

Introduction

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From the unorganized advancing frontier to the management of a stable international border

The history of the borders and migrations of the United States is a very recent chapter of world history. Seen from the United States, the starting date of their border history is obviously July 4, 1776, and from the British—and legalistic—viewpoint it can be set at the end of the Revolutionary War, September 3, 1783, when Britain recognized the new country with the signature of the Treaty of Paris.

However, borders and migrations have preoccupied the American colonies from the beginning of colonization and the question reached a climax when the English mother country set a western limit to their expansion with the 1763 Royal Proclamation theoretically forbidding access to the trans-Appalachian west. The colonial regulation of the Appalachian border, as well as immigration restrictions, were part of the grievances and the “long train of abuses” listed in the Declaration of Independence:

[The King of England] has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose, obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands. (Declaration of Independence)

With the treaty that marked the end of their rebellion against the mother country, the United States acquired the trans-Appalachian west up to the Mississippi. From then on, the United States continued to push its borders west—and south—until the mid-nineteenth century (Stephanson.)

If we consider the geographic space that is now the United States, in the approximately 250 years of their territorial growth, their historic border typology exhibits a great diversity which in turn has generated diverse representations. Since the country has expanded rapidly over less than a century—up to the acquisition of Alaska in 1867—and in a fairly recent period, the human memory of migrations is still vivid in memory, popular representation and storytelling.

Following a pattern visible in all of the Americas, the borders of the United States have started as mobile and colonial frontiers, often unorganized territories where European immigrants butted against indigenous groups (Turner). Gradually, the frontiers narrowed down to a line and became the geographically stable international borders as we know them today.

These subsequently evolved from porous lines allowing relatively easy crossing, even for permanent settlement, to administratively more constrictive borders with heightened access control.

The history of the United States has always been one of immigration and consequently border control has always existed, at least to a certain extent. Colonial America, of course, saw wave upon wave of voluntary and forced migration—English, Scots-Irish, Germans, and Africans, to name the most prominent. And in the early republic, the U.S. population swelled from German and Irish migration. Such patterns continued throughout United States history. Sometimes immigration was promoted, when settlers or workforce were needed, and discouraged, or outlawed, at other times, often selectively, when certain ethnicities or nations of origin were considered unwanted, starting with the Chinese after the completion of the transcontinental railroad and the passing of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Since then, various policies have been implemented from country of origin quotas, to family reunification policies, to lottery schemes and selective acceptance.

By their nature, borders can be considered from various viewpoints and Patricia Nelson Limerick's famous "look both ways" advice to historians (Limerick 181) is especially useful in this context. The historian of the West had in mind the relentless invasion of the continent by European settlers displacing the Indigenous and she advocated for a more balanced view on conquest. When the border between the United States and Mexico is viewed through this lens, one cannot fail to notice that most of its current setting was determined by warfare and was thus positioned on the map under duress, contrary to the wishes of people on the losing side.

Some of the border issues in the present volume use the concept of "race" and since the present papers are published in a French journal, this requires some clarifications which will seem obvious to American readers (Carter 547-549, Sarich and Miele 14.) In the United States, the term "race" is commonly used, by the administration and the general public, to define a reality combining ethnicity, culture and various—not necessarily very visible—nuances of skin color. Despite the fact that it is a social

construct, “race” is a term used in U.S. administrative documents, some even requiring “racial self-identification” and—in the case of the census—permitting the indication of multiple “races.” While racism exists, the mention of a person’s “race” on an application or document is not necessarily to the detriment of non-white people but is generally used today for statistical purposes and for the implementation of policy measures to redress harmful situations.

As for policies, such as border control or immigration, which are often considered to have a racial bias, they can be deemed neutral, or color-blind, from a legal point of view, while statistically affecting to a larger degree individuals from one specific group, or “race” according to the terms used in the United States. This is the case for example of border policies implemented on the southern border of the United States; while they do not officially target “brown” people, the practical result is that the vast majority of the border-crossers will be from Latin America, hence the criticism that the border wall is a measure to prevent access to the U.S. for poor, non-white Latinos, hence it can be called a racist policy. To conclude, the reader should be aware of the fact that the term “race” in the present volume is always to be understood in the American sense.

The present volume discusses an extensive typology of borders: nineteenth century international borders crossed by American citizens settling Mexican territory (Greg Cantrell), or crossed by Europeans settling the United States and becoming American in the process (Kathleen DeHaan, David Zwart). As a counterpoint, several papers deal with the more recent crossing of the Southern border of the United States with a view from the ground giving a voice to the coyotes enabling the passage into the United States (Óscar Gil-García), or with a view on the technology and discourse used to block access from the South (Saïd Ouaked, Hugo Rangel Torrijo). The unfiltered narrative of—and by—recent immigrants, both legal and illegal, trying to reconstruct their lives in the United States is discussed in the interview of filmmaker Yehuda Sharim who presents his own reasons for giving them a voice.

Not all borders are physical lines on the map; some are conceptual and are crossed when moving into another culture or into another space. They are linked to the notion of cultural mobility, evidenced when a group adopts cultural traits from another group. Hence, partial assimilation of migrants into the culture of the host country is also a situation of cultural mobility, and of micro-borders surrounding subcultures or ethnic enclaves. These non-international and often invisible borders will be analyzed in the context of Arab-American fiction (Sonia Farid), in the racialized context of African-

Americans confronted with—and interacting with—white Arizonians, Mexicans and Indians on the Southern border of Arizona (Robert Jefferson), and in a discussion of the theoretical framework of “decolonial” studies questioning how far the colonial blueprint affects the relations between mainstream America and its Latin American neighbors (Maria Teresia DePaoli).

1. Border History: borders as international affairs and foreign ancestors becoming Americans

The first chapter of the present volume (“Border History”) deals with international matters and borders crossed. Greg Cantrell presents an important chapter in the history of the United States, the peopling of Texas organized by *empresario* Stephen Austin (“Imagination, Representation, and Reality in the Peopling of Anglo-American Texas: Stephen F. Austin as Visionary and Pragmatist”). The transformation of Texas, from an array of colonies accredited by Mexico, to the independent Lone Star Republic, later to be annexed by the United States, shows the need for historians in the discussion of public policies and ideologies. The invasion of Mexico by private American citizens, who then proceeded to annex the area they settled to the United States, puts the border management into perspective since this particular frontier intersects with “la frontera,” *i.e.* the borderlands between the United States and Mexico (White 89-90).

Gregg Cantrell focuses on the importance of the migrants’ imaginary visions in their settlement of a new country, their dreams of life on better land but also their yearning for the culture they left behind. Cantrell’s analysis shows how the personal aspirations of Stephen Austin, traditionally called the Father of Texas, played a role in his endeavors. Starting with petty personal motivations of wealth, his vision soon evolved into a grand scheme of bringing “civilization”—as opposed to Indian, not yet called Native American, culture—to this underpopulated region of Northern Mexico (see also Cantrell 1999).

Drawing attention to a family group instead of an individual, Kathleen DeHaans’ paper (“*A Pleasurable Exertion: Navigating an Immigrant Identity*”) addresses the representation of the migratory experience. Her research is based on the letters sent home to England by the Watson family who had emigrated to America in the early 1800s, and she focuses on the communication techniques used by the migrants who

detail their American experience to make sense for themselves as well as convince their readers to join them.

The letters of the Watsons are thus centered around the main push factor that convinced them to board a ship to America: the inability of the working poor in Sussex to better their condition. The Watsons then proceeded to demonstrate the positive changes in their life in North America, focusing on the fact that their migration has rendered possible profiting from their work, producing a surplus to acquire land and animals, and moving within North America when they sensed better opportunities.

It is surprising how the rhetorical discourse of migrants writing home is unchanged since the nineteenth century. While, for the Watsons, the most common tool of communication was letter writing, social media are used today by migrants for the somewhat hyperbolic documentation and storytelling of their new life, with a focus on desirable social and cultural situations, to justify the hardships of the migration, a fact that is well-known by the authorities of African countries, like Ivory Coast, who actively try to debunk the stereotype of the easy life in the projected host country (Gokra).

When the migrants to America became settlers, they also became American. The question has already been worded in the 1780s by Hector St John Crèvecoeur in *Letters from an American Farmer* when he asked rhetorically “And what then is the American, this new man?” St John Crèvecoeur goes on detailing the multiple—northern European—origins of the settlers and their appreciation for the new social contract they are offered in America and made possible by an agricultural life conducive of equality and producing plenty (St John Crèvecoeur 49-52).

Expanding beyond families to religio-ethnic groups, David Zwart (“Remembering Immigration: Ethnicity in the Rural Midwest after World War II”) focuses on the history of rural Midwestern farmers and more specifically on how settler history was (re)written in the 1950s and 60s. After World War II, with the United States as one of the victorious powers in a bipolar world, the U.S. reaffirmed the values of the mainstream. Minorities conformed or became invisible, and the descendants of Northern European settlers in the rural Midwest (Iowa) told the story of their ancestors as hard-working builders of the country, as real Americans.

Zwart uses a corpus of church commemoration pamphlets produced for the fiftieth, seventy-fifths, and mostly the hundredth anniversaries of the churches’ creation by immigrants from Germany or Scandinavia. They were presented as the good immigrants, the people with a strong faith who built America, who made the land

productive, who set up the core institutions of the country, and who built the churches. Their selective stories are centered on developing the land while overlooking some aspects of conquest (taking the land from the Natives) and the Civil War. They also tended to forget that their acceptance of English, in replacement of the language of their country of origin, often took several generations and was motivated by the fact that at the onset of the First World War the American tolerance for German, or any other non-English language, was low.

Zwart's study demonstrates how representations of "good" immigration served people who lived in the heartland, especially the Protestants. The view is from the church members who see the church as the heart of their community's identity and social world. While they have established cultural micro-borders defining their communities, they also minimize the international borders their ancestors have crossed to migrate to the United States as the process of cultural migration and assimilation has transformed these ancestors into Americans (Greenblatt 2-6).

2. Moving across borders: Border crossing today

The second chapter of the present volume ("Moving Across Borders") deals with border crossing today. Demographic pressure, as well as the relative ease of transportation, and easier access to information, have increased the worldwide migratory flow (U.N. International Migration Report 2017 1-6). To avoid destabilization, the overwhelming majority of countries have implemented policies to regulate immigration and those that do not are countries with the lowest pull factor, such as Syria during the recent war.

The present volume being focused on the United States, it is necessary to remind the French reader that citizenship in the U.S. derives "from the soil," as opposed to "from the blood." Thus, any person born on U.S. soil obtains *de facto* immediate citizenship regardless of the mother's status, whether legally or illegally in the country. This is a powerful pull factor for parents, or mothers, who want to assure their offspring a future in the U.S. without the hassle of visas or illegality. Opposition to the policy of the "instant citizen" can be heard, especially, from right wing sources, but—in 2018—there is no consensus to modify the fourteenth (citizenship) Amendment (Delgado).

The U.S. citizenship policy reflects the history of the country, welcoming foreign nationals when the land was sparsely populated or when workforce was needed, or when the citizenship of freed slaves was discussed. It must be added that the U.S. is

a country with almost no welfare entitlement—at least compared to most Western European countries—and that migrants to the U.S are expected to work for their upkeep upon arrival with no safety net or health insurance. As a corollary, working immigrants, whether legal or illegal, are often considered with benevolence as they represent a needed workforce for jobs with low qualifications and low pay. Past administrations have dealt with mass legalizations of immigrants enabling their status change, starting with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, which did not include provisions to stop illegal immigration. Hence the criticism it faces today.

The current United States administration has chosen to enforce existing immigration laws and to pass more restrictive ones to prevent illegal entry into the United States. The general context is one of fear—of the possibly dangerous Other—and of uncertainties in the face of economic shifts and heavy industries moving abroad while the high-tech sector has no need for low-qualified workers. In addition to that, a general distrust of foreigners in the age of global terrorism, and a tightening of border controls, have made it more acceptable to stop or deport immigrants (Crowe).

The first paper in this chapter deals with the little-known situation—at least outside the United States—of individuals who return to their country of origin because they are compelled to do so against their wishes. These so-called “unintended returnees” may be children, who may also be citizens of the U.S., or spouses of deported individuals.

Óscar Gil-García (“U.S. Immigration Enforcement and the Making of Unintended Returnees”) has followed a family of foreign nationals from Guatemala and analyzed the migratory trajectories that led them to the United States. When the husband was deported, his wife and U.S.-born child (thus a U.S. citizen) left the United States for Mexico. The husband subsequently became a “coyote,” and led occasional tours, guiding people illegally through the border to the United States. While it might be easy from a safe position far away from the locus of the situation to consider him a human trafficker, Gil-García presents a nuanced picture of survival on the border and guiding people seen as helping them, rather than committing an illegal action, while the real villains are the higher ups who manage the cross-border traffic and have unlimited power over the independent coyotes.

It seems that whatever devices or measures are put in place by the U.S. to stop illegal immigration, the pull factor of the U.S.—and the push factor of Latin American countries—is such that individuals are willing to incur high costs and high risks to cross the border and endure a situation where they will live as illegal immigrants in the host

country. Moreover, in response to the demand, the illegal border crossing business has fostered an array of criminal activities where “customers” are not protected and “small business leaders” risk torture and death.

Seen from the American side, the relatively unprotected U.S.-Mexican border has gradually been strengthened since the 1980s (Levario 1-3) and even more so in the twenty-first century with an increase in global terrorism as well as an upswing of isolationist policies in the United States.

Isolationism has been reinforced by the perception that threat comes from the outside and that danger can be prevented through immigration control. For Saïd Ouaked (“Beyond Borders: Revisiting the Concept of ‘Frontier’ in the Age of Global Terrorism”) the “new frontier” has become a locus where the American security apparatus confronts incoming dangers. For Ouaked, the narrative on immigration now focuses on the unwanted characteristics of immigrants who are seen as a threat to the economy—taking away jobs from American citizens—as well as potential criminals and terrorists. The recent anti-Muslim rhetoric also fosters the great Satan image of the U.S. in areas of the world where there is traditionally little sympathy for the country.

The most visible way to keep perceived dangers at bay is the construction of a massive wall on the southern border of the United States. For Hugo Rangel Torrijo (“The Conservative Discourse Behind the US-Mexico Border Wall vs. Co-operation for Cross-Border Regional Development”) the wall exemplifies the impermeable border and is the direct offspring of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo which shifted a colonial border of the United States to the South and to the West.

In parallel to the construction of the wall, a negative image of the Latino is being created in the U.S. to foster distrust of immigrants from the South with an exaggerated discourse of fear (crime, terrorism, drugs) that does not match reality.

While the official discourse on immigration largely focuses on the risks posed by people crossing the southern border illegally, Yehuda Sharim provides us an insight of a different vision in his interview (“As Borders Are Crossed: Violence, Race, and Migrant Realities”). As filmmaker and academic, he uses the techniques of oral history to record the unfiltered voices of immigrants with hopes of a better life in America, hardships to be overcome, and a new culture to be mastered and integrated into past experiences. His Middle-Eastern, Latino, Asian, and African voices imbue immigrants with humanity transforming them into seekers of the American Dream instead of anonymous carriers of risks.

3. Cultural mobility: culture and ethnic borders

Crossing a cultural border is an enduring element of migrations. The third chapter of the present volume (“Cultural Mobility”) deals with cultural borders that have been crossed and with conflict in progress.

Literature by minorities often speaks truths that cannot be said elsewhere. Set at the crossing between reality and fiction, minority literature gives voice to fictional characters who draw their inspiration from real life. While this can be said about any piece of literature, minorities need—more than any mainstream group—to present their take on subjects, and their life, within the host society through the protective filter of the literary text offering credibility through its position in high culture.

Sonia Farid (“Being Arab-American: Stereotyping and Representation in *Arabian Jazz*”) presents a cultural and social vision of a novel set in the United State by Jordanian-American writer Diana Abu-Jaber.

Farid argues that the genre is fraught with difficulties as mainstream readers in the United States prefer rags-to-riches tales with an Arab version of the America Dream, while avoiding mentions of cultural and geopolitical conflict. The text Sonia Farid chooses to analyze shatters the model of the exotic ethnicity, serving as a veneer, and delves into controversial topics and stereotypes such as the dissension among Arabs of various backgrounds, the patriarchal society, the role of women, and honor killings. The migratory trajectory of the main female character does give a realistic view of geographic borders crossed and of internalized borders carried by migrants to their new host country.

The invisible borders surrounding cultures are the main theme of Robert Jefferson’s text on African-American GIs stationed on the Southern Arizona border during WW2 (“Dark Passages: African American World War II GIs, Blackness, and Border Town Life and Cultures in 1940s Southern Arizona”). Several borders intersect in Jefferson’s text: the international border with Mexico and the racial border delineating groups of non-white individuals, whether brown—Mexican, Indian—or black. Arizona, has a long history of race relations. After the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexicans remained on U.S. soil as second-class citizens while Indians were in limbo, not yet citizens, and had to be protected by the U.S. army against massacres by locals. This was the situation at the end of the nineteenth century, and at the eve of the Second World War Arizona was still a stratified society when the black GIs arrived in the border towns of Arizona.

Jefferson argues that they felt—at first—more welcomed in the Mexican border towns they visited for entertainment, at least until their massive arrival led to the risk of racial strife. Jefferson’s paper discusses how black bodies were viewed as threats against the established social order, how racial purity was enforced in areas where interracial relations were frowned upon, and how black and brown outsiders interacted on the margins of white society.

The notion of outsiders viewed as threats is the theme of Maria Teresia DePaoli’s analysis of undocumented immigrants who have no voice to present their plight (“Can the Undocumented Immigrant Speak? Exploring Decolonial Thinking in Mexican and Latinx Literature and Cinema”). At the crossroad between cultural studies and politics, DePaoli also uses literary texts (in the broad sense, including film discourse) to present the trajectories of children brought to the U.S. with their parents and growing up undocumented as illegal aliens.

Her decolonial analysis starts with the term “alien” used by the U.S. administration services, and her criticism of its non-human, extra-terrestrial connotation. Decolonial thinking considers the economic purpose—as a cheap and uncomplaining workforce—of the illegal aliens. As racialized Others, they live on the margins of society, serving those who are protected by citizenship.

The question of borderland (“frontera”) citizenship is ironic as it brings us back to the first chapter of the present volume and to the empresario Stephen Austin settling Americans on Mexican territory. A colonial border was then established and the same colonial border is being discussed, crossed, increasingly militarized in the twenty-first century, and, as Brunet-Jailly argues, increasingly used as an exclusionary device (Brunet-Jailly 639).

Conclusion: the ongoing research on migration and borders at ILCEA4 - UGA

The present volume of *Représentations dans le monde anglophone* is part of an ongoing research program on migrations and borders at University Grenoble Alpes by ILCEA4, the Institute for Research on Languages and Cultures in Europe, the Americas, Asia, Australia, and Africa. We are also indebted to the researchers of PACTE (Laboratoire PACTE, UMR) and more particularly its director, geographer and border specialist, Professor Anne-Laure Amilhat-Szary and her research on the borders of the United States.

Grenoble is located in south-eastern France, in close proximity with Italy and Switzerland, and has witnessed border warfare and clashes over the centuries since the Roman occupation. Living close to international borders also means that many inhabitants have a personal experience of border crossing or family migration. The renewed interest in migrations and borders also stems from the last decade's world-wide instabilities also felt in this region of France, with civilians fleeing the war in Syria or danger zones in Afghanistan, and the demographic crisis in Africa sending a steady stream of African migrants across the Mediterranean. These reasons help explain why we are interested in other push factors, such as the dreary economic and social situations in the Americas south of the United States, especially south of Mexico, and the enduring pull factor of the stable and relatively safe countries of the north. As for international border management in the wider Grenoble region, we have experienced the growth of Europe with the gradual ease of trans-European border crossing into Italy—for European citizens—with the Schengen zone border control regulations. We have seen Switzerland accepting some European regulations, and rejecting others, creating situations where strict rules were enforced crossing one way or the other for citizens of Europe or those of Switzerland. More recently, we have seen migrants—mostly from Africa—crossing Alpine passes on foot to evade border controls.

Since borders control the flow of goods, capital, and people, the advent of mass terrorism in the early twenty first century added an element of threat to the management of individuals crossing international borders. Both mass migrations and international terrorism have thus led to more defensive borders, and to a discussion about wanted versus unwanted immigration. While this is not specific to the Grenoble area, it is part of a global experience.

The above elements help explain the reasons, and the need, for academic studies on borders and migrations, *i.e.* research disconnected from direct policy-making but offering a wider and more informed viewpoint on relevant issues. Many of the issues discussed here find an echo in the Grenoble region: territorial annexation and a displaced international border (neighboring Savoy was annexed by France in 1860), the integration of hard-working migrants in the industrial post-WWII days, the incoming flow of Syrians, and later Africans and the ongoing discussion on whether to block their arrival or favor their integration.

It is also our aim to discuss border and migration issues with students of every level, from the Bachelor, to the Masters, and to Doctoral studies. Our purpose is to provide

information that will—or will not—be used by policy-makers, but will form a body of knowledge that can be drawn upon when necessary, knowledge that can also be discussed, disproved or amended. This is the role academia should play in public life.

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