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# Narrating North American Borderlands

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# 1 Introduction: Border Contexts and the Notion of the Beyond

The history of Canada-U.S. bilateral relations is marked by shifts obvious in the way the border between the two nation-states has been managed, maintained, and negotiated. The Canada-U.S.<sup>1</sup> border was originally imposed on indigenous lands by the colonial powers in North America<sup>2</sup>. Nonetheless, aside from some border skirmishes or disputes in the 19th century, the border was friendly, open, and permeable for the local border residents and other border crossers. This was to change at the beginning of the 21st century. Instead of the so-called “longest undefended border” the Canada-U.S. border has become a controlled and secured border. The “thickening” (Ackleson 336) of the Canada-U.S. border is in fact a practice of rebordering. Border permeability and border mobility are increasingly dependent on border management and policies such as the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI)<sup>3</sup>. The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 marked a turning point in the change from open to closed border. In the wake of 9/11, suspicion regarding this loophole in the U.S. defense system against terrorists was directed at the Canada-U.S. border due to seemingly insufficient controls, patrols, and lax immigration laws. Borders continue to play a key role in our ever-shrinking world marked by the opposing forces of globalization and simultaneous regionalization. Processes of recurrent bordering or debordering, i.e. thickening or blurring of borders, unfold constantly. Paradoxically, borders are increasingly important in the formerly so-called “borderless world” (Ohmae). Borders project a sense of order in a world that is in flux. The international boundary between Canada and the United States has moved much more to the center of public attention and scholarly interest since the terrorist attacks

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1 The adjectives in the designation “Canada-U.S. border” are arranged in alphabetical order.

2 See “Drawing the Line Across North America” in Konrad and Nicol 64–70 on the history of the boundary demarcation.

3 The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative took full effect including at land and sea borders in June 2009 after the only partial enforcement at airports in January 2007. A “WHTI-compliant document” is required at the border to establish “the bearer’s identity and nationality” (Department of Homeland Security/ DHS). <<http://www.dhs.gov/western-hemisphere-travel-initiative>> 8 May 2013.

of 9/11 and ensuing rebordering efforts. This border plays a geopolitical as well as a symbolic role embodying a line of demarcation between Canada and the United States. It functions as an internal as well as an external border between these two nation-states and as a necessary paradigm for Anglophone Canadian vs. American<sup>4</sup> national identity construction.

Hence, it is not only a territorial expression of national sovereignty, but also a marker of cultural identities at the local, regional, and national levels. Indigenous identities, the struggle for sovereign rights, and land claims contribute to make the international border even more complex and contested. On the one hand indigenous peoples dismiss the Canada-U.S. border as superimposed on their ancestral homelands, yet on the other hand the nation-state is important as an interlocutor to reclaim land. Borders often defy intuitive logic, particularly if they are not geophysical borders such as mountain ranges or rivers. This arbitrariness leaves a person with a puzzled sense of why here is here and there is there, which also holds true for the Canada-U.S. border. The border is conceptualized in multiple ways, whether as “an interval of resonance” (McLuhan 73), a sieve, a semi/permeable membrane, a mirror of various kinds, a meeting place, in-between space, a (sanctuary) line, a wall, an “abyss” (Brown), a barrier, a fence, a “bridge” (Konrad and Nicol 29) or an open or closed gate. This study covers the full range of border expressions oscillating between the permeable and the non-permeable, the borderless air and the mended wall.

## 1.1 Poetic Border Approaches

By way of introduction two poems by William E. Stafford (1914–1993) and Robert Frost (1874–1963) are juxtaposed. Both U.S. poets are associated with border regions – Stafford with the Pacific Northwest and Frost with New England. Stafford’s poem “At the Un-National Monument along the Canadian Border” emphasizes the days of a seemingly open and inconsequential border for law-abiding citizens and legal border-crossers, whereas Frost’s poem “Mending Wall” (published in *North of Boston* in 1914) foretells the rebordering unfolding along the Canada-U.S. border in a post-9/11 era. Both metaphors, “At the Un-National Monument along the Canadian Border” and “Mending Wall” are spatial terms. The first one resembles an oxymoron combining the terms “un-national” and

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4 “American” refers to concepts regarding a citizen or resident of the United States of America. For simplicity and coherence I do not employ the term “U.S.(-)American,” frequently and primarily used by scholars in the fields of hemispheric, inter-American, Latin American, or Chicano/a studies.

“monument”. Usually, national and monument collocate and seem a natural semantic fit. This oxymoron underscores the ambivalent nature of the Canada-U.S. border. For Anglophone Canadians in particular this international boundary is more than a geographical division. It is a symbol of a distinct (Anglophone) Canadian national identity in contrast to the overwhelming presence of the United States. Indeed, for many Anglophone Canadians this un-national monument should rather be a mended wall. A similar predilection for a wall is also part of the U.S. psyche in terms of security insecurity. Eventually, only two options exist, either mending walls or mending bilateral relations. An open border is more perceptive to neighborly relations in a spirit of cooperation, whereas a wall that is actively maintained, even mended, signals isolationism and separation. Therefore, the concomitant message is one of division and distrust. Mending walls also foregrounds the experience that walls can deteriorate and even become obsolete over time. For a wall to persist maintenance is required. However, if the residents or neighbors deem other priorities more important than attending to a crumbling wall, this is a good sign for mended relations and thus mended walls are no longer called for. So the titles of both poems have the potential to subvert readers’ first impressions, one undermining the official nation-state discourse along the border and the other one drawing attention to the need for mending walls.

### 1.1.1 “At the Un-National Monument along the Canadian Border”

This is the field where the battle did not happen,  
where the unknown soldier did not die.  
This is the field where grass joined hands,  
where no monument stands,  
and the only heroic thing is the sky.

Birds fly here without any sound,  
unfolding their wings across the open.  
No people killed — or were killed — on this ground  
hallowed by neglect and an air so tame  
that people celebrate it by forgetting its name.  
(William E. Stafford)

In Stafford’s poem every line is evocative such as “the air so tame.” This, however, is no longer the reality. Due to surveillance along the forty-ninth parallel the air is potentially threatening, creating a feeling of insecurity and ambiguity. Above all, the unpredictable conduct of the border guards and allegations of racial profiling emphasize premonitions border crossers have, in particular after the full implementation of WHTI in 2009. Color lines in supposedly color-blind

and post-racial societies such as the United States or Canada remain. The prefix of “post” with all its echoes is subtly referred to in the poem’s title “At the Un-National Monument.” The question arises of how the prefix “post” is similar or different from the prefix “un.” The “post” presupposes a historical development, whereas the “un” simply negates the adjective “national” in the poem. The “un-national monument” is one that is not national, but a monument qualified by alternative notions.

If the border is perceived as “the un-national monument,” it could be a trans-national, international, or even a post-national monument. A monument is usually erected by a nation-state or other group in order to commemorate or celebrate an event, a person, or a community. The goal is to construct history, memory, identity or “imagined communities” (Anderson), resembling a “metanarrative” (Lyotard) written in stone. The questions are who creates monuments, for which overt and covert reasons and what is the specific function of such a monument. In the poem’s title the Canada-U.S. border is described as both a monument and more importantly as an “un-national monument.” The border as a demarcation of the nation-state is undermined since the boundary is un-national. This monument, whose name is forgotten, enshrines and celebrates the notion of the beyond.

### 1.1.2 “Mending Wall”

[...]  
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know  
What I was walling in or walling out,  
And to whom I was like to give offence.  
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,  
That wants it down.' I could say 'Elves' to him,  
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather  
He said it for himself. I see him there  
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top  
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.  
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,  
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.  
He will not go behind his father's saying,  
And he likes having thought of it so well  
He says again, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'  
(Robert Frost)

The essence of Frost's poem “Mending Wall” is memorably put as the saying “Good fences make good neighbors” and despite “Something there is that doesn't

love a wall / That wants it down” the border as a mended wall<sup>5</sup> persists. The word “mended” entails two meanings – both “reinforced” and “recuperated.” Frost’s poem suggests the dual nature of any wall or border thus highlighting both the maintenance and the overcoming of divisions as in mending relations. Borders are not inherently evil, because certain delineations can be useful to create a sense of belonging and an established order. However, borders become contentious if unequal power relations are manifest at a geopolitical boundary, hence excluding people for arbitrary and subjective reasons. The same holds true for bordering. Seemingly necessary for identity construction and belonging, bordering by extreme othering creates a smoldering problem. The duality of the border – the bordering processes as well as practices – becomes obvious.

Walls have to be consciously maintained to endure. The poem displays the differing opinions on the part of the two neighbors. It is not clear what nationality the neighbor has who wants to continue the exercise of “walling in or walling out” and whether the other neighbor is of a different nationality. The setting of “Mending Wall” is not explicit. It is a poem against bordering processes and practices between neighbors. By extension, this analogy can be used for the bilateral Canada-U.S. relations as neighboring countries and “Brethren Dwelling Together in Unity” (Inscription, Peace Arch, “History”). Critique of bordering, whether expressed spatially or verbally, is the focus of this poem.

### **1.1.3 Echoing the Poetic in Border Fiction: The “Un-National” and Walls**

The borderline as a peaceful non-issue is highlighted in Stafford’s poem, whereas Frost’s poem alludes more to the image of a metaphoric battleground: “Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top / In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.” This military image portrays the boundary as a necessary demarcation among neighbors that is fiercely and consciously maintained and fortified. Frost’s choice of words suggests the outdated nature of such an approach as it is more reminiscent of the Stone Age or savagery. However, Frost ends with the seeming need for delineation among neighbors. In stark contrast, the opposite message is conveyed in Stafford’s poem: “This is the field where the battle did not happen, / where the unknown soldier did not die.” Stafford highlights the pacifist character of the Canada-U.S. border, echoing

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5 The walling dimension is also the focus of the special issue of the *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 27.2 (2012): “The (Re)Building of the Wall in International Relations.” Guest editor: Élisabeth Vallet.

Canadian John McCrae's iconic World War I poem "In Flanders Fields" (1915), even enshrined on the previous Canadian ten dollar bill<sup>6</sup>:

"In Flanders fields the poppies blow / Between the crosses, row on row, / That mark our place; and in the sky/ The larks, still bravely singing, fly/ Scarce heard amid the guns below" (McCrae). Juxtaposing peace and war, Stafford poetically argues that a sense of nationhood can also be forged, if at all necessary, without the traumatic experience of war: "No people killed — or were killed — on this ground / hallowed by neglect and an air so tame / that people celebrate it by forgetting its name" (Stafford).

It is revealing to see the different tone in Stafford's and Frost's poems written both by U.S. authors hailing from regions in close proximity to the border. Stafford's poem is utopian, even more so read in the wake of 9/11 and ensuing security primacy in the United States, and exacerbated by several terrorist acts since. In contrast, Frost's poem has more realistic underpinnings. Humanity ostensibly needs to erect safeguards to preserve peace and order. Bordering is the dominant theme in the three novels to be analyzed in detail in chapters three, four, and five. The quilt in Thomas King's narrative serves as such a defensive fence, or the remoteness of Kingdom Mountain in Howard Frank Mosher's fiction or the geopolitical boundary projected as a ditch in Jim Lynch's novel. Quite literally, two of Lynch's characters, Canadian Wayne and American Norm, are neighbors living in two countries and are only able to get along thanks to the international boundary between them. Even despite this border they will insult and provoke each other. In their case, good fences seemingly make better neighbors. The question is whether mutual understanding is the goal or simply peaceful coexistence. Ideally the wall, the fence, or the border can also be or become a place of encounters and negotiations for a brighter future.

Stafford's poem echoes McCrae's memorable lines of "In Flanders Fields," inscribed in the Canadian national imagination and symbolizing the importance of the First World War for Canadians' sense of nationhood. However, by naming his poem "At the Un-National Monument" Stafford poetically ushers in a postnational era. This utopian stance prevails in Mosher's work. Walls that are restored and rebuilt as in Frost's poem are also a feature in Lynch's novel, so are the transcending power of nature and birds alluded to in Stafford's poem. King's novel *Truth & Bright Water* is set on a water boundary. The water image highlights the

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6 "The \$10 note features the first verse of John McCrae's poem [...]" (Bank of Canada). <<http://www.bankofcanada.ca/banknotes/bank-note-series/canadian-journey/quotation-excerpt-from-john-mccraes-poem-in-flanders-fields/>> 8 May 2013.

complexity and fluidity of geographical and geopolitical boundaries. Taken at a metaphorical level, physical boundaries and metaphysical borders are interwoven and permeate the lives of people locally, nationally, and internationally. This pervasive influence is strongly aligned with notions of power, nation-building, and metanarratives. The dominant discourse of a nation-state is recognizable at the margins of the political body and reveals the inner logic of the nation-state. In the case of the United States the focus is clearly on homeland security due to the lingering sense of vulnerability.

In contrast to the United States, the discourse of the Anglophone majority in Canada's multicultural and multilingual society is marked by identity insecurity. The perceived danger is intangible and not necessarily related to a perceived physical threat or terrorist acts. The danger consists in cultural assimilation and subservience. The Anglophone majority in Canada, despite the internal differences regarding the "two solitudes" (Hugh MacLennan), between urban and rural, East and West, the North and the rest of the country, indigenous peoples and newcomers, still values the Canada-U.S. border as a demarcation of identity. The border, though open for trade, travelers, and transportation, functions as a visible and felt boundary that marks the cultural difference between the United States and Canada (Mayer, "Romanized" 147). Diametrically opposed are the views held by Americans (Mayer, "Line Dancing" 71). In the U.S., due to the asymmetry and dominance on the North American continent in terms of the military and economic power, and the population size, the border with Canada is irrelevant for national identity construction. From a U.S. perspective, the Canada-U.S. border is a bulwark against the unwanted crossing of presumed terrorists, illegal migrants, or contraband.

## 1.2 Beyond, "Betwixt, and Between"<sup>7</sup>

The notion of the beyond,<sup>8</sup> the guiding principle of this study, is best embodied by birds "unfolding their wings across the open" (Stafford). The bird trope is part of all three novels discussed. In King's novel allusions to flying are to be found, for instance when Lum runs over the edge of the bridge or in the ghost-like character of Rebecca. In Mosher's novel flying plays a major role, too,

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7 "Betwixt and Between" (Victor Turner).

8 See also the comprehensive study *Beyond Walls: Re-Inventing the Canada-United States Borderlands*, published in 2008 by Victor Konrad and Heather N. Nicol or my article "Beyond Border Binaries: Borderlines, Borderlands, and In-Betweenness in Thomas King's Short Story 'Borders.'"



since the aviator and his biplane imitate birds. The most striking example of the transcending nature of birds is evident in *Border Songs*. In Lynch's novel border agent Brandon Vanderkool, called "Big Bird," acts as a birder, and a bird painter. He seems to fly across the border while accidentally stopping illegal migrants. Border-transcending "Big Bird" Brandon paradoxically contributes to reinscribe the boundary, though only a ditch in this region, with meaning. The natural bird songs are superseded by the socially constructed border songs sung by the Border Patrol. Nonetheless, in the end Brandon is "free as a bird," because he quits his job as a border agent.

The international boundary between Canada and the United States serves multiple, sometimes contradictory, purposes depending on the perspective and the status of a person wanting to cross. Notions of power, identity and citizenship, all interrelated, come to the fore through the magnifying glass of the border. Issues of only minor importance in other circumstances are overblown at this site. This "contact zone" (Pratt) and "third space" (Bhabha) at the nexus of national identity and state power functions as a breeding ground for new nationalisms, but also sends important unifying signals to overcome once divisive nationalisms. Unity is stressed by integrated borderlands, border regions, cross-border regions, and borderscapes, in addition to symbolic, liminal, or interstitial spaces along the Canada-U.S. border. Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park or the Peace Arch Park in the Pacific Northwest are locations that testify to the conceptualization of the border as a meeting place and overlapping zone. At the Peace Arch Park in Blaine, WA and White Rock, BC the "Hands Across the Border" festival used to celebrate the unifying message of the border until financial woes put an end to this cross-border celebration<sup>9</sup>. On a personal or institutional level, kinship ties and shared services on either side of the border underscore cross-border linkages. At the border in Vermont and Quebec the Haskell Free Library and Opera House<sup>10</sup> is another place of mutual cultural pursuits, in short, common humanity at the international boundary.

The relationship of indigenous peoples is complex regarding the Canada-U.S. border. The superimposition of the geopolitical, at the time colonial, boundary bisected certain tribes such as the Blackfoot in what is now Alberta-Montana or the Mohawks in Akwesasne, who have to deal with a fivefold administration due

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9 Press Release. 28 Feb. 2013 from Peace Arch Association regarding "Hands Across the Border Cancelled." <<http://www.peacearchpark.org/peacearchcelebration.htm>> May 8, 2013.

10 The Haskell Free Library and Opera House is situated in Stanstead, QC and Derby Line, VT. <<http://haskellopera.com/>>.

to their location. The Mohawk nation engages with Ontario, Quebec, and New York State in addition to the nation-states of Canada and the United States. Native peoples, whether subsumed under the national affiliations of Canada or the United States, experienced colonialism, relocation, forced assimilation, cultural genocide if not actual genocide.

### **1.2.1 Literary Analysis: The Confluence of Border and North American Studies**

Memory, history, and everyday practices and processes of “bordering, ordering and othering” (van Houtum and van Naerssen), and concomitant debordering intersect at the international boundary between Canada and the United States. In addition to the geopolitical boundary the literary discussion focuses on deterritorialized borders in society as represented in fiction. Community borders, the color line, i.e. borders of ethnicity and race, as well as cultural identity borders are essential in any understanding of borders and bordering. For close investigation I have chosen three contemporary North American novels published at the turn from the 20th to the 21st century and in the first decade of the 21st century: Canadian Native author Thomas King’s *Truth & Bright Water* (1999), American writer Howard Frank Mosher’s *On Kingdom Mountain* (2007), and American author Jim Lynch’s *Border Songs* (2009). These novels<sup>11</sup>, published within a decade, are well suited to gauge current developments and changes at the Canada-U.S. border. Aside from the geopolitical boundary, symbolic borders and bordering practices feature prominently in their work.

The border in King’s *Truth & Bright Water* is permeable for the protagonists with the small ferry across the river Shield. However, at the official ports of entry border permeability and therefore the mobility of the prospective border crosser is dependent on Border Patrol agents and the official “Script” (Lundy 136). The power of the sovereign nation-states becomes visible in the border crossing situation. In Mosher’s *On Kingdom Mountain*, the border region is comprised of the larger borderland of Vermont-Quebec as well as the fictionalized microcosm Kingdom Mountain. In this utopian and interstitial space protagonist Jane Hubbell Kinneson, who is partly indigenous, reigns as the so-called Duchess of Kingdom Mountain. Lynch’s *Border Songs* is also set at the border and in the

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11 Though the spatial element in literary studies and the literary aspect in border studies have increasingly been addressed by various scholars, an analysis focusing on the three selected novels of this study has to the best of my knowledge not been undertaken before.

borderlands of Cascadia in the Pacific Northwest. The author explicitly chronicles and extrapolates in a fictionalized way the outcome of security paranoia at the border after September 11, 2001 and the thickening of the border in the wake of measures such as the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative. The local border community on both sides is subjected to fear and distrust leading to an escalation of paranoia and rebordering. A policed Border Patrol state emerges. Protagonist Brandon Vanderkool, though because of his unusual nature, undermines the solemn sovereignty of the state by discovering more illegal migrants and contraband while he is birding than seasoned agents while on duty.

The selection of the three border texts informs one another and showcases the importance of border novels for different groups of border residents. The context in which each fictional work is anchored is essential for the reader's understanding of the shifting functions of borders, borderlands, and bordering. My analysis traces these changes along the Canada-U.S. border and draws attention to the different levels of border permeability and of mobility for the various border crossers. The power of the nation-state, already contested due to globalization and simultaneous regionalization, and of national vs. regional, ethnic, or cultural identities is examined. The selected novels are ideal for analyzing how borders, borderlands, bordering processes and bordering practices are represented in fiction. It becomes possible to infer the reasons for that representation thanks to the centrality of the border and borderlands as a setting or bordering as a trope.

Diverse border regions between the contiguous United States and Canada feature in the selected novels situated in the East, the Prairies and Plains and in the Northwest. Each novel focuses on one main theme such as contemporary indigeneity in the borderlands (King), historical multi-ethnicity and third spaces in the Eastern borderlands of Vermont and Quebec (Mosher), and post-9/11 security imperatives and the ensuing repercussions to the detriment of local cross-border communities in the Pacific Northwest (Lynch). All three novels deal with negotiating socio-cultural spaces and identities aside from subverting, challenging, or transgressing mental, symbolic, socio-economic, ethnic and racial, in addition to geographic and geopolitical borders. In so doing these novels open up a whole spectrum of alternative borderlands and contribute to exposing, questioning, and discussing bordering.

Another overarching factor for the selection of primary fiction is the inclusion of significant lasting issues, for example social justice for Natives, the ecological dimension, the threatened rural life, and current affairs such as the thickening of the Canada-U.S. border. With the emerging field of border studies and in the context of transnational American studies, it is therefore promising to closely

examine borders, borderlands, and bordering in fiction. Literature is an expression of cultural identity and an avantgardist mirror of societal change. Indicators for special techniques and tropes employed, presumably more frequently in border fiction, particularly in indigenous writing include: the use of the trickster figure (typically in Native writing), of magical realism and of occasional humor and irony. The links between the geographical border, symbolic borders and identity borders are examined and discussed. I also show how borders are drawn, maintained, blurred, or erased. Notions of in-between spaces, borderscapes, borderlands, and related spatial conceptualizations and metaphors are at the center of this interdisciplinary study.

### **1.2.2 Interdisciplinary Significance: Borders, Borderlands, and De/Bordering**

The expanding field of border studies, originally firmly grounded in geographical, historical and political paradigms, includes an increasing focus on the humanities and border poetics (Schimanski and Wolfe). The content, the locales as well as the disciplinary perspectives regarding border studies proliferated (Wastl-Walter; Wilson and Donnan). Along the same lines, American studies are understood as transnational American studies highlighting the transnational or hemispheric turns and other spatial concepts. A reconceptualization of American studies and Canadian studies as North American<sup>12</sup> studies at a number of European universities puts the spatial turn institutionally into practice. The spatial element is one of the decisive factors of transformation behind the new contours of American studies in a globalized world. Both border studies and transnational American studies, the two main fields of this study, have experienced a significant expansion of interests, foci, and theories. It is therefore a promising undertaking to combine these two multi- or arguably interdisciplinary fields and gain new perspectives for the textual analysis of contemporary border fiction in North America. Going beyond nation-state and ostensible disciplinary binaries Native<sup>13</sup> studies are primarily applied to indigenous writer Thomas King's fictional work.

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12 A note on terminology: By "North America" I mean the United States of America and Canada.

13 The adjectives "Native," "indigenous," and "aboriginal" are used in connection with studies and other nouns. Referring to "Native" peoples in Canada "First peoples" comprise "First Nations, Inuit, and Métis," whereas in the United States "Native Americans," "American Indians," or tribal affiliations are categories of reference. The terms are employed according to the indigenous person's preference and self-designation. This list is neither meant to be a comprehensive nor an authoritative list.

The goal of this analysis is a broad discussion and examination of contemporary novels taking into account diverse voices that add their own notes to this chorus of contemporary cultures. Because of the breadth of the topics and backgrounds dealt with an interdisciplinary approach is most useful and different conceptualizations from multiple fields are applied to the three novels. This confluence of approaches sheds new light on the Canada-U.S. border precisely by the complementary nature of the fields in question. Dissonances are part of the new music emerging from the analyzed border fiction; a new border song develops, resounding the primary and secondary sources of this discussion. The border is thus in terms of McLuhan an “interval of resonance” (73). Taken literally the border is an inter-zone, resonating with people living at, crossing, and working near the Canada-U.S. border. The border elicits a reaction. It is similar to jazz in that there is the border call and border chorus’s response. Call and response alternate and improvisation, fluctuating notes, and blue notes reign supreme. Situated at the confluence between on the one hand approaches and theory from the humanities and on the other hand from the social sciences, this study shows the need for a complementary analysis in order to adequately address the phenomena of borders, borderlands, and de/bordering in Canada-U.S. border fiction.

### **1.2.3 Procedure: Situating Canada-U.S. Border Fiction**

The themes of the two juxtaposed poems by Stafford and Frost, addressing border demarcation and border invisibility as well as debordering versus rebordering, set the stage for the theoretical underpinnings of the literary analysis. These poems represent an aperture in the critical application of concepts emanating from the fields of transnational American, Canadian, and Indigenous studies on the side of the humanities and from border studies in the tradition of the social sciences.

Starting in the theoretical second chapter of this study, the shifting binaries and the transcending notion of the beyond are framed in terms of spatial elements in North American studies and cultural and literary elements in border studies. Disciplinary boundaries are transcended and notions of parallax, palimpsest, and “worlding” are highlighted. The third chapter analyzes Thomas King’s novel *Truth & Bright Water*, published pre-9/11, telling the story of two Native young boys, cousins. In this novel Native questions of social justice within a settler society are explored. The Canada-U.S. border is not only the geographical setting, but also serves as a line of demarcation between the White and the Native worlds involving issues of class, race, and ethnicity. Chapter four is centered on Howard Frank Mosher’s novel *On Kingdom Mountain* combining some of the Native and ecological ideas in

rural 1930s Vermont. The setting is Kingdom Mountain, a unique place and color-blind utopian space straddling and transcending the boundary between Canada and the United States. It is a novel beyond border binaries, suggesting a Bhabhian “third space.” The fifth chapter examines Jim Lynch’s novel *Border Songs*. The author, a former journalist, directly responds to the rebordering and thickening in his home region in the Pacific Northwest, also known as Cascadia. Brandon Vanderkool, the protagonist, is an American Border Patrol agent, who falls in love with a Canadian smuggler. The concluding chapter summarizes the study and highlights its significant contributions to the fields of transnational American studies and border studies focusing on the notion of the beyond, subversion and resistance as well as new border concepts and imaginaries.