that Coyote is the first of ‘a dense network of recurrent motifs’ of wild animals found throughout the record and who is evoked ‘to characterize her partner in a passing affair: a sexually appetitive loner and attractive scoundrel ... overlay[ing] her description of the affair with a memory of the animal in its natural setting’.<sup>113</sup> Whitesell’s classification of coyote here is reminiscent of the mythical trickster embodiment of Coyote once more, wherein, according to Bright, ‘The insatiable and indiscriminate horniness of Coyote is well known’. Whilst this is at odds with the traits and behaviours displayed by *Canis latrans* itself, it nevertheless exemplifies the ways in which Coyote can be positioned as a subversive figure that can assist in redrawing understandings of region in revolutionary ways. Assessing the appropriation of the wild coyote as a trickster trope, Bright continues, ‘it appears that human beings, perceiving such traits of coyotes as their wandering habits and their appetites, have projected other characteristics onto them – reflecting, above all, the rebellion of humans against their self-imposed domesticity’.<sup>114</sup> Thus, the fundamental wildness of *Canis latrans* seems the only

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<sup>111</sup> Whitesell, *Joni Mitchell*, 204, 205.

<sup>112</sup> Ganser, ‘On the Asphalt Frontier’, 153.

<sup>113</sup> Whitesell, *Joni Mitchell*, 204.

<sup>114</sup> Bright, *A Coyote Reader*, 105, 65.

trait which translates from the animal kingdom into the trickster figure of Coyote, a wildness which equates to ‘rebellion’: a rebelliousness which, for the purposes of coyote cartography connects to, and challenges, the ‘imposition’ of meaning onto the margin – not by self, but by the ideological centre. When Mitchell’s narrator’s lover ‘Coyote’ becomes once more a version of the wild creature, ‘He went running through the whisker wheat/Chasing some prize down/And a hawk was playing with him/Coyote was jumping straight up and just making passes’, the elusive nature of what he is chasing is as uncertain as any identity enacted in the borderlands.

I have argued throughout this chapter that the figure of Coyote, and the critical and geographical cartography which it can shape, should, like hemispheric regionalism itself, be viewed as both a theoretical standpoint *and* have practical applications; Coyote can help shape content but also initiate form. Having explored how Coyote informs the content of Joni Mitchell’s song of the same name, an examination of the formal characteristics of this composition helps to illuminate how Coyote – much like the trickster discourse function which informs much of Thomas King’s writing – might also be viewed as a distinct stylistic device which cultivates understandings of nomadic thought as a hemispherically regionalist strategy that can encourage discursive and ongoing constructions of regional identity and representations in zones of marginality. LeBlanc claims that ‘*Hejira* ... is not merely a manifestation of travel-infused themes and emotions, but it is an analysis of, and a musical reflection on those themes and emotions’, suggesting that the peripatetic lyrical leitmotifs which appear throughout the piece are not merely lyrical but also manifest as stylistic and formal choices for both the musical motifs and poetic meters which are used to complement them.<sup>115</sup> Consequently, just as ‘Coyote’s lyrics reflect the eponymous figure’s importance to a possible flight from spatial and temporal boundaries, and real and imagined borders, so too do Mitchell’s lyrical arrangement; stylistically, her writing acts ‘as a conduit for a subjective sense of time ... treating poetic meter as extremely elastic, allowing for a great deal of variation in line length’.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> LeBlanc, ‘Facing Time’, 2-3.

<sup>116</sup> Whitesell, *Joni Mitchell*, 204.



Such ‘subjectivity’, ‘elasticity’ and ‘variation’, are integral to the expanded sense of identity and its manifestation in regionalism which Coyote/coyote both make apparent: indistinct, mutable, haphazard and dispersed, a bricolage of expressions and forms. Furthermore, the strophic form of the composition – an ordered, methodical, and *striated* structure – is placed in constant juxtaposition to the radical, open-tuning which Mitchell’s rhythm guitar employs and the literal *smooth* space of Jaco Pastorius’ fretless instrument from which the song’s bass line emanates. ‘[The] bassline refuses to stay grounded in the low register or settle for a supporting role’, claims Whitesell, instead ‘becom[ing] floating [and] questing’. In this way, the sonic effects which the song employs replicate the deployment of Coyote/coyote in a rhizomatic and nomadic configuration: existing within and between dominant hierarchies. The ‘heterophonic, slightly out-of-phase texture’ which these formal effects create for Whitesell’s ear, mimic the heteroglossia that a hemispheric regionalism seeks to reinstate from within received versions of region.<sup>117</sup> Heteroglossia here relies upon another Deleuzean suggestion that ‘coyote cartography’ can facilitate, the realisation that any concept should be understood as ‘contrapuntal, polyphonic and plurivocal’.<sup>118</sup> Again, ‘Coyote’s formal attributes and linguistic effects parallel such desires and reflect what I suggest the Coyote trope itself can effect:

the verbal discourse is freely associative, marked by frequent lateral shifts in utterance ... the opening verse of “Coyote” begins by casually breaking off an affair, in direct address ... then suddenly shifts to a more generalized observation about relationships ... before returning just as suddenly to direct address.<sup>119</sup>

In ‘freely associating’ between the two coyote tropes, employing different modes of address and ‘shifting utterances’, coyote cartography can align spatial, temporal and experiential expressions of border regions’ identities and representations. Such a dialogical theory and practice can make manifest moments of disjuncture and conjuncture in vastly different, yet intimately related, regions despite their emergence

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid, 210, 211.

<sup>118</sup> Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (London: Verso, 1994), 187.

<sup>119</sup> Whitesell, *Joni Mitchell*, 204.

'from such different sets of circumstance'. The amalgamation of regional tropes that are enabled by a hemispherically regionalist approach frees these figures from spatial limitations whether they be regional, national or disciplinary. In performing resistance to spatial and temporal limitations through a number of subversive strategies – made manifest in texts such as those of King and Bowden and illuminated by the similarly subversive tactics employed within coyote cartography – the performative possibilities of a hemispheric regionalism which focuses upon the discursive construction of borders and their borderlands is made apparent. The next chapter will expand and advance notions of border performativity and demonstrate the further opportunities it presents for comparative critique across, between, and through, the borders of the nation-state, exploring how, through an effacement of 'real' cartographic and historical boundaries these 'imagined' borders might be rendered rhizomatic.

### III

## Uncontainable Geographies, Uncontainable Histories: Crossing Borders with Music

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Music has always sent out lines of flight, like so many “transformational multiplicities,” even overturning the very codes that structure or arborify it; that is why musical form, right down to its ruptures and proliferations, is comparable to a weed, a rhizome

- Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 1987.<sup>1</sup>

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In May 2014 the Mohegan Sun Casino in New Haven, Connecticut was the setting for an incongruous pair of major events: the closing two shows of Bruce Springsteen’s *Wrecking Ball* world tour and the state’s Republican Party Convention. As G.O.P. delegates and Springsteen fans mingled amidst the plush carpets, flashing lights, and spinning dollar signs, Melissa Bailey – a reporter for the *New Haven Independent* – canvassed opinions from fans and politicians alike. Whilst the majority of the latter group expressed a barely-disguised contempt for Springsteen, a small minority were, it seemed, fans of his. As Bailey’s editorial later reported: ‘Several Republicans at the convention ... cited “Born in the U.S.A.” as their favourite song’.<sup>2</sup> Pressed further on the issue by the reporter, one delegate elaborated on the reason for this choice and stated, apparently without irony: ‘it’s just uplifting. It’s an everyone song. Next to the star spangled banner, it’s next’.<sup>3</sup> This represents a curious interpretation of a song that gives voice to the tortured lamentations of a Vietnam veteran cut adrift by his government upon his return from the conflict,

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<sup>1</sup> Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013 [1987]), 11.

<sup>2</sup> Melissa Bailey, ‘At Casino, A Search For Springsteen & GOP Soul’. *New Haven Independent*, May 19<sup>th</sup> 2014.

[[http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/soul\\_of\\_the\\_gop/](http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/soul_of_the_gop/)]

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*

but an interpretation that is commonplace and has been oft-repeated in the three decades since the song was first released.

In looking back to the original release of the *Born in the U.S.A.* album in 1984, we find a further intertwining of The Boss and the G.O.P. and further muddled readings of the title track. Writing an op-ed piece for *The Washington Post*, the conservative political commentator George Will reviewed a Springsteen concert he had attended, a concert he reports having attended whilst wearing ‘a bow tie and double-breasted blazer’.<sup>4</sup> As a nationally syndicated columnist, Will’s commentary was widely published across the U.S. and ran under titles such as, ‘Bruce Springsteen’s U.S.A.’, ‘Bruce Springsteen: Blue Collar Troubadour’ and, most famously, ‘A Yankee Doodle Springsteen’. Amongst Will’s hyperbole, he seems to have been particularly drawn to two key nationalist symbols that he saw in evidence at the concert: first, the song ‘Born in the U.S.A.’ which he proclaimed ‘an anthem’; and, second, the Stars-and-Stripes itself which he saw held aloft by concert-goers.<sup>5</sup> These flags, according to Will’s review, ‘get waved ... while he sings songs about hard times ... the recitation of closed factories and other problems always seems punctuated by a grand, cheerful affirmation: “Born in the U.S.A.!”’<sup>6</sup> Enthused by what he had seen and heard at the concert, Will contacted the offices of Ronald Reagan’s re-election campaign and urged them to seek Springsteen’s endorsement, going so far as to suggest that ‘Born in the U.S.A.’ might make a suitable campaign song. The Boss naturally declined the Republican Party’s advances, but that wasn’t about to stop the incumbent’s speechwriters. In September of 1984 the Reagan campaign pitched up in Hammonton, New Jersey and, as his stump speech developed – littered with the mandatory local references – he finally intoned: ‘America’s future rests in a thousand dreams inside your hearts. It rests in the message of hope in songs of a man so many young Americans admire – New Jersey’s own, Bruce

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<sup>4</sup> George Will, ‘A Yankee Doodle Springsteen’. *Washington Post*, September 13<sup>th</sup> 1984; 19. [<http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=2519&dat=19840915&id=RY1iAAAAIBA&sjid=uHcNAAAAIBA&pg=1334,1660487>]

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

Springsteen. And helping you make those dreams come true is what this job of mine is all about'.<sup>7</sup> This calling upon the ideals of freedom his speechwriters felt Springsteen's corpus exemplified revealed that they, like many others of the period, viewed the songwriter's work in ways that Adam Lifshey has recently identified as being 'apolitical, authentic, and provincial slices of quintessentially national life'.<sup>8</sup>

Whilst these two instances of the incongruous intertwining of two distinctly different ideological positions – Springsteen's critique of U.S. foreign and domestic policy and the Republican Party's nationalistic conservatism – offer amusement and bemusement in equal measure, they also reveal the central problem that this chapter will address: the tension between nationalism and musical production, and particularly the way in which this tension is often accommodated rather than explored in music criticism. Thomas Turino, writing predominantly about musical nationalism in Latin America, 'consider[s] *musical nationalism* to be a subset of cultural nationalism'.<sup>9</sup> As Turino continues, this facet of cultural nationalism 'is not a celebratory or entertainment-oriented frill attached to serious political work; it is one of the essential pillars upon which the entire nationalist edifice stands'.<sup>10</sup> This, in the analysis that follows, may appear something of a tautology given the historical lineage of this idea that I trace across the last two centuries, but the mere recognition of this tension has not been sufficient to enable the total extrication of scholarly music criticism from within the borders of nations and nationalism. Psychobiologist Harry Witchel has recently argued that there is something akin to an inherent fundamentality found in music and its function in this regard, suggesting that 'Music contributes to territory so often that we fail to notice the ubiquity of the link: music can soothe babies, pace athletes during exercise and invigorate an army before fighting. Might territory be the reason we have music?'<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ronald Reagan, 'Remarks at Reagan-Bush Rally', Hammonton N.J., September 19<sup>th</sup> 1984 [http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1984/91984c.htm]

<sup>8</sup> Adam Lifshey, 'The Borderlands Poetics of Bruce Springsteen'. *Journal of the Society for American Music*, Vol.3, No.2 (2009), 227.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Turino, 'Nationalism and Latin American Music: Selected Case Studies and Theoretical Considerations'. *Latin American Music Review* 24.2 (2003), 175.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Harry Witchel, *You Are What You Hear: How Music and Territory Make Us Who We Are* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2010), 6.

Witchel's examples are almost self-evidential but I want to modify his closing question: does music have, or indeed need, an identifiable, tangible, or inviolable territory?

In something of an answer to this question, Lifshy has remarked that Springsteen's 'famously working class protagonists do not live isolated from transamerican movements', a suggestion plainly evident from even the artist's earliest recordings.<sup>12</sup> He also argues that he 'reconceptualizes the Americas as an unbordered and fluid space ... enact[ing] Mexico and the United States as transamerican ideations rather than discrete nations': a bold and not unfounded claim that is more clearly evident in Springsteen's later career.<sup>13</sup> This perception of America as a continental whole rather than as three separate nation states is crucial. Where the previous chapter sought ways in which marginalised voices and positions might move from the peripheries to occupy the centre, in focusing on a major U.S. recording artist in Bruce Springsteen, here I am addressing an almost contrary concern but one that is no less pressing for border studies. As Lifshy again observes,

Border studies ultimately may carve out a vibrant scholarly space doomed, like its subject, to the margins of scholarly taxonomies. This result would be due to its relative lack of engagement with canonical literatures that, at first glance, may seem irrelevant to discussions of borders.<sup>14</sup>

Hence, whilst the inclusion of a U.S. artist such as Springsteen in border studies could be read as a recolonising gesture, what this inclusion does is address another of the discrepancies in the field: the fact that border studies privileges those cultural productions that arise from the materiality of the border itself.<sup>15</sup> Whilst largely unimpressed by Springsteen's rendition of the border on his *The Ghost of Tom Joad* (1995) album that I turn to and explore in detail later, José Pablo Villalobos raises a useful question in this regard when he asks is 'the space of the border a necessary marker for border cultural production?'<sup>16</sup> This

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 224.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 221.

<sup>14</sup> Lifshy, 'Borderlands Poetics', 222.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> José Pablo Villalobos, 'Mapping Border Music: Sonic Representations of La Frontera'. *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, 23 (2004), 69.

is a key question that my analysis addresses: can major U.S. cultural producers such as Springsteen be considered as addressing the border in meaningful ways despite their central and predominantly nationalised positions? Krista Silva Gruesz crystallises the importance of this notion when she remarks upon the inescapable relationship which exists between putative centres and putative borders and the pertinence of borderlands theory to both of these locales, suggesting that ‘the critical potential of borderlands theory lies not merely in its insistence on local expressions of difference and resistance, but in the implicit dialogue with the national that it calls forth: the very concept of the border is unintelligible without the nation’.<sup>17</sup> We must also therefore consider the possibility that the nation is similarly unintelligible without the border. Certainly, with regards to Springsteen his portrayal of the nation would be poorer were it not for his poetic renditions of the multiple subjectivities and contact zones that the ideas of borderlands theory presents, and for the characters that originate from beyond national borders, and occasionally speak from that outside position, that inhabit his music.

### **Smoothing the Star-Spangled Banner**

Although Springsteen has successfully resisted the attempted alignment of his work with conservative and nationalistic ideologies (at least within his popular positioning as a performer that he has some modicum of control over; in terms of his positioning within scholarly critiques of his work he is obviously less able to exercise such resistance), there is something of a parallel between himself and another illustrious New Jersey resident of a previous century: Walt Whitman. Whitman, as the title of one of his most influential poems suggests, felt he was able to ‘Hear America Singing’, but as a man who harboured doubts about abolition, favoured prohibition, and supported the aggressive U.S. expansionism that motivated the U.S.-Mexico War, it is important to ask what version of America it was that he heard singing. As Josh Kun has recently noted in *Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America*, Whitman was, and remains, a ‘characteristic signifier of beaming, confident American nationalism who fell into the wrong hands, the poetic poster

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<sup>17</sup> Krista Silva Gruesz, *Ambassadors of Culture: The Transamerican Origins of Latino Writing* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), 10.

boy of a soul-stirring patriotic democracy'.<sup>18</sup> Whilst successfully – though not without exceptions – divesting himself of nationalistic ideological appropriation, Springsteen's corpus when read alongside the work of Walt Whitman, enables an interrogation of nationalist symbols and their manifestation in music to develop. Rock star and poet alike exemplify in different and productive ways the troubled, and troubling, relationship between music and nationalism.

Both Whitman and Reagan exhibit a peculiar kind of selective hearing that continues to structure and pervade many approaches to critiques of U.S. music: always seeking within it those elements that speak to, or of, a wholly U.S. experience – a kind of U.S. musical exceptionalism. Whitman in hearing America singing and Reagan in appropriating Springsteen were attempting to interpellate difference into a cohesive image of a nation. Whitman's 'the varied songs I hear' speaks of a nation whose population is expanding and diversifying but that, to his ear, ultimately speaks univocally. And never mind the politics in evidence on 'Born in the U.S.A.': Reagan saw in its staccato refrain a tool to reaffirm a conservative and patriotic ideology. Music, then, becomes a key means through which nationalism constructs and maintains itself. But, to approach it post-nationally is to be more cognizant of the ever-present nature of music: its mobility. As Kun has argued, while music

may take root in national formations, impact national audiences, and impact the creation of national ideas and politics, [it] is always from somewhere else and always en route to somewhere else ... [it] can be of a nation, but it is never exclusively national; it always overflows, spills out, sneaks through, reaches an ear on the other side of the border line, on the other side of the sea.<sup>19</sup>

Such a sentiment stands to reason (after all, it is how I first became acquainted with the music of Bruce Springsteen) but still exists in tension with predominant approaches to music criticism and the uses to which music is put to by the political elite. In the previous chapter I argued that the predominant territorial and disciplinary maps of 'American' Studies could be reconfigured. Now I take this approach in an

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<sup>18</sup> Josh Kun, *Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America* (Oakland, CA.: University of California Press, 2005), 18.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.



alternative but complementary direction: if our maps – regional, national, international; theoretical, critical, disciplinary – are made malleable by means of the tactics discussed in constructing a coyote cartography, what other symbols and paradigms might also be made pliable? If maps of nations are one means by which peoples and ideologies orient themselves in space, then flags perform a similar function; can these totemic ciphers be subjected to a similarly deterritorialising move? This is a crucial counterpart to my suggestion that, through Springsteen, we might be able to deterritorialise critiques of his music through a deterritorialisation of some of the theoretical paradigms that Border Studies, and borderlands theory more broadly, afford the critic. As Deleuze and Guattari suggest, any deterritorialisation must be partnered with a reterritorialisation and, as such, the border, though not materially present, remains visible throughout my analysis here. Another highly visible element throughout the development of my analysis here is the U.S. flag and my purpose in this is twofold. Springsteen's use of 'Stars and Stripes' iconography at the time that he found his music appropriated by the ideologues of conservative U.S. Republicanism – in spite of its pairing with a strident and radical critique of that ideology within its accompanying musical elements – has served to structure much of the scholarly work that focuses upon his corpus and that privilege nationalistic claims to his music: demonstrating how Springsteen deterritorialises the U.S. flag affords the opportunity to begin to reterritorialise his position within the academy while simultaneously challenging the dogmatic and reductive insistence that symbols of nations (as in my challenge to maps in the previous chapters) are instructive, structuring, and inviolable parameters for studies of culture.<sup>20</sup>

Imbued as it is with mythical and cultural power, the U.S. flag is instantly recognisable across the globe and elicits a range of responses. Over the last decade or so – though not exclusively, of course – the 'Stars and Stripes' has had its fair share of unfortunate appearances outside of its own national borders:

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<sup>20</sup> cf. Jim Cullen, *Born in the U.S.A.: Bruce Springsteen and the American Tradition* (Middletown, CT.: Wesleyan University Press, 1997); Jimmy Guterman, *Runaway American Dream: Listening to Bruce Springsteen* (Boston, MA.: Da Capo Press, 2005); Louis P. Masur, *Runaway Dream: Born to Run and Bruce Springsteen's American Vision* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009); Larry David Smith, *Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, and American Song* (Westport, CT.: Praeger Publishing, 2002). Just some examples of book-length studies that align the songwriter with a predominantly 'American' position and vision.

emblazoned with the legend ‘Mission Accomplished’ aboard the *U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln* as President George W. Bush declared an end to major combat operations in Iraq in 2003; or, a few months earlier when it was draped across, and then hastily removed from, a statue of Saddam Hussein in a Baghdad square; or, even more troublingly, as it appeared in the notorious images from Abu Ghraib prison. In all of these instances, those utilising the flag were motivated by a mistaken belief that Arnaldo Testi suggests was grounded in the conviction

that the Stars and Stripes was not only suited to govern the world but that it should do so, that national security and the advancement of the cause of freedom were the same thing. There was here an impetus of revolutionary origin in which universalism, provincialism and hard expansionism were intertwined; the idea that the American flag is a message of freedom for all; that everyone, after all, wants to be American.<sup>21</sup>

To question this belief – to recognise that a national flag, whether transplanted beyond its native territory or staked within it, might attract a range of responses and interpretations – is to move beyond the flag as what Deleuze and Guattari have called striated space and to make it smooth; to expand the intertwining ideologies that Testi identifies and incorporate those ruptures too into an image of nation. The very mythic beginnings of the U.S. flag highlight and encourage such reconfigurations. The arguably apocryphal historical narrative of Betsy Ross and the ‘first’ U.S. flag, for instance, exemplifies the smoothing of the striated stars and stripes: the Philadelphia flag maker asked by George Washington in 1770 to create ‘a flag of thirteen stripes with thirteen stars encircled in a blue field’ as the first flag of the Union.<sup>22</sup> As the Union expanded, that original embroidered flag would be reconfigured in numerous ways: an ever-changing patchwork meant to represent the changing constituency of regions that created the wider nation. If we consider the ideas of Deleuze and Guattari on the practice of patchwork, the ongoing tension between the striations of the broader nation and the smooth spaces of its component regions can be seen

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<sup>21</sup> Arnaldo Testi, *Capture the Flag: The Stars and Stripes in American History* (London: New York University Press, 2010), 132.

<sup>22</sup> Marla R. Miller, *Betsy Ross and the Making of America* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 2010), 5.

to be enacted in the very flag itself; the tension between embroidery, with its central motif, and patchwork, with its more haphazard, infinite, and processive construction. Patchwork, they argue, should be considered,

[a]n amorphous collection of juxtaposed pieces that can be joined together in an infinite number of ways ... That is why very special work groups were formed for patchwork fabrication (the importance of the quilting bee in America, and its role from the standpoint of women's collectivity). The smooth space of patchwork is adequate to demonstrate that "smooth" does not mean homogeneous, quite the contrary: it is an amorphous, nonformal space, prefiguring op art.<sup>23</sup>

That 'op art' is founded upon an aesthetic of illusion adds but one more layer of significance to arguments that the heterogeneous, smooth space of the totemic flag, when co-opted by the homogenising tendencies of nationalism, erases and denudes difference; dynamism and potentiality become inert and sedentary.

Suggesting the U.S. flag – even in its reified, 'Old Glory' incarnation – is malleable, is not in itself revelatory; there are many studies that detail the changing interpretations and ideological uses of the object itself, and yet more that cover the countless re-articulations of it in popular culture.<sup>24</sup> Here Bruce Springsteen re-enters this theoretical equation: for non-Springsteen fans and scholars alike, 'Born in the U.S.A.' (whether it be the album or its titular song), remains the one element of the artist's corpus and mythos that provides the point of accessibility for both popular and academic interpretations. It also, because of its outwardly nationalistic surface as a piece of material culture, and its constantly misappropriated sentiment as a set of ideologies present in its lyrical content, reveals the ways in which

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<sup>23</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 554.

<sup>24</sup> cf. Kit Hinrichs & Delphine Hirasuna, *Long May She Wave: A Graphic History of the American Flag* (Berkeley, CA.: Ten Speed Press, 2013), an exhaustive collection of U.S. flag representations; Marc Leepson, *Flag: An American Biography* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006), a thorough exploration of the myths and misinformation which surround the Stars and Stripes; Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero* (Durham, NC.: Duke University Press, 2007), includes a number of thought-provoking insights into the deployment of the flag in times of national crisis; Arnaldo Testi, *Capture the Flag: The Stars and Stripes in American History* (London: New York University Press, 2010), and, Scott Guenter, *The American Flag, 1777-1924: Cultural Shifts from Creation to Codification* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1990), provided me with the most pertinent cultural and historical material on the U.S. flag for the arguments put forward in this chapter.

nationalism and the hardened borders of nations it creates continue to structure the majority of critiques of popular music.

### The Flag as Palimpsest

Some have suggested that the iconic sleeve design for *Born in the U.S.A.* (Figure 1) was a masterstroke of cynical marketing; further, that the overt and widespread use of stars-and-stripes imagery used by Reagan in his election campaigns, was something that Springsteen – or his management – had noted and to which they had deliberately sought to align their product to capture and exploit the large Republican constituency for commercial gain.

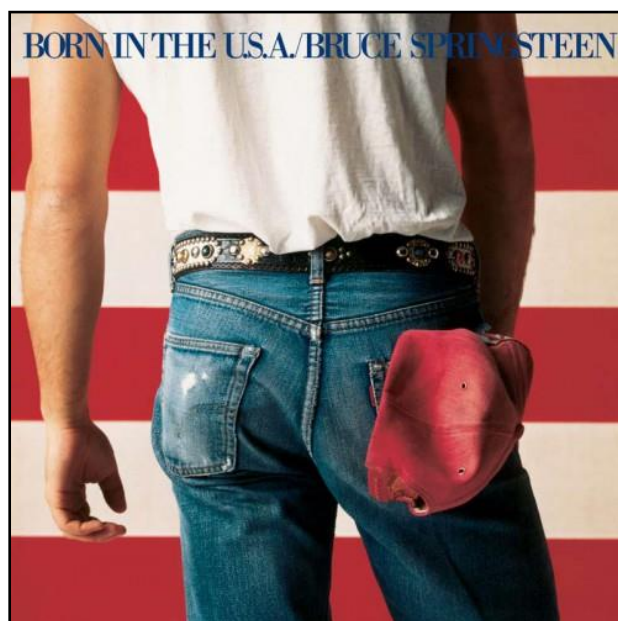


Figure 1. *Born in the U.S.A.* album sleeve. Bruce Springsteen, *Born in the U.S.A.* (Columbia Records, 1984).

*Rolling Stone* – a magazine perhaps more attuned to the messages and media of popular music than the previously cited conservative commentator George Will – were quick to question the artist on these very points when they interviewed Springsteen on the occasion of the release of his latest album in 1984.<sup>25</sup> Interviewer Kurt Loder, amongst a series of questions that attempted (and failed) to probe the singer's

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

political beliefs, asked: ‘didn’t you play into the hands of professional patriots by releasing an election-year album called *Born in the U.S.A.*, with the American flag bannered across the front?’<sup>26</sup> Springsteen’s response was measured and cognizant of the malleable symbol of ‘the stars and stripes’:

Well, we had the flag on the cover because the first song was called “Born in the U.S.A.,” and the theme of the record kind of follows from the themes I’ve been writing about for at least the last six or seven years. But the flag is a powerful image, and when you set that stuff loose, you don’t know what’s gonna be done with it.<sup>27</sup>

Matters were further complicated by the video release to accompany the song which received extensive airplay on MTV. Bookended by images of the U.S. flag, the video seemed to disorient viewers and listeners further despite the fact, as John Shook notes, that the ‘scenes accurately imitated the images conjured up by the song’s lyrics’.<sup>28</sup> Images of the Vietnam War, its veterans, and its war cemeteries were intercut with concert footage and counterpointed with scenes of everyday occurrences such as weddings and birthday parties. These latter elements appeared more hopeful and wholesome, an (American) dream-like pageant punctuated rather than punctured by the song’s staccato refrain.

As Colleen J. Sheehy – amongst many others – suggests, ‘many considered the title tune politically equivocal’, and this fact was no doubt enhanced by the record’s boldly designed sleeve in which the red, white and blue of the U.S. flag predominate.<sup>29</sup> Such indelible links between ideas of patriotism and national flags were no doubt one of the driving forces behind the Reagan campaign team’s ill-fated chasing of the Springsteen endorsement. Of course, the sleeve for the album was a commercially-minded decision but if it was also politically motivated, the politics were as clearly visible in the aesthetic decision-

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<sup>26</sup> Kurt Loder, ‘The Rolling Stone Interview: Bruce Springsteen on ‘Born in the U.S.A.’ Rolling Stone, December 6<sup>th</sup> 1984. [<http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/the-rolling-stone-interview-bruce-springsteen-on-born-in-the-u-s-a-19841206>]

<sup>27</sup> qtd. in *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> John Shook, ‘Where Were You Born, Bruce Springsteen, and Does it Matter?’ In, Randall E. Auxier & Doug Anderson (eds) *Bruce Springsteen and Philosophy: Darkness on the Edge of Truth* (Chicago: Carus Publishing, 2008).

<sup>29</sup> Colleen J. Sheehy, ‘Bruce’s Butt: Masculinity, Patriotism, and Rock’s Ecstatic Body’. In, Asbjørn Grønstad & Øyvind Yāgnes (eds), *Coverscaping: Discovering Album Aesthetics*. (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2010), 22.

making process as they were in the song-writing processes encased within. A deeper consideration of the image also reveals the depth of Springsteen's cultural reference points and their own political leanings. Dave Marsh has revealed how Springsteen had originally wanted his previous album – *Nebraska* (1982) – to feature one of the images from Robert Frank's unflinching photo-essay of 1958, *The Americans* (though it eventually featured a David Kennedy image of a mid-western highway viewed through a windshield).<sup>30</sup> Springsteen and his art director, Andrea Klein, envisaged a similarly seminal and archetypal image providing the cover artwork for *Born in the U.S.A.*: either one of Joseph Szabo's photographs of U.S. teenagers or, more intriguingly, Jasper Johns' 1954-55 painting, *Flag* (Figure 2).<sup>31</sup> Whilst, ultimately, the sleeve would feature an image of the artist himself shot by Annie Leibovitz, the mooted use of Johns' most famous of several works representing the national flag, can tell us much about the U.S.A. which Springsteen considered his birthplace and his song-writing responses to it.



Figure 2. Jasper Johns, *Flag* (1954-55). Encaustic, oil, and collage on fabric mounted on three panels, 107 x 153 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York. From: [http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object\\_id=78805](http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=78805).

Far from being an uncomplicated denotative image, *Flag* is constructed with a complexity barely visible to the naked eye. Whilst the 48 stars depicted lend this flag a certain historical specificity, a far

<sup>30</sup> Dave Marsh, *Bruce Springsteen, Two Hearts: The Definitive Biography, 1972-2003*. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 281.

<sup>31</sup> Sheehy, 'Bruce's Butt', 25.

greater specificity lies beneath the encaustic and oil painted exterior: the newsprint collage that affords the artist his canvas. As Colleen J. Sheehy notes, this aesthetic decision is one that has been largely overlooked by critics and *Flag* is, as a result, most often referred to as simply a painting rather than as a collage. In many ways this affords Johns' work almost exactly the response which had triggered the work in the first place: speaking of his lifetime's obsession with representing flags and targets, the artist has elaborated that these are both 'things which are seen and looked at, [but] not examined'.<sup>32</sup>

When one does examine, closely, the undergirding newspaper collage of *Flag*, the torn pieces of paper which it consists of are not the front page stories of the day but the smaller, seemingly more insignificant reports culled from the inside and back pages. Thus, as Sheehy contends,

If you get close to this object ... you can see the newsprint leaking through the stripes like a ghostly whisper of history. His flag has a voice and it was the voice of people's everyday stories, not of the government ... The flag here is like something biological and living, about to erupt, and, while seemingly stationary, it is also moving, in an act of forming and dissolving at the same time<sup>33</sup>

Whether or not Springsteen and his art director were fully cognizant of such assessments of their original source of inspiration and were inviting their own audience to see and listen more closely to the songwriters' material, it is nonetheless an interesting convergence from which a number of comparative threads can be followed. Most obvious is the way in which, rarely, were either Johns' *Flag* or Springsteen's *Born in the U.S.A.* (the sleeve design or the musical material itself) sufficiently scrutinised for their intended message: their use of recognisable and rarely questioned flag imagery was all too easily equated with a blind and jingoistic patriotism rather than as palimpsests that invite excavation of their other possible layers of meaning. Johns' image both connected with and critiqued the widespread display of flags during the period of Cold War nationalism in which *Flag* was produced. Springsteen's album debuted during an outbreak of a similar national mood – overseen by Reagan's exceptionalist and romantic nationalism –

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<sup>32</sup> [www.jasper-johns.org/flag.jsp] Accessed: 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2014.

<sup>33</sup> Sheehy, 'Bruce's Butt', 31-32.

and, like Johns' depiction, the artistic direction that this signposted was marked by a deep ambivalence towards the flag itself, the partisan connotations associated with it, and the outward global projections which stemmed from these associations.

Another point of comparison between these two images is the ways in which both pieces oscillate between instances of local specificity and more overarching themes and concerns whilst privileging neither. Sheehy's contention regarding the 'everyday stories' that constitute Johns' collage canvas is also reflected in the site-specific, often realist narratives of Springsteen's songs on *Born in the U.S.A.*: stories that take place in particular locations but that can project outwards to form wider points of connection. Even George Will appears to have grasped something of these intersectional modes and uses of music more broadly, and Springsteen's oeuvre in particular: 'Springsteen's tour is hard, honest work' he enthused, 'evidence of the astonishing vitality of America's regions and generations. They produce distinctive tones of voice that other regions and generations embrace'.<sup>34</sup> Despite this apparent endorsement of regional productions that might speak outwardly and inform understandings of other regions – notwithstanding, also, the interesting suggestion as to the possibilities that thinking and linking music historically and across generational boundaries might afford – Will unfortunately concludes that all of this is simply evidence that '[t]here is still nothing quite like being born in the U.S.A.'<sup>35</sup> The all too familiar collapsing of the regional into the national occurs here once more; the familiar assumption that any points of connection – no doubt heightened by the perceived uncomplicated association drawn between flag-waving and anthemic music and overt patriotism and nationalist sentiment – connect the region, inevitably, and with no room for ambiguity, to the nation. What Will, and many other cultural commentators and critics at the time, failed to grasp is the possibility that these points of connection might cross national borders to intersect with more global, transnational reference points and concerns. And in so doing that they might slip the shackles of the nation-state, contest its privileged subjectivity, and disrupt

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<sup>34</sup> Will, 'Yankee Doodle', 19.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.



the nationalist projects with which they might be erroneously equated. It is incumbent upon any discussion of Springsteen's music not to overlook the striking similarity between these two articulations of the U.S. flag: outwardly, seemingly reflecting an entire nation and its ideals but beneath these surfaces, speaking more of local and individual anxieties about those same national ideals. This was the U.S. that Springsteen was singing of: a collective of individuals with vastly differing experiences of the nation. Unlike Whitman though, his poetic did not attempt to interpellate them into a grand and unified song of a nation. And, unlike Reagan's vision of the nation, the fears, anxieties, and injustices they experienced could not be remedied by that homogenising palliative: 'the American dream'.

The chorus of 'Born in the U.S.A.' – that the likes of George Will had selectively culled from the broader lyric – is far from an assertion of nationalist pride: it is lamentation rather than celebration of U.S. exceptionalism that decries its effects both within the nation's borders and beyond them. On this point, Sheehy has noted Springsteen's elliptical lyrical style, which she characterises as indicating 'a kind of slippage ... a fault line running between promises and realities'.<sup>36</sup> Hence, just as Springsteen's ambiguous use of flag imagery on the sleeve of *Born in the U.S.A.* leaves it open to interpretation, the unfinished phrases that mark several of 'Born in the U.S.A.'s lyrics further deepen the ambiguous portrait of a nation that the artist provides. One striking element of the song is Springsteen's encouraging identification with the foreign other by having the narrator's brother fall in love with a Vietnamese woman. This in itself moves his previous approach to depicting and debating the Vietnam War and its consequences beyond the borders of the U.S., actively creating the kinds of 'fault lines' that Sheehy identifies as a distinctive quality of his song-writing style. Furthermore, the desire here (albeit one that appears lost on the ears of the era's politicians and conservative cultural pundits) appears to be a deliberate attempt to avoid any possible normative strategic essentialism in the song's message. The lyrics that trail off into ambiguous ellipsis during 'Born in the U.S.A.' – 'Come back home to the refinery/Hiring man says 'if it was up to me...'' and 'Went down to see my V.A. man, he said, 'Son, don't you understand

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<sup>36</sup> Sheehy, 'Bruce's Butt', 35.

now ...' – echo the 'slippage' between 'promise' and 'reality' that encapsulate much of Springsteen's poetic output. Such points of disconnection afford a way into what George Lipsitz describes as the 'sedimented networks and associations beneath the surface of the seemingly disconnected world of commodified musical production'.<sup>37</sup> Hence, to explore these 'fault lines' is to achieve something of the 'freeing of music' itself to which Deleuze alludes when he states that

[i]n order for music to free itself, it will have to pass over to the other side — there where territories tremble, where the structures collapse, where the ethos get mixed up, where a powerful song of the earth is unleashed, the great ritornello that transmutes all the airs it carries away and makes return.<sup>38</sup>

The fault line is 'where territories tremble' and slip from their previous moorings, blur boundaries and intervene in the construction of clearly demarcated identities; to 'pass over to the other side' is to traverse borders and where Springsteen, in 'Born in the U.S.A.', had urged his listeners to look beyond the borders of the U.S. to appreciate the devastating impacts of the Vietnam War as they were simultaneously felt by the foreign other, in many of his earlier compositions the songwriter exhorted identification with the other across a much closer and more tangible border: Mexico and into South America – a territory to which he has returned throughout his career.

### Springsteen's Transnational America

Later to become Springsteen's manager, Jon Landau, writing for *The Real Paper* in 1974 famously wrote that he had 'seen rock and roll future and its name is Bruce Springsteen'.<sup>39</sup> Within that same piece he listed the artist's main qualities: 'He is a rock 'n' roll punk ... a ballet dancer, an actor, a joker, bar band leader, hot-shit rhythm guitar player, extraordinary singer, and a truly great rock 'n' roll composer'.<sup>40</sup> Less repeated than Landau's prophetic praise for Springsteen, and maybe less recognisable to his legions of fans

<sup>37</sup> George Lipsitz, *Time Passages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 261.

<sup>38</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 104.

<sup>39</sup> Jon Landau, 'Growing Young with Rock and Roll'. *The Real Paper*, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1974 [no pagination].

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

amongst the various assets appended to him, was another descriptor with which the critic labelled him: Springsteen was, he contended, ‘a Latin street poet’.<sup>41</sup> Whilst Springsteen’s early career and predominantly urban location and related vernacular did coincide with the rise of Nuyorican arts and poetry and its own geography and idiom, it is doubtful that Landau was equating the two. Nonetheless, the overriding concern with cultural identity and oppressed class consciousness that defines the Nuyorican movement was similarly present in some of the early works of the songwriter. Recurrent motifs of Mexico and its border with the U.S. and a cast of Spanish-speaking characters populate many of his early compositions.

The song ‘Mary Queen of Arkansas’ from his first album *Greetings From Asbury Park, N.J.* (1973), for example, uncritically celebrates the Mexican border and what lies beyond it in a distinctly binary way: as a site of escape, unfettered and dark sexuality and disorganised social and cultural anarchy. The tale of a circus acrobat and his affair with a fellow performer, ‘Mary Queen of Arkansas’ casts the border and Mexico beyond it, as a site for reinvention and renewal: ‘The big top is for dreamers; we can take the circus all the way to the border’ the narrator claims before suggesting that ‘I know a place where we can go Mary; Where we can start out all over again clean; I got contacts deep in Mexico, where the servants have been seen’. The border presented here is a mythic one: a site of metamorphosis. Similarly well-worn and stereotypical motifs litter another composition from the artist’s debut album, ‘Does This Bus Stop at 82<sup>nd</sup> Street?’, where, in New York, a ‘señorita, Spanish rose, wipes her eyes and blows her nose; Uptown in Harlem, she throws a rose, to some lucky young matador’. Such Spanish typecasts belie the fact that Springsteen’s borderlands imaginary was arguably already far more nuanced than many mainstream recording artists of this period, with Adam Lifshey remarking that ‘[f]ew Anglo musicians in the 1970s were yielding the sort of foregrounded spaces to Hispanic individuals that Springsteen does’.<sup>42</sup> These ‘foregrounded spaces’ appear periodically throughout his first two albums and Springsteen – like Whitman

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Adam Lifshey, ‘The Borderlands Poetics of Bruce Springsteen’. *Journal of the Society for American Music*, Vol.3, No.2 (2009), 225.

before him – does deploy interpolative strategies to integrate these ‘other’ spaces and voices into a vision of America; yet, in the doomed romances and violent inner-city milieus that they relate, they represent the disavowed and discriminatory underbelly of the fêted ‘American Dream’.

A track from Springsteen’s second album *The Wild, The Innocent, and The E-Street Shuffle* (1973), ‘Incident on 57<sup>th</sup> Street’, features the protagonists ‘Spanish Johnny’ and ‘Puerto Rican Jane’ but whilst their names speak of difference, their actions in the song’s narrative do not speak to it. However, it is important to state that whilst these characters – described as ‘a cool Romeo’ and ‘a late Juliet’ in the lyrics – may appear outwardly as stereotyped simplifications layered on to well-established romantic tropes, the song does not feature any Anglo characters or proxy narrator, allowing these Latino characters to attain some measure of individual agency. It is intriguing that Lifshy chooses to describe a selection of Springsteen’s output – including the aforementioned ‘Incident on 57<sup>th</sup> Street’ – as displaying a ‘borderlands poetics’. In making such an allusion to that seminal work in the field of borderlands studies – Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) – I would argue that Lifshy, when he does focus upon Springsteen’s early career compositions (rather than later more explicitly border-oriented songs), has in mind Anzaldúa’s suggestion that the ‘Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other’.<sup>43</sup> Springsteen’s entire corpus and the urban oeuvre that he often situates his narratives in – despite being geographically distant from the material and territorial conditions that prompt Anzaldúa’s remark – still retains something of her originally intended meaning when she continues that such borderlands exist ‘where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle, and upper classes touch, where the space between individuals shrinks with intimacy’.<sup>44</sup> Nowhere is this more apparent than in the scenarios evoked on another track on his debut album entitled ‘Lost in the Flood’. Taking a different approach to giving voice to a trans- or intra-American difference – though still set among early-career Springsteen standard urban locales – ‘Lost in

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<sup>43</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 2007), 19.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

the Flood' features a triptych of violent narratives with the final one presenting a Spanish-speaking protagonist who communicates from his own autonomous subject position:

And some kid comes blastin' round the corner,  
 But a cop puts him right away,  
 He lays on the street, holding his leg, screamin' something in Spanish,  
 Still breathin' when I walked away.  
 And someone said, hey man did you see that?  
 His body hit the street with such a beautiful thud,  
 I wonder what the dude was sayin',  
 Or was he just lost in the flood?

Some critics point to the fact that none of the observers of this incident can interpret what he is saying and, hence, the song does nothing to further Springsteen's transamerican imaginary. Lifshy again, for example, suggests that this scene in 'Lost in the Flood', in some respects, with its linguistic barrier to interpretation, reinforces borders as uncrossable.<sup>45</sup> Yet the fact that the injured youth speaks in his own language, is suggestive of a sovereign space for the individual in which his own agency is maintained and articulated. Whilst neither 'Incident' or 'Lost in the Flood' suggest any particularly political or social conscience on the part of Springsteen, a later unreleased recording, 'They Killed Him in the Street', from the *The River* (1980) sessions, was reportedly inspired by the 1980 assassination of Archbishop Óscar Romero during the Salvadoran civil war and is indicative of an increased engagement with a broader transnational and political imagination in his work.<sup>46</sup> Read alongside this piece of arcane trivia, Springsteen's musical output prior to *Born in the U.S.A.*, demonstrates that the 'America' that Springsteen was singing – even at this fledgling stage of his career – was more heterogeneous than the 'America' that Whitman heard a century previous, and that the political elite of today continue to hear.

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<sup>45</sup> Lifshy, 'Borderland Poetics', 225.

<sup>46</sup> Mark Dolan, 'How Ronald Reagan Changed Bruce Springsteen's Politics' (2014) [[http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/06/bruce-springsteen-ronald-reagan-107448\\_Page2.html#.VZO7ZzNRHug](http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/06/bruce-springsteen-ronald-reagan-107448_Page2.html#.VZO7ZzNRHug)] According to Dolan, 'had it been released, ['They Killed Him in the Street'] would have been one of the earliest references in U.S. pop music to right-wing capitalist terrorism in Central America' np.

### **‘Now I’m Movin’ on the Border’<sup>47</sup>**

Nowhere is this continental polyphony more consistently apparent than on Springsteen’s 1995 release, *The Ghost of Tom Joad*. In the decade that had passed since *Born in the U.S.A.* and the attendant political brouhaha it prompted, the songwriter’s work can be seen as being marked by a steep decline in political engagement. *Tunnel of Love* (1987), *Human Touch*, and *Lucky Town* (both 1992), all relate much more deeply personal human emotions rather than addressing the broader socio-cultural, economic, and political currents that had characterised, albeit largely obliquely, much of his earlier output. Reagan’s misappropriation of Springsteen had, according to Mark Dolan, ‘the greatest political impact on Springsteen himself – turning him from a relatively apolitical performer from an avowedly working-class background to a passionate advocate for the rights of the disenfranchised’.<sup>48</sup> Despite this, there was little evidence of a newly ignited interest in such themes on those three albums, all of which were composed in California after the artist relocated from his life-long New Jersey home on the back of the huge commercial success of *Born in the U.S.A.* This relocation to the U.S. Southwest did however serve to sharpen Springsteen’s vision of the U.S.-Mexico border and it was this that was to serve as the re-awakening of his social conscience. Prompted by encounters with people of the region, by the photographs of Michael Williamson that accompanied Dale Maharidge’s travelogue, *Journey to Nowhere: The Saga of a New Underclass* (1985), and by numerous articles published in the *Los Angeles Times* on the plight of illegal aliens and the cross-border drugs trade, Springsteen composed a series of sparse and stark compositions that most clearly echo Lifshy’s praise for his evocation of America as an ‘unbordered and fluid space’.<sup>49</sup> In summoning forth John Steinbeck’s ‘figure of smouldering witness’, Springsteen ‘historicizes contemporary

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<sup>47</sup> This subheading is a lyric from an unpublished Springsteen song – ‘Ballad of the Self-Loading Pistol’ – that was recorded during his original demo performances for Columbia Records in 1972/73. Due to its rarity it is not considered at length herein but there are striking similarities between its own ballad form and the *corrido* form that I explore in parts of this chapter that could warrant further exploration. For lyrics and provenance see:

[<http://www.springsteenlyrics.com/lyrics/b/balladofaselfloadingpistol.php>]; for a recording see:

[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UuwErcjTX0Y>]

<sup>48</sup> Dolan, ‘How Reagan Changed Springsteen’s Politics’, np.

<sup>49</sup> Gary Graff, *The Ties That Bind: Bruce Springsteen, A to E to Z* (Canton, MI.: Visible Ink Press, 2005), 161; Lifshy, ‘Borderlands Poetics’, 221.

circumstances by placing them alongside those of the Great Depression'; singing no longer just about those excluded from the ultimately illusory dream of 'America' by structural inequalities but also those kept at an even more insurmountable distance from it by the border.<sup>50</sup> Springsteen is Joad: the man with a social conscience who came west. Joad is Springsteen: 'the passive observer turned ... activist and communitarian conscience ... grabbed by figures right and left to stand for something, represent something, or, in recent vintage, to represent nothing at all, rendered void of the political meaning deliberately invested in him'.<sup>51</sup> If, as Bryant Simon and William Deverell impassionedly suggest, 'Tom Joad ... [has] always been seen not as imaginary at all, not fictional, but real', then the border at which Springsteen relocates and then locates him in the late-twentieth century is similarly real – present and active in the narratives of *The Ghost of Tom Joad* – its ephemeral aural representation combining with the experiential material encounters that Springsteen has with it whilst resident in the Southwest.<sup>52</sup> This provides something of an answer to Villalobos' question regarding the necessity of the material presence of the border as a prerequisite for considerations of border cultural productions whilst simultaneously addressing the pressing discrepancy within Border Studies that Lifshy identifies. In taking a canonical figure such as Tom Joad (notwithstanding Steinbeck as his original creator) and filtering him through both a national border and a national figure of widespread popularity in Springsteen, *The Ghost of Tom Joad* (current sales figures: 2.2 million) provides a decidedly non-niche, mainstream depiction of the border that, whilst arguably occupying the centre, is still responsible to the margin and an ethical and efficacious representation of it.

Frank Eugene Cruz has made a compelling case for considering the story of Tom Joad in Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) as an exemplar of an early form of what would later take shape as

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<sup>50</sup> Bryant Simon & William Deverell, 'Come Back Tom Joad: Thoughts on a California Dreamer'. *California History*, Vol.79, No.4 (Winter, 2000/2001), 181; Roxanne Harde, "Living in Your American Skin": Bruce Springsteen and the Possibility of Politics'. *Canadian Review of American Studies*, Vol.43, No.1 (Spring 2013), 132.

<sup>51</sup> Simon & Deverell, 'Come Back Tom Joad', 181.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

borderlands theory.<sup>53</sup> In finding precursory textual evidence within Steinbeck's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel of the later thinking of such border-related theorists as Homi Bhabha, Gloria Anzaldúa, Loida Maritza Pérez, and José David Saldívar, Cruz argues that the predominant theme of *The Grapes of Wrath* is 'in-betweenness' and that it is this motif that accounts for the ongoing presence of both the novel, and Tom Joad in particular, in the popular cultural imagination.<sup>54</sup> This, he argues, is due to the fact that 'the "American experience" is quickly becoming more about multiple, rather than monolithic subjectivities – more about in-between, as opposed to essentialist conceptions of culture and ethno-racial formations, as the lines between "Us" and "Them", "Here" and "There", and "Home" and "World" blur'.<sup>55</sup> Such an observation allows us to position the ghost of Tom Joad as a spectral presence that haunts the songs on *The Ghost of Tom Joad* precisely because of his interstitiality, a state that the character – as given voice by Springsteen in his reworking of Nunnally Johnson's elegiac speech written for Joad in John Ford's feature film version (1940) of Steinbeck's novel – anticipates and foreshadows in the closing verse of the title song:

Now Tom said: "Mom, wherever there's a cop beatin' a guy  
Wherever a hungry, new-born baby cries  
Where there's a fight against the blood and hatred in the air  
Look for me, Mom, I'll be there  
Wherever somebody's fighting for a place to stand  
Or a decent job or a helpin' hand  
Wherever somebody's strugglin' to be free  
Look in their eyes, Mom, you'll see me".

This interstitial state makes Tom Joad the ideal figure through which Springsteen can channel the border experience, and if the title track does not make explicit reference to the border itself, then the iniquitous

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<sup>53</sup> Frank Eugene Cruz, "In Between a Past and Future Town": Home, The Unhomely, and *The Grapes of Wrath*'. *Steinbeck Review*, Vol.4, No.2 (Fall 2007).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 55.



interstice that it itself embodies permeates many of the other songs on the album whilst also echoing the intra-colonial, border-crossing, subaltern positioning of the Joads themselves and their migratory descendants in North America: as Simon and Deverell crystallize in this regard, 'Tom Joad's west has become their north'.<sup>56</sup>

If 'Born in the U.S.A.' asked the U.S. to orient its moral compass to the east and identify with the foreign other, then 'Across the Border' – the tenth track on *The Ghost of Tom Joad* – is far less equivocal in its sense of direction. Plainly the territory that it occupies is that of the Mexico-U.S. border but the outwardly simplistic and optimistic lyrical rendering of an impending border crossing by a pair of lovers is made more complex by the fact that the listener receives no cues as to which side of the border is their point of departure and which their arrival. Indeed, if it were not for the fact that the narrator, in the third stanza, finally divulges a geographical reference point, we might not even be certain as to what border the pair were planning to traverse: 'We'll leave behind my dear / The pain and sadness we found here / And we'll drink from the Bravo's muddy water'. The use of the Mexican toponym for what the U.S. refers to as the Rio Grande offers some suggestion as to the nationality of the song's protagonists – as does the later use of the word 'corazón' – but the idyllic, paradisiacal, almost prelapsarian, visions of their future across the border ('Tomorrow my love and I, will sleep 'neath auburn skies' / 'For you I'll build a house, high up on a grassy hill' / 'Sweet blossoms fill the air, pastures of gold and green, flow down to cool, clear waters') do not appear to privilege either side of the border: is this an escape to the promise of the U.S., or a retreat from its own late-capitalist realities?

Whichever side of the border the song unfolds on, it is fundamentally present in the lyrics. This is something of a departure for Springsteen's use of geography and topography in his song writing. Marya Morris, writing on this aspect of his craft, suggests that '[i]n addition to the real and fictional place names, Springsteen has a stock pile of non-specific images of natural landscapes and political geography (e.g.,

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<sup>56</sup> Simon & Deverell, 'Come Back Tom Joad', 190.

“over the rise”, “the edge of town”, “the river”) that he uses as metaphors for the characters’ emotional states of being’.<sup>57</sup> The repeated use of the title ‘Across the Border’ throughout the song does not, in this instance, appear to tally with this notion of ‘landscape as metaphor’, though it does retain the similarly vague ‘non-specificity’ of the other phrases that Morris identifies. Morris also draws attention to the songwriter’s constant use of ‘elements of the built environment, such as cars, streets, and highways, [that] also make frequent appearances in the lyrics, symbolizing a person or a people’s sense of freedom, limitation, opportunity, and confinement’: here, the use of the border – which, it could be argued, is part of ‘the built environment’ since it is a human construct that maintains a physical presence – has a parallel with a standard Springsteen approach since it is symbolic for the promise that lies beyond it.<sup>58</sup> Hence, one way in which ‘Across the Border’ can be seen to figure the border as interstitial is in its emergence from the interstice of Springsteen’s usual approach to writing about, and use of, geographical and topographical features: existing somewhere in-between metaphor and symbol.

This approach is further demonstrated in the composition ‘The Line’, which takes the listener much closer to the Mexico-U.S. border, with the narrator – Carl, an Anglo character recently released from military service – stating in the opening lines: ‘I got my discharge from Fort Irwin / Took a place on the San Diego county line ... Went to work for the I.N.S. on the line / With the California border patrol’. Here ‘The Line’ manifests as a symbol – as a line of ‘limitation’ or ‘confinement’ as Morris would put it – that Carl is charged with patrolling with his partner Bobby Ramírez: ‘Come night we’d wait out in the canyons / And try to keep ’em from crossin’ the line’. In this last phrase the border suddenly becomes metaphor for the actions that Carl will undertake later in the song: assisting three Mexican migrants to cross the border. The border, in the images and ideas that ‘The Line’ conjures, becomes more complex than the interstice between promise and reality that ‘Across the Border’ fashions

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<sup>57</sup> Marya Morris, ‘From “My Hometown” to “This Hard Land”: Bruce Springsteen’s Use of Geography, Landscapes, and Places to Depict the American Experience’. *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies*, Vol.9, No.1, Glory Days: A Bruce Springsteen Celebration (Fall 2007), 5.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

it as. The oscillation between ‘the line’ as symbol and ‘the line’ as metaphor is mirrored in the ways in which the song’s narrative constantly shifts perspective: one moment the action is in San Diego, the next it is in Guanajuato with Bobby Ramírez’ family; in one verse the listener is taken to Madera County, in another, transported to Tijuana. It is in this last location that Carl, having crossed the symbolic line into Mexico, crosses the metaphorical line:

There’s a bar in Tijuana  
Where me and Bobby drink alongside  
The same people we sent back the day before  
We met there she said her name was Louisa  
She was from Sonora and had just come north  
We danced and I held her in my arms  
And I knew what I would do

Whilst assisting Louisa ‘her child and younger brother ... [to] get through’, the Anglo character of Carl is chased down by his Mexican immigrant partner, Bobby, who ultimately allows Louisa, to escape ‘[a]s off through the arroyo she ran’ and finally ‘never sa[ys] nothing’. Therefore, not only is ‘the line’ of the border imagined as both symbol and metaphor – becoming a point of articulation that shifts between these two rhetorical statuses – but it also becomes a site for the re-articulation of the usual geopolitical power dynamic of the border as the border patrol itself becomes the facilitator for the illegal crossing.

In this regard I believe that Springsteen can also be considered to be engaged in another equally important act of border articulation and re-articulation. In the ambiguously heroic actions of Carl in ‘The Line’, there exist a number of echoes of the *corrido* tradition that developed in the U.S.-Mexico border region from the period following the Mexican-American War (1846-48). *Corridos*, in very general terms, are ‘border ballads with epic themes of heroes who resisted the Texas Rangers, U.S. authorities, or, in some cases, even central Mexican authorities’, but a number of their more nuanced elements can cast

further light on the narrative relayed in Springsteen's 'The Line'.<sup>59</sup> Key amongst these is the *corridos*' rhetorical stance when it comes to their portrayal of the dominant power and its discourse as they operate at the border. Mark Noe suggests that rather 'than opposing the dominant discourse head on, the *corrido* overturns that discourse' and we can see this in operation when the border patrol agent himself becomes the means for a border crossing rather than a preventative actor against it, and when the Anglo character is pursued by his immigrant partner.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, in the mutability of the song's setting as it crosses the border multiple times, and in the shifting allegiances of the characters that inhabit it, Springsteen's lyrics chime with another predominant motif of the *corrido* genre as it 'constructs a fluid multisubjectivity as a rhetorical trope'.<sup>61</sup> This then requires the listener – in much the same way as 'Born in the U.S.A.' did a decade earlier – to reckon with the perspective of a member of its own community's affinity for the foreign other whilst simultaneously resonating with one of the most renowned *corridos* – 'El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez' – wherein one of the principal themes is Cortez' 'challenge to the dominant discourse's ability to fix his identity': a challenge that Carl also lays down in 'The Line'.<sup>62</sup>

*Corridos*, their popularity, and their viability as a cultural form have, according to Mark Cameron Edberg, 'ebbed and flowed with the nature and intensity of cross-border tensions', and, again, it is possible to read Springsteen into this tradition given his residence in California during the 1990s and that state's passing of Proposition 187 in 1994: a year prior to the release of *The Ghost of Tom Joad*.<sup>63</sup> Also known as the 'Save Our State' initiative, Proposition 187 legislated against illegal immigrants accessing health care, public education, and other state services and drew widespread national attention, creating a perception that the U.S. was being overrun by illegal Mexican migrants and a misplaced apprehension that many of them were involved in the cross-border narcotics trade. Thus, Springsteen's return to his position as a voice of social conscience given his newfound proximity to the border itself, demonstrates that his work

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<sup>59</sup> Mark Cameron Edberg, *El Narcotraficante: Narcocorridos and the Construction of a Cultural Persona on the U.S.-Mexico Border* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004); 25.

<sup>60</sup> Mark Noe, 'The *Corrido*: A Border Rhetoric', *College English*, 71.6 (2009), 598.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 599.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>63</sup> Edberg, *El Narcotraficante*, 30.

of this time could be read as a foray into the territory of the *corrido* genre. Perhaps more telling, though, is the emergence of a new form of the *corrido* that had begun to develop and attract the attention of the public and scholars alike, and that I contend we can find evidence of in two of the compositions on *The Ghost of Tom Joad*: the *narcocorrido*. Where the *corrido* initially emerges as a cultural form of resistance to the dominant border discourse, the *narcocorrido* makes a form of resistance itself its subject matter, specifically the actions of drug cartels and their operatives. Some scholars have remarked upon the emergence of this new genre as perhaps more representative of the material conditions and experiences of the contemporary Mexico-U.S. border than its predecessor since their subject matter embodies the nature of the national boundary as ‘a zone of both harsh poverty and fantastic wealth’: a real-and-imagined region that makes socio-economic disparities visible, and for which drug smuggling is viewed as providing a bridge between these two states of being.<sup>64</sup> Springsteen’s songs ‘Balboa Park’ and ‘Sinaloa Cowboys’ both address this issue.

Recalling Marya Morris’ remarks about the artist’s use of geographical and topographical markers in his music, Springsteen’s titles here add a tangible border specificity to their content and that material continues the themes of both multiple border crossings – by protagonists and in compositional style – and the fluidity of the border in its interaction with subjectivity that is in evidence on ‘Across the Border’ and ‘The Line’. Originally set aside as parkland by the authorities in Alta California in 1835, the Pueblo land on which Balboa Park is now sited lies in San Diego and might be considered – given its history as ceded Mexican territory and its being named after Spanish explorer Vasco Núñez de Balboa in 1910 – as a reminder of the interconnected histories and cultures of Mexico and the U.S.. During the 1980s and 1990s it became synonymous with violent crime after a series of murders and it is into this context that Springsteen’s song of the same name enters its discursive terrain. It is also into the discursive terrain of the *narcocorrido* that ‘Balboa Park’ ventures with its narrative of ‘Spider’ who ‘grew up near the Zona Norte’ – an area of Tijuana that is nestled right against the border with the U.S. with San Ysidro, CA. on

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 8.

the northern side – and who, ‘With the hustlers and smugglers he hung out with ... swallowed their balloons of cocaine, [and] brought ’em across to the twelfth street strip’. This setting seems indicative of Springsteen’s treatment of the border in that ‘rather than being a line that sharply separates two distinct national realities, is consistently transgressed as the United States and Mexico materialize as an interwoven entity’, and the transgression of this line is doubly reinforced by the contravention of the law that ‘Balboa Park’ relates.<sup>65</sup> Yet, most of the action in the song – and also in ‘Sinaloa Cowboys’ – takes place on distinctly U.S. terrain, with references to Mexico reduced to providing backstory for the characters that inhabit the song’s story-world. Again, this aligns these songs with the *narcocorrido* tradition since, as Hector Amaya notes, ‘the majority of narcocorridos are recorded and produced in the U.S. Southwest’ so they are already a deterritorialised form of the *corrido*, reterritorialised in Mexico’s northern neighbour.<sup>66</sup> Although they have antecedents in Mexico (most notably in Sinaloa), Amaya notes that the reason for this flourishing of the genre – epitomised by the success of Los Tigres del Norte from California – is twofold: the recording and production infrastructure required is more advanced in the U.S., and the *narcocorrido* itself glamorises and celebrates conspicuous material consumption on a scale more readily found in California than Sinaloa. It is here that Springsteen again uses the border to rearticulate this border form: taking the thematic underpinning of the *narcocorrido* form – tales of drug smuggling and related activity – but imagining their outcomes very differently. For Mark Edberg, ‘[a]ssessing narcocorridos and their representations of the narcotrafficker is a useful study in the process of cultural-image construction, dissemination, and transformation ... however, such an assessment may inform broader questions concerning the interaction between poverty, viewed within a context of social stratification’.<sup>67</sup> And it is in this latter terrain that Springsteen’s iteration of the *narcocorrido* operates.

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<sup>65</sup> Lifshy, ‘Borderlands Poetics’, 223.

<sup>66</sup> Hector Amaya, ‘The Dark Side of Transnational Latinidad: Narcocorridos and the Branding of Authenticity’. In, Arlene M. Dávila & Yeidy M. Rivero (eds), *Contemporary Latina/o Media: Production, Circulation, Politics* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 223.

<sup>67</sup> Edberg, *El Narcotraficante*, 12.

One final composition from *The Ghost of Tom Joad* marries a number of the themes identified so far in Springsteen's possible use of the *corrido* and *narcocorrido* forms, and the reterritorialisation of them that his music enacts. 'Sinaloa Cowboys' is again replete with specific geographical reference points and its titular region of Mexico reveals the songwriter's affinity for, and understanding of, his subject material. As Edberg notes in his study of the *narcocorrido*, this form is 'less tied to the actual geographic border ... in Mexico, certain states in the sierra or near the Pacific coast, such as Sinaloa, are well known narcotrafficker territory and thus the origin of many narcocorridos'.<sup>68</sup> Hence, Springsteen's tale of Miguel and Louis Rosales who fall prey to 'some men in from Sinaloa [who] were lookin' for some hands' whilst working as undocumented braceros 'in the fields of the San Joaquin', falls within the socio-political and poetic lineage of *narco* territory. But the noun that follows Sinaloa – Cowboys – in the song's title functions in an almost contrary way. Given Springsteen's fondness for Spanish words and phrases (from his clumsy usage of 'señorita' and 'matador' in early-career efforts, to the more considered placement of 'corazon', 'hueros', or 'gavachos' in later compositions), the use of 'cowboys' might appear strange; indeed, in one of his songs – 'Reno' – he makes strategic use of the Spanish language equivalent, 'vaqueros'. But this apparent juxtaposition serves to highlight once more the intertwined histories and contemporary circumstances of the two nations bisected by the Rio Grande, recognising the reterritorialisation of the drugs trade 'deep in Fresno County' where the song's protagonists 'on the edge of a ravine ... stood cooking methamphetamine', and facilitating Springsteen's deterritorialisation of the *narcocorrido* form.

Where Springsteen could be seen to retain another key feature of both the *corrido* and *narcocorrido* form, is in the closing lyrics of the songs analysed thus far. Edberg notes that the majority of these border ballads close with a *despedida* that functions as both a warning and a farewell.<sup>69</sup> More often than not, since the *corrido* focuses on what we might characterise as an anti-hero, this takes the form of the protagonist departing and cautioning against following them. Hence, 'The Ghost of Tom Joad' has the titular character

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<sup>68</sup> Edberg, *El Narcotraficante*, 8.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 48.

delivering his own eulogy as he departs, warning that he will continue to fight injustice; ‘The Line’ has its central character leaving the Border Patrol and vowing to continue looking for the undocumented ‘Louisa’, whose border-crossing he facilitated, in ‘the migrant towns’. The two songs that might be considered as examples of the newer *narco*- iteration of the *corrido* form contain a far starker warning; one that echoes the words of an unseen father character in ‘Sinaloa Cowboys’ who cautions ‘My sons one thing you will learn / For everything the north gives, it exacts a price in return’. In ‘Balboa Park’, the character of ‘Spider’ meets his end through a combination of his illicit business and the ever-present threat of the I.N.S.:

One night the border patrol swept Twelfth Street  
 A big car came fast down the boulevard  
 Spider stood caught in its headlights  
 Got hit and went down hard  
 As the car sped away Spider held his stomach  
 Limped to his blanket ‘neath the underpass  
 Lie [sic] there tasting his own blood on his tongue  
 Closed his eyes and listened to the cars  
 Rushin’ by so fast.

In counterpoint to this possibly familiar *corrido* trope of the Border Patrol as the arbiter of an undocumented migrant’s demise, the closing of ‘Sinaloa Cowboys’ presents a different cautionary farewell in its closing lines as one of the brothers dies in the process of ‘cooking methamphetamine ... when the shack exploded lighting up the valley night’. A far more complex denouement emerges:

Miguel lifted Louis’ body into his truck and then he drove  
 To where the morning sunlight fell on a eucalyptus grove  
 There in the dirt he dug up ten thousand dollars, all that they’d saved  
 Kissed his brother’s lips and placed him in his grave.



Here again are elements of the ‘slippage’ between promise and reality that Sheehy notes as characteristic of Springsteen’s writing: the ‘promise’ afforded by the money the brothers have earned, and the ‘reality’ of the dangerous actions that have enabled them to do so, with the symbolic makeshift resting place for Louis becoming yet one more liminal site in North America’s southwest. The border is once more figured as a threshold between promise and reality, poverty and wealth, life and death and, furthermore, the disparate and specific local geographies of a rural Californian county and the mountainous region of Sinaloa are figured as geopolitically linked despite the 2,500km that separates them, with events in one area impacting upon those of the other. In adopting and re-articulating the *narcocorrido* genre that forms an important part of the culture of Sinaloa, Springsteen is able to dissolve many of the borders and boundaries that demarcate the physical and psychological territories of North America.

A decade following *The Ghost of Tom Joad*, Springsteen’s 13<sup>th</sup> studio album, *Devils and Dust* (2005), presented his audience with another borderlands ballad that again epitomises many of the tropes of the *corrido* genre and the socio-political, economic, and cultural contexts that gave rise to the form. Some scholars, no doubt reading ‘Across the Border’ as being uncomplicatedly sung from the Mexican side of the border, have suggested that ‘Matamoros Banks’ is the continuation of, conclusion or corollary to, that earlier track. Matthew Orel, for instance, in attempting to ensure some thematic continuity across Springsteen’s career, remarks that it is of a type with other of the artist’s recordings that suggest ‘the impossibilities of reaching the destination intact ... [such as] “Matamoros Banks”, in which the demise of the character from “Across the Border” is confirmed’.<sup>70</sup> The narrative of the song emerges from the body of a Mexican migrant lying on a riverbed and, in an uncharacteristic tactic from Springsteen, its lyrics are prefaced by a reflection on their contents from the artist himself: ‘Each year many die crossing the deserts, mountains, and rivers of our southern border in search of a better life. Here I follow the journey backwards from the body at the river bottom, to the man walking across the desert towards the banks of the Rio

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<sup>70</sup> Matthew Orel, ‘From Adam to Jesus: Springsteen’s Use of Scripture’. In, Kenneth Womack & Mark Bernhard (eds) *Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series: Bruce Springsteen, Cultural Studies, and the Runaway American Dream* (Burlington, VT.: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), 153.

Grande'.<sup>71</sup> Compelled though he is to ensure that the inspiration for, and earnest meaning of, the song is not overlooked, Springsteen's lyrics cannot escape ambiguity precisely because of their border setting and *corrido*-like undertones. Just as Edberg notes that in the *corrido* form 'however it is imagined, it could be said that the border is a distiller of themes and a metaphoric region of ambiguity – a liminal space', Lifshy also notes the embodiment of this liminal state in the cadaver that he believes voices 'Matamoros Banks' when he responds to it thus: 'Little is clear but liminality: a subject, or perhaps an object, exists at the borders of life and death, silence and speech, one shore and another. This existence, however, is not so much a product of borders as an active transgressor thereof, contesting as it does the claims of any of the sides at hand'.<sup>72</sup> Thus, in 'Matamoros Banks', one of Springsteen's narrators inhabits a threshold between two states of being much as the *narcocorrido* incarnation of the *corrido* form occupies that space between poverty and wealth. But, more than this, the corpse who prompts the narrative from the bottom of the Rio Grande/Bravo dwells in the cartographic mark of the border as it becomes fluid in its liquid journey across the continent – a journey that the body becomes a part of as first clothes, then skin, then bones, decompose and are carried away: becoming the border and emphasising the refusal to acquiesce to a particular national position. The call in the chorus echoes this ambiguity with the entreaty to 'Meet me on the Matamoros, Meet me on the Matamoros, Meet me on the Matamoros Banks' available for interpretation as a call to the narrator's lover in his past life, or as a clarion call to those on the U.S. side of the border to come and witness the savagery of the border, a reading that Springsteen's liner notes seems to encourage. Furthermore, if we incorporate Donna Dolphin's reading of the song into consideration, it is possible to hear once more a potential resonance with Anzaldúa's theorisation of the borderlands. Equating Springsteen with a forebear he is often deemed to descend from in Woody Guthrie, Dolphin claims that "Matamoros Banks" centres itself in the intimate geographies of hurt. Rather than focus on the social and institutional causes which propel so many people across the Mexican border into danger, uncertainty, and working class poverty, Springsteen gives voice to the bereaved lover left

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<sup>71</sup> Bruce Springsteen, *Devils and Dust* Liner Notes (Columbia Records, 2005) np.

<sup>72</sup> Edberg, *El Narcotraficante*, 8; Lifshy, 'Borderlands Poetics', 221.

behind'.<sup>73</sup> Herein, 'the space between individuals [that] shrinks with intimacy' which Anzaldúa pronounces as a marker of borderlands territory, becomes a more public and widespread utterance that, whilst drawing attention to the basic human emotions that Springsteen regularly voices, also demonstrates the sharpening they undergo at the border.<sup>74</sup> The oppositional binaries that discursively construct the dominant ideology of the border are, in this reading, collapsed by a number of analytical strategies: the inherent liminality of the narrative voice of 'Matamoros Banks', the consideration of it as being representative of borderlands cultural production, and by reading it as an example of the *corrido* form in which the dominant discourse is subjected to a fundamental reordering that creates multiple and fluid subjectivities.

In Springsteen's use of specific border topography throughout his compositions that deal explicitly with the border and the borderlands – the observable border settings of Matamoros and Tijuana for example, or those places that were once Mexican territory and now attract large numbers of Mexican migrants, such as Fresno County, San Joaquin, and Balboa Park – there seems a conscious strategy at work to have the scenarios the songs evoke emerge from those regions where the geographies and cultures of two separate nation-states cannot be adequately delineated. That they deal largely with death and destruction again places them firmly within the borderlands paradigm that Anzaldúa develops – 'the U.S.-Mexican border es una herida abierta' [an open wound] – and Springsteen's choice of major border-straddling conurbations as the settings for some of his border songs only further enhances this potential alignment: 'wherever two or more cultures edge each other' is writ large in his use of Matamoros/Brownsville or Tijuana/San Ysidro where this 'edge' has an observable bifurcating presence.<sup>75</sup> In true *corrido* style, the compositions considered here demonstrate that 'the border ceases to be exclusionary and becomes a rich space within which cultures intermix rather than a place where one

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<sup>73</sup> Donna M. Dolphin, "'Believe Me, Mister": The Tradition of Woody Guthrie's Hurt Song in Springsteen's *The Rising* and *Devils & Dust*'. In, Kenneth Womack & Mark Bernhard (eds) *Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series: Bruce Springsteen, Cultural Studies, and the Runaway American Dream* (Burlington, VT.: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), 54.

<sup>74</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 19.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, 11, 19.

culture disappears until it is simply a shadow of the other'.<sup>76</sup> If the body on the riverbed in 'Matamoros Banks' does disappear, it does so in Springsteen's lyrics in a strategic fashion: not lost in the deserts where the disappearance might be disavowed by whichever nation uncovered its remains but on the very edge of both nations, in a territory common to both, where the geopolitical violence wrought unto it cannot be ignored. Caught between life and death, promise and reality, poverty and affluence, states of being and nation states, the characters of Springsteen's border songs epitomise the *corrido* genre in their positioning of the border as beyond the structuring and ordering capabilities of the broader outside/inside binary which those boundaries are generally ideologically constructed.

The positioning of the cadaver that forms the central focus of 'Matamoros Banks' makes the song an innovative and daring composition. Herein, the man's body meets a violent and tragic end at the bottom of the Rio Bravo/Grande, and a man who is a citizen of another nation is now visible on another nation's edge: a powerful reminder of the interconnectedness of the region as a cultural, political, and socio-economic entity. Where Colleen Sheehy characterises the lyrics of 'Born in the U.S.A.' as being marked by 'slippage' as they sink into ambiguity, the character at the centre of 'Matamoros Banks' embodies this 'slippage': its presence at the threshold of two nations marks the liminal state of both the body and the territory it dwells in, challenging the dominant narrative and refusing to be driven out of that discourse.<sup>77</sup> The violence, elegiac as it might be, is, as Marvin and Ingle would term it, 'transformative' in this regard. A more recent Springsteen composition 'We Are Alive' – from the *Wrecking Ball* (2012) release – continues this theme of resurrecting silenced voices:

A voice cried I was killed in Maryland in 1877  
 When the railroad workers made their stand  
 I was killed in 1963  
 One Sunday morning in Birmingham  
 I died last year crossing the southern desert

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<sup>76</sup> Noe, 'Border Rhetoric', 599.

<sup>77</sup> Sheehy, 'Bruce's Butt', 35.

My children left behind in San Pablo  
 Well they've left our bodies here to rot  
 Please let them know we are alive.

Here, the liminal thresholds of the borders between life and death, silence and song, individual and community, are given voice, and the boundaries between nations and histories are dissolved. In this way Springsteen produces border music in the manner of a contemporary trend within the genre that José Pablo Villalobos characterises thus: 'The nature of the border as a sight [sic] of struggle that defines border music is ... extending itself beyond the local and to the transnational arena by way of a strategic essentialism that allows for solidarity among common struggles'.<sup>78</sup> Villalobos' focus in his analysis – what Josh Kun terms Mexican 'anti-government, anti-U.S., anti-imperialist, anti-PRI, antiracist, anti-NAFTA, pro-immigrant, pro-Zapatista, pro-anarchy punk' – might be far removed from Springsteen's brand of music, but nevertheless, the result achieves a similar effect to that which Villalobos identifies as a key tactic for border music: 'drawing us to the border only to take us elsewhere ... [and] countermapping the notion of the border as we know it'.<sup>79</sup> Springsteen's music is awash with both border imagery and a trans-American imaginary, and in drawing an analysis of his work to the border and considering it alongside that site's own cultural productions, traditions, and theoretical paradigms, a richer and more nuanced understanding of his own approach to issues of nationalism and patriotism (or lack thereof) is more clearly evidenced and affords the opportunity to 'countermap' the dominant discursive positioning of him within North American culture and studies of it.

In this regard, it is my contention that songs such as those found on *The Ghost of Tom Joad* – that deal with and detail the border and experiences of it from a distance – cannot be properly opened up to interpretation nor fully comprehended without recourse to theoretical paradigms that originate from elsewhere; that operate outside of nation-centred approaches to culture and that are rendered largely

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<sup>78</sup> Villalobos, 'Mapping Border Music', 79.

<sup>79</sup> Josh Kun, 'The Sun Never Sets on MTV: Tijuana NO! and the Border of Music Video'. In, Michelle Habell-Pallán & Mary Romero (eds) *Latino/a Popular Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 104-5; Villalobos, 'Mapping Border Music', 79.

invisible by such frameworks. Such a theorisation retains echoes of the ways in which it is suggested we might suitably comprehend Jasper Johns' *Flag*. Joan Carpenter – who offers an analysis of Johns' encaustic-crusted collages via infrared photography that more clearly reveals the layers of its palimpsest surfaces – argues that the interaction of the multiple surfaces of Johns' complex critique of this commonplace and everyday symbol 'is heightened by the realization that neither the collage fabric nor the flag design that veils it can assume full aesthetic existence without the presence – alternately seen or clearly sensed – of the other'.<sup>80</sup> And so it is with Springsteen. His distance – physically, materially, economically – from the border results, it could be argued, in its deterritorialisation in his aural rendering of it, but through recourse to borderlands theory and a concurrent consideration of border cultural productions, it is effectively reterritorialised: each side of this equation bringing the other into sharper focus.

If Johns' iconic *Flag* provides one way into an alternative analysis of Bruce Springsteen's songwriting and image, and Carpenter's suggested stance for reading the former's paintings is complementary to my aims in approaching the latter, then another of Johns' paintings of a commonplace object affords an equally useful entry point to the consideration of another set of musicians that I believe require reconsidering and rearticulating in similarly transnational ways. Where *Flag* takes an object that may outwardly lack depth and gives it layers to remedy this assumed absence of depth, *Map* (1961, Figure 3) takes an object that is assumed to represent stasis and supplants its cartographic inertia with radical movement. There is still something of Johns' overarching thematic concern – that finds its apotheosis in *Flag* – within *Map* and, in this sense, it draws upon the following rationalisation Johns offered regarding his art: 'My experience with life is that it's very fragmented. In one place certain kinds of thing occur, and in another place a different kind of thing occurs. I would like my work to have some vivid indication of those differences. I guess, in painting, it would amount to different kinds of space being represented in it'.<sup>81</sup> The differentiated spatiality that *Map* presents is both one of fragmentation but also integration.

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<sup>80</sup> Joan Carpenter, 'The Infra-Iconography of Jasper Johns'. *Art Journal*, 36.3 (1977).

<sup>81</sup> Jasper Johns [<http://www.jasper-johns.org/jasper-johns-quotes.jsp>]



Figure 3. Jasper Johns, *Map* (1961). Oil on canvas, 198 x 314 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York. From: [[http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object\\_id=79372](http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=79372)]

Johns' *Map* 'bleeds' much as his earlier *Flag* study does, but here, the bleeding pertains not to a singular national symbol but to a much broader configuration of *nations*. Again, the painting features the familiar but requires additional attention from the viewer to recognise the ways in which it challenges the practices and messages of cartography. Whilst *Map* provides a recognisable rendition of the outlines of the states and names them all correctly – in keeping with the conventions of cartography – its inclusion of several Canadian provinces and Mexican states, challenges the predominant representation of the U.S. in map form which invariably leaves those spaces to the north and south of the nation empty. Furthermore, the bleeding together of colours across and between states is mirrored in its depiction of national borders and boundaries too. Hence, Ontario leaks across the Great Lakes region; California is partially engulfed by the Pacific Ocean; and Texas and Louisiana bleed into the Gulf of Mexico. *Map* draws attention to the imaginary status of such schematics through its inability to contain its own symbolic geography, whilst also remaining 'real' through its use of mimeographed stencilling for the letters – a technique which would have been commonplace in the reproduction of maps at the time Johns produced the artwork. Much as Sheehy points to the simultaneously inert and animate qualities of Johns' *Flag*, similar traits can be observed in *Map*, utilising its source material's values as an aid to both orientation and travel: always slipping between these two conditions. My prior exploration of Bruce Springsteen focused more upon the

former of these conditions, recognising that Springsteen is well-represented in academic discourse but offering a challenge to the conventional theoretical orientation that has traditionally served to map his corpus. Far less well-represented within music criticism, despite their oft-remarked upon influential status, are The Band, who I move to consider now. Herein, the second condition that cartography facilitates – that of travel – attains primacy over orientation in my exploration of North American cross-border musical production and performativity. In *Culture after Humanism*, Iain Chambers suggests that '[m]usic permits us to travel ... draws us into the passages of memory ... [and] overflows the containment of our concepts ... form[ing] a contrapuntal score that sounds out circumstances in the creation of a mobile individuation and community'.<sup>82</sup> It is the centripetal tendencies of nation and nationalism as structuring devices for analysis that often silence the 'passages of memory' and 'contrapuntal score' to which Chambers refers and that characterise large swathes of The Band's catalogue: a state of affairs that has served to relegate them to only partial consideration in scholarly discussions of music. As a group that navigated geographical borders both physically and psychically, and traversed the boundaries of history in both performance and composition, a reconsideration of their body of work is critical to understanding how the multiple sites of the border can, rather than demarcate territory – geopolitical or disciplinary – expose both their material artifice and further cultivate their fecund intellectual soil.

### **Music beyond National Boundaries**

First coming together in 1958 as The Hawks – the backing band for Arkansas-born Rockabilly singer, Ronnie Hawkins – The Band, as they later came to be pragmatically known, were one of the most popularly fêted but curiously less critically celebrated proponents of the 1960s folk revival. After cutting their teeth with Hawkins, they began a lengthy and fruitful collaboration with Bob Dylan from 1965 and were the backing band for that most contentious of moments in the decade's folk music movement: Dylan's eschewing of the traditional acoustic guitar in favour of electric instruments. When they began

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<sup>82</sup> Iain Chambers, *Culture after Humanism* (London: Routledge, 2001), 117-118.



recording and releasing records without either of their previous frontmen in 1968, they had been touring North America and beyond for a decade. On retreating to the solitude of Woodstock, New York – later to become, of course, the site of the burgeoning 1960s counterculture’s most definitive statement – they began an acoustic journey across the geographical and historical territories they had previously toured, producing a wealth of musical material that crosses numerous borders and is difficult therefore to definitively categorise.

Much of this difficulty emerges from the problem that often shadows music criticism: the desire to ascribe music with national characteristics and anchor it within a particular, observable, and inviolable geographical and historical territory. The Band complicate this endeavour due to their own character, consisting as they did of four Canadians and one U.S. citizen. The latter, Levon Helm – The Band’s drummer, mandolin player, and one of their vocalists – hailed, like Hawkins, from Arkansas. The four Canadian members, meanwhile, were all born and raised in various areas of Ontario. And it was in this context that they were first exposed to the ways in which music travels and crosses borders. Despite all growing up in the same province, their upbringings were markedly different: Robbie Robertson – The Band’s lead guitarist and most prolific songwriter – would spend his summers with family on the Six Nations Reservation due to his part-Mohawk lineage; Rick Danko – bassist, fiddler, trombonist, and vocalist – was of Ukrainian descent and grew up in a farming community on the edge of Lake Erie; Garth Hudson – predominantly The Band’s organist but more widely a multi-instrumentalist – spent his youth in Windsor, often playing music in his uncle’s funeral parlour; and Richard Manuel – pianist, drummer, and vocalist – hailed from Stratford and spent time at the Ontario conservatory of music and singing in the local church choir. What all of them had in common, however, was their tuning in to radio stations that broadcast from across the border in the United States. According to their individual autobiographies all four Canadian members of The Band, and Helm in Arkansas, were tuned in to one station in particular: WLAC Nashville. As Barney Hoskyns relates in his definitive biography of the group, *Across the Great Divide: The Band and America*, WLAC was ‘a fluke of nature, its 50,000 watts beaming out in a band that stretched

from Canada to Mexico'.<sup>83</sup> It was in that context that the constituent members of The Band first began to formulate, translate, and ultimately conjure a borderless North American musical imaginary.

The folk music genre as it existed in the 1960s and as it therein mutated into 'folk rock' – the subgenre to which The Band most comfortably belong – is, in itself, an example of a musical movement and moment that is well-placed to challenge the dominant and dichotomous urges of regionalism and the nationalist impulses that it often falls prey to. In its widespread positioning as a musical type tied to notions of 'tradition' and 'revival' – not withstanding its important designation as 'folk', thus recalling the 'folkways' and 'authentic voices' that the original regionalist movement constructed and reified – it is also, as Gillian Mitchell has remarked, a category 'often superficially understood to signify music that ... in some way belong[s] to a particular ethnic, regional or historical group'.<sup>84</sup> As the subtitle of Mitchell's *North American Folk Music Revival: Nation and Identity in the United States and Canada*, makes abundantly clear, in its history and historiography, and despite its putative 'regional' elements – perhaps more so than any other – is dogged by the shadow of national identity: its diffuse and varied styles motivating a desire to corral, control, and claim it. In such a context, The Band have troubled music critics and scholars, precisely because of the transnational character of both their physical and psychological make-up, a vexation that has fed into debates about nationalism, identity, and authenticity. The music produced by The Band is illustrative of Josh Kun's suggestion that we should approach and appreciate music 'as a system of dispersal across the human geographies and geographical landscapes of the Americas ... creat[ing] and reflect[ing] social spaces and mediat[ing] between distant and dissimilar ones'.<sup>85</sup> To this – especially in the context of The Band – I would also add historical landscapes as a vital component for understanding the alternative functioning of regionalism that I envisage when scholars approach their object of study in transnational, postnational and hemispherically regionalist ways. To approach and critique the music of

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<sup>83</sup> Barney Hoskyns, *Across the Great Divide: The Band and America* (London: Pimlico, 2003), 12.

<sup>84</sup> Gillian Mitchell, *North American Folk Music Revival: Nation and Identity in the United States and Canada, 1945-1980* (Burlington, VT.: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2007), 8.

<sup>85</sup> Josh Kun, 'Against Easy Listening: Audiotopic Readings and Transnational Soundings'. In, Celeste Fraser Delgado & José Esteban Muñoz (eds) *Everynight Life: Culture and Dance in Latin/a America* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997), 289.

The Band on these terms, I argue, renders previous understandings and positioning of their corpus obsolete.

This is not to suggest that there have been many critical readings of The Band and their music. Bart Testa and Jim Shedden even go so far as to suggest that ‘The Band constituted a footnote, at best, to sixties rock’.<sup>86</sup> Yet the lack of academic attention they have received is, to my mind, more a result of the difficulty that scholars have had in firstly overcoming the tendency to privilege ideas of nation, national identity and nationalism in overarching methodological and theoretical approaches to music and, secondly, the deep-rooted tendency to approach musical content and context as immovable parameters fixed at the time of recording, rather than any paucity of artistic merit in their output and rewarding endeavour in interrogating it. Where such enterprises have been meaningfully undertaken they have often been in the context of considering The Band’s contribution to Bob Dylan’s fabled *The Basement Tapes* (recorded 1967; released 1975). Here the influential rock music critic Greil Marcus, in his book-length study *Invisible Republic: Bob Dylan’s Basement Tapes*, provides some useful shorthand for the questions that my own subsequent analysis of The Band will address, stating that: ‘Heard as something like a whole – as a story, despite or even because of its jumble of missing pieces, half-finished recordings, garbled chronologies of composition or performance – the basement tapes can begin to sound like a map; but if they are a map, what country, what lost mine, is it that they center and fix?’<sup>87</sup> Here again is the persistent dogmatism of insisting upon nation as a vital anchoring mechanism for music critique mirrored in the averring of the apparently necessary ‘centering’ and ‘fixing’ of the musical object. Because of The Band’s cross-border configuration, critics and academics alike appear beholden to this artificial necessity to privilege nation as the bedrock of analyses of their music: alternately claiming them as either American or Canadian rather than as a productive point of intersection between these two identities, geographies, and histories.

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<sup>86</sup> Bart Testa & Jim Shedden, ‘In the Great Midwestern Hardware Store: The Seventies Triumph in English-Canadian Rock Music’, Joan Nicks and Jeannette Sloniowski (eds) *Slippery Pastimes: Reading the Popular in Canadian Culture* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2002), 192.

<sup>87</sup> Greil Marcus, *Invisible Republic: Bob Dylan’s Basement Tapes* (London: Picador, 1997), xv.

For example, taking his title from a recording by The Band, Barry Grant's 'Across the Great Divide: Imitation and Inflection in Canadian Rock Music' attempts, unsuccessfully, to define Canadian rock and roll as distinct from that across the border.<sup>88</sup> Proposing 'irony' and 'generic subversion' of American musical idioms as the defining feature of Canadian popular music, Grant's blinkered, culturally nationalist approach pays little heed to the fact that, as Testa and Shedden highlight, 'rock is a pop-culture genre inclined to ironic self-subversion without respect to national cultures'.<sup>89</sup> The following year, Robert Wright similarly attempted to stake out a unique territory for Canadian music in the same vein as Grant. Taking his title from the lyrics of a Canadian artist more significantly represented in music criticism, Neil Young, Wright's 'Dream, Memory, Comfort, Despair: Canadian Popular Musicians and the Dilemma of Nationalism', claims folk music, and specifically its 'protest music' sub-genre, as distinctly Canadian in character.<sup>90</sup> Again, Testa and Shedden take the author to task for his one-sided approach, rightly suggesting that 'Wright brushes aside the fact that the same folk and protest forms also underwrote U.S. pop music in the 1960s'.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, given the article's curious subtitle, Wright does little more than reinforce the cultural nationalism he claims to be addressing rather than illuminate its dilemmas, and appears astonishingly unprepared to highlight, let alone address, the transnational currents clearly evident in two of his chosen examples: Neil Young's 'Ohio' (narrating the events of May 4<sup>th</sup> 1970 and the state-sanctioned shooting of four students at Kent State University) and Gordon Lightfoot's 'Black Day in July' (about the Detroit riots of 1970). Both are simply held up as examples of not only a 'distinctly Canadian' protest music, but also as reflections of Canada's identity as a wholly more pacifistic and tolerant nation than its southern neighbour. Hence, both the stubborn rigidity of nationalism as a spuriously valid theoretical approach to music and a tendency to treat individual moments of musical production as fixed and

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<sup>88</sup> Barry S. Grant, 'Across the Great Divide: Imitation and Inflection in Canadian Rock Music', *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 21:1 (1986).

<sup>89</sup> Testa & Shedden, 'Midwestern Hardware Store', 179. The authors offer up the likes of Little Richard and Bo Diddley as early examples of 'parodic' American rockers, Frank Zappa and Captain Beefheart as 'genre-benders' and Arthur Brown and Mot the Hoople as 'outlandish British ironists' to underscore their disagreement with Grant's under-evidenced argument.

<sup>90</sup> Robert Wright, 'Dream, Memory, Comfort, Despair: Canadian Popular Musicians and the Dilemma of Nationalism', *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 22.4 (1987).

<sup>91</sup> Testa & Shedden, 'Midwestern Hardware Store', 180.

centralised events, isolated from broader contexts, have underscored much of the historiography on Canadian music in the period in which The Band were recording and performing. It is perhaps for these very reasons that The Band remain curiously absent, or, at best, significantly under-represented in studies of both Canadian music at large and considerations of folk and rock music more specifically. In one Canadian perspective that critiques the nationalist bent of much music criticism, Ryan Edwardson's *Canuck Rock: A History of Canadian Popular Music* pays fulsome attention to the wave of folk artists who hailed from north of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel but who came to dominate that music scene south of that line. Offering a reason for the oft-demonstrated desire to reclaim such artists as representative of a distinct Canadian-ness he suggests that '[m]usicians of the folk and folk rock veins have been identified more than any others [in this endeavour] because their work is so easily connected to a myth-symbol complex that upholds an anti-modern, romanticized, outdoors image of Canada that dates back to the Group of Seven and even much earlier'.<sup>92</sup> This allusion to the myth-and-symbol school of cultural criticism also goes some way to explaining The Band's treatment in discourse emanating from the U.S. Herein those elements that some may claim as distinctly Canadian are just as easily claimed as representative of an apparently self-evident 'American' character, given that the U.S. academy is still, to some extent, in thrall to one of American Studies' founding frameworks.

Where they have been represented and considered at length, the imposition of culturally-nationalist positions have been, perhaps, even more egregious in this context of U.S.-based critiques. Greil Marcus, despite his ear being attuned to some of the nuances evident in The Band's corpus, and his insights on them providing many illuminating starting points from which to approach their music, is representative of the broader problem that this chapter seeks to address: the narrow-minded tendency in music criticism to consider its history as linear and its geography as extant. *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'n' Roll* (1975) is Marcus' seminal contribution to this historiography and remains a canonical touchstone for many a critique of the power of popular music. The very structure of Marcus' treatise on this aspect of culture

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<sup>92</sup> Ryan Edwardson, *Canuck Rock: A History of Canadian Popular Music* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 19.

reveals the assumed historical lineage of music's development, with the book being split into two sections headed 'Ancestors' and 'Inheritors'. Amongst the latter group Marcus devotes one section specifically to The Band and its own title – 'Pilgrim's Progress' – makes explicit the overarching ideological thrust of *Mystery Train*, since this is one chapter in which his genealogical approach intertwines with the supposed geographical location of his subject: *Mystery Train* is an attempt to construct an 'American' musical canon in the manner that, for example, F.O. Matthiessen, Leslie Fiedler, and D.H. Lawrence, and their influential studies of American literature did in the twentieth century.<sup>93</sup> In this sense, Marcus was also heavily influenced by broader trends in music writing at the time, epitomised by the likes of *Rolling Stone* and *Creem* magazines. Marcus had been the former's first reviews editor and, as the underground countercultural movements of the 1960s gave way to the commercialisation and mainstreaming of its musical proponents, so too did the popular music press of the early 1970s with *Rolling Stone's* publisher Jann Wenner altering his description of the publication in 1974 from 'just a little rock 'n' roll newspaper from San Francisco' to a 'biweekly general interest magazine covering contemporary American culture, politics, and arts, with a special interest in music'.<sup>94</sup> It was this collapse of the political potency and envisaged social progressivism that the varied landscape of popular music during the 1960s had represented but that had been largely eroded and rearticulated as that margin became a part of the centre, which in many ways, can be seen to have prompted Marcus' writing of *Mystery Train*. This cultural co-option of the music of the counterculture was remarked upon at the time of *Mystery Train's* publication, with Mark Crispin Miller in the *New York Review of Books* suggesting that 'unfortunately the time is right for a history of rock 'n' roll' and that Marcus' discourse on this subject contributed to 'the continuing story of a finished

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<sup>93</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002 [1923]); F. O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2010 [1941]); Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (London: Dalkey Archive Press, 1998 [1960]). All of these studies attempt to create a canonical set of texts of American literature that, for the authors, exemplify 'American' character and values. They also represent some of the key foundational studies that were propagated by the nascent mid-century American Studies programmes, on which Marcus himself was a student at University of California, Berkeley in the 1960s. For a specific analysis of the traceable influences of these literary critics in Marcus' own writing see: Mark Mazullo, 'Fans and Critics: Greil Marcus's "Mystery Train" as Rock 'n' Roll History', *The Musical Quarterly*, 81.2 (1997).

<sup>94</sup> Cited in: Robert Draper, *Rolling Stone Magazine: The Uncensored History* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 208.

thing'.<sup>95</sup> There is something here of the possible alternative imagining of history's function and the radical potentiality to be found in revisiting the margin that this thesis seeks to achieve, but Marcus' rhetoric merely reveals his work as a peculiar jeremiad that fundamentally misappropriates The Band in its quest 'to broaden the context in which the music is heard; to deal with rock 'n' roll not as youth culture, or counterculture, but simply as American culture'.<sup>96</sup> If I have written elsewhere that The Band barely register in the varied histories and analyses of popular music because of their transnational character and imagination, then Marcus is an exception: there is little doubt that his project in *Mystery Train* is painstakingly and meticulously developed and his consideration of The Band is arguably the longest serious consideration of their output outside of a scant handful of biographies. However, in locating them as purveyors of a distinctly and solely U.S. mythography, Marcus' critique denudes the far more expansive, inclusive, and proliferative nature of their musical imaginary. In the prologue to his book he offers the following quote from Leslie Fiedler: 'To be an American (unlike being English or French or whatever) is precisely to imagine a destiny rather than to inherit one; since we have always been, insofar as we are Americans at all, inhabitants of myth rather than history'.<sup>97</sup> Whilst I have no truck with this critical sentiment – indeed, it seems rather forward-looking in comparison to many of the regionalist texts I have appraised elsewhere in this project – I would suggest that the title of Fiedler's essay requires closer examination, or at the very least, an opening up of it as a signpost to a possible interpretative method, titled as it is, 'Cross the Border, Close the Gap'. In that essay Fiedler puts voice to the anxieties of literary criticism in the early 1970s, drawing a line through modernism and announcing postmodernism as the newly dominant mode of creation and critique. But, in its title, I suggest, lies a possible approach to contemplating the North America that The Band sang of: one that crosses borders – of nations but also of dominant histories and normative chronologies – and that closes the gaps that separate incongruent

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<sup>95</sup> Mark Crispin Miller, 'Where All the Flowers Went', *New York Review of Books*, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1977, 31.

<sup>96</sup> Greil Marcus, *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'n' Roll*. (Online) [<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=IGBQBQAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=greil+marcus+mystery+train&hl=en&sa=X&ei=PAVbVbLhOaP5ygOn9oGgDA&ved=0CCAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false>]; np.

<sup>97</sup> Leslie Fiedler, 'Cross the Border, Close the Gap' (1972), cited in: Marcus, *Mystery Train*, np.

territorial geographies and their attendant cartographies, bridging those gaps across borders through the contingency of transnational memory and that dynamic's related patterns of continental migration.

### **Music Exceeds Territory**

The template for this approach can be seen to have its root in the routes The Band took across North America in their guise as The Hawks: the material experiences of the road, its disparate geographies and interlinking histories layering the members' imaginations. The opening track to the second side of their debut release – *Music from Big Pink* (1968) – demonstrates many of the sonic techniques and narrative strategies that would come to characterise their musical output and the America that it conveyed. 'We Can Talk' is a little-celebrated but crucial track to understanding the ways in which The Band's vision of North America, shaped as it was by over a decade touring across its length and breadth, is characterised by a mobility that revels in undercutting the linearity of its normative histories and its demarcated geographies. Greil Marcus described the album as a whole as being 'obscure in its plots, [with] dialogue hard to catch, communicating with a blind humor and a cryptic intensity nothing in rock 'n' roll has ever remotely touched', and 'We Can Talk' epitomises this assessment.<sup>98</sup> The lyrics for 'We Can Talk' are certainly 'cryptic', appearing as fragments and unfinished utterances. For instance, following a joyous intro featuring an intertwining of Manuel's piano and Hudson's organ, the opening lines – 'We can talk about it now / It's that same old riddle only starting from the middle / I'd fix it but I don't know how' – sets the abstruse tone from which the entire song then proceeds. Unusual amongst The Band's broader output, 'We Can Talk' was written by Richard Manuel rather than their songwriter-in-chief Robbie Robertson and for Rob Bowman, 'has a whimsical feel about it, [that] according to Levon accurately portray[ed] the way the members of The Band typically interacted'.<sup>99</sup> Years spent on the road and in each other's company evidently bred a camaraderie and familiarity amongst the group's members which is manifest in the trading and finishing of one another's vocal lines that characterises 'We Can Talk' and

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Rob Bowman, *The Band Remasters: Music from Big Pink*, Liner Notes (Capitol Records, 2000), np.



would become something of a signature style for them as their career progressed. Full of what are evidently in-jokes – ‘Did you ever milk a cow? / Well, I had the chance one day but I was all dressed up for Sunday’ – and reminiscences of their peripatetic lifestyle as touring musicians – ‘To keep the wheels turning, you’ve got to keep the engine churning’ – the song is however, not without more insightful and revealing juxtapositions in relation to the interconnected geographies and moveable histories that they imagine and that will form the bedrock of my analysis here. Indicative of this are the following lines towards the end of the song:

Woah, stop me, if I should sound kinda down in the mouth  
 But I’d rather be burned in Canada than to freeze here in the South  
 Pulling that eternal plough  
 We’ve got to find a sharper blade or have a new one made  
 Rest awhile and cool your brow  
 Don’tcha see, there’s no need to slave, the whip is in the grave  
 No salt, no trance  
 It’s safe now to take a backward glance.

The most striking image here is obviously the transposition of the predominant climactic conditions of the two locations mentioned: Canada becomes hot and the South cold (a crucial early echo of the contingent and related histories of these two areas of North America that will attain greater prominence as this chapter progresses). There are also hints at the rural character that would come to shape many of their later releases in the references to farming. Finally, in the closing lines there appear references to slavery and its abolition, interspersed with a biblical allusion to Sodom and Gomorrah that is suggestive of the ways in which The Band envision and enact a re-articulation of historical narratives as, here, with ‘No salt’, the cataclysm that befell those twin cities and claimed Lot’s wife does not occur and no small number of deuterocanonical texts are consequently re-imagined.

*Music from Big Pink* is an album marked by both musical virtuosity and lyrical playfulness that appear informed by both the material experiences of being a touring band, of being (with Helm as the exception)

musical migrants, and of being attuned not just to musical history but also the histories of North America. Songs such as ‘In a Station’, ‘This Wheel’s on Fire’, ‘Long Distance Operator’, and ‘Key to the Highway’, give voice to notions of mobility and the geographical vastness of the continent.<sup>100</sup> ‘Long Black Veil’ and ‘Chest Fever’ revel in creating a series of interconnections through both musical, cultural, and social history: the former is an oft-recorded country standard that makes allusions to a number of socio-cultural myths, while the latter begins with Hudson making sonic reference to Bach’s ‘Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor’. Whilst all of these tracks could warrant further critical attention, it is ‘We Can Talk’ with its competing voices and juxtaposed geographies that stands out as the key to locating a place for The Band in music criticism: a place that requires the development of a comparative approach, and it is here that previous attempts to comprehend The Band have been confounded.

Focusing on her own rationale for producing a history of *North American* folk music, rather than focusing on a specific nation, Gillian Mitchell suggests that ‘Canadian scholars, in particular, are loath to undertake any comparative study of the two countries, especially when the study involves an aspect of popular culture, such as music’.<sup>101</sup> And yet, in some of the previously cited examples of music criticism in Canada, there is always an underlying comparative element but not one in which an appropriately objective stance is adopted. On the contrary, the viewpoint taken is less a comparative one, and one more informed by simplistic *comparison*, and laden with lazy binaries. This is, of course, a standard culturally nationalist approach, and one that many of the authors I am critical of in this thesis fall prey to, even as they bemoan the effects of the Broadcasting Act of 1968 and its resultant ‘CanCon’ legislative provision. So, whilst one of the aforementioned authors – in a statement that simultaneously appears foresighted and undercuts the worth of their account – declares midway through their study that ‘[t]he use of “Canadian” as a music descriptor is absurd and meaningless’, they still cannot resist the temptation ‘to carve out Canadian musicians’ differences ... so that they can evaluate them *above* it on behalf of Canada’s cultural

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<sup>100</sup> I should note here that the last two tracks offered as examples here were not included on the original release but do appear as outtakes under ‘Bonus Tracks’ on the re-mastered 2000 release.

<sup>101</sup> Mitchell, *Folk Music Revival*, 4.

identity'.<sup>102</sup> There are echoes here of Mitchell's further suggestions regarding the shunning of truly comparative and transnational analyses of music: that to undertake such an approach 'is bound to put Canada at a disadvantage' and, more insidiously, that it 'would also impose upon Canada an American perspective which is both damaging and limiting'.<sup>103</sup> Mitchell's social history of a distinctive moment in popular music is one that she, most likely correctly, identifies as beginning, predominantly, 'as a North Eastern American urban phenomenon', with New York City's Greenwich Village and Toronto's Yorkville districts as the movement's initial epicentres.<sup>104</sup> If, however, there is a fault in her approach to – and analysis of – the music that this phenomenon created, it is that her designation of North America does not include Mexico. In incorporating Mexico into the equation – seeking to include the theoretical approaches the music that that territory's own North American border has motivated and created – we might simultaneously ward off the apparent fear of comparative studies of North American music as promising only unequal relationships and theoretical imperialism, and create a new paradigm that addresses and accounts for the mobility of music and its ideas across a variety of borders: across those of nation, genre, identity, chronology, and region. As Mitchell succinctly claims, 'rather than continue to insist that the existence of the Canadian-US border holds the answer to their [music critic's] queries', maybe the ideal corrective to the well-rehearsed dichotomies in studies of North American popular music lies to the south: at the Mexico-U.S. border.<sup>105</sup> Echoing Paul Gilroy's theorisation of the 'Black Atlantic' as a multidirectional flow, Josh Kun's work reminds us that the musical circumstances that surround the Rio Grande suggest 'that the flow of rock and roll between north and south is not unidirectional'; nor should the theorising of popular music be governed by such restrictive and restricting – yet oft-repeated – disciplinary models and their routes.<sup>106</sup> If music migrates – as it did in the ears and imaginations of The Band – so too should the theory directed towards it.

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<sup>102</sup> Michael Barclay, Ian A. D. Jack, & Jason Schneider, *Have Not Been the Same: The CanRock Renaissance, 1985-1995* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2011), 202; Testa & Shedden, 'Midwestern Hardware Store', 181.

<sup>103</sup> Mitchell, *Folk Music Revival*, 3-4.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

<sup>106</sup> Kun, 'Against Easy Listening', 300.

Josh Kun has written extensively on music, and always with an ear toward that produced in the Mexico-U.S. borderlands. Far from theorising such productions as solely examples of Chicano/a or Tejano/a identities and nationalisms, Kun's eye is often trained even further afield than the geographical locales most readily associated with such concerns: often deeper into Mexico, north to Walt Whitman 'hearing America sing' in New Jersey, and further north still to Canada, to compare these country's own musical nationalisms. Kun encourages the listener to approach music as 'a spatial practice', but also to create in the listener a willingness to transgress the spaces that it creates to attain a fuller understanding of the ways in which music 'creates spaces where cultures can be both contested and consolidated, both sounded and silenced'.<sup>107</sup> The 'contested and consolidated space' of culture that Marianne Kielian-Gilbert is most interested in is that of history. She argues compellingly that studies of history, and its intersection with, and representation in, music (and this latter cultural artefact's own historiography), are undermined by problems similar to those I outlined earlier in my remarks upon Canadian music criticism's propensity to define itself in oppositional terms:

Historians and music analysts claim authorial space by adopting particular rhetorical strategies in construing music: challenging the "myths" and assumptions of a composer's compositional practice, isolating the historical lineage or analytical presentation of a particular compositional technique or set of materials.<sup>108</sup>

Hence, even Gillian Mitchell's work on folk music, from which I take many cues, is guilty of several of the problems with musical analysis and history that Kielian-Gilbert identifies. Not least amongst these is the slavish insistence upon 'isolating historical lineage' and 'materials', that is inevitably tied to an unwillingness to abandon a consistent chronology lest it undermine the critic's narrative authority. This seems to lack nuance when one considers the fact that the objects of study themselves – songs and their lyrics – are often ambiguous or shifting in their narrative authority and often provide no answers to the

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<sup>107</sup> Kun, 'Against Easy Listening', 288.

<sup>108</sup> Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, 'Musical Bordering, Connecting Histories, Becoming Performative', *Music Theory Spectrum*, 33.2 (2011), 201.

questions they pose or the scenarios they evoke. As Kun suggests: ‘Listening to a song’s whole [is] always listening to its parts, to the crossings and exchanges and collaborations that went into its making’.<sup>109</sup> In attempting to isolate a piece of music, whether that be geographically, culturally, or historically, the critic or listener alike, fails to recognise that music’s own boundaries are as porous as any other border. For Kun ‘it always overflows, spills out, sneaks through, reaches an ear on the other side of the border line, on the other side of the sea’; for Kielian-Gilbert, it is similarly always ‘threading between places, times, representations, and identities, in spaces of transition, instability, multiplicity/ambiguity, and tensionally dynamic relationships’.<sup>110</sup> The fluidity of the aural space that music carves out, then, reflects the fluidity of the ideas that it attempts to encapsulate, and the liquid journey that it, and its audience are taken on in the act of listening. For all of music’s power to evoke place it does not do so in any concrete, objective, or representative sense. Songs are ‘almost-places of cultural encounter that may not be physical places but exist in their own auditory somewhere’; a somewhere that is created in an act of negotiation between artist and audience, between their disparate material, social, cultural, and historical conditions.<sup>111</sup>

Josh Kun terms these ‘almost-places’, ‘audiotopias’: they are sites not of belonging, but of longing. Music, in these terms, is ceaselessly heterogeneous, not only in its production and performance, but also in its reception. Kun defines his terms thus:

Because of music’s ability to act effectively as an agent of intense utopian longing and its uncanny ability to absorb and meld heterogeneous national, cultural, and historical styles and traditions across space and within place, we might consider “audiotopias” as specific instances of “heterotopias”: sonic spaces of effective utopian longings where several sites normally deemed incompatible are brought together not only in the space of a particular piece of music itself, but in the production of social space and mapping of geographical space that music makes possible.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Josh Kun, *Audiotopia*, 3.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, 20; Kielian-Gilbert, ‘Musical Bordering’, 200.

<sup>111</sup> Kun, *Audiotopia*, 2.

<sup>112</sup> Kun, ‘Against Easy Listening’, 289.

From this point of view, the pursuit of authenticity – at whatever level and on which ever register – is a fruitless exercise: it is not possible to extricate the ‘almost-place’ from its self-created territory and re-insert it into a no-less imagined, but nonetheless ‘real’ space. This is the major fault in studies of music which either begin from, or eventually tend towards, the nationalising, centralising impulse. Such approaches are utopian in the wrong way. Those critics cited previously, who claim folk music as Canadian because of its supposedly inherent rural character – its ‘back-to-the-land’ aesthetic – or the protest song sub-genre as similarly nationally characteristic due to its social conscience, create utopias that isolate difference, homogenise and fix it: these utopias promote ‘listening for sounds and songs that replicate and reaffirm conservative ideologies of cultural consensus and racial univocality’.<sup>113</sup> Hence, whilst exhibiting an awareness of the mobility of music and unpacking its contents, allowing it to move beyond the borders of its recording, the direction of its flow remains unidirectional and serves only the present and centralised context of the critic’s writing. The utopia that derives from Kun’s model of the ‘audiotopia’ is defined by the belief that it has ‘no known location, that it exists nowhere’, that it cannot be isolated in the present nor in a clearly geographically, culturally, or politically defined space: it is formed from the conditions of the present, informed by the past, and projects towards a future as yet unknown: that is its utopian function.<sup>114</sup>

Whilst in broad agreement with Kun’s suggestions that approaching music in the sense of its creating ‘audiotopias’ that ‘may produce maps, but ... maps that move’, the cartographies that his model yields are geographical and geopolitical in their scope but, for the purposes of this project, they lack one crucial potential for reconfiguration: the level of history. This is, however, an easy addition to the ‘audiotopic’ model if we layer it further with a fluid and mobile re-conception of consensual chronology. Following Deleuze and Guattari, Kielian-Gilbert suggests that history, particularly in the way in which it is related through music, is ‘[m]ore than a single or linear conception of chronology ... [it] makes

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<sup>113</sup> Wright, ‘Dream, Memory, Comfort, Despair’, 284; Kun, *Audiotopia*, 20.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

connections between events, localizing (situating) them in many histories'.<sup>115</sup> And these 'audiotopic' connections must always include the utopia that is longed for, not just in the present moment, not just in the future, but also in the past: 'If the present includes the whole of the past and potentials of the unforeseen future, "facts" and "interpretations" intertwine in historical and analytical reconstructions drawing on forces both retroactive and proactive'.<sup>116</sup> It is in such spaces of contradiction – both the contradiction of searching for authenticity in a form that has no definable roots, and the contradictory histories that are presented within the spaces that the form creates – that The Band exists. As Testa and Shedden suggest regarding The Band's musical, lyrical and performative output:

most often they seem to arise from an ambiguous place that has no definite location, that has no official version of itself and is therefore unlocatable. The same ambiguity pertains to the songs' times, which do not belong to a known history, but only to those small and forgotten times that nations do not recall, but localities remember, vividly if elliptically.<sup>117</sup>

It is these serial 'ambiguities' that have seen The Band regularly overlooked in accounts of both Canadian music and more generally. Their significance and stylistic legacy is regularly noted but the suggested 'unlocatable' nature of their music and all that it contains, results in them being 'unlocatable' in the dominant approaches to North American music analysis and historiography. But to approach their corpus in conceptual terms that derive from more niche, geographically and theoretically marginal methods, enables an appreciation of the regionally pluralist, nomadic, and interconnected North America that The Band configures and evokes.

This endeavour also requires a corrective: Testa and Shedden's suggestion that The Band's music is 'unlocatable' is thought-provoking but lacks nuance. The difficulty they highlight is a valid one in relation to the chronological and geographical paradigms that dominate academic music criticism. In rock music's seemingly inextricable link to notions of authenticity, the pursuit of, and search for, the roots of artists'

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<sup>115</sup> Kielian-Gilbert, 'Musical Bordering', 202.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*, 203.

<sup>117</sup> Testa & Shedden, 'Midwestern Hardware Store', 190.

music-making, history and location have become intertwined and key guiding principles for establishing the critical worth of popular forms of musical expression and production. An ability to trace musical antecedents – the *history* of an artist's own musical listening – supposedly reveals their authenticity; the ability to find reflections of a tangible geography – the *location* of an artist's material experience – likewise. This outwardly critically regional fusion of the real-and-imagined is unable to maintain, fully, the promise of this apparent overlapping of the tangible and intangible as its purpose is invariably lent to attempts to demarcate artists' musical idioms so that they might neatly tessellate with both an existing history and historiography. Furthermore, the continual processual motion that such models imply, *and* with an implausibly extant and idealised set of identities remains paradoxically inert.

History and geography remain steadfast as parameters for defining the objects of musical inquiry, and they continue to provide the critical lenses through which those objects are then interrogated. This, as I have stated previously, has its merits as these dual factors are interwoven into the very fabric of popular music genres. Geographical loci come to act as monikers for certain moments in musical history or as sites of particular forms: 'Merseybeat', 'The Seattle Sound', 'Krautrock', 'Britpop', 'Swamp Rock' for example; or the persistence of the corrido on the Mexico-U.S. border, the formal distinctions between 'East' and 'West Coast' hip-hop or 'Delta' and 'Chicago' blues in the U.S., and the 'Chansonnier' tradition in Quebec, Canada. Alongside developing histories of these genres and forms reside other forms of history: the personal history of an artist musicking auto-biographically, or utilising other personal biographies as inspiration; or the use of historical or contemporary events as inspiration for music-making. Artists and critics alike continually draw upon geography and history in these multivalent ways to such an extent that it appears improbable that such entrenched paradigms could be reconfigured. In this respect, Edward Comentale's recent *Sweet Air: Modernism, Regionalism and American Popular Song*, demonstrates these deep-rooted tendencies in self-aware but nonetheless complicit ways. In his introduction he acknowledges the possible methodological issues that his project presents, stating that 'readers might question my decision to organize the discussion around regional and generic categories ... as we all know that both



musicians and audiences ... [experience] music in more fluid ways'.<sup>118</sup> But, in spite of this honest and insightful caveat, for Comentale, 'regional and generic categories remain real focal points for historically consistent sets of concerns and ideals'.<sup>119</sup> It is this claim to 'consistency' that illuminates the *inconsistency* that music criticism often overlooks: music's inherent mobility, its movement away from its point of origin – either to the audience who listens from a distance or to the fellow artist who listens and rearticulates the form – and the mutations that occur during such travels. To return to my discussion of The Band, their music is not, as Testa and Shedden argue, 'unlocatable'; more correctly it must be termed *multiply located* precisely because of the mutations it contains and undergoes, existing in multiple histories and multiple geographies.

Comentale's monograph may contain discrepancies but, through judicious and well-considered use of Josh Kun's more measured and consistent approach, it does offer some useful interventions from which to begin to interrogate The Band. The introduction to *Sweet Air* sees Comentale considering the problematic issue of authenticity in the arenas of music production, reception, and criticism. In all of these instances he cautions against the pursuit of authenticity since, for him, 'it sanctions a troublesome sort of fetishism – of race, masculinity, [and] the past': it fetishes that parallel the insidious nature of regionalism and nationalism.<sup>120</sup> It is precisely this search for the authentic – on regional and national, geographical and historical registers – that confounds the culturally-nationalist critiques of the likes of the previously discussed Robert Wright, Barry Grant, and their ilk, in their attempts to position The Band within any of these hierarchies, and explains their puzzling absence (or at least, scant appearance) in many histories and appraisals of North American popular music. Discussing the revival of 'roots music' in 'a small midwestern college town', Comentale explores the alternatives to fetishism that might be at play in adopting certain, outwardly incongruous, musical vernaculars:

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<sup>118</sup> Edward P. Comentale, *Sweet Air: Modernism, Regionalism, and American Popular Song* (Champaign, IL.: Illinois University Press, 2013), 22.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

while many of them appreciate the history of the music they like to play, they tend to approach that tradition in ways that are genuinely practical and creative ... providing direction and significance, continuity and traction, generating new forms of identity and community. In other words, if my “townsfolk” have found a “fit” in this music, it’s not simply because it “expresses” or “represents” authenticity or rootedness, but because it is itself dynamic, migrant, and abstract.<sup>121</sup>

Hence, music may arise somewhere but it invariably goes somewhere else, inhabiting multiple geographies and histories simultaneously, rearticulated to meet the needs of those producing and consuming it: never authentic nor rooted, never representative of a singular time or space, always, in its form and content, a messy, tangled and provisional network that in itself motivates the critic’s desire to unravel it so that it might be comprehended in terms of logic and linearity and placed neatly into pre-existing models and all of the arbitrary boundaries that they entail. So, even when The Band find themselves in the critical spotlight – most specifically in the work of music journalists Barney Hoskyns and Greil Marcus – despite their complex constitution, they are invariably aligned with the U.S., their delving into its history and archetypes serving to mythologise only ‘America’.<sup>122</sup> Whilst there is always recognition in such works of the ‘outsider’ status of four-fifths of the ensemble in this regard, little heed is paid to the fact that The Band’s music is evocative of not only the U.S.’ past but, more broadly ‘often pointedly so, of a *regional* North America’.<sup>123</sup> Whilst the likes of Marcus and Hoskyns are cognizant of the travelling nature of The Band’s members, their music, and their appearance, the migration they trace is unidirectional: from Canada to the U.S., from the present to the past. Tracing the alternative directions to these journeys proves The Band and their corpus to be far more problematic – productively so – to easy notions of space, place and time.

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>122</sup> Barney Hoskyns, *Across the Great Divide: The Band and America* (Pimlico: London, 2003); Greil Marcus, *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock ‘n’ Roll Music* (New York: Plume Publishing, 1975).

<sup>123</sup> Testa & Shedden, ‘Midwestern Hardware Store’, 190.

## Music beyond National Memories

Aside from Martin Scorsese's *The Last Waltz* (1978) – a cinematic record of The Band's farewell concert on Thanksgiving Day, 1976 – the most enduring images of The Band are undoubtedly Elliot Landy's photographs of the five members during their time living and recording in Woodstock in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Fig.3). Commenting on such images, Testa and Shedden suggest that The Band's 'members looked and dressed in photographs like well-worn homesteaders who had wagoned in from a winter's solitude to kick up their heels at a church social'.<sup>124</sup>



Figure 4: The Band. Publicity still for *Music from Big Pink* (Capitol Records, 1968). © Elliot Landy.

But such appearances do not display mere nostalgia for simpler, rural lifestyles of the type many interpreted as the call to 'get back to the garden' compelled them to, on the Joni Mitchell song 'Woodstock'. As David Emblidge noted shortly after the demise of The Band, they maintained 'a sense of historical roots that yields nostalgia without sentimentality', a fundamentally different approach to the 'sentimentalist' pastoral ideals that Leo Marx defined in a period roughly coextensive with that of the genesis of The Band in his influential *The Machine in the Garden*.<sup>125</sup> As Emblidge contends, 'examin[ing] their lyrics, we see a clearly unidealized pastoral past. There is plenty of good humor in the ill-fated

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, 189.

<sup>125</sup> David Emblidge, 'Down Home with The Band: Country-Western Music and Rock' *Ethnomusicology*, 20.3 (1976), 541; Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967).

romances they recount; yet they also treat the pain, suffering, loneliness and hard work inherent in rural life'.<sup>126</sup> Yet they remain inextricably linked to such fixed geographies and the histories they are seen to contain. In a fascinating recent essay on the notion of authenticity and The Band, Henry Adam Svec posits the opinion that they would lose their perceived authenticity when their de facto 'leader', Robbie Robertson, begins to adopt a modernist approach to his songwriting and performance that is fundamentally at odds with the romanticism that their image and imaginary conjure for the uncritical or conservative eye.<sup>127</sup>

Nevertheless at the time of their career as The Band, and in the intervening period, their preference for such supposedly historical garb and reference points has led them to be equated and aligned with the kind of sentimental regionalism that this thesis has already critiqued, and to related notions of American pastoralism. Barney Hoskyns – ostensibly one of music journalism's foremost authorities on The Band – goes so far as to suggest that in 'their fascination with Americana, The Band showed interesting parallels with the American regionalist painters of the post-Depression era'.<sup>128</sup> If I have criticised Edward Comentale elsewhere for a similarly unflinching allegiance to region as both a geographical and historical anchor for music criticism – complete with all of the inertia that such a metaphor implies – I also want to identify his recognition of the inauthentic and unstable characteristics of such determinants. Speaking of his own book, Comentale suggests that the reader will find it 'as much invested in estrangement as it is identification, anti-regionalism as regionalism'.<sup>129</sup> This interplay of binaries is writ large in the music of The Band and the complementary performative elements of their work. This collapsing of binaries speaks directly to the alternative imaginings of history and geography that The Band's music and lyrics create. As Comentale, in concordance with the likes of Josh Kun and myself, suggests, 'music ... is a moving and thus unstable medium, one in which identity both locates and exceeds its own historical limits ... to

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<sup>126</sup> Emblidge, 'Down Home', 550.

<sup>127</sup> Henry Adam Svec, "'Who Don't Care if the Money's No Good?': Authenticity and The Band", *Popular Music and Society*, 35:3 (2012).

<sup>128</sup> Hoskyns, *Across the Great Divide*, 194. Hoskyns specifically references Thomas Hart Benton, Grant Wood, and John Steuart Curry who 'celebrated an America of Midwestern farmers and revival meetings, almost to the point of xenophobia'.

<sup>129</sup> Comentale, *Sweet Air*, 8.

expand, through its own abstract qualities, local coordinates of space and time'.<sup>130</sup> Through an exceeding of historical memory and an expansion of geographical locales, The Band fashion a distinctly North American music that presents both a borderless territory and a delicately balanced, subversive, but no less valid, past, present, and future oriented imagination of it.

Before demonstrating the ways in which a specific composition from The Band – ‘Acadian Driftwood’ – epitomises the expansive and subversive possibilities that their music can afford to a vision of reimagined but interconnected North American histories and geographies, I want to return to an earlier period in both U.S. music criticism and its relationship with broader, conservative, nation-building exercises in the medium of poetry. I began this chapter by outlining how the musical oeuvre of Bruce Springsteen and its attendant reception, celebration, and criticism, might be better understood were it to be reconfigured to reflect the transnational, transcultural, and transhistorical mutations and migrations that indelibly but almost imperceptibly mark it. And it is Springsteen’s New Jersey forebear and canonised national poet, Walt Whitman, who, it can be argued, set in motion the tendency to ‘hear America singing’ in the very narrow terms that continue to influence and dominate contemporary approaches to North American music critiques and to which Springsteen fell foul when misappropriated by Reagan in 1984. Whitman espoused an indexical approach to listening to and comprehending music – identifying difference, yes, but always with the aim of finding within that difference some harmonious notes that would operate in concert with a nationalist and inherently conservative musical utopia. Josh Kun makes a convincing case for Whitman as the first music critic to hail from the U.S., noting that his writings in the years before the publication of his seminal *Leaves of Grass* (1855) had covered a plethora of musical performers and genres, from opera to family singing groups, from abolitionist songs to minstrelsy troupes.<sup>131</sup> And, when ‘I Hear America Singing’ was added to the second edition of *Leaves of Grass* in 1860, his musical ear appeared to have expanded its aural ‘American’ ear yet further. ‘The varied carols I hear’,

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Kun, *Audiotopia*, 32-33.

he writes, before listing those whose voices he hears: mechanics, carpenters, masons, boatmen, deckhands, shoemakers, woodcutters, ploughboys, and mothers. Despite his subsequent intonation that they are ‘Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else’, in their ‘varied carols’ he hears not individuals but a nation singing. Here we see the indexing of musical styles in full effect: apparently recognising and celebrating difference but subsequently discarding it, seeking its connection to, and convergence with, a more overarching and homogeneous idea. Such an impulse – to trace (or create) the roots of music, to demarcate and delineate it – continues to dominate music in its popular dissemination and critical reception, wherein any dissonant notes may still be subsumed into the symphony of nation as a demonstration of selective hearing.

Coinciding with critical nation-forming moments in U.S. history – The U.S.-Mexican War (1848) and the conclusion of the Civil War (1865) – Whitman’s poetics and rhetoric, despite their putatively diverse resource of songs and singers, constantly attune themselves to ‘the frequencies of cultural consensus and univocality’, foreshadowing by several decades the regionalist movement’s quest for an ‘indigenous’ American ‘folk’ culture.<sup>132</sup> This is no more amply demonstrated than in remarks made by Whitman and related in a recent biography – *Walt Whitman’s America* – authored by David Reynolds. Reynolds reveals that one of Whitman’s preferred singing groups was The Hutchinsons, a troupe of white abolitionists with strong connections to Frederick Douglass. Of them he wrote: ‘We hope no spirit of imitation will ever induce them to engraft any ‘foreign airs’ upon their ‘native graces’.<sup>133</sup> Herein, not only does Whitman indulge in that insidious U.S. nation-building trope of equating the settler in the New World with the indigene, he also makes plain that only certain voices can ‘sing America’; or, as Kun puts it, ‘national and cultural citizenship [is] understood to have an acoustic, aural dimension that sonically interpellates them into the body of the nation’.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Kun, *Audiotopia*, 30.

<sup>133</sup> David S. Reynolds, *Walt Whitman’s America* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing, 2011), 180.

<sup>134</sup> Kun, *Audiotopia*, 30.

Whitman's approach clearly chimed well with the times, with the aforementioned conflicts and the concurrent project of Westward expansion (an endeavour for which Whitman was a vocal populariser) providing a fulcrum for the attempted forging of a coherent national identity even as the nation of the U.S. grew to encompass greater numbers of citizens and housed an increasing multitude of voices. Although the term 'Americanisation' was not yet common parlance, there can be little doubt that the cultural processes of which Whitman was both a fundamental component and a key celebrator, sought and fed into that acculturative goal, and one of his contemporaries, fellow poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, provides another clear example of the assimilating methods that culture of this period employed. Published in 1847, Longfellow's epic canonical poem, *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie*, details the forced migration of the Acadian people from their homelands in what would now constitute both Maritime Canada and the U.S. Northeast (on which, more shortly). Far from being a work of literature that deals with displacement, it could be more accurately described as a portrait of emplacement, a portrait that actually has little to do with the Acadian diaspora, and much more to do with fashioning an all-encompassing and territorially-bounded national identity. Much as Whitman's poetry and thought – on the importance of song and lyrical form as devices through which cultural citizenship could be formed and reinforced through the obfuscation of difference – Longfellow's poem uses Acadian difference as a device to 'interpellate' *all* citizens into the nation. Just as Whitman casts a shadow over critical approaches to 'American' music 150 years after the time of his writing, Longfellow's *Evangeline* still structures many popular understandings of Cajun (as the Acadian exiles to Louisiana would come to be known) identity and culture, but still also speaks to that larger goal of national identity despite its discreetly localised, *regional* basis. The following extract from a recent exhibition catalogue speaks to this problem:

The Acadian exile is probably best known through Longfellow's poem *Evangeline* (1847). As the most prominent literary figure of his day, Longfellow devoted much of his poetry to the description of North American landscapes in a concerted effort to forge for a nation of immigrants a spiritual connection to their new land. Longfellow understood that while Americans were busy

surveying, mapping, and finding economic use for the frontier they were also searching for a deeper relationship with the land ... By using the story of the Acadian expulsion, he spoke to this sentiment in *Evangeline*.<sup>135</sup>

Cited in the introduction to Maria Hebert-Leitier's *Becoming Cajun, Becoming American*, the above provides a telling example of how difference – often wrought or reinforced by destruction, discrimination, or displacement – can be rearticulated and transplanted into much broader nation-affirming ideologies. As Hebert-Leitier succinctly suggests: 'Longfellow wrote for a new nation ... still searching for an identity ... [and] *Evangeline* captures a people at the beginning of their American settlement, making it an origin myth not only for a native ethnicity, but also for the larger nation'.<sup>136</sup> Herein, the troubled – and troubling – history of a specific group, and the geographies – once distinct, later scattered – from which that history arises, lose their specificity through culture's removal of them from marginal and localised experience, to stand for a larger and more centralised national imaginary.

The writing of the Acadian experience into culture offers a demonstration of the ways in which possible counter-histories and counter-geographies, and their always-existing as alternative narratives, have been uprooted much like the Acadians themselves and integrated into a larger 'American' project. If literature and music are sites where these counter identities are given voice then, as Kun meaningfully puts it, 'the point is not that they ... must be "added" or "included" into the definition of "American"', rather, the alternative geographies and histories of which they speak should be recognised as being 'dispersed across unpredictable cartographies'.<sup>137</sup> Despite music's recognised mobility, coupled with nominally accepted calls for post- and trans- national methodologies, approaches to these objects of study continue to be beholden to the ongoing persistence of grand narratives of history and territorially stable

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<sup>135</sup> Pamphlet to accompany an exhibition of paintings, 'Still Stands the Forest Primeval' (New Orleans Historic Collection, December 2001 – January 2002). qtd. in, Maria Hebert-Leitier, *Becoming Cajun, Becoming American: The Acadian in American Literature from Longfellow to James Lee Burke* (Baton Rouge, LA.: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), 1.

<sup>136</sup> Hebert-Leitier, *Becoming Cajun*, 2.

<sup>137</sup> Kun, *Audiotopia*, 17, 11.



units of analysis. Such narratives of the Acadian experience are replete with the linear motifs of history and territorial borders.

Founded in 1604, the French North American colony of Acadia (French, *Acadie*) encompassed the modern day provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and parts of Quebec, it also comprised the modern-day U.S. state of Maine, with one of its many early capitals – Pentagoet – now the site of the town of Castine in that state. Some debate arises as to whether Acadia is a Mi'kmaq word or derived from Arcadian paintings of the Renaissance period, with their portrayal of rural idylls. What is certain is that Acadia frequently changed hands between the French and British colonial empires during a series of violent conflicts throughout the seventeenth century before the majority of Acadian territory was ceded to Britain under the terms of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. In the decades following and in the run-up to the Seven Years War, Acadians were the subject of rabid anti-Catholic sentiment and constant attempts by the British to have them swear an oath of allegiance to the British crown. As tensions heightened the Acadians were eventually deported and scattered amongst other British colonies in the present-day U.S. in something of a precautionary measure motivated by the looming conflict with the French. In French, *Le Grand Dérangement* (The Great Expulsion), served to create a curious internal colonial North American diaspora and fashion an intimate shared history between geographically disparate regions of the continent. This was due, predominantly, to the fact that a majority of Acadians chose Louisiana as their destination (though others were scattered to Massachusetts, Virginia, Maryland, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, New York, North and South Carolina, and New York; still others returned to France or further afield to their colonies in the Caribbean). With the majority of those who migrated to Louisiana choosing to settle along the Mississippi, the links between Canada and the Delta that came to characterise The Band, already had a historical precedent.

Of the song 'Acadian Driftwood' – a composition from the *Northern Lights-Southern Cross* (1975) album – Barney Hoskyns has suggested that,

It took Jaime ‘Robbie’ Robertson ... almost a decade of living in America to write a song about Canada. But when it came, it was a song full of yearning and homesickness, the saga of an Acadian family uprooted from its Nova Scotia home in 1759 and forced to sail down the Eastern seaboard till it reached the Gulf of Mexico.<sup>138</sup>

It is difficult to disagree with Hoskyns’ assessment of the predominant themes of the song – certainly it does contain elements of ‘yearning’ and ‘homesickness’ – but the reading of it as a simple tale of Acadian expulsion in the eighteenth century is much too superficial. Hoskyns’ surface reading of the song is marked by a slavish reliance upon linearity as a simple cause-and-effect model of three distinct elements of the composition. Firstly in the travel that it traces: in Hoskyns’ reading of the journey from Nova Scotia to the Gulf of Mexico is a straightforward and unidirectional migration. Second, the insistence that ‘Acadian Driftwood’ emerges from the distinctive historical moment of 1759, elides the fact that the song may have contemporary relevance, or that the ordeals that it relates may echo other historical or contemporary moments of displacement. Thirdly, the identification of the song as a ‘saga’ is suggestive of a commonplace misconception in popular music criticism, that songs are straightforward narratives that, alongside a codified progressive unfolding of events in one-way sequence, also exist solely and distinctly within the realms of singular compositions. In approaching the song, as Hoskyns does, in a manner marked by linear ideas about spatiality and temporality, many of the nuances of the lyrics are lost and their potential to disrupt accepted ideas and ideologies about historical memory and geographical specificity is nullified. A closer reading of the song, attuned to the possibility that its lyrics might present Deleuzian lines of flight, can reveal these overlooked complexities and expose the interweaving of North American narratives of diaspora and displacement alongside the competing versions of events that emerge in specific spatial and temporal circumstances that vie with one another and become entangled in that process. The very title of the album that ‘Acadian Driftwood’ appears on – *Northern Lights-Southern Cross* – seems to hint at the

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<sup>138</sup> Hoskyns, *Across the Great Divide*, 7.

interconnectedness of the American hemisphere, with its hyphen bridging two astral phenomena generally only observable from either Canada, or Mexico and the southern United States.

As Maria Hebert-Leitier demonstrates, Longfellow's epic poem *Evangeline* remains the most enduring popular imagining of the Acadian people and their subsequent diasporic conditions; so wide-ranging is its influence that she goes so far as to suggest that it also structures Cajun perceptions of themselves and their historical emergence as a distinctive social and ethnic group – a definite rarity in Anglo depictions of minority groups in North America. It is evident that *Evangeline* also informs and shapes elements of Robertson's use and treatment of the Acadian expulsion in the lyrics of 'Acadian Driftwood'. The opening line to each chorus, for example, begins, 'Acadian driftwood, gypsy tail wind', and echoes quite clearly Longfellow's own characterisation of the beginnings of *Evangeline's* journey, of which he writes:

Like to a gypsy camp, or a leaguer after battle,  
All escape cut off by the sea, and the sentinels near them,  
Lay encamped for the night the houseless Acadian farmers.  
Back to its nethermost caves retreated the bellowing ocean,  
Dragging down the beach the rattling pebbles, and leaving  
Inland and far up the shore the stranded boats of the sailors.<sup>139</sup>

Given Longfellow's widely-accepted alignment with the Romantic movement in poetry there is plainly here a romanticisation of the material conditions of the gypsy lifestyle and one which – despite a clear commitment within *Evangeline* to communicate the desperate and harsh conditions of the migratory trail – celebrates the putative freedoms and lack of responsibilities that such a nomadic existence is seen to afford. This celebration of a supposed lack of spatial constraints on a people is clearly evident in the privileging of verbs that emphasise movement and mobility within Longfellow's poetic meter which

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<sup>139</sup> Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 'Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie' In, *Evangeline and Other Poems* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1995 [1847]), 31.

resonate with the warning against the uncritical celebration of the conditions of decentred identities that the previous chapter identified. This mood of tumultuous kinesis in *Evangeline* is further built upon by Longfellow a few lines later:

But on the shores meanwhile the evening fires had been kindled  
Built of the drift-wood thrown on the sands from wrecks in the tempest.<sup>140</sup>

Whether or not Robertson explicitly engaged with Longfellow's poem in composing 'Acadian Driftwood', it is plain to see that there are a number of similarities between his linguistic choices and those found in *Evangeline* and, to that extent, the song epitomises one of the key themes of this thesis: the potential for the re-articulation of canonical materials. Amongst the numerous similarities in terms of language and the imagery it conjures between *Evangeline* and 'Acadian Driftwood', though, there is a significant difference in the ways in which they are put to use. Longfellow's 'drift-wood', for example, represents the remains of destroyed Acadian boats – whether those used for fishing (the dominant economy, historically, of Acadia) or those on which the Acadians were to travel – put to inherently romantic use to sustain those who remained; whereas the 'driftwood' of Robertson's lyric appears to still be afloat and subject to the ebb and flow of the water, evident in the closing line of each chorus: 'what a way to ride, what a way to go' that bespeaks not only of the potential for movement but also of the importance of cultural survival and the significance of maintaining mobility for displaced peoples lest their culture become marked by extinction or nostalgia. Furthermore, where Longfellow devotes large swathes of his poem to the hardships and prejudices that the Acadians face in their trek southward, Robertson's characters are propelled by a 'gypsy tailwind', suggestive of the direction of travel being complementary to the method of propulsion. It is in this factor that 'Acadian Driftwood' appears, on some levels and in some passages, to become much more autobiographically concerned with the route that Robertson and his fellow Canadian band members willingly took south to the Mississippi Delta than it is with the histories

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid, 31-32.

of the Acadian diaspora who, whilst driven similarly across the continent could be more usefully considered to have been travelling into a headwind – as evidenced by the fact that they were often unwelcome where they landed, a fact that accounts for their originally broad dispersal.

Not that ‘Acadian Driftwood’ is an explicitly autobiographical song concerned only with The Band’s own history: indeed, the eddying currents that carry the driftwood of its title can also be usefully aligned with the broader historical memories that the song explicates. Here, it is useful to recall the previously cited insight from Testa and Shedden, and their suggestion that the narratives of The Band’s songs ‘do not belong to a known history, but only to those small and forgotten times that nations do not recall, but localities remember, vividly if elliptically’.<sup>141</sup> This is immediately apparent in the song’s opening lines: ‘The war was over and the spirit was broken, the hills were smokin’ as the men withdrew’. If ‘Acadian Driftwood’, as the song’s title and its allusions to Longfellow’s *Evangeline* appear outwardly to suggest, is solely concerned with *Le Grand Dérangement*, then these opening lines are confusing as the Acadian expulsion took place prior to The Seven Years War. Further, the only historically traceable element within the lyric is a reference to ‘what went down on the Plains of Abraham’, a significant theatre of battle during the aforementioned conflict but also a Biblical reference to Abraham who looked out across the plain and witnessed the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah which in turn feeds into the later book of *Exodus*. Similarly, the song makes reference to the fact that ‘They signed a treaty and our homes were taken’, but, again, it is unclear which treaty this refers to: the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) or the Treaty of Paris (1763)? All of this makes the song much less clearly about a specific forced migration such as that of the Acadians in the eighteenth century, and more broadly concerned with other instances of North American social upheaval wrought by anonymous governmental forces as the impersonal use of ‘they’ in ‘they signed a treaty’ points to.

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<sup>141</sup> Testa & Shedden, ‘Midwestern Hardware Store’, 190.

Not that the song is wholly concerned with the impersonal; in fact it oscillates between the personal and impersonal voice in ways that perhaps emphasise the intertwining of disparate historical memories. Indeed, given the multitude of historical references and sources that the song seems to point towards, the upheavals, and subsequent wanderings that they hint at could equally be referring to the Acadians, the Jews, or – given Robertson’s own lineage – the Mohawk. Furthermore, I would argue that it is also possible to read into the diasporic conditions that ‘Acadian Driftwood’ gives voice to, another, unnamed but no less present group: African American slaves. In the closing verse – sung by the Southerner, Levon Helm – Robertson refers to people ‘walkin’ in chains’. Lest this be read as too simplistic an analysis it is first important to note that the Acadians, whilst embattled and subject to mass transportation to the U.S. south, were not at any point an enslaved people and, whilst the lines that follow can be related to the Acadian experience in that region, they also highlight a possible linkage between Canada and the Deep South – in much the same manner as the possible drawing of, and possibilities for, a ‘coyote cartography’ that I proposed in the previous chapter – that presents an opposite migratory route to that traversed by the expelled Acadians and one that is a more widely recalled and popularly imagined transnational route across the borders of the North American continent. Helm sings:

This isn’t my turf, this ain’t my season  
 Can’t think of one good reason to remain  
 We worked in the sugar fields up from New Orleans  
 They were evergreen up until the floods  
 You could call it an omen, points ya where you’re goin’  
 Set my compass north, I got winter in my blood

It is my contention that these lyrics can be read as a reference to the Underground Railroad and its oft-times terminus in Canada. Such a possible reading allows not only a construing of the rhizome and its own ‘underground’ derivation to enter into this analysis but also brings to the surface the complex network that the Underground Railroad constituted as a physical route to freedom and, furthermore, the similarly

multifarious identificatory psychological geography that that freedom historically begat. By this I refer to the ways in which former slaves chose either to remain north of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel, or return south to enlist in the Union Army and following that army's eventual triumph, either return to Canada or, in many cases, return to the U.S. south where family and other emotional attachment might have remained following their previous flight from slavery. The multiple border crossing that this interpretation suggests again calls into question what history 'Acadian Driftwood' exists within or is shaped by. This is further complicated by one of the centrepiece lyrics in the composition: 'We had kin, livin' south of the border'. From this, the question arises: which border? If the song is solely concerned with the expulsion of the Acadians then the prefiguring of any form of border in that historical context is anachronistic: in 1755, there were no United States, just fourteen British colonies (including Nova Scotia), New France, and Newfoundland and any form of border between them would have been extremely vague and subject to constant mutation and negotiation. There was no border – in the sense of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel that we might automatically assume given the song's subject matter and nationality of the songwriter – until the end of the U.S. War of Independence and, even following that, certain portions of that border remained in dispute and open to the possibility of further fluctuation – Nova Scotia, for example, sent representatives to the Continental Congress and the border between New Brunswick and Maine remained disputed until the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842. On the one hand this seems to point again to the interpretation that 'Acadian Driftwood' is an autobiographical track of sorts detailing the migratory trajectories of The Band's four Canadian members and, therefore, since the border came into existence. Alternatively it may also figure as further evidence of the links between former fugitive slaves and their kin who were unable to escape alongside them to the putative promise of freedom in Canada. Another possible interpretation is that the narrative of the song is after the Acadian expulsion but prior to the Louisiana Purchase of 1803-04 and that that – as the state where the majority of Acadians settled – is the territory 'south of the border'.

'Acadian Driftwood' therefore crosses multiple borders and extricates the Acadian experience from its canonical and nostalgic rendering in Longfellow's *Evangeline*. In so doing, it interweaves a number

of complex histories of other migrations within North America that rely upon a reconfiguration of the continent's geographical and historical borders that recognises cartography and chronology as moveable objects. When these are loosed from their psychological and ideological moorings they can reveal heretofore unexpected points of connection that challenge the linearity of uncontested narratives of nation and bring to the surface the shared experiences and commonalities of a North America that was always already and continues to be a transnational territory. It is in such a borderless critical territory that the vibrant imagination of The Band – so often overlooked in music history and criticism – can stake a claim for renewed attention and consideration.

The artists considered in this chapter could be said to occupy opposite discursive positions: Bruce Springsteen is well represented in cultural criticism, The Band markedly less so. In both of these cases though, the reason for this presence or absence can be seen to be as a result of a nationalist impulse that marks much music criticism. In Springsteen's case his co-option by conservative ideology and U.S. exceptionalist dogma has overshadowed the clearly observable transnational elements and influences within his body of work, whereas The Band's well-documented transnational character serves to confound this nationalist tendency and thus gives rise to their relative invisibility in music scholarship. The overarching problem that this study addresses – the constricting and reductive character of American Studies – can also, within this chapter, be seen to have a similar stranglehold on Canadian Studies. Ryan Edwardson's wide-ranging consideration of Canadian popular music is an encouraging attempt to move beyond the boundaries of nations and nationalism to correct the recidivist tendencies of area studies as they manifest in the discrete realm of music criticism. As he observes of Canadian music and musicians: 'Any innateness disappears when the musical text is placed in a different context and interpreted within other ideological and discursive parameters'.<sup>142</sup> As my analysis here demonstrates, listening to music from borders, in the context of borders, or through those same borders serves to open up what might be considered canonical and relatively inert materials to a broader interpretive terrain: a terrain that allows

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<sup>142</sup> Edwardson, *Canuck Rock*, 18.



for a re-articulation of history and geography that can reveal the interconnected, contingent, and contrapuntal culture and cultures of continental North America.

## Conclusion

### An Alternative Hemisphere: Mapping Turtle Island

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[N]arratives and characters and symbols and forms and themes move and are moved and, in the course of their movements, simple and complex, more obvious and more subtle, stories and elements of stories develop and change. The local launches into the regional, national or global only to become local again and again.

- Chadwick Allen, 'A *Transnational* Native American Studies?' 2012.<sup>1</sup>

One must remember ... that Gayatri Spivak's question "Can the Subaltern Speak?" was first posed as a critique of Deleuze and Michel Foucault, who seemed in their theorizations to suggest that the subaltern already was speaking through them, through the ventriloquism of the left intellectual.

- Jodi Byrd (Chickasaw), *Transit of Empire*, 2011.<sup>2</sup>

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In rearticulating the Acadian expulsion, Robbie Robertson's musical imagining of migration and diaspora in 'Acadian Driftwood' gives voice to multiple hemispheric connectivities of experience in North America. Reinstating the manifold geographic positions of the history of Acadie, Robertson's song offers a corrective to the pervasive and romanticised version of the tale provided by Longfellow's epic and its interpolative and linear teleology. If, as some have suggested, the other purpose in writing 'Acadian Driftwood' was for Robertson to remedy his homesickness and nostalgic longing for Canada, then, more recently in his varied career, the recovery of other elements of personal history has informed his artistic output. The albums *Music for the Native Americans* (1994), *Contact from the Underworld of Red Boy* (1998) and *How to be Clairvoyant* (2011) explore Robertson's Mohawk heritage and relate the historical and contemporary conditions of North America's Indigenous populations. Robertson's most recent project,

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<sup>1</sup> Chadwick Allen, 'A *Transnational* Native American Studies? Why not Studies that are *Trans-Indigenous*?' *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 4.1 (2012), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Jodi A. Byrd, *Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

the children's book *Hiawatha and the Peacemaker* (2015), takes up another subject of one of Longfellow's epic poems – 'The Song of Hiawatha' (1855) – and reanimates its subject through a reinstatement of its specific geographies and cultural contingencies. In an author's note on the text Robertson relates the following:

Some years later in school, we were studying Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem about Hiawatha. I think I was the only one in the class who knew that Longfellow got Hiawatha mixed up with another Indian. I knew his poem was not about the *real* Hiawatha, whom I had learned about years ago, that day in the longhouse. I didn't say anything. I kept the truth to myself... till now.<sup>3</sup>

As Robertson no doubt knew, the Hiawatha he had learned of in the longhouse was a pre-colonial Mohawk leader and founder of the Iroquois Confederacy. Comprising the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca and, later, the Tuscarora, the Confederacy occupied large swathes of land in what is now upstate New York, tracing the St. Lawrence River to present-day Montreal. Given the prominence of the Iroquois in colonial-era North America – not only their crucial participation in numerous battles between the British and French but also the mooted influence of their model of governance upon the later U.S. Constitution – and their ongoing visibility in the U.S. through the nineteenth century, Longfellow's distorted version of Hiawatha's narrative is curious. Apparently drawing much inspiration from the ethnological works of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, Longfellow laboured under a misapprehension he shared with the celebrated former Indian Agent to Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan: that *Manabozho* [sic], the Ojibwe/Anishinaabe trickster figure, and Hiawatha, the co-founder (along with the Great Peacemaker, Deganawida) of the Iroquois Confederacy were one and the same person. This subtraction of cultural specificity results in a concomitant loss of geographical specificity with, as Eliot Singer has noted, numerous towns, schools, libraries and other public services now bearing the name 'Hiawatha' in Michigan in particular, and at far remove from the traditional tribal lands of the Iroquois confederacy.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Robbie Robertson and David Shannon, *Hiawatha and the Peacemaker* (New York: Abrams Books, 2015), back matter.

<sup>4</sup> Eliot A. Singer, 'Paul Bunyan and Hiawatha' In, C. Kurt Dewhurst and Yvonne R. Lockwood (eds) *Michigan Folklife Reader* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1988).

I do not wish to labour the point that Longfellow's appropriative poetics display the hallmark of the later regionalist movement. However, the fact that his erroneous version of the story of Hiawatha – like his adaptation of the history of Acadie in *Evangeline* – dominates the popular imagination in spite of (or because of?) its lack of contingency, provides us with a useful way to think critically about Indigeneity and how it may fit into the hemispheric regionalism I have developed and advocate herein. As Chadwick Allen notes in this conclusion's epigraph, Indigenous symbols and forms travel in ways similar to those of any other culture and, therefore, they also provide fruitful terrain for the dynamic hemisphericism that emerges from a return to region as a starting point for analysis. If this study began with a dissection of regionalism's attempts to transform settlers and their colonial histories into indigenous actors and cultures within the geography of North America, then it will close with a consideration of not only how a hemispheric regionalism in American Studies can trouble this process – as has been demonstrated throughout – but also how the legacies and structures of settler-colonial history are now themselves being troubled by Indigenous communities in political and scholarly activism.

The starting point for my model of hemispheric regionalism is in the dialogue that emerges within a local-global dialectic. Insisting upon the contingencies of the specific geographies where these dialogues take place – whether these are defined in terms of the terrain or cultural enunciation – maintains the materiality of that place whilst also enabling it to take flight to other, related territories. The proliferative and rhizomatic relationality that this develops invokes notions of kinship in both explicit and implicit terms: culturally specific ties with deeply embedded histories that move between and beyond the arbitrary borders of nations and their centralised ideologies. Such models of kinship have begun to animate debates about alternative sovereignties that simultaneously fall within, and in opposition to, the imposed and entrenched models of dominance and dependence that settler sovereignty perpetuates in the often separate spheres of geopolitical reality and academic discourse. Audra Simpson's (Mohawk) combination of political theory and ethnographic fieldwork in *Mohawk Interruptus* forms a bridge between these two spheres and posits kinship – perhaps the ultimate and most

naturally occurring form of relationality – as a key intervention in attempts, firstly, to obtain cultural recognition for Indigenous North American populations and, secondly, to envisage and enact Indigenous sovereignty.

Describing her project as ‘a cartography of refusal’, Simpson’s forays into the realm of tribal ties similarly rejects the dominant model of arborescent genealogy that shapes both colonial power and the regionalist articulation of the settler as indigenous.<sup>5</sup> Such obfuscating claims denude and deny colonial history and result in the exceptionalist rhetoric of ‘manifest destiny’ and ‘virgin lands’. The genealogy that Simpson draws traces the oppositional rhizome that the settler state constructs in said rhetoric, developing a ‘historical consciousness’ that reanimates the ‘residue of ... encounters’ that shapes the contemporary conditions of the Mohawk territory and community of Kahnawá:ke.<sup>6</sup> Much as Robbie Robertson fashions a cultural reinstatement of a pre-colonial Iroquoian history in the story of Hiawatha, Simpson gestures towards a restorative politics through similar recourse to history and the ties between people that it reveals. Crucially though – and important to my claim that Deleuzian theory can, when developed along paths divergent from Deleuze’s original exceptionalist position, in spite of well-founded claims to the contrary, account for and articulate Indigeneity – the political actions that Simpson observes and advocates in Kahnawá:ke do not, as in mainstream conservative regionalism, vacate or make vacant the space of colonial history, for that very space and the political apparatus that constructed it can be rearticulated to imagine and instate Indigenous sovereignty. In being subject to the ‘question of membership’ – that is, in the eyes of the settler state, who is and who is not a ‘status Indian’ – the Mohawk of Kahnawá:ke are able to utilise that imposed discursive space to uncover and preserve their own distinctive culture by exploring that self-same question which, in so doing, allows ‘the webs of kinship ... to be made material through dialogue and discourse’.<sup>7</sup> This coalitional recovery of tribal

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<sup>5</sup> Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2014), 33.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

connections, in the Deleuzian terms I explore throughout this project, represents a minoritarian political practice: working within imposed structures and their institutionalised languages to imagine alternative understandings, such as with my reading of Paredes' *George Washington Gómez*. Further evidence of such rearticulations of settler-invader constructs can be seen in recent considerations of Harold Cardinal's (Cree) influential concept of the 'Buckskin Curtain': a veil that shields the disenfranchisement that is the lived reality of subjugated Indigenous populations. Jace Weaver (Cherokee), Craig Womack (Creek-Cherokee) and Robert Warrior (Osage), for instance, suggest that this construct has become an integral part of maintaining Indigenous identities when they remark that the colonisers 'want us to rend the Buckskin Curtain for them, and they are wounded when we say we have grown to like it just fine as a way of maintaining a demarcation, much like a border between nation-states'.<sup>8</sup> In similar terms Kenneth Lincoln argues for the utility of this concept for both delineating and negotiating between cultures when he suggests that a 'different bear song is being sung on either flapside of the Buckskin Curtain, one humorously lyrical, the other cross-culturally derisive, inside and outside tribal boundaries'.<sup>9</sup> In these terms the national-colonial framework persists, but it becomes a strategy for cultural and political resistance through an Indigenous rearticulation of its functions.

Whilst Simpson's primary focus is the Kahnawá:ke reserve in Québec, she insists that this is not a bounded territory, but rather – much like the Buckskin Curtain – 'is a space with entries and exits' and that 'it is not hermetic'.<sup>10</sup> This furthers my claim that the attempted performance of Mohawk sovereignty therein is an enacted rhizomatic and minor practice. Furthermore, in figuring the movement of Indigenous subjects in contemporary circumstances, Simpson's focus on the lived reality of the Mohawk is complementary to Allen's observations on the travel of Indigenous signs, and ensures that the ahistorical freezing of the Indigenous subject in recidivist regionalism is confounded. This movement

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<sup>8</sup> Jace Weaver, Craig S. Womack and Robert Warrior, *American Indian Literary Nationalism* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 37.

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth Lincoln, *Sing with the Heart of a Bear: Fusions of Native and American Poetry, 1890-1999* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 315.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

also ensures that the exigencies of the reserve (figured as a region) are but one link in a chain of contingencies that can be hemispheric in their connections: as was also the case in my interpretation of the historical imaginations present in *Fronteras Americanas* and the music of The Band. In his call for what he terms ‘relational regionality’, Tol Foster (Creek) demonstrates the productive ramifications of regional-hemispheric paradigms. Identifying a tendency within Native American scholarship to privilege tribal-specific studies in the hope that doing so will produce a comprehensibility more easily accommodated within the extant frameworks of American Studies, Foster argues persuasively for a regional approach that looks ‘outside the tribal archive’ to seek hitherto unknown or unforeseen connections between not only different Indigenous groups but also between other racial and ethnic minorities within North America; not dissimilar to my connection of the Coyote/coyote tropes.<sup>11</sup> Suggesting ‘that tribally specific work is necessarily incomplete if it does not have multiple perspectives and voices within it and is even incomplete *if it does not acknowledge voices without as well*’, Foster discovers that the celebrated African American poet Melvin Tolson was Afro-Creek and that this, in turn, leads ‘to a very different reading of some of his material than now exists in the scholarship’.<sup>12</sup> This recovered connection between the urban Harlem Renaissance and the rural territories of the Creek people (notwithstanding the fact that historical Creek lands now form part of Mexico), highlights the critical vitality that can emerge when regions are understood as constituent parts of a larger hemispheric constellation. Foster’s conclusion that his ‘regional frame is by definition the least theoretically or culturally pristine space, for it is effectively only the edge of other constructions, and it is always by definition incomplete’, not only underscores the exciting possibilities of connecting, for example, Harlem and the Southeast portion of the U.S. in ways that need not privilege the legacies of slavery as

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<sup>11</sup> Tol Foster, ‘Of One Blood: An Argument for Relations and Regionality in Native American Literary Studies’ In, Craig S. Womack, Daniel Heath Justice and Christopher B. Teuton (eds) *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective* (Norman, OK.: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 270.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid* (emphasis in original).

the predominant critical frame, but it also gestures back to those other constructed edges: the borders of North America.<sup>13</sup>

Here, not only do the geopolitical borders of North America come under consideration but also those internal borders of the various colonial projects undertaken within its terrain, namely, boundaries that constrict Indigenous peoples and construct Indigeneity. It is important that we consider American Studies as one of these colonial projects since, even in its recent attempts at paradigmatic rearticulation, boundaries are still ranked and reified. Despite its potential for acknowledging the cultural, if not political sovereignty of internal Indigenous nations within the larger national-colonial frame, invoking the transnational, for example, 'implies both a binary opposition and a vertical hierarchy of the Indigenous (always) tethered to (and positioned below) the settler-invader', Chadwick Allen suggests.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, postcolonial theory that, according to Foster, is 'seemingly tailored for Native people', has been inadequate for recuperating and reinstating Indigenous subjectivities. This point seems somewhat inevitable when we consider the rapid and continuing *neo*-colonialism at the heart of the globalised world that gave rise to the calls for transnational and postnational scholarship in the first instance. If one of the underlying themes I have considered in this project is how to alter conceptions of, and approaches to, the erroneously titled American Studies, then one of the foremost thinkers in this regard, Janice Radway, places the global economy at the heart of this problematic when pondering 'whether this can be adequately done in the current historical context, dominated as it is by a rapidly advancing global neo-colonialism that specifically benefits the United States'.<sup>15</sup> If, as Radway and others suggest, neo-colonialism is the predominant condition under which American Studies now operates then the effects that such a system has upon those originally colonised populations and their attempted resistance to it must be acknowledged and addressed. Transnationalism is inadequate for this endeavour due to its

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 272.

<sup>14</sup> Allen, 'Transnational Native American Studies?', 3

<sup>15</sup> Janice Radway, 'What's in a Name?' In, Donald E. Pease and Robyn Wiegman (eds) *The Futures of American Studies* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002), 51.



perpetuation of binaries, and post-colonialism is rendered obsolete in the resurgence of its suffix. Hemispheric approaches, however, offer the greatest potential for rendering these ongoing cultural and political struggles clear and intelligible.

As this thesis has demonstrated throughout, issues of Indigeneity in North America – both historical and contemporary – are brought into sharper relief when the seemingly incompatible pairing of region and hemisphere are brought into dialogue with one another. When reinstated, regionalism's original insistence upon the contingent relationship between materiality and cultural production – so thoroughly erased in colonial nation-building projects – affords a framework that engrains plurality and specificity and, in its combination with the larger hemisphere, highlights the multiple historical and contemporary connectivities that foreground the potential for dialogue on differentiated but common ground. Dylan Miner's (Métis) recent monograph *Creating Aztlán: Chicano Art, Indigenous Sovereignty, and Lowriding across Turtle Island* is an example of how this region-hemisphere dialectic excavates the extant potential of such a paradigm. Incorporating two oppositional cartographies – Aztlán and Turtle Island – Miner's project points to connections between the discrete alternative identities enacted by First Nations, Native American and Chicano/a populations. To trace these connections he employs the metaphor of 'lowriding' that 'engages traditional migration patterns, yet employs late-capitalist machinery to traverse colonized landscapes'.<sup>16</sup> The perpetual motion of the metaphor and its insurgent positioning within existing colonial structures is not dissimilar to the utility of the Deleuzian concepts I have mapped within this project: rhizomatous, minoritarian and unromantically nomadic, illuminating temporal and spatial networks that provide the means for resistance. Such concepts are fundamentally immanent and make available the alternative cartography of Turtle Island as a truly hemispheric configuration of North America whilst not overwriting its distinctive regions. Such palimpsests have long stood as the tool of the coloniser and as accusatory rejoinders to attempts to articulate Indigenous

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<sup>16</sup> Dylan Miner, *Creating Aztlán: Chicano Art, Indigenous Sovereignty, and Lowriding across Turtle Island* (Tucson, AZ.: University of Arizona Press, 2014), 3.

alternatives within scholarly discourse; the pentimento – the sense in which something extant irrupts into existing discursive terrain – offers the greater possibility to articulate alternative epistemologies. A hemispheric regionalism attuned to the registers of both of its constituent geographical and historical territories can achieve the rehabilitation of American Studies so long envisaged by uncovering and forging intersections between its existing canons and paradigms and those excluded from them. In so doing, hemispheric regionalism can expand its textual, theoretical, and discursive terrains beyond their existing borders.

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