

Line Dancing: A Performative and Phenomenological Study of the  
Borderlands Region of Stanstead, Quebec, and Derby Line,  
Vermont

by

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## **Abstract**

This ethnographic study of the borderlands region of Stanstead, Quebec and Derby Line, Vermont uses an approach that draws from both performativity and phenomenology to explore the local life–world. I argue that there is a uniquely borderland way of being in the world in this region. This is reflected in the local experience of the border as something that unites rather than as something that divides. I suggest that the hardening border is taking a toll on the perceived unity of the cross–border community, even as a borderland way of being persists. I examine aspects of border enactment and claim that on the Canadian side, the border is cooperatively enacted, and that “smart” border crossing is a marker of borderlander identity. On the American side, border changes have made the borderlands into a zone of exclusion. Finally, I argue that borderlanders trouble the non–borderlander understanding of the border.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction: Methodology and Literature Review

From my field notes:

I'm at the Manoir in Stanstead sector. This was formerly an Ursuline Convent, but is now a retirement home. Specifically, I'm in the chapel, attending a line dancing class. This is a beautiful, large and airy space, decorated with ornate columns, plaster medallions on the ceiling, large chandeliers, and yellow and clouded-white glass arched windows. It clearly continues to function as a chapel occasionally—something of an altar, and a few old pews remain, albeit pushed to one side of the space. It is also obvious that the chapel serves primarily as a multi-purpose room. On one of the end walls, beneath a remarkable life-sized, hand-carved wooden crucifix, there is an equally remarkable pool table. At the other end of the room, there are a number of tables littered with an assortment of large-piece jigsaw puzzles and craft supplies. These tables have been pushed back to make an open square, perhaps 20 by 20 feet in size, in which a dozen women have arranged themselves in columns and rows. Most of them are French-Canadian, some are English-Canadian, and two are from the American side. I consider all but two of them to be either late-middle aged or elderly. A fit and enthusiastic octogenarian stands at the front with her back to the other women.

She begins.

She counts to twelve in French as she maneuvers her way through the sequence of steps that form the base of a line dance with which these women are unfamiliar. She turns to the women and says something that is clearly the equivalent of “Can you get that?”

The women register some confusion. The instructor turns her back to them and resumes counting off steps, this time in what seems to be an endless series of 12s:

“Un-deux-trois, quatre-cinq-six, sept-huit-neuf, dix-onze-douze. Un-deux-trois, quatre-cinq-six, sept-huit-neuf, dix-onze-douze. Un-deux-trois, quatre-cinq-six, sept-huit-neuf, dix-onze-douze.”

She moves continuously through each repetition of the twelve steps. By the time she gets to “douze”, the sequence of steps has her finishing ninety degrees from the direction she started in. At “Un” she begins to repeat the sequence of steps in the new direction. Each sequence of steps turns her ninety degrees. After a few sequences, some of the women begin to imitate her moves.

“Un-deux-trois, quatre-cinq-six, sept-huit-neuf, dix-onze-douze.”

Two or three of the women can do the dance now.

“Un–deux–trois, quatre–cinq–six, sept–huit–neuf, dix–onze–douze.”

Over and over she counts, and they follow her. After a while, most can do some of it, some can do all of it, and few still cannot follow at all.

The instructor stops, and moves to a tape player. It’s time to add music. She finds the song she wants and returns to her position, cuing the beginning of the sequence of steps with her right index finger.

“Un–deux–trois, quatre–cinq–six, sept–huit–neuf, dix–onze–douze.”

Over and over and over she counts. After two complete runs through the song, I cannot see much difference in the performance of the students.

She returns to the tape player, and finds a new song. She cues the beginning, and

“Un–deux–trois, quatre–cinq–six, sept–huit–neuf, dix–onze–douze.”

The song is a French–Canadian ballad, with a beautiful, slow, lilting melody line.

“Un–deux–trois, quatre–cinq–six, sept–huit–neuf, dix–onze–douze.”

After a few moments, I watch one by one, as the women surrender their bodies to the music, their eyes looking forward, but no longer fixed on the instructor. By the end of the song, the women are moving together, like a single organism—each one dances the steps in unison with the others, all of them dance oriented in the same direction. And yet each dances her own dance.

“Un–deux–trois, quatre–cinq–six, sept–huit–neuf, dix–onze–douze.”

I found myself at this line dancing class towards the end of my first two weeks in my field site. Somehow, in spite of my dislike for country and western music, this was actually the third line dancing event that I had attended in my short time in the area.

While I cannot argue with certainty that line dancing is more popular in this area than it might be in other parts of Canada or the United States (although perhaps it is), I can say



**Figure 1. The Manoir Retirement Home, formerly the Ursuline Convent.**



**Figure 2. Hand-carved wooden crucifix above the pool table in the chapel of the former Ursuline Convent.**

that it was a very important part of social life for several of my informants. Each of these women, regardless of language, culture, or citizenship was in the room as a member of a social group whose purpose was to learn and perform in unison the intricate steps of a new line dance. Stanley Tambiah notes Radcliffe–Brown’s perception that rhythm in music motivates people to yield to its form, and by doing so facilitates the creation of unity among people in collective performance (1979:113). It is unpleasant to move in a way that does not rhythmically conform to the music, and at the same time, by agreeing to yield, to collaborate with the music, the dancer experiences the “pleasure of self–surrender” (113). Dance in ritual is a force that brings embodied selves together into a particular kind of conformity. It acts out meaning while also creating that meaning. At the same time, the possibility for innovation is never excluded. New meanings may always be introduced, created, enacted within the framework of rules that constrain the dance. Tambiah argues that these characteristics of dance can be attributed to most collective rituals as well.

While my line dancing anecdote is not an instance of ritual dancing, it is nonetheless an activity in which a group of performers work within a set of “rules” to enact, or create a particular reality. Watching the women engage in the process of learning the changing steps, watching them work together within a complicated framework of mutually understood rules, and yet also watching each woman move with her own unique style—I was very quickly struck by the aptness of line dancing as metaphor for the way the people of my field work site navigate and negotiate their bodies, lives and identities in the shadow of the international border. But it also became a metaphor for how the border itself is constructed out of the interlocking performances of

the many people who interact along, and across, and around its collectively imagined length.

This thesis is an ethnographic study of the borderlands region of Stanstead, Quebec and Derby Line, Vermont. The border exists on paper and in legal documents—passports and permits, rules and regulations, economic and security policy documents—it has been cut through forests, and marked by cameras, but really, it is a thing that is brought to life only in the performative acts of people who enforce it, come up against it, sneak past it, or move through it. The border is created, enacted and transformed moment by moment through the communications and practices of people in many different ways, and through many different channels—corporally, verbally and institutionally—and it becomes a reality which in turn has an impact on the identities of those who enact it. In this thesis I will explore how identity formation and transformation in this region reflects a uniquely borderland experience of the world. I take an analytic approach that sits at the intersection of performativity and phenomenology to explore the unfolding of everyday life in Stanstead and Derby Line, and by doing so hope to demonstrate how border and border identity are, at least in part, co-constitutive. Put most simply, this study seeks to answer the question, what does it mean to live in such a liminal place—a place that is liminal because it is in-between nations, and a place that is liminal because it is always changing? In using this approach to analyze the borderland world, I also aim to show how borderlanders manage to trouble the non-borderlander assumption that the border is a line that divides and separates.

## **My Interest in the Study**

I have lived in a Canadian border community for the past twenty seven years and have had a vague awareness that as a person who lives near the border, my understanding of the border may be different from that of someone who does not. In July 2010, a young American fisherman strayed into Canadian waters in the 1000 Islands region of the St. Lawrence River, not far from where I live (CBC News 2011). Canada Border Services agents boarded his boat and threatened to impound it if he did not hand over a credit card in order to pay a \$1000 fine. Locals, who had always understood that there was no need to go to customs as long as one didn't touch down or drop anchor on the wrong side of the border, were infuriated. I was caught off guard by comments on the news article by people from outside the area who were largely unsympathetic to the fisherman. They expressed the idea that the border is the border and everyone should respect it. I responded with my own comment: "If you don't know this neck of the woods, you aren't qualified to comment."

I was reminded of this cross-border incident and my response to it during a brief family visit to Stanstead, Quebec in the summer of 2014. I was immediately struck by the evident conflict between the border as enacted by non-local bureaucrats and officials and its very central place in what seemed to be a single cross-border community. I saw the peculiar and particular material characteristics of a port of entry unlike any other Canada-U. S. border crossing that I had seen—this was a crossing intended for use by cars, bicycles *and* pedestrians. I was also intrigued by how the borderline between Canada and the U. S. is made manifest in public locations variously through friendly potted plants, electrical tape stripes across the floor in the public library and opera hall,



**Figure 3. The Haskell Library. The entrance is on the U. S. side of the building. The border runs through it.**



**Figure 4. The border through the Haskell library, marked by black electrical tape.**

and yet sometimes also by decidedly unpleasant barricades and angry signs dropped across what were evidently once through streets. This is a borderline that divides homes, yards and streets. It clearly affects the day to day lives of everyone who lives near it.

My initial research made it clear that this was a novelty that few news outlets could resist. In fact, Stanstead seemed to be the “go to” place whenever any American or Canadian politician offered an opinion, no matter how ill-informed, on any aspect of border security or management, weapons/drug/human smuggling, economic protectionism and/or terrorism. Locals in this border region obviously contend in their daily lives with a border that is forcibly shaped by outsiders—in effect, reactive media consumers and politicians who have little understanding or sympathy for the communities affected by changes in how the border is secured. But I could also see how borderlanders actively and with agency engage in representing their complicated relationship with the border to an always listening mainstream media, and thus also produce and transform the construction of border even as they are transformed by it.

Given the substantial interest that other kinds of border communities have received, (especially between Mexico and the U. S.), my preliminary research yielded surprisingly little academic scholarship focused on this specific area with the exception of an exploratory project by Laval University cultural geographers, Lasserre, Forest and Arapi (2012), and a linguistics study done by University of Montreal’s Pierrette Thibault (2008). Victor Konrad and Heather N. Nicol (2008) have written a multi-levelled (geographical, political, sociological and cultural) examination of the Canada U. S. border which includes the border region of the Eastern Townships and Vermont. I found little evidence of published ethnographic research originating from this region. I came to

believe that this site had the potential to be a rich source of data on processes of identity formation and transformation, and how the connections between different locations, voices and the reach of history might work together to both maintain and yet also change the shape of a way of being in the world—in a world so dramatically bisected by a strange, permeable, enacted, and yet very real boundary.

### **My Expectations—Drawn from the Headlines**

Here is a sampling of the many headlines I encountered in my preliminary research on Stanstead and Derby Line:

“Stiffer rules infuriate Quebec border town” (Peritz 2010)

“New gates divide U. S.—Canada border towns” (Associated Press 2009)

“Vt. Town’s way of life fades as border tightens” (National Public Radio 2008)

The following quote gives a sense of the tone of most of these articles:

Six Canadian and U. S. checkpoints service the 2 ½ mile stretch of frontier that cuts through the villages of Derby Line and Beebe Plain, both in Vermont, and the town of Stanstead, in Quebec. Street cameras, satellite and sensor surveillance, vehicle patrols, and the occasional thumping helicopter overhead ensure that residents can’t budge without someone watching . . . But the heightened security is a sign of the times that doesn’t sit well with all of the residents in these once close-knit cross-border communities tucked into the northern highlands of the Appalachian Mountains . . . Surveillance has grown stricter and more intrusive along the 3900 mile lower U.S.—Canadian frontier since Sept. 11, 2001, creating a continent-wide gulf that many argue reflects a political parting of ways, as well—American conservatism vs. Canadian socialism, as defined by Canada’s universal health care, maternity leave, tough gun laws, and subsidized day care and higher education. But the burden borne by the Vermont–Quebec communities is unique. Residents linked by intermarriage, blood relations, and in many cases, dual citizenship are now separated by an invisible but hardening wall. (Marsden 2016: par 2, 5, 6–7)

This article and others like it, give a sense that these twin, lovely, Mayberry-like towns did in the past function almost as though there was no border, and may even have, prior

to the events of 9/11, functioned as a single community. This was certainly what I expected to find during my stay in Stanstead. I intended to explore the impacts on the community resulting from the increasing security at the border in the aftermath of 9/11. While I have no intention of arguing that the tightening of the border has not negatively affected the communities of Stanstead and Derby Line, I would like to qualify my position with one little statement: It is complicated. Living at the edge of a country is complicated. Living at the bridge between them is complicated. I would argue that while the project of increasing security at the border has undoubtedly increased the gulf between the two sides of the line, the border has always been central to existence, to the ways of being in the world of those who live in proximity to it. The border is a bizarre human production and enactment, and the borderlanders are participants in this enactment—they define its presence, they challenge and redefine the rules of engagement with it, and at the same time, it shapes their identities—as border people. As one informant put it, “I like living on the edge of a country”.

### **My Planned Methodology, and What Actually Happened**

Prior to the onset of my field work, I spent a day in Stanstead and Derby Line doing some preliminary investigation. My husband and I drove into the region from the south. We crossed the border into the U. S. in Ogdensburg, New York, and drove across upper New York state, across the Lake Champlain causeway into Vermont, and then around the south end of Lake Mephrmagog, through Newport, up through Derby Line and back across the border at Stanstead Quebec. Our previous drive to the region had been through Quebec. It had taken us along what seemed to be increasingly uninhabited Quebec autoroutes, and left us with the impression that we might possibly be driving to

the end of the world. This second drive to the area left us with a sense of endless small towns and villages that run into one another without discernible breaks. We were aware that we had arrived in Newport, and were surprised when we suddenly came upon the border. Derby Line seemed to be a rural extension of Newport. I became aware of the fact that Derby Line and Stanstead are not isolated rural communities. During my longer stay, I realized that my initial impression of rural isolation on the Quebec side was also very wrong.

During this short visit, I thought it might be best to experience the area as tourists. We parked our car just inside Stanstead, in the Rock Island sector (see Figure 6, page 28). We ate lunch at a newly opened restaurant situated in the old Canada Customs building. We visited several local businesses, and I managed to chat up a few people. I collected email addresses from several who expressed interest in helping me find a place to stay for my longer visit, and who also agreed to do interviews with me.

Buoyed by my initial success, we walked back across the border (an unmemorable crossing) to the Haskell Library and Opera House. The atmosphere here was a little chillier. The border goes through the middle of the building, making it the number one tourist draw in the border region. An agreement allows people to enter from both sides of the border without going through customs, provided that Canadians approach and leave the building by Church Street. The building has been used occasionally by drug and weapons smugglers (for example, see Hopper 2012). Consequently, it is under constant scrutiny. Almost always, either a U. S. Border Patrol vehicle or RCMP cruiser are parked, with motors running, just to one side of the building. Staff members endure constant questions as well as the antics of visitors jumping back

and forth across, and playing with the black electrical line that marks the international boundary within the building. Perhaps it was understandable then that no staff member was interested in doing an interview with me for my project. One employee quipped, “We don’t need another academic here studying us.” I was later informed that journalism students frequent the area. This was the first hint of trouble for me, a warning sign that journalism had taken something of a toll on weary residents. In the end, one staff member agreed to talk to me when I returned to town, but only if she wasn’t busy.<sup>1</sup> Discouraged, but still keen, we drove to the Beebe sector along Canusa Street, and then drove back to Rock Island and up through Stanstead. I made note of a few sites of interest (the town hall, the Manoir—a retirement home, and the Colby–Curtis Museum).

When I returned to Stanstead/Derby Line several months later for my field work, I anticipated interviewing a dozen to fifteen people, each of whom I expected to meet rather randomly, much as I had met my first two contacts. Never mind the fact that one of my initial contacts (who had promised to help find me a place to stay) had left the country without a word, and my second had not replied to my follow up emails. I also planned to look up a few people who seemed to feature prominently in many of the news articles I had read.

I rented half of a duplexed house in the Rock Island sector—within sight of the Canadian port of entry—for the duration of my fieldwork, two months. For my first few days, all attempts to introduce myself to locals proved futile. And then I met my landlord. He was a locally raised young man. He worked in Sherbrooke, and his wife worked in Stanstead. Importantly for me, he was well connected in the community. He suggested that he had a relative who was “very good at this sort of thing”. He called her and asked if

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<sup>1</sup> She was always busy. I was not able to interview her.

she would introduce me to some locals who might help me. Within an hour, I was on the telephone with her and had the names and phone numbers of a dozen people, all of whom she agreed to speak with on my behalf. By the end of the day, I had booked interviews with four of them. I was in! Or so I thought.

My first interviewees proved to be very forthcoming and enthusiastic. I also recognized their names from many of the news media reports that I had read. Most of these early interviewees in the end became important points of connection for me in the community, and many became close friends. But at the outset I noticed a trend. I was often introduced to new people as a reporter—it seemed difficult to make people understand that I was not a reporter. This usually either shut people down, or at the very least, changed their demeanor dramatically. I realized quickly that something peculiar had happened—that I had been funnelled into a kind of media pipeline. When reporters come to town, people tell them who they should be talking to in order to “get the real story”. There are several individuals in the area known for being ready and willing to deal with the press. I think it is fair to say that they have well-rehearsed scripts. I do not mean to suggest that their scripts are not truthful, but, on the other hand, I have a sense that the truth that they choose to tell is part of a larger story—the story of knowing who you are, how you fit in, and how you should act, when you live next to something as large, and ever-present, and bizarre as the enacted line that divides one country from another, especially when those countries seem on the surface to be so similar.

For about two weeks, this was my experience. Then one day, I ran into one of these early informants, and he said “You’re still here!” to which I answered “Yes!” At this point, my experience of the community began to change. Now, although I felt certain

that there was still some eye-rolling going on because of my presence in the community, I noticed that people were starting to accept my interest in the community as genuine. People began to ask me to come to meetings and participate in social events. By the time I left the area, I felt embraced by many people—waitresses and sales clerks, business and property owners, local celebrities and politicians—so much so that locals were calling me when they were looking for local news and gossip! One month after leaving the area, I was invited back for the annual Christmas Bazaar, and so spent a weekend visiting with my informants as “an old friend”. I have returned several times since.

In summary then, my methodology was participant observation combined with interviews. I completed fifteen of these, most of which were at least one hour in duration. I was guided by a short script of questions which I attempted to address with all of my interviewees, although the interviews usually deviated from the set questions. The interviews were arranged as in-person meetings with the exception of one telephone interview conducted after I left the field site. Some of my formal interviews came about as a result of contacts provided to me by my landlord’s relative. Others were people I met either through them or through my interactions in the community. Eight of the fifteen interviews were with men. The average age of my informants was older than the median age of people in the area. Older residents were much more eager to chat with me about their perceptions of change in the community than were younger people. I attended, and occasionally participated in local political meetings, line-dancing rehearsals, musical and theater performances, dinner parties, the farmers market, several craft shows, and a New Age Equinox festival. I shopped and dined with my informants both south of the border in Newport as well as on the Canadian side in Magog, Knowlton, and several other

communities in the Eastern Townships of Quebec. To protect the anonymity of my informants as much as is possible, all names are pseudonyms, and I have attempted to obscure or eliminate identifiable descriptors (with the exception of the mayor, whose name I have not used).

### **Theorizing the Border**

Before I come to the particular approach that I use in this thesis to think about the situation in the borderland region of Stanstead and Derby Line, I want to pause and consider the idea of “border”—how the border is theoretically conceptualized—while being mindful that the central purpose of this project is not to theorize about the “border” as an abstract idea, but rather to consider what it means to live in a borderland.

The border as we know it today is a relatively new entity. The border made its first appearance along a trajectory that originated with a fundamental shift in the shape of knowledge: the birth of modernity, a time marked by “the colonization of time and the invention of the Middle Ages, and the colonization of space and the invention of America” (Mignolo and Tlostanova 2006:205). Prior to this time, empires emanated from centers of power, with their hold on power diminishing towards their fuzzy margins—the frontier lands. Mignolo and Tlostanova remind us that frontiers emanated from the center of a perspective that allowed no other (206). The establishment of the border between what is now Stanstead Quebec and Derby Line Vermont was an important event in the era in which empires were transitioning into modern nation states. Borders and nations emerged in a time that was beginning to acknowledge the existence of others (208). Borders create an outside from the inside and place others on the other side. I will describe the history of this border region in more detail in the next chapter.

Before I continue with the border, it will be useful to pause for a moment here to consider my use of the term “other”. For the purposes of this work, I will use this term in its phenomenological sense (see Leistle 2015). For example, I might use it to point to someone or a group of someones who I recognize as being not me, but whom I nonetheless have made some kind of sense of through the lens of my own experience. In other words, using the term “other” is an acknowledgement that there is something about the other that escapes me, even as I also perceive something of myself in the other. I use the term “Other” to refer to that which escapes me—the alien, the unimaginable. The Other is not simply different, but rather is something that exists beyond my understanding of the world.

Obviously borders highlight territoriality. Borders are often the place where the state is most highly visible. Sociologist Rob Shields (2006) notes that:

A border constitutes space as territory. As such, borders are usually conceived spatially from within a jurisdiction, and are conceived functionally as limits. Even where their precise location is arbitrary or subject to negotiation, borderlines are a location and locus of political certainty imposed on an often–recalcitrant topography. Without borders, there is no territory. (225)

Often their existence is evident in the structures created to manage or hinder movement across them. Other times, their existence is virtual—nothing more than a line on a map. Yet, their existence is not limited to or by geographical coordinates. Borders are multiplicities: While they are, most obviously, lines etched on land that mark edges of place, they are also abstractions written into government and legal texts, and technologies, and semi–permeable membranes that control movement. Sometimes their presence is virtual— and a presence not manifest in the present may become apparent in the future (225). Sometimes their presence is felt far from the place they mark (airports

for example). The border is an abstract, material and virtual interface. The spatial location of a border is occasionally subject to change, but more often, it is the “bordering process” that shifts and takes on different shapes as different interest groups negotiate the meaning and purpose of the line—who and what can cross it, and how.

Borders and borderlines are continuously transforming entities that shift in lockstep with larger discourses. They reflect changing understandings of the role and reach of the nation within a larger global framework. Whereas borders in the past were conceived of as geographical lines – that is, lines imposed on topography—to be navigated across (as onerous as this navigation might have been through different eras and different spaces), and which served to differentiate inside from outside, insider from outsider, borders since the 1990s, and especially since the events of 9/11, have become more diffused—they operate in different places within a space—and are conceived of less in terms of being solid sites of differentiation, than they are as points for controlling movement and flows of people and goods in an increasingly “globalized” world (Rumford 2006).<sup>2</sup>

Political geographer David Newman (2006), writing about the revitalized study of borders, reminds us of the contrast between the more or less borderless world anticipated to arise out of processes of globalization by social theorists in the 1980s and 1990s, and the world in which we actually live today—one populated by multiple and multiplying borders, visible and invisible—boundaries managed and structured “to the benefit of political and economic elites, but to the detriment of many others” (172). Border scholarship in recent years has become a huge interdisciplinary project involving

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<sup>2</sup> I have parenthesized “globalized” here to perhaps highlight the absurdity of using the word in such a sense. I’m not sure that the imposition of a particular form of capitalism on large parts of the world qualifies as globalization.

sociologists, political scientists, economists, law enforcement and security agents, environmental scientists, historians, geographers, and anthropologists.

While the processual nature of borders has long been recognized in border studies literature, a recent trend in border studies has been to more fully flesh out a theory of borders in motion (Konrad 2015). While not quite a unifying theory of borders, this is a framework for border research that accentuates the dynamic nature of borders as they are created and enacted, as they function on a day to day basis, and as they respond to both internally and externally generated challenges (11). My project is first and foremost an ethnographic examination of what it means to live in the borderlands, but in its emphasis on the border as something that is performed and as a result, is never static, I believe that it fits very comfortably into the borders in motion framework.

What follows is a brief sketch of some more specific directions of border literature. Some works clearly focus on issues of power and security in the new world order (Foucauldian perspectives—for example, see Bhandar 2004; Newman 2003; Walters 2004, 2006). Others focus on globalization and capitalism (see Anderson 2012—Marxist perspective). Post-colonization and decolonization processes also are of great interest to scholars (for example, borders in Africa—Cheater 1998; Driessen 1998, and South Asia—O’Leary 2012). There are rich bodies of work on particular border regions as well. For a collection of papers focused on European borders and bordering processes see Brambilla, Laine, Scott, and Bocchi (2015). Of course there has also been substantial work done on the Mexican U. S. border (for examples, see Kearney 1998; Muehlmann 2014—an ethnography that looks at borderlands people affected by borderlands drug trafficking; Vilo 2003, a collection of ethnographies of this border). It becomes apparent

after some digging that scholarship tends to focus on borders that divide “two distinct areas of qualitative difference” (Shields 2006:227)—in other words, borders that serve to separate distinctive groups of people from each other.

This being said, there are a significant number of valuable publications that focus on the Canada U. S. border—a border that might be seen to divide two countries which are more alike than different. For example, Jane Helleiner is a Brock University sociologist who has published extensively on cross-border experience and regional identity in the Niagara region of Ontario (2007, 2009, 2010, 2013, 2016). As well, Davina Bhandar (2004; Canadian Studies professor at Trent University) has published on the “new normal” of citizenship in post-9/11 North America. As previously mentioned, Carleton University cultural geographer Victor Konrad and Trent University political geographer Heather N. Nicol have also contributed significantly to literature on the Canada U. S. border (2008). Conway and Pasch (2013), communications professors from the University of North Dakota, have also published a collection of essays on the post-9/11 Canada U. S. border. Their book is a fascinating compilation of essays that contend with both First Nation communities’ perspectives on the border, but also with the cross-border reach of entertainment media. As unlikely as this mix of perspectives seems, the book manages to convey a sense of how fragile and illusory the sovereignty is that we see materially represented at the border.

In addition to the theoretical frameworks that inform border studies, there are also different ethnographic approaches for contending with the relationships among the border as a manifestation of the nation-state, its enactment on the ground, and the lives of local borderlanders. Early border literature tended to be concerned with the border as an

enactment of the central state, with its political and economic priorities portrayed in opposition to the interests of individual migrants and borderland dwellers (Grimson 2012: 198). Alejandro Grimson, writing about South American border research argues that this led to borderland inhabitants being treated as either “patriots” or as culturally contaminated and “insufficiently patriotic” (2012:199). He identifies a more recent trend in border anthropology which sees “. . . the root of all evil in the state—imagining and implementing an artificial homogeneity onto its territory—and idealized border populations as ‘noble savages’ who had best been able to resist it” (199). Such an approach makes it much easier to characterize those impacted by border policy as powerless victims, or as Joel Robbins (2013) would put it, “suffering subjects”. Wilson and Donnan identify another trend in which focus on the role of the state and border in a borderland region is minimized in order to concentrate on the particularities of a community (1998:6). Grimson suggests that such studies risk other kinds of essentialism: “One can fall into believing in an essential brotherhood or essential hybridity among all border dwellers” (2012:200). A more recent theoretical approach in border anthropology sees the goal of the anthropologist as “simply to understand the borders, those who live on each side of them and the actors who interact with them” (201). The strength of such an approach is that it complicates the picture created of the people who live in borderland regions, accounting for their agency while also acknowledging that they live in a situation not entirely of their own making.

### **This Project: At the Intersection of Phenomenology and Performance Theory**

The situation in the borderlands region that I have chosen to work in is indeed complicated, and my goal in this project is to explore what it means to live such a place

without essentializing, or presenting the people of this region as victims, even though the structure and functioning of the thing that defines them is controlled in large part from outside the region. In order to address the question of what it means to live literally on the border, and to do so in a way that captures the richness and complexity of life in such an in-between place, I have chosen to knit together approaches drawn from both phenomenology and performance theory. Phenomenology offers a way of understanding how we come to experience the particular realities we do. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology in particular serves as my framework for understanding what it means to be an embodied self in a perpetually in-between place. Alfred Schütz applies the principles of phenomenology to the social world. I borrow his concept of the life-world as a way of understanding the organization of social life in the borderlands. Victor Turner, who occupies places in both the world of phenomenology and performance theory, is my guide as I contemplate the border as a liminal or threshold place.<sup>3</sup> Performance theory can be seen as an extension of phenomenology in that it concerns itself with the construction of the reality that we share with one another—intersubjective space—but it also highlights the processual nature of the social world. The social world is created, recreated, and transformed in every interaction. I frame a discussion of how borderlanders contend with unanticipated changes to their world (including the tightening of the border) by returning again to Victor Turner, this time deploying his notion of the social drama. Erving Goffman and John Austin assist me in my exploration of the social

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<sup>3</sup> Here I would like to acknowledge Arnold van Gennep's contribution as the first anthropologist to identify and describe the components that form the basis of most rites of passage: the rites of separation, rites of transition, and rites of incorporation (1992[1960]). Victor Turner's work focused primarily on furthering our understanding of rites of transition—the liminal or threshold phases of rites of passage. I have turned to Turner because his work links directly with my concern with the philosophical notion of in-between-ness.

roles and identities in whose enactment both the border and surrounding community are created.

### **Outline of Chapters**

Chapter Two offers a contextual snapshot of the Stanstead and Derby Line communities in order to set the stage for the ethnographic chapters that follow. The communities are described in terms of geography, demographics, and local economies. This chapter also includes a brief history of the region, covering pre-settlement through the Prohibition era as well as some relevant recent history. The securing of the border in the aftermath of the events of September 11, 2001 is also described in this chapter. I begin the process of addressing local perceptions of community change that have resulted from increased security at the border.

Chapter Three functions as an introduction to the complexities of border enactment. I begin the chapter by telling the story of one man's resistance to sudden changes to the functioning of the border that have been imposed on the region with little or no consultation with locals. I present the social world of the borderlands region in terms of Alfred Schütz's concept of life-world. Schütz argues that each person in a particular social world has different degrees and kinds of knowledge about the social world, the depths of which are proportional to their relevance to the actor's day to day life. The actor's knowledge is sufficient and overlaps enough with that of his or her fellow actors that everyone gets along adequately. Turner's notion of the social drama becomes useful for considering what happens when one's knowledge of the life-world fails one because of changes to the border imposed from outside the region. I then present

an inter–community social drama that demonstrates how a chasm is growing between the communities on either side of the border.

Chapter Four is an exploration of what it means to be an embodied self in the borderlands region. This chapter begins with an extract from my fieldnotes in which I describe crossing the border for the first time in a car driven by a local borderlander. This anecdote becomes the basis for an exploration of the liminality of the border for those of us who do not consider it home, and how this might be different for those for whom crossing the border is a regular part of day to day life. The discussion turns to Merleau–Ponty and the process by which we come to have ways of perceiving and in the world (including the social world)—how they accumulate within us through the ongoing communicative relationship between body and world. I turn the discussion towards specific differences in how I as a non–borderlander experience the border compared to those who live in the region. This involves a discussion about national identity. Ultimately I point to a borderlander way of being in the world in which lines that are supposed to divide are experienced as lines that unite. Finally, this chapter ends where it began, with an anecdote set in the zone between border kiosks. A local man tells his own story of growing discomfort in the in–between place.

The final ethnographic chapter, Chapter Five, takes up the enactment of the border. The chapter begins with an outline of Erving Goffman’s theory of self–presentation, and John Austin’s theory of performativity, the frameworks used to analyze what is accomplished during border crossing. I then introduce what I refer to “the game”, an unspoken understanding of the rules and roles involved in crossing the border back into Canada by Canadian borderlanders. The art of crossing back into Canada without

having declared relevant purchases is an expected part of this game. I introduce this idea by first allowing two of my informants to describe their unhappiness with the rudeness and arrogance of some American border agents. I use this to point to what is different about the Canadian side: “a quiet cooperative enactment”. Borderlanders expect allowances because they live on the border, and in exchange, they assist border officers by monitoring and reporting misbehaviour by strangers. I then turn to the American experience of the border and describe how changes in border security practices, not just at the border, but also in the 100 mile deep area south of it has marginalized American borderlanders. On a daily basis, their loyalty to the U. S. is interrogated. Their proximity to the border has made them somehow less authentically American. I conclude the chapter by referencing Derrida’s idea of the trace, and I consider what is absent and present in border crossing performances on either side of the line. I argue that borderlanders disrupt our understanding of the border as a line that divides.

## Chapter Two

### Life on the Edge

Excerpt from Interview with Ellery:

Me: Were you born on the Canadian side or the American side?

Ellery: Yah, I was born just out of Beebe. From the Beebe line I was born out about a hundred yards beyond the Beebe line and that house was about a hundred yards from the border. And at that time at the border there was a building with a store in it. Uh, the building had the back door, north door it was on the Canadian side, the south door on the American side. Did I say there was a post office in it?

Me: No! You didn't mention that yet.

Ellery: It was an American post office and it was a small general store, very general and small and you know cigarettes and some canned goods, and a post office on the American side, and on the Canadian side, was only two things on the Canadian side. And that was bread made in Rock Island, sandwich bread and soft drinks. And they were from Sherbrooke. Bryant's was the name of the company and there was Bryant's ginger ale, and they had the franchise for coke also. And that's all there was on the Canadian side. And the post office, they must have wondered in Washington how many— they had more mail orders than they had letters. There were people in Beebe, people beyond Beebe—Graniteville, Marlinton, Lake Road, they bought—Everybody had four catalogues in the house, two American (Sears-Roebuck and Montgomery Ward's), Canadian side you had Simpson's and Eaton's, and so when you shopped you had all four going and most of it was cheaper on the American side so that's where they'd order. They'd go over and you didn't drive over, they, most people, a lot of people didn't have any vehicle, cars back then, they'd pick it up and head home. I remember one guy, when he was older telling about it. He'd go down and pick up a parcel and pick it up late afternoon so it would be near like in the winter it would be near dark going home and he'd hope a car would come along and offer him a ride he had this package. Yep, that was North Derby.

Excerpt from Interview with Manon:

Me: I'm staying down by Rock Island, that's where I've been staying for the last month, and I see so many empty stores. Did it used to be a busy, busy town?

Manon: We had stores at every of the doors, and now we don't have anything, and you know, what I find? People cannot buy even bread in Rock Island. They

have to walk or take a car, or you come to Stanstead, and we had two, three groceries in Rock Island. Groceries, and butcher shops, and pharmacies, we had two pharmacies. Once upon a time, we had a jewelry store.

Me: Oh, you had a jewelry store too, I didn't know that!

Manon: Oh yes, we had a jewelry store, a very good one too. . . and we had the Stanstead Journal was in Rock Island. They had a building of their own, and oh my, yes, Rock Island was booming then.

Excerpt of interview with Claude:

Claude: . . . But, I don't think anything has really changed. The line ups are a little longer, uh sometimes, not always. But I really...they still go to work, they still visit, they still shop. They just can't walk up the side streets and that— they weren't supposed to do that anyway.

Me: Oh really?

Claude: No, they were supposed to go report.

Me: But in the past, couldn't they go up the side street and then? Well I guess...

Claude: Yah, they used to go up the side street and go report. Yah. Everyone had to report anyway, now you just have to go up Dufferin Street. That's all that's changed as far as I'm concerned. And it stopped a whole lot of illegal entries. And lost people is the worst thing, because you can imagine, GPS, you're driving down Caswell up there, and GPS, you're driving down Caswell up there and it says turn on Lee Street, because it's closest. You go down Lee Street and you get a \$1000 fine. Now you can't because it's all blocked up.

Me: Well what about surveillance?

Claude: There's tons of surveillance and beepers and cameras, everything is watched now.

My curiosity regarding the impact of the artificial, but very palpable and visible boundary between the U. S. and Canada on the sister communities of Stanstead and Derby Line brought me to the area. In this chapter I will geographically and historically situate the communities and border in relation to each other. I begin the chapter with a brief

description of the geography of the region. I will then offer some description of the form and function of the boundary and its ports of entry. From there I will move my descriptions outwards into the communities in which they are found, and some of the stories that people tell about them—the facts as they are understood. I will outline some of basics of life in the region, including demographics and economics. It will also be important to sketch some local history. Finally, I will outline some of the perceived changes that have occurred in the region as a result of the events of September 11, 2001.

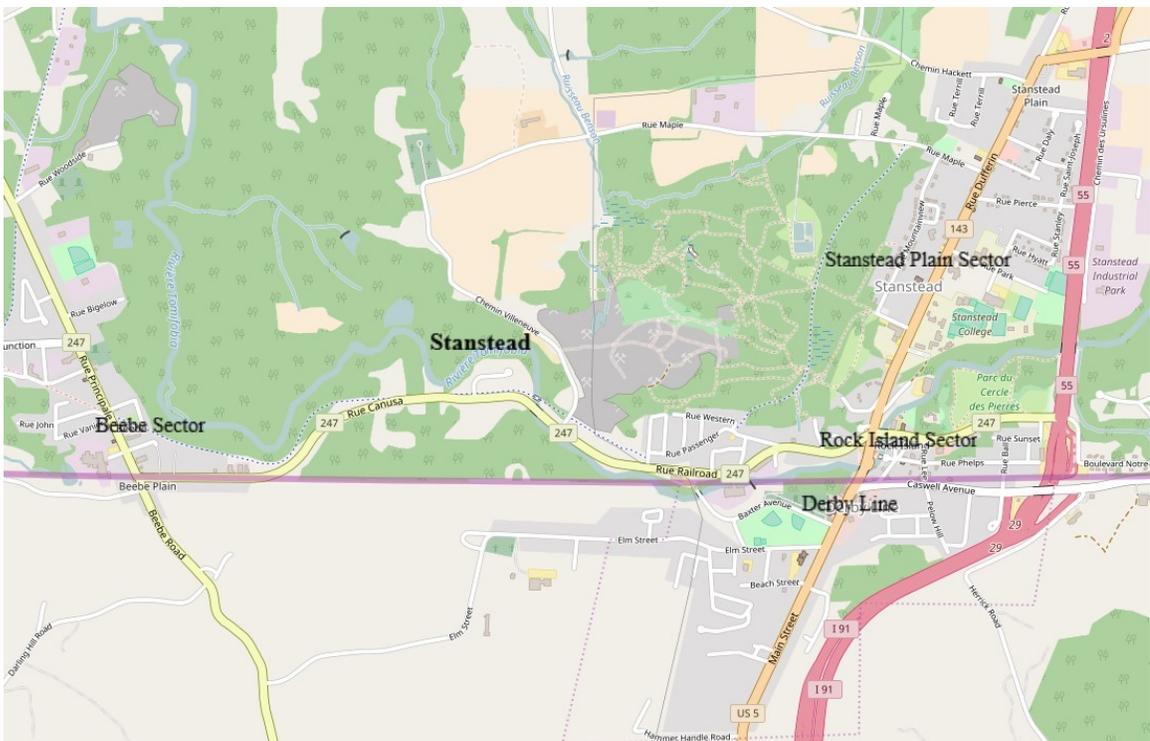
### **Stanstead and Derby Line—Geography**

The town of Stanstead is located in the Eastern Townships of Quebec, about 160 kilometers southeast of Montreal, 45 kilometres southwest of Sherbrooke, and 30 kilometres south of Magog (see Figure 5). Just south of Stanstead—down the road, across the street, and occasionally as near as the other side of the road—is the village of Derby Line, Vermont. It is about seven and a half miles (12 kilometres) northeast of Newport, Vermont, and 100 miles (160 kilometres) northeast of Burlington. Stanstead and Derby Line are located in the northern end of the Appalachian Mountains, east of Lake Mephrémagog, and on either side of the Tomiphobia River. The Tomiphobia wanders northeast into Lake Massawippi, the outflow of which is a tributary of the St. Lawrence River.

Stanstead was formed in 1995 as a result of the amalgamation of three historic villages: Rock Island, Stanstead Plain, and Beebe Plain (see Figure 6). Each of the original villages, including Derby Line, was first settled in the 1790s. I will fill in some history of the area in a later section. Local residents continue to speak of these former villages as separate communities—they tend to refer to the Rock Island, Stanstead



**Figure 5. Location of Stanstead and Derby Line in relation to Montreal Quebec and Burlington Vermont.**  
 ©OpenStreetMap contributors



**Figure 6. The Three Villages. Historically they were Stanstead Plain, Rock Island and Derby Line. Now they are Stanstead Plain, Rock Island and Beebe.**  
 ©OpenStreetMap contributors

Plain, and Beebe “sectors” of Stanstead. One often hears the phrase “The Three Villages” being used by locals. Sometimes this is a nostalgic move used by older locals and those on the American side to speak of the past collective identity of Stanstead Plain, Rock Island, and Derby Line. These villages—two Canadian and one American—came to have this identity because they ran into each other along a single road: Dufferin Street in Quebec, and Main Street, as it is known south of the border. But just as often, “The Three Villages” is also used to reference the amalgamation of Stanstead Plain, Rock Island, and Beebe on the Quebec side. During my field work time, I quickly learned to pay close attention to contextual cues in order to figure out which three villages were being spoken of in any given moment.

On the east side of Stanstead, Quebec, Autoroute 55, a major limited access highway, connects to U. S. Interstate 91 at the second largest border crossing between Quebec and the U. S.<sup>1</sup> Approximately two kilometers north of the border, Autoroute 55 is crossed diagonally by Quebec Route 143, a smaller highway that runs north and south and becomes Dufferin Street in Stanstead. As mentioned, this road runs south into Derby Line and becomes Main Street at the smaller border crossing between the former village of Rock Island, Quebec, and Derby Line, Vermont. Main Street becomes Highway 5, which travels southwest to Newport before returning back to a southward path that more or less echoes the path of Interstate 91. Derby Line is an incorporated village in the larger rural town of Derby. Route 247 runs east and west between Rock Island and Beebe in Quebec, a distance of not quite four kilometres. The route is called Rue Railroad in the Rock Island sector and Canusa Avenue in the Beebe sector. A portion of Canusa runs along the border for less than a kilometre, with homes on the south side being in the U.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://transborder.bts.gov/programs/international/transborder/TBDR\\_BC/TBDR\\_BC\\_QuickSearch.html](http://transborder.bts.gov/programs/international/transborder/TBDR_BC/TBDR_BC_QuickSearch.html)

S., and those on the north side being in Canada. At the southwest corner of Beebe, one can either turn north to continue on Route 247 (Rue Principale now) towards Magog, or one can turn south directly into the port of entry into Vermont at what was once the unincorporated village of Beebe Plain, Vermont—now North Derby, on North Derby Road.

Although Stanstead and Derby Line are located in different countries, everyone on both sides drinks water pumped from wells in Stanstead. A reservoir in Derby Line holds the water and it is distributed from there. Prior to 1995, according to a municipal employee, all water had come from the American side. All area sewage is treated in Stanstead. Most routine road maintenance on shared streets is done by the municipality of Stanstead, and Derby Line pays maintenance fees. The communities also share fire trucks when necessary. Fire trucks racing across the border to aid the community on the other side are not required to stop and report at customs. The communities also share a public library and opera house—funded by both the province of Quebec and the state of Vermont.

### **The Boundary, the Border**

The boundary between Canada and the U. S—the agreed upon, fixed line that marks the limits of both countries— is an 8891 kilometre entity that has been physically maintained by the International Boundary Commission (IBC) since 1908.<sup>2</sup> Theoretically, the boundary is an impermeable entity, at least where people, money, and goods are concerned—their movement across is regulated at designated ports of entry—the “border” is the term I will use to refer to these semi-porous parts of the boundary, whether they occur along the geographical edges of nations, in embassies, or in airports.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://internationalboundarycommission.org/boundary.html>

The IBC maintains 8000 visible boundary monuments, and keeps a six metre wide swath (“The Vista”) open along 2172 kilometres of the boundary located in forested or heavily vegetated regions, including between Quebec and Vermont. In the mountainous area of Stanstead and Derby Line, this border stripe is a highly visible feature of the landscape—it stands out on the slopes of mountains and in the valleys between. Any work that is done within three metres of the boundary must be authorized by the IBC. Security along the boundary is controlled on the U. S. side by Customs and Border Patrol officers, who maintain a heavy presence between points of entry and well south into Vermont. According to the Department of Homeland Security’s website, although originally established in 1924 as part of the Immigration Bureau for the purpose of preventing illegal immigration into the U. S.,<sup>3</sup> “[t]he primary mission of the Border Patrol is to protect our Nation by reducing the likelihood that dangerous people and capabilities enter the United States between the ports of entry.”<sup>4</sup> People in the region understand that the line is heavily surveilled by the Americans—many people in the area believe that, at the very least, cameras and microphones are being used along the boundary to monitor for unauthorized incursions one way or the other across the boundary. Authorities on both sides claim, rather non-specifically, to be using state of the art surveillance techniques and technologies.<sup>5</sup> On the Canadian side, the RCMP is responsible for patrolling the boundary between points of entry.<sup>6</sup>

A number of roads in the Stanstead and Derby Line region either run parallel to, or in the past crossed the boundary without an associated entry port. These are of great

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cbp.gov/about/history/1924-border-patrol-established>, accessed June 29, 2016

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cbp.gov/border-security/along-us-borders/overview>, accessed June 29, 2016

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/bi-if/index-eng.htm>, accessed June 29, 2016



Figure 7. Border monument.



Figure 8. The Canadian port of entry in Rock Island is just visible on the left side of this image. A border monument is visible on the right hand side. The "No right turn" sign is intended for people moving down Main Street, heading for Canada.



Figure 9. U. S. Port of entry at Beebe.



Figure 10. The approach up Main Street to the U. S. port of entry in Derby Line.

interest to federal authorities. Regardless of which side of the border you are on, locals assure me that any irregular travel and/or tarrying along these roads in its vicinity will quickly attract the attention of either U. S. Customs and Border Patrol or the RCMP. All but one local road that cross the boundary without a port of entry are now blocked by heavy fences and gates. Although Church Street in Stanstead was left unblocked by border authorities, no one is allowed to use it to move between countries, with the exception of patrons of the Haskell Library and Opera House who are coming from Canada. According to its official website, this very popular tourist attraction was intentionally built on the boundary line between 1901 and 1904 to serve locals, regardless of citizenship.<sup>7</sup> An unofficial agreement allows patrons from the Canadian side to walk the few required steps through American territory to reach the entrance to the building which is located on the American side, as long as they remain on the sidewalk and don't touch down on the road. Almost always, either a Border Patrol or RCMP vehicle sits running near the building with officers carefully scrutinizing every person who enters and exits. Although the rules for movement in this little area are well-marked, missteps by a number of Canadians have led to detentions and large fines. In 2010, much to the consternation of some locals who felt that the road should remain open, even if just symbolically, the mayor of Stanstead opted to place large ornamental planters across it along the boundary in order to prevent people from accidentally crossing into the U. S. via the road rather than the sidewalk.

Of the three border crossings in the area, two are located within the central business and residential areas of Stanstead and Derby Line. The ports of entry on the east side of the residential area (Dufferin and Main streets) each are located approximately

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<sup>7</sup> <http://haskellopera.com/history/>

100 metres north and south of the border. This places a large area of the “downtown” cores of both the Rock Island sector and Derby Line into something of a no man’s land. People within this area are required to report to the appropriate customs port to cross the border, even if they stay between the two border ports. Those who travel into this in-between area technically should not have to report to customs if they do not intend to cross the border, although as an informant will explain later, the U. S. border patrol sometimes demands that Canadians report to American Customs, even if they stay on the Canadian side. Additionally, in this middle place a number of properties, buildings, and residences actually straddle the boundary, which, as I shall discuss later, adds considerably to the complexities of living in this region. In later chapters I shall return my discussion to this disorienting part of the region. In the Beebe sector, the border ports fall on either side of Canusa Street. There is no counter-intuitive middle space here.

### **The Villagers and Townspeople**

According to the town of Stanstead’s website, its population is approximately 2850.<sup>8</sup> Derby Line boasts a population of 673 (more or less)<sup>9</sup>. On both sides of the border, the median age of residents is 45.6 years, three to three and a half years older than their state and provincial counterparts.<sup>10</sup> Just over fifty percent of the residents of Stanstead identify English as their first language, and forty four percent identify French as their first language. In Derby Line, 22.7% claim French Canadian ancestry. A large

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.stanstead.ca/en/welcome.htm>

<sup>9</sup> 2010 Census (<http://censusviewer.com/city/VT/Derby%20Line>)

<sup>10</sup> Statistics in this section are from 2011 Statistics Canada Census Profile: Stanstead (town), Quebec <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=2445008&Geo2=PR&Code2=24&Data=Count&SearchText=Stanstead&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&Custom=> and <http://www.city-data.com/income/income-Derby-Line-Vermont.html> data accessed through U. S. Freedom of Information Act

percentage of those on the Canadian side of the border hold dual citizenship. The nearest hospital is in Newport, Vermont, so every baby born here from the time women began going to the hospital to give birth (locals point to the 1930s), until the introduction of socialized medicine in Quebec in 1969, was born in the U. S.—and each was granted dual citizenship. Canadians now must travel to Sherbrooke to give birth in a hospital.

Youth in the community deal with long commutes to out-of-town secondary schools. They move away to attend post-secondary institutions, and tend to not return to the area. Between 2001 and 2011, Stanstead has seen a 4.6% decrease in its population compared to a 9.2% increase in the Quebec population. Derby Line has seen a 15.5 % decrease in its population since 2000. The state of Vermont saw a meager increase in its population between 2000 and 2010 of 2.78%.

Employment opportunities in the area are relatively few, and many locals find that they must commute out of the area for work. Locally, the granite mining industry, started in the late 1800s, continues to be one of the largest sources of employment in the region. The local flavour of granite, “Stanstead grey”, has many desirable properties and has been used to clad a number of architecturally and historically significant buildings in both the U. S. and Canada. Of course granite is also used to make memorial monuments. The recent granite kitchen counter trend has helped to revitalize the local industry. Stanstead College, a private university preparatory school, plays an important part in the local economy by providing jobs, and by bringing students, their families, and their pocketbooks into the area. Seventy five people are employed by an industrial glove manufacturer in Beebe.<sup>11</sup> A number of Canadians own businesses or work in the Newport

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<sup>11</sup> According to the Economic Development Canada website:

area, just beyond Derby. A tool manufacturing facility operates on the American side of the old Butterfield plant, providing jobs for as many as 165 Derby Liners (WCAX 2013). Several granite quarries also operate in the Derby region. Nonetheless, many from Derby Line find it necessary to commute quite far to work—Jay Peak Resort employs many in the Northeast Kingdom (the commonly used term for the three counties in the northeast part of Vermont).

Several of my interviewees made it very clear to me that even though the granite industry is the most visible economic force in the area, there are many small thriving businesses that are critical to the functioning of the communities. Stanstead boasts (among other things) a small supermarket, a gas station, a pharmacy, a SAQ (provincially controlled wine and spirit sales outlet), several banks, a hardware store, a garden centre, two bakeries, a second hand/antique shop, and a number of great bed and breakfasts and restaurants. There is also a brand new hockey arena in the Stanstead sector, and a well utilized curling club in the Beebe sector. Some Americans venture north to use these facilities.

Derby Line has a gas station, a pharmacy, a luncheonette, and a highly regarded bed and breakfast and restaurant. Derby Line residents drive south to Derby or Newport to shop. Many from Stanstead do the same, although Sherbrooke and Magog are also popular destinations for big weekly grocery runs. Many Stansteaders buy their gasoline from the gas bar in Derby Line. Many also have post office boxes on the U. S. side to which online purchases are shipped. As will become apparent, a much higher percentage of Canadians in the region are thought to have the passports necessary for border crossing



**Figure 11. Stanstead College. Private university preparatory school.**



**Figure 12. The old Butterfield's plant, Canadian side.**



**Figure 13. Granite quarry near Beebe.**



**Figure 14. "Stanstead grey" granite.**

than do local Americans. This is asserted by virtually everyone with whom I spoke in the Stanstead and Derby Line area (including border officers).<sup>12</sup> It is important to note that much of the retail and business space in the vicinity of the border, particularly in Rock Island sector and Derby Line, lies vacant. I will revisit this point later.

Although several of my informants expressed weariness with the visibility and presumed importance of the granite industry to the economy of the area, it is hard to avoid noticing its local presence and impact. In Stanstead, many businesses have signs made from laser etched granite—a strange juxtaposition of cutting edge technology and death memorial. The hockey arena (Pat Burns Arena), for example, has a very large laser-etched granite image of Pat Burns on its facade. Additionally, there is a recurring “school” in Stanstead for sculptors who want to learn how to work with granite. Many of their projects have stayed behind in the community and can be found in random and unexpected locations. Again, they tend to be “gravestone” sized and shaped. In the old square in what used to be the business core of the Rock Island sector, a granite memorial and fountain has been erected in recent years in honour of Henry Seth Taylor, manufacturer of the first steam-powered automobile in Canada (1867). And lest I forget it, I must mention the unexpected and yet somehow unsurprising Stonehenge-like stone circle that stands on public land between Autoroute 55, the Tomophobia, and Rock Island.

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<sup>12</sup> Passport Canada reports that 59.11% of Quebecers have Canadian passports ([http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/passport-ar/documents/PDF/ar\\_12\\_eng.pdf](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/passport-ar/documents/PDF/ar_12_eng.pdf)) while the Bureau of Consular Affairs in the U. S. reports that 40% of Americans have passports ([https://travel.state.gov/content/dam/travel/CA\\_By\\_the\\_Numbers.pdf](https://travel.state.gov/content/dam/travel/CA_By_the_Numbers.pdf)). These statistics offer no local insight. I found at least one website that claimed that 56% of Vermonters have passports (<http://chartsbin.com/view/1147>), but the data source could not be verified



**Figure 15. Granite carving left in the community after a workshop.**



**Figure 16. The Stanstead Stone Circle. The largest stone weighs 35,000 pounds. For more information see <http://stansteadstonecircle.org/>**

Stanstead grey granite does loom large in the local community. The area is surrounded by Appalachian peaks made of granite, and granite is the bedrock under everyone's feet. From early morning until evening, all day long, trucks rumble along the main roads of Stanstead, hauling loads of cut granite to markets in larger centers. Granite mills dot the countryside. Everyone's walkway is made from rejected end cuts of granite (given away "free to a good home"). The signs and curbs are made from granite. Indeed, until recently, "Granite Central", a museum dedicated to the history of the granite industry in the area (and model trains), was an important regional tourist site on the Canadian side.

In the next section I briefly describe some highlights of the very complex timeline of the region. History invites us to gaze on the spectacle of the boundary as a created reality, a created absurdity that has from the very inception of the idea of "border" been fraught with contradiction and complex layers of performance—both local and distant. From the outset, the imaginary line that divides Stanstead from Derby Line has always been real. That is, the line has always had particular kinds of meanings for and impacts on the lives of those who live in its vicinity that differ from those of people who do not—but meanings that shift and change, that are responsive to changing circumstances.

### **A Brief History**

The histories I will tell in this chapter reflect past and current local understandings and interpretations. To achieve this, I have drawn from secondary rather than primary sources and I have also chosen to base most of the story I tell here on the works of local historians from both sides of the boundary. Where necessary I have drawn from outside

sources that help imbed the local and particular events that I describe in a larger political and economic context. My emphasis will be on events that have risen to the surface in local memory, events that are understood to have given shape to the current state of affairs, and events necessarily understood through the lens of contemporary experience.

### *Pre-Settlement*

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the Abenaki, an Algonquin speaking people, were the original occupants of the land from the St. Lawrence River in the north to what is now northern Massachusetts, and from Lake Champlain in the west to the Atlantic Ocean (Hoxie 1996:1). Although the people with whom I interacted in Stanstead and Derby Line seemed relatively unfamiliar with local First Nations history, this history does continue to reverberate, and is important to acknowledge. The Abenaki were hunters, although they also grew corn seasonally. While the arrival of the French in the area certainly had an impact on Abenaki peoples—with them came disease, new religion and technologies—the French had little interest in removing the Abenaki from their territories and settling there in their stead. Rather, the French relied on them to help develop the fur trade industry (McIntosh 1984:26). Settlement of New France—which extended from Labrador to west of the Great Lakes—was primarily limited to farms in the St. Lawrence Valley, mostly around the capital of Quebec (Bothwell 1998:11). Although the French claimed the area that included Stanstead, they never settled it.

In contrast, to the south in the Thirteen Colonies, British colonists were intent on settling in Abenaki territories. Consequently, many Abenaki people retreated north into New France in order to escape hostilities with the British, although not without resistance. Abenaki warriors occasionally raided new British settlements (Hoxie 1996:2).

Local histories written on the American side stress the ferocity of the Abenaki: “They were a particularly warlike and brutal tribe, roving all over the area between the St. Lawrence and Connecticut Rivers, committing atrocious crimes and taking plunder, scalps, and captives as far south as Massachussetts” (Hay and Hay 1967:11). In fact, Hay and Hay (1967) open their book on Derby History with an account of an historical pageant that took place in Derby in 1959 that celebrated the two hundredth anniversary of the massacre of hundreds of Abenakis at their refugee village of St. Francis, on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River, by raiding British soldiers. The massacre was understood to have “broke[n] the power of the St. Francis Indians” so that “they were no longer a menace to settlers in northern Vermont” (12). It enabled settlers to push north, although fear of Abenaki retaliations lingered among English speaking settlers (White 1877:32).

#### *Early European Settlement of Stanstead and Derby Line*

In the same year as the massacre, and in the midst of the Seven Years War (the French and Indian War in North America) France ceded its North American claim on New France to the British. The area between Montreal and northern Vermont, however, remained unsettled until after the American Revolution. At the end of the Seven Years War, in 1763, the British government decreed the existence of the Province of Quebec, and set the forty–fifth parallel as the boundary between it and the British Colonies of America (Lawrence and Hubbard 1963[1874]:1). The creation of this boundary, as yet only differentiating between two parts of one empire, had huge historical significance. With the American Revolution, this boundary would become an important symbol of the transition from a world ordered by empires to one ordered by nations. Staying with

British North America however, the Province of Quebec would eventually be divided into the Provinces of Upper Canada and Lower Canada. By 1867, Lower Canada would again take on what had formerly been the name for the entirety: the Province of Quebec.

Several historians of the Eastern Townships offer playful stories about the origin of the on the ground manifestation of the arbitrarily set boundary line. These stories, I believe, give us a sense of what it has over time come to mean in local Canadian lives and imaginations. The first Eastern Township origin story tells us that between 1771 and 1774, two men were charged with the task of surveying the forty–fifth parallel between Lake Champlain and the Connecticut River to the east. Local legend suggests that altogether too much whiskey was consumed over the duration of the survey mission, although kinder folk blame poor instruments and difficult bush conditions for the final result: a marked border that zigged and zagged well north of the forty–fifth parallel (Farfan 2009:7). A second story informs us that the name of Stanstead emerged from the border surveying process: It is claimed that the surveyors were too drunk to either use their instruments correctly or even to articulate this fact. B. F. Hubbard, in 1874, retells the “legend handed down from early settlers” (Lawrence and Hubbard 1963[1874]:19) that the drunken surveyors slurred “Stand Stead” at their misbehaving compass, and this somehow became the town’s name.

According to Stanstead historian, Matthew Farfan, the British initially deliberately kept the area between the formerly French held territory and its colonies to the South as an uninhabited buffer (Farfan 2009:8). Following the American Revolution, the British changed their policy and began to actively encourage settlement along the boundary. By the late 1790s, settlers began to migrate up from Connecticut,

Massachusetts, and southern parts of Vermont into the borderlands area. At this time, the first homesteads were established in the communities of Rock Island, Stanstead Plain, and Beebe, in Quebec (Lawrence and Hubbard 1963[1874]:26–36), and Derby Line and Beebe Plain, in Vermont (Hemenway 1877:37,183). The enduring popular mythology on the Canadian side is that the bulk of these early area settlers were United Empire Loyalists fleeing the U. S. The border has therefore always been seen as the key to settlement in the area around Stanstead—this history emphasizes that the original settlers on the Canadian side had deliberately set out to cross the border in order to reside on the British side. Farfan argues that although land grants in the Eastern Townships were given to Loyalists and individuals being rewarded by the Crown, most settlers to the region were people pushing up from northern Vermont seeking not refuge, but rather, “good, cheap farmland” (Farfan 2009:8). The majority of early settlers necessarily came into the Eastern Townships through the New England road system, and the border between Vermont and Canada was no impediment (8). On the other hand, given the fact that the actual location of the border was uncertain (was it where the surveyors had placed it, or on the forty–fifth parallel?), regardless of their intentions, many settlers had no idea whether they were building homesteads in Canada or Vermont (Lawrence and Hubbard 1963[1874]:31). Ultimately, in 1842, a treaty was signed between the United States and Great Britain that accepted the surveyed line as the official boundary rather than the forty–fifth parallel. Some settlers were surprised to find that they were unintended residents of the United States.

On the American side, the Revolution is also cited as an indirect reason for the movement of settlement north: The same highway that Canadians acknowledge brought

Loyalists up to Stanstead and Beebe had originally been built through Vermont to facilitate a planned invasion of Canada during the Revolution (Hemenway 1877; Miller and Wells 1913). Many of the settlers who ultimately migrated north along this road had been involved in its construction, and at that time had taken note of the quality of the land along its path.

Whether it was loyalty to the Crown, or the convenience of a ready-made road through the now more-or-less uninhabited wilderness that brought settlers to Stanstead and Derby Line, certainly no settlers actually arrived in either of these towns before the mid-1790s (Hay and Hay 1967:20–21; Lawrence and Hubbard 1963[1874]:26–36). By 1807, the degree of settlement already justified the opening of a clothier shop in Stanstead Plain. Traders were also operating on either side of the border, charging locals exorbitant fees to transport products in and out of the area along the still rough roads (Lawrence and Hubbard 1963[1874]:28).

Matthew Farfan argues that “[f]or several decades, the culture north of the border was very much an extension of that to the south” (2009:8). Those north of the forty-fifth parallel had come from the south and certainly had family and social connections in that direction, but additionally, poor roadways on the north side of the boundary for the first few decades after settlement ensured the maintenance of tight social and economic relations across the boundary. Additionally, during the early years, Stansteaders were unable to produce enough food for their needs and turned to Vermont to seek out supplies of flour, beef, and other farm products (Hay and Hay 1967:48).

By the 1830s, the population of the French in Quebec (Canadiens) had grown substantially, and a shortage of farmland drove young Canadiens out of the St. Lawrence

Valley to seek either land or employment (Bothwell 1998:30). Many moved into the Eastern Townships, but many also continued across the border into New England. This accounts for the 22 percent of Vermonters who claim a French Canadian heritage.

### *Smuggling Emerges with the Border*

Whatever side of they found themselves on, regardless of whom they were loyal to, border settlers' early exploits have become woven into the fabric of borderland identity. Many of the area's first settlers have become infamous for the opportunities that they either quickly found or created in the presence of the international boundary. The following story is told by Hubbard in his 1874 compilation of Stanstead County history: Stephen Boroughs lodged with Stanstead merchant Johnson Taplin in the late 1790s. He purchased a large quantity of buttons from Mr. Taplin, only to return them shortly afterwards. However, he kept their tissue paper wrappings and used them to manufacture counterfeit New Hampshire \$3 bills that he passed back across the border (Lawrence and Hubbard 1963[1874]:27). Here is a story from the other side: Within the first few years of area settlement, an entrepreneur on the American side made a rough road to Quebec in part, to bring manufactured goods and alcohol into the region to sell for exorbitant prices, but also to smuggle locally produced potash out to the British in Quebec. Potash was highly valued by the British—it was an ingredient in soap which was being used in great quantities in the rapidly growing wool industry in England. In these early years, area settlers were barely able to subsist on harvests from their own land, and trading potash was often the only means by which local settlers could purchase necessary provisions (White 1877:32).

Smuggling was an early, regular, and perhaps inevitable part of life along the line for those on both sides. Although Lower Canadians were allowed to import “American timber, cereals, dairy products, cattle, poultry, and fresh fish” duty-free, they were expected to pay duties on all imported manufactured goods, wine, liquor, salt, playing cards, and tobacco (McIntosh 1984:36). This was intended to offset the administrative and judicial costs associated with local governance (35). From early days officials expressed concern that in Lower Canada, “the ‘extent and openness of the frontier’ permitted great deal of smuggling” (37), but it was almost impossible to deter or control it. Smugglers were, more so in the past than now, regarded favourably by many because their crimes were against the taxman, not their neighbours. They provided lower cost goods, and goods that were otherwise unavailable to the poor (1984:215–216). One revenue collector (duty collector) in 1851 reported that Stansteaders were “shrewd and lawless and ever-willing to aid smugglers” (Farfan 2009:9).

Revenue collectors occupied a much lower position than smugglers in the estimation of most citizens. They were widely known to overcharge duty and under-report what they did collect. In the 1820s, at the same time that the first Stanstead customs house became operational (a mile and a half from the border), it was estimated that the government was spending eight dollars for every dollar of revenue collected (McIntosh 1984:62). Farfan quotes the story of an unfortunate 1850s Stanstead customs house employee when he attempted to confiscate smuggled goods:

‘I was set upon,’ he wrote, ‘by six or eight men having their faces blackened and otherwise dressed to avoid detection. They chased me and, throwing upon me like so many wolves, they tied my legs with rope, when they immediately commenced cutting my hair with curses and execrations and said they would tar and feather [me].’ (2009:9)

Stansteads were not alone in their reputation for smuggling. Vermonters also proved to be wily smugglers. A U. S. trade embargo banned all exports out of the U. S. between 1807 and 1808. During this time, buildings were constructed that straddled the border specifically for the purpose of illegally moving goods into Canada (McIntosh 1984:231). One man did just this after settling in the Stanstead and Derby Line area: He built a house on the border with entry doors on both sides of the border line, which he painted on the floor. From this location, those who had fled to Canada owing money in the U. S. could meet with creditors or loved ones with no fear of arrest (Lawrence and Hubbard 1963[1874]:32). Likely, as was the case at other such buildings, the American side was stocked with goods during the evening, which were by the next day safely in Canada. McIntosh writes that “imports into Canada doubled in 1807–08” (1984:231). As a result of their smuggling activities, President Jefferson declared Vermonters to be rebels. Militia forces were ordered out to help contain the problem.

The War of 1812 created conditions that caused the government of Vermont to expend significant effort to deter the practice of smuggling. Hay and Hay (1967) report that after the declaration of war by President Madison in 1812, the Vermont legislature passed a law forbidding travel and trade across the border to Canada, the penalty for which would be a \$1000 fine and seven years imprisonment (48). During the war, demand for food and goods in Stanstead continued to exceed the ability of Canadians to provide for their own, and American smugglers were therefore able to greatly increase their revenues. American historians Hay and Hay write that when the law against trade and movement across the border was passed, “smugglers became angry and unlawfully resistant and the Canadians very bitter” (1967:48). Smuggling to Canada escalated, with

the result that Vermont “rais[ed] troops and levied additional taxes on lands for the support and arming of the militia” (48). These troops patrolled the entire Vermont–Quebec border. The effectiveness of the patrol in preventing the movement of badly needed food supplies across the border, “enraged the Canadians and British” who then snuck across the line and burnt a military barracks to the ground after relieving it of all supplies (48–49). From that time until the end of the war, according to Hay and Hay, Canadians who crossed the line into Derby ran the risk of being tarred and feathered. On the other hand, Canadian writer Hubbard argues that:

The inhabitants of Stanstead and Derby maintained a strict neutrality and continued their previous friendly relation to each other. As they had together and alike shared the difficulties and privations incident to new settlements, and as nothing they could do could affect the general issue between the two governments, they succeeded in maintaining an interchange of visits between families, and, to a very great extent, their previous business intercourse. Smuggling was, indeed, carried on by parties on both sides of the Line. (Lawrence and Hubbard 1963[1874]:30)

#### *Temperance–The Dry State of Vermont*

The boundary between Stanstead and Derby Line has continued to be the scene of many dramatic happenings over the years. It was a hotbed of activity during the rebellion of 1837–1838 (the Papineau rebellion) when a number of Americans and disaffected Canadians of British origin tried to overthrow the monarchical government in Canada in favour of a republican style one (Lawrence and Hubbard 1963[1874]:12–16). This boundary was also the destination for slaves seeking freedom in Canada (Hay and Hay 1967:212), as well as Confederate soldiers seeking refuge in the north during the American Civil War (224). There are numerous stories of notorious fugitive criminals fleeing into Canada over the years.

Of all of the eras that locals describe, one occupies perhaps a disproportionate space in the imaginations of borderland locals: the prohibition era of the 1920s. In 1920, the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the U. S. came into effect “outlawing the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors in the U. S.” (Wheeler 2002:6). By this time, the manufacture of alcohol as a beverage had been banned in Maine since 1851. In Vermont, its manufacture had been banned in 1853, but re-allowed on a county by county basis in 1902. The temperance movement had first risen in these New England States in the early 1800s. Between 1790 and 1820, the population of Vermont grew from 85,000 to 230,000, and the number of distilleries climbed to over two hundred during the same period (20). Fearing for the moral well-being of Vermonters, the Vermont Temperance Society was formed in 1828 and pressured the state into requiring licences for the sale of alcohol by inns and retailers. By 1840, the movement had successfully reduced the number of distilleries in the state to two, plus one brewery. Fearing that the state intended to become less stringent in the regulation of alcohol, the temperance movement campaigned to hold a referendum on temperance. In 1852, temperance became the rule in Vermont for the next fifty years (20–21).

During its early state-specific period of temperance Vermont could hardly be considered “dry”. A ready supply of alcohol was available from across the border in Canada, as well as from other states. Enforcement of the regulations was weak and often ignored completely (22). In Stanstead County, Lawrence and Hubbard report that by early in its settlement years, much like the early situation in Vermont, as many as 26 potato whiskey distilleries were operational, producing “3,000 gallons of whiskey, each,

annually” (1963[1874]:30). From Stanstead, the whiskey was easily peddled to both American and Canadian markets.

When nation-wide prohibition was enacted in the U. S. in 1920, it took only a few weeks to transform the roads between Quebec and Vermont into major alcohol smuggling routes (Wheeler 2002:24). Most of the alcohol smuggled from Canada was earmarked for destinations well beyond Vermont. Vermonters who resided along the border were often hired to do the smuggling of alcohol across the border—they weren’t paid well, but the ill-gotten income was appreciated in an economically depressed region, and even more so after the Great Depression took hold in the 1930s (26, 28–29). At the same time, most Vermont citizens were not involved in smuggling and were quite distressed by the accompanying violence, and presence of organized crime gangs in their midst.

In 1933 prohibition was repealed. While it was in effect, the costs of running the federal penal system increased 1000 percent, and despite the increased expenditure, overflowed with people incarcerated for prohibition related offenses (28). The incarceration rate took its own toll on society—families were pushed into desperate poverty, often losing their homes. Vermonters, although unhappy with the presence of organized crime gangs in their midst, also became disillusioned with lawmen and government. Nonetheless, a number of people in the borderlands region are renowned for having made their fortunes during the prohibition era. And at least two of my interviewees enthusiastically informed me that Al Capone was rumoured to have spent time in the area.

In the 1940s and 1950s large-scale smuggling continued in the region. Alcohol and cigarettes were smuggled to avoid duties. Cotton was another valued good that was

smuggled into Canada. Hank, an American man in his early seventies, first brought my attention to the cotton smuggling story:

Hank: That's why the villages prospered, because there was a lot of smuggling going on, they [pause]

Me: In my neck of the woods too.

Hank: I'm sure everywhere. You know here there was, um, overall factories, And denim was much, much cheaper in the states. And so fortunes were made. They manufactured the overalls in Canada, but they smuggled the denim across. . . And this is, you know, 75 years ago or so.

Bruce, a very youthful seventy-something man from the Stanstead sector who became one of my most important informants filled in a few details:

Bruce: One thing that happened is a lot of the factories here, okay, back years ago, like there was five, six, seven factories around the town here. Like a lot of their cotton and stuff, they never paid duty on any of it, because the trains used to come in, you know where the bowling alley is?

Me: Yes.

Bruce: Well, there were trains, well there were train tracks for Vermont over there, and there were train tracks from Quebec, and the stuff that came on the trains, they'd just put it on the truck and bring it to the factories around here. Until Montreal found out about it, and then they gave us, and then we had a provincial police, the mounted police detachment here years and years ago. In the 50s when I was a kid then.

Bruce recalls that denim smuggling by the local overall manufacturing factories precipitated the arrival of the first local provincial and RCMP detachments in the region.

In the intervening years there have been many other significant changes in community life that are directly attributable to the functioning of both the boundary and its border crossing sites. In particular, locals attribute many dramatic and negative changes in their communities to the U. S. government's response in the borderlands to the

devastating events of September 11 2001. I am not finished with the topic of smuggling, and will return to it in a later chapter, but it will be helpful at this point to address how life in the borderlands is perceived to have changed in recent years, especially in the aftermath of September 11, 2001.

### **From Undefended Border to Secure Border**

Here is an excerpt from an interview with Richard who moved to the area from another province in the early 1990s:

Richard: . . . But I remember just before 9/11 there was a lot of talk on the border and there was actually media down here at the time, just prior, because they were talking about opening up the border, making it easier. And they were going to make it more open for like mostly commercial traffic back and forth, but there was this idea that even like hinting at just eliminating the border, and um [pause]

Me: Like the EU?

Richard: Yah, and that was literally just the month prior. There was people down here and they would come to the—whenever there's a border story, they'll come to Stanstead.

Me: I've noticed that—people are very media savvy here.

Richard: Yes! So they go to the library and they film at the library and so we're used to that, so exactly, so people come and "We've got a story on the border and where can we go, let's go to Stanstead" so there was media here I think even in the, if I went back to the old [newspaper], I think there was media around here anyway around that time and then 9/11 happened and so some people were actually on the ground here. Um. But yah it was quite— people forget that that there was going to be a more open border and then all this, and then it just slammed shut [he claps] in a day and, for me on that day that was the story. The local coverage was that what was going to happen at the border and there was rumors that the border was going to close, that like no traffic was getting across. So that was the story— and that people were coming, terrorists had come into the U. S. from Canada, that kind of thing. But it was quite amazing how quickly it just slammed shut, the border.

Me: What sort of things did you see right off the bat?

Richard: Well, the security was heightened immediately, and um—

Me: Was that border patrol, or state troopers or—

Richard: I think, I don't remember state troopers. I remember border patrol as more present, and just at the border. It was, it became, much more serious, and rightfully so. I mean in the days immediately following it was like, no one was really sure what was going on so I think people were very patient and understanding and troubled by the whole thing. But there was also a sense of, for everyone it was a shocking time and there was a sense of reaching out to our neighbors too, and there was actually a contingent that came and laid flowers, of politicians and people who, in the days after, right down town, near the border. And candlelight vigil kind of thing. So there was a sense that we were in this together. So in terms of the border being closed, I think, no one was, certainly no one was outraged that that happened. It was very understandable that that something remarkable had occurred and that we had to um manage this crisis. Then it was afterwards that when things started to get back to normal that the border security really ramped up and you've probably heard the stories—it just became a less, much less friendly border. And that's troubling, I think that's was very troubling for the communities on both sides.

This segment of my interview with Richard begins with an acknowledgement that at the moment when the World Trade Center attacks occurred, reporters were on the ground in Stanstead and Derby Line to talk about the expected opening of the border. On this day a new and unanticipated era was ushered in for the boundary between Canada and the United States. Since the events of 9/11, security at the border and along the boundary has become of paramount importance to the U. S., and as a result has also had to become a major concern for trading partner Canada.

The boundary as a security threat to the U. S. had appeared on the radar of protectionist groups for a number of years prior to 9/11.<sup>13</sup> On September 13, 2001, in the first few days after the attacks on the World Trade Center buildings, two Boston newspapers reported that investigators were looking for evidence that the hijackers had

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<sup>13</sup> For example, this story ran in the influential Christian Science Monitor in December 1999: "Is Canada a Haven for Terrorists?", <http://www.csmonitor.com/1999/1223/p6s1.html>, accessed July 6, 2016

entered the U. S. through Canada—one article suggested this had happened by boat, the other said through a land crossing (Struck 2005:par 7). It was an easy assumption for investigators to make, but of course, in the end it turned out that none of the 9/11 hijackers had entered the U. S. through Canada. Nonetheless, a narrative emerged and spread, and as late as 2010 was still being told, that the 9/11 terrorists had come through the lax Canada U. S. border.<sup>14 15</sup> The events of September 11, 2001 were seized and presented by certain political elites in the U. S. as evidence for the need to better secure the border between Canada and the United States, and to redefine the level of control and surveillance involved in navigating one’s way across it. A detailed, broad discussion of the ideological and political processes that have driven the tightening of the border is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, in this section I will outline some of the ways that the border and its functioning have changed from the perspective of Stanstead and Derby Line residents.

Prior to 9/11, the communities on either side of the line, while perhaps not thriving, were nonetheless doing alright. Many more businesses could be found in what I came to refer to as the liminal zone—the zone between the two ports of entry in the Rock Island sector and Derby Line. Americans crossed to play hockey or go curling, or to pick up quick emergency groceries. Canadians bought gas and went to the post office on the other side. They also loved to shop and dine in the United States. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, as is evident from Richard’s experience, security at the border

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<sup>14</sup> National Post article headline from October 18, 2010 regarding a statement made by Nevada Republican Sharron Angle: “Another U.S. politician says 9/11 terrorists came from Canada”, <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/another-u-s-politician-says-911-terrorists-came-from-canada>, accessed July 6, 2016

<sup>15</sup> Something that at least one poll found 73% of Americans to believe in 2009. [http://www.robbinsscereasearch.com/polls/poll\\_587.html](http://www.robbinsscereasearch.com/polls/poll_587.html)

dramatically tightened in the short term. <sup>16</sup>The U. S government tripled the number of border guards, and adopted a “militarized stance” (Konrad and Nicol 2004:17). Lineups and excessive delays at the border resulted from “increasingly onerous border checks” (18). By 2004, border delays of commercial traffic were costing both sides billions of dollars. The move to expedite the flow of goods while minimizing the flow of terrorists, expedited the shift in border management towards a strategy of high technology surveillance (Konrad and Nicol 2008:164). The U. S. government began upgrading its ports of entry. The U. S. border patrol was given an enhanced mandate—by 2005, they were patrolling everywhere within one hundred miles of the boundary (North Country Public Radio 2011:5). A Department of Homeland Security (DHS) document indicates that by 2007, ground sensors and linked cameras, as well as thermal night-vision devices had been deployed on significant stretches of the boundary (Department of Homeland Security 2007). Additional high-technology radar and visual surveillance equipment was announced for the Vermont stretch (12). By 2009, gates had been erected across two of the three roads that cross from Stanstead into Derby Line. The RCMP paid for one, and the U. S. DHS paid for the other. And noticeably, the official justification for all these interventions had begun to shift. On both sides of the border, authorities were pointing to concerns about “criminal smuggling organizations”, in particular, those who smuggled people into the U. S., rather than simply terrorists (Associated Press 2009:par7).

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<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, most of my informants actually have little recollection of what happened at the border in their communities on that day. Whatever was going on at the border was of little consequence because virtually all residents were glued to their televisions watching events unfold in New York, Arlington, and Pennsylvania—they were not trying to cross the line.

For border crossers, passports became mandatory in 2008. As Manon, an elderly, French–Canadian long–term resident of the Stanstead Sector explains, this was experienced as a big turning point in the community:

Manon: It's changed. We feel strange. I don't go to, I don't cross over because—the funniest part, I tried to have my passport, I always had a passport, all my life, and when they insisted that we would have a passport to cross over, I had to apply, and I applied three times, and I never could have my passport. And even I had sent along with my papers an old passport to show that I had a passport before, but even at that, I never had my passport. There was something in the paperwork missing and this and that. So I said to myself, never mind, I'm not going to go along for the fourth time. So I said, no more. So no I didn't go on the American side, for five, six years now.

Me: So you haven't gone over the border in a long time.

Manon: I really don't have any interest in, only for shopping, but that's all. I manage on the Canadian side.

Me: What do you think other people in Stanstead think about some of the changes that have happened at the border. Are there a lot of people like you that can't go over?

Manon: There's some that cannot, they don't have any passport so, but you know, we miss that because we went on the American side so much, and so easy.

Me: Now when you were younger and it was so easy to go over, did you find that there were also Americans that came over to the Canadian side all the time?

Manon: Oh yes, we had friends that come in from the American side. That was just as easy as it was for us.

Me: When do you think it started to change, that it started to become two countries instead of one town?

Manon: When? It was from one year to the other. Laws changed.

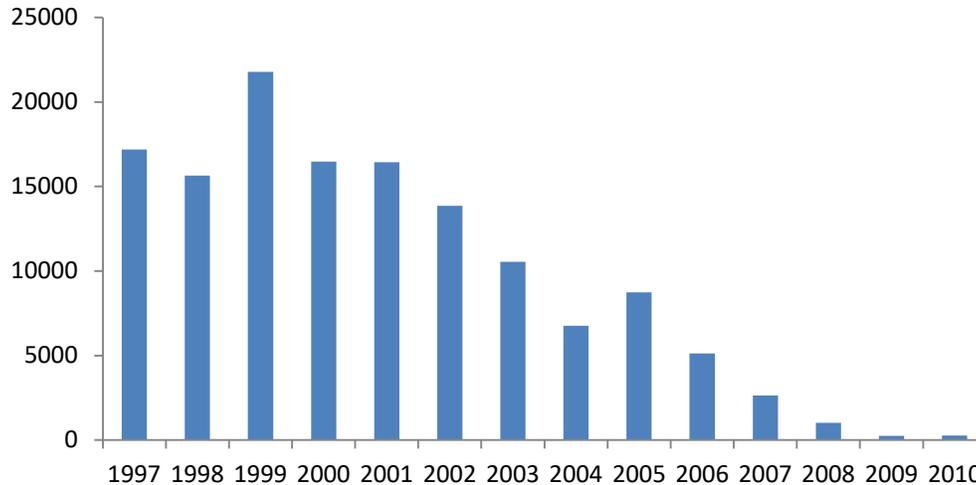
Me: So just a gradual. . .

Manon: Yes, a gradual affair, and finally it came to the passport.

Manon acknowledges that the changes that divided the community happened very slowly following 9/11, and feels that the passport requirement was the final blow. A number of informants from both sides indicated that acquiring a passport was too expensive for some residents, and that the requirement had therefore torn apart cross-border families. The passport requirement has also curtailed the cross-border use of sports and recreational facilities. For example, Stanstead College students no longer swim in the public pool in Derby. And the Derby Hockey team, which used to play out of Stanstead, moved an hour south of Derby so that the team could play games against other American teams, the majority of whose members likely would not have passports.

The passport issue is a difficult one for people in the area, and most of my informants mentioned it as a significant game changer in the area. Curious about its impacts, I found statistics on pedestrian border crossings at the Derby Line port of entry. I was surprised to see that most of the foot traffic—people crossing over to go their American mailboxes, or to pick up take out from Canadian restaurants—had begun to drop long before the passport requirement. Table 1 summarizes this data. It shows that there were substantial year to year drops in the number of pedestrian border crossings from 2000 to 2007. By 2007, pedestrian crossings were only just more than one tenth of what they had been. The requirement for passports cut that number in half again. A number of factors seem to have accumulated to create the current situation. A big factor for most of my informants was the changing, newly militarized attitude of the American border guards. Border guards had quickly transformed, as my informant Ellery put it, from “duty and tax collectors into policemen.” Here Hank expresses an opinion on the

### Pedestrian Crossings at Derby Line Port of Entry 1997 to 2010



**Table 1. This table illustrates the dramatic change in the number of pedestrians crossing into Derby Line in the years following 9/11. Source: U. S. Department of Transportation, Research and Innovative Technology Administration, Bureau of Transportation**

overall changes at the American port of entry that is representative of that of most of my American informants:

Hank: You know we used to just cross the border and it was—you knew everybody, and you know you'd have some small talk or something and, um, now it's just business. You know it's just, you answer their questions and—

Me: And you don't muck around, I mean I've noticed that. (laughs)

Hank: Nah, I'm just very abrupt with them and just answer their questions and, but that's—but they treat everybody that's crossing the border as if they're a terrorist and the average person typically that lived here pre-9/11 really despises that. They dislike it because we're, you know, not terrorists and don't like to be treated as such. I just have a terrible problem with their authority.

My American informants were each careful to mention that the new reality trampled on their rights and liberties. My Canadian informants had a slightly different take on what was going on at the American port of entry. They tended to report their displeasure at being treated badly, as though they were criminals. The border officers' rudeness offended them the most. Claude, a Canadian border guard said this:

We get a lot of complaints of certain U. S. border guards, only certain ones, and I know who they are now, I can tell, because, and they do, they treat people like shit, these couple, mostly actually one guy. But most of them, they're pretty decent about it, they know what it's like, especially if you get new guys, they just come up from the Mexican border. Everybody's a bad guy.

While I was in Stanstead, I crossed the border perhaps a dozen times. I never encountered the same border officer twice on the American side. Although the questioning became more daunting as my solo travels continued, all but one of my American border agent encounters were, if not pleasant, then at least business-like. During one crossing, I found the border officer to be difficult, and I did indeed feel vulnerable, perhaps even afraid, simply because of his manner and tone. I will come back to this episode later. Other locals commented routinely about "the guys up from Mexico" as if that should explain everything.

The border officers on the American side are one problem, but the border patrol officers, who police along the boundary, and up to one hundred miles south of it, present an even more frightening problem for borderlanders. Sarah is an American woman who works in the in-between zone in Derby Line. She agreed to be interviewed, but declined to be recorded. Sarah told me that one day when she was driving home from work, some distance south of the border she was chased by two border patrol vehicles. When she stopped the car, they drew their guns on her, and screamed at her, accusing her of not

reporting at customs. She had never left the United States. Sarah says that people in Derby Line are fed up with the bad treatment, and are now writing letters to their senators. Everyone agrees that although security had tightened up at the Canadian port of entries in lockstep with the American port of entries, some (not all) American officers were making life extremely difficult for borderlanders. Although people resented having to report at the Canadian port of entry every bit as much as they did at the American port of entry, the Canadian border officers continued to be considered polite and respectful.

It was in 2010, after the implementation of a DHS grant program that saw police officers from across Vermont converge on Derby Line to help patrol the boundary that borderlanders began to experience the worst problems with the border patrol.<sup>17</sup> An influx of law enforcement personnel from outside the area, untrained in border matters, ensured that locals were penalized for every minor infraction (Risen 2014:206). Suddenly locals who did not cross the border at the official checkpoint when picking up pizza, fast food, or visiting neighbourhood friends and relatives were surprised to find themselves handcuffed and detained by diligent officers (Peritz 2010, Chung 2011). Unhappy residents began to show signs of resistance. My informant Hank became something of a local hero after challenging a U. S. agent who attempted to stop him from walking back to his home in the U. S. via one of the as yet un-barricaded through streets with a take-out pizza (Chung 2011). I will tell his story in more detail in a later chapter.

### **Stanstead and Derby Line—Divided Communities?**

What has the net result been of the project of securing the border? Locals have said a great deal to reporters about what has happened as a result of tightening border security. One local resident argued that the U. S. has the right to do what is necessary to

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<sup>17</sup>From <https://immigrationforum.org/blog/operation-stonegarden/>, accessed June 12, 2016.

protect itself at its borders, but the outcome of those actions “harm[s] communities like these” (Associated Press 2009:par 13). Another resident said “we don’t consider the border a border. . . . We consider the village as all one. These gates split the community” (par 14). After the Stanstead Mayor placed flowerpots across Church Street to encourage locals to use the official crossing, locals indicated to the press that although his intentions were good, the new fences have contributed to the sense of loss in the community. A retired U.S. customs officer and Derby Line trustee told a reporter “we’re losing a lot. We’re growing further apart from our neighbours” (Chung 2011:par 31). Almost always, there is an emphasis with the press that the towns formerly functioned as a single community, and they have been wedged apart by inflexible security policies developed far from their sites of implementation.

Several of my interviewees, especially the first ones, also indicated to *me* that the tightened security at the border was responsible for the cleavage of the community—but I began to question if this had been the sole cause of the division. It certainly seems true that the communities are not one. But when did the split happen? And were the communities ever really one, simply existing with an accidental, absurd, and meaningless international boundary in their midst?

As my field work progressed, I started to catch tiny hints that things weren’t as the locals liked to portray them. I asked most of my interviewees some version of the question: “Prior to 9/11, was it your impression that this was a community or was it two communities with the border in the middle?” At first, when people did not understand who I was, most said it was one community. After several weeks, I started to get different answers to the question. Richard, who moved to the area in 1992, offered me this:

I got the sense that it was two communities, but very close communities. And I'm sure you know by now the original three villages when they talk about the three villages, Stanstead Plain, Rock Island, Derby Line? When I got here the three villages was Beebe so that had transformed already. So there was really that feeling that this was the community, [and] that was another community. But there was so much crossover, the churches, the library, community organizations like the rotary, so that was like a surprise to me that these boundary organizations existed.

Suzanne, a very French Canadian resident of the retirement home said this when I asked her if Derby Line had always been its own separate village: "Oh yah, oh yah, it's been there for I don't know, the line, the State is there." I began to suspect that although the communities had in the past undoubtedly been much more closely connected, the American side and the Canadian side had probably not really functioned as a singular community in living memory. The fact was, in all of the stories my informants told me, the borderline was always a central feature. For example, here is Bruce reminiscing about his boyhood:

Yes! All the Americans like [name], all the French kids, the Catholic French boys from Derby Line, from Holland even, you know, way up on the hill there, they'd walk down those big hills and they didn't go to report, no no no no. It's like us, where the bowling alley is, if you've been down there, there's a bridge there and it's closed, okay, but that wasn't closed before, and we lived down in the area around Pocket Street, we'd go play ball in Derby Line, we never went to the customs, we'd just go play ball, we'd be playing ball for hours, we'd come back we'd get down there, we'd go sliding okay and never did we report. We'd go—that was a heck of a nice hill to slide there with a bobsled and stuff like that, eh?

In Bruce's story, there are the Americans (them) and the Canadians (us). Clearly there was a sense that that they could interact freely, but there was a "here"—Stanstead, Quebec, and there was a "there"—Derby Line, Vermont. There is no sense that the places were one. Despite their familiarity and ease with the undefended, unsecuritized boundary,

it nonetheless seemed to function well as a place holder, a threshold. Clearly it loomed large in people's minds.

Here was another fact that unsettled me: Early in my fieldwork I became aware that many fewer Derby Liners regularly crossed the border than did Stansteads. This was confirmed by Claude, the Canadian border officer, who told me that “we get, anywhere from four to five hundred cars a day, average, downtown here, and out of that, I would say eighty percent of it is Canadian, from Quebec. Yah, so it's a lot more Canadians going back and forth than Americans.” The question was why. Sarah was the first to point me in a particular direction. During my interview with her, I asked her if more Canadians crossed over into the U. S. than Americans crossed into Canada. She said that yes, that was true, and that among Americans in Derby Line, there was a sense that the world ended at the border. Why would they want to cross into Canada?

Ultimately, several of my informants identified changes in the province of Quebec in the latter half of the twentieth century as the likely root cause of American disinterest in coming up to Canada. The 1950s and 1960s saw the rise of Quebec nationalism, which culminated in the election of a separatist government in 1976. Along the way, social welfare became a provincial priority, and universal socialized health care came into effect in 1969. The so-called Quiet Revolution saw the departure of an estimated half million Anglophones out of Quebec in the same period.<sup>18</sup> Over the course of a decade, the Eastern Townships, which in the past had had an Anglophone majority, were now much more French. Language laws also changed: Signs were required to be in French. Quebec

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<sup>18</sup> From “Portraits of Official–Language Minorities in Canada—Anglophones in Quebec” 2010, page 51 <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-642-x/89-642-x2010002-eng.pdf>, accessed July 9, 2016

suddenly became very foreign, very alien, and very uninteresting to many on the Derby Line side.

The Quiet Revolution explanation for why Americans don't cross over into Quebec makes sense. It's undoubtedly a significant part of the story. But there is another local and particular set of circumstances that I also have come to believe is a major contributor to the break-up of Stanstead and Derby Line: economics. The recession of the early 1980s saw unemployment and interest rates soar in the U. S. and Canada. In 1982, a labour dispute erupted at the Butterfield and Company factory in Rock Island (Farfan 2014). Butterfield's was a tool and die manufacturer that occupied a large red brick industrial facility that straddled the border. At its peak, it employed more than 800 people. After a lengthy strike on the Canadian side, the owners of the company shuttered the Canadian side of the plant and moved operations to Smiths Falls, Ontario. The local economy on the Canadian side was devastated. The effects of the closure on the community are legendary—people tend to refer to two different time eras: before closure and after closure. Whether or not all the aftermath can be attributed to the closure of Butterfields, and perhaps it should be situated in the larger social, political, economic framework, here is what happened: One by one, over the next few decades, virtually all the small businesses that had peppered the Rock Island sector and Derby Line disappeared. I believe that this is part of the explanation for the drop in pedestrian crossings evident in Table 1. There was really nothing to walk to.

I have spent a great deal of time on this question of whether or not Stanstead and Derby Line were ever really one community or not, in part because the claim seems very important to locals on both sides of the line. I have also dwelled on it because for me this

claim became a strange irritation which demanded a particular kind of attention. In his paper on border ethnography in South America, Alejandro Grimson offers this observation: “In the Southern Cone, the very fact that local border discourse is full of statements about a ‘shared culture’ and the absence of cross–border conflict should make any ethnographer doubt the ‘truth’ of such claims” (2012:201). I am not sure that that is fair in the case of Stanstead and Derby Line. I have come to see that the people of the borderland region in which I worked mean something when they make their claim. My job as an anthropologist is not to interrogate the truth of their claim, but rather is to try to understand the truth in the claim. My task is to grab a sense of what it means to say that these communities used to be one, and have increasingly become divided since the events of 9/11. In the chapters that follow, this small irritation becomes the foundation for how I explore the borderland life–world, and the way of being in the world that is unique to the region. I will argue that there indeed has been and continues to be a oneness to this cross–border community, and that oneness is under threat.

As a student of anthropology, I have become accustomed to hearing and speaking one particular phrase: “It’s complicated.” And so it is in Stanstead and Derby Line. In this chapter I have presented a snapshot of the community as it is today, and as it has been in the past. I have discussed the complex relationship that has always existed between borderlanders and the border, and have described recent changes to the structure and function of the border, as well as some of the impacts those changes have had on local borderlanders. I have also teased apart some of the subtle differences between historical experiences and perceptions on either side of the line. In the chapter that

follows, I will begin the process of excavating from both my experiences in the region, and the stories people have told me, what it means to be a border person.

### Chapter Three

#### Pizza and Hot Air: The Social Drama

The basic premise of my thesis is very simple: In essence, I argue that the border, like every other aspect of social life, is enacted. Reality in the border region, as it is everywhere else, is produced in expressive acts or performances, and takes place in situations, the definitions of which have been mutually agreed upon (Goffman 1959:9). Knowledge of our social worlds tends to be taken for granted, and our behaviour and interactions are very “business as usual”, unless something unexpected or unimaginable interrupts the flow of everyday happenings. In these moments, the open-endedness and indeterminacy of reality becomes apparent: Some kind of meaning must be made of the alien and unexpected, and then life goes on.

In the last chapter, I gave a sense of the cast of characters that enact the region, as well as a sense of setting. In the next few chapters, I will use material from my stay in Stanstead and Derby line to think about what it means to live on the border and how both the life-world and way of being in the world reflect a particularly borderland perspective. I will use this chapter to introduce some of the complexities of border enactment, particularly as they reflect the impact of changes in the structure and functioning of the border on cross-border relationships among borderlanders.

Stanstead and Derby Line are fascinating places precisely because of the peculiarity of their situation. The border marks both the centre of the region but also defines the edges of two nations. And as permanent a feature of the landscape as the border in this area has been through the last 250 or so years, it has also always been in flux. Its enacted form shifts and changes depending on which border agents are working

on it in any given moment, who is trying to cross it, what the political priorities are in the seats of power on either side of it, and also what the fears and demands are of citizens who live nowhere near it. Locals are regularly bombarded by changes and conflicts that almost always originate outside the local environment. Yet those changes and conflicts are only made real in local enactments. The limits of the border and its reach into the lives of those who live in proximity to it might be fuzzy and constantly subject to transformation, and the power dynamic undoubtedly favours the person with the gun and government appointed authority, but all isn't as it seems at a glance. The people of Stanstead and Derby Line become justifiably unsettled when the rules of border life change, but their responses to those changes do have an effect on the shape of the lived border. It is important to keep in mind that the rules have changed with regularity since the very beginning of settler life in the region, and those changes have always been part of the game, part of the art of living on the border. Sometimes those changes come into awareness through events that become community happenings, but border changes also bring about unexpected consequences that lead to social dramas of a different kind.

What happens then, when one is living one's life as one always has, when one has a taken-for-granted understanding of relationships and structures (such as the functioning of the border), when one is certain of where and how one can and should move in space and place, and when suddenly, without warning or negotiation, someone—some force from outside the life-world changes the rules? How does the local life-world come back into equilibrium? And what has changed in the process? What has remained the same? In this chapter, I will consider two significant recent social dramas that reached across the border for very different reasons, and yet which I believe to be linked. To aid

me in this exploration, I will begin by considering Alfred Schütz's framework for thinking about the phenomenology of everyday social life. I will then turn to Victor Turner's conceptualization of the social drama to help me unpack the particular dramas that I have chosen to write about here. Before I turn to theory, let me introduce you to Hank Peters, a well-known and loved Derby Line man who was going about his daily business, in his everyday life-world, when he encountered a very large glitch in the normal pattern of things.

### **Pizza: Pick-Up or Delivery**

Hank Peters was one of the first people I sought out in Stanstead/Derby Line when I arrived. He is an active community leader. His story is well known on both sides of the border and beyond. In what follows, I have changed his name and aspects of his identity in order to protect his privacy. Before I continue his story, here is an excerpt from my field notes (September 17) regarding my initial encounter with Hank. In this excerpt, I write about an early crossing into Derby Line. My intention on this visit was to participate in an official tour of the Haskell Library and Opera House, but having a few minutes to wait before the tour began, I decided to walk around the border zone on the American side:

I decided to go find Hank. And he was exactly where I was told [by locals] that he would be—quietly working in his Derby Line office. He looked to be late middle-aged, perhaps older. His receptionist/gatekeeper let me pass through to the inner sanctum with a knowing expression on her face (knowing that I'd be out the door and gone soon enough). I explained to him who I was, and what I was here to do. I said to him enthusiastically, "You are a rock star in these parts". He dropped his head and chuckled a little at that. But he looked tired and unhappy with my sudden appearance in his place of business. I tried to assure him that I wasn't here to exploit the situation, or capitalize on it, and that I just intended to write about the situation as a social scientist—about what's "really" going on here, in his home. He said "It makes me gag just thinking about the 'story', and all the interviews I've done". I began to feel that I should apologize and withdraw,

but then Hank let out a sigh and said “Because you are a student, I will do it”. So we agreed to meet at his business the next afternoon. I resolved to NOT ask him about “the pizza incident”, but rather to focus on his life as a citizen of the community.

Indeed, during the interview I did not ask him to tell me this story, but he did suggest that I read James Risen’s (2014:205–209) version of his infamous misadventure. Here are the essential events of a particular Saturday evening in February 2010, as outlined by Risen and approved of by Hank:

On this evening, Hank crossed over into Stanstead from Derby Line to pick up a pizza that he had ordered from the nearby popular pizzeria. Under an agreement between Derby Line and Homeland Security, at this time, two of the three roads that ran between Stanstead and Derby Line had been gated, but up to this time, the third had remained open for local use. Hank therefore quite naturally turned up the un-gated road and walked across the border, towards home with his pizza. He was quite surprised when a Vermont state trooper intercepted him. This particular state trooper had been assigned to the Derby Line border region under a special Homeland Security initiative that had begun in 2009. The point is that he was not a local resident, but rather was a stranger brought in from the outside. The trooper asked to see identification, and informed Hank that it was illegal to cross into the U. S. at this location. Risen writes, “[Hank] knew that wasn’t true—keeping Church Street open had been part of Derby Line’s compromise with Homeland Security [at the time the gates were erected on the other two through roads]” (207). Hank was eventually sent home with a warning. As he ate his pizza, he began to feel angry about both the way he had been treated by this stranger, but also about the impact that the Homeland Security initiative was having on his community. He decided to take a stand, and got up, walked outside and back down the road he had been

intercepted on, and returned to Canada. He walked back and forth across the border one more time, just to be sure he had been noticed. Within a few moments, a sheriff's deputy drove up to him and informed him that he was breaking the law. "Through gritted teeth, Hank said that it was his right as a U. S. citizen, that he had lived there all his life, and that Church Street had been kept open under Derby Line's deal with the federal government. The deputy pointed to a new sign that said it was illegal to cross Church Street" (208). Hank had never seen the sign before, and argued with the deputy that Homeland Security had put the sign up without consulting with, or even informing locals. A group of border patrol agents arrived during this disagreement, handcuffed Hank, and took him to the Border Patrol detention center in Newport where he was held for three hours. Eventually, a local border patrol officer who knew Hank heard about his predicament and intervened. He took Hank back to his home.

At this point, thinking-as-usual was out of the question for Hank. Prior to this, Hank's life-world had a comfortable, mostly predictable order to it. The addition of gates to formerly through streets had certainly been a difficult pill to swallow for locals, but locals had been able to negotiate a compromise with which everyone had been willing to live. The sudden closure of Church Street to local movement was a devastating development. Something new and unexpected had intruded into his life-world—but not just into Hank's world—into the life-world of everyone who lived on either side of the border in this region. It was a development that demanded attention, and action. It became a social drama.

## **The Life–World**

Before I introduce Schütz’s framework for the everyday life–world, I will begin with a few fundamentals of phenomenology—the branch of philosophy that is concerned with uncovering the structures that give rise to and organize the way we experience the world. Perspective, fullness and incompleteness are three such structures. To speak of perspective as a structure of experience is to reference the fact that as embodied beings, we always experience the world from a particular point of view. We know that if we move, we will see things from a different angle. We also are confident that other people around us are experiencing the world from different points of view. Additionally, we have different senses that allow us to experience the world and objects in the world in different ways. Fullness refers to the idea that when we perceive something, we experience it as a complete thing, and we have little doubt that the parts of an object that aren’t available to us from one perspective will become available to us if we shift our point of view appropriately. The flip side of this is that although we are naturally confident in the completeness of what we experience, at the same time, because of our perspective, our experience is only and ever partial. Something is always hidden. Phenomenology holds that this is fundamental to our being as humans—this paradox that yokes completeness and incompleteness is the foundation of our reality—it is what gives us sameness and continuity, but what also allows for transformation and change.

The phenomenological concept of intentionality refers to the idea that objects are experienced in conscious mind activity. There cannot be consciousness without there being consciousness of something. Consciousness is simultaneously both an internal process and a process of reaching toward and relating to the world. Neither the world nor

consciousness can exist independently of one another. This is at the heart of the phenomenological phrase used to describe human existence: “being-in-the-world”. Again, intention is necessarily grounded in bodily experience. In phenomenology, there can be no disconnect between mind and body.

These deceptively simple, seemingly obvious, yet strangely counter-intuitive concepts can be woven together to consider the nature of the human world—cultural and social experience can be framed in terms of phenomenological structures. This project was initiated by Husserl, who gave us the term “life-world”, but was taken up in earnest by Alfred Schütz between the early 1930s and the late 1950s. Most simply, the life-world is the taken for granted reality of our wide-awake daily lives, when we are in what he calls “the natural attitude”. This is the reality that seems given, the one that we function in on a day-to-day basis, the one that we navigate through and transform as “animate organisms”. It is the reality which is predictable and “patterned”, but one that is also filled with pre-existing objects and obstacles that limit our actions (Schütz and Luckmann 1973:3). This is the reality that gives rise to a shared world that makes sense, and is for the most part unquestioned. It is the world we were born into. It is a coherent, organized world filled with objects “having determinate properties” (4).

It is a world we share with the other people who populate it—we assume that our bodies and minds function similarly, and so we also assume that the objects found in the world are experienced similarly by other people of our life-world. In other words, this reality is not private, but rather is intersubjective (Schütz and Luckmann 1973:4). We understand that we can communicate and have relations with others around us (59). Schütz’s “axioms of the social, natural attitude” (59) include: that fellow humans have

intelligence, and that they experience objects in the life–world in a similar fashion (60). This comes with the understanding that none of us experiences things from the same perspective, yet we operate under the assumption that if we exchanged places, we could also exchange perspectives. We also assume that differences in our biographical histories do not create significant differences in our here and now goals (60). When we meet another person face to face and merge our flows of experience, we find ourselves in a “we–relation”—with either a particular person, or a particular type of person (62). In this relation, through our bodily experience of one another, we gain access to each other’s conscious life. We also access another person’s attitude to us (67). We unconsciously see ourselves in one another. Our we–relations are perceptual encounters with both an other, and with our own Otherness—those aspects of ourselves that are only visible to an other. In a we–relation, we are informed by our past experiences, but every we–relation encounter is a new experience that also changes our knowledge and understanding of our world.

The “predictable” and patterned aspects of reality become particularly evident when we consider Schütz’s characterization of the individual’s functioning within his larger social group (Schütz 1971). The actor’s knowledge of his social world is organized around its “relevance to his actions” and goals (92). Schütz argues that what the actor “. . . wants is graduated knowledge of relevant elements, the degree of desired knowledge being correlated with their relevance” (93). Schütz uses the metaphor of a topography map to clarify this. The highest areas on the map correspond to areas of most detailed knowledge pertaining to one’s particular goals (93). These areas are surrounded by lower areas in which knowledge becomes increasingly less specific, ultimately leading to simple

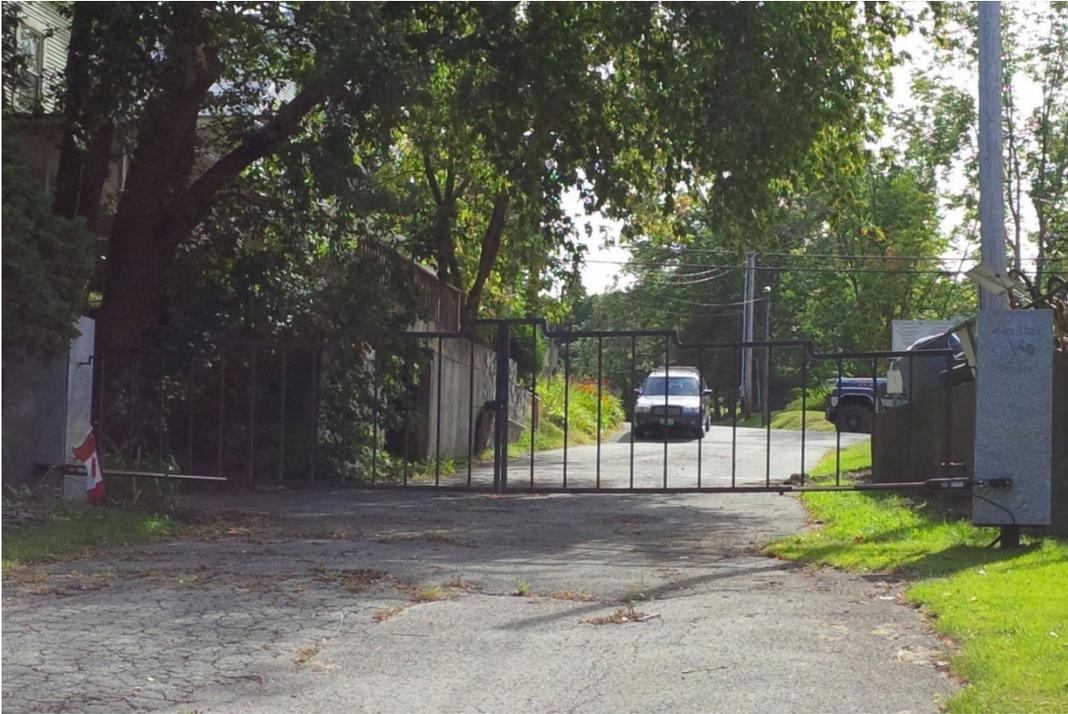
heuristics and then ignorance. The point is that each person's map is an aggregation of high and low points—it is not uniform. The actor's knowledge of his life-world is “incoherent”, “only partially clear”, and “not at all free from contradictions” (93). Nonetheless, within his social group, the actor's system of knowledge is coherent enough that he adequately understands and is understood by his group. He has internalized the “scheme of the cultural pattern handed down to him by ancestors, teachers and authorities” (95). In effect, this scheme provides him with “recipes for interpreting the social world” (95) and managing in-group others and objects so as to ensure and maximize desirable goal outcomes while minimizing effort. These recipes (“thinking-as-usual”) work as long as social life carries on in the expected fashion—if the knowledge that has been passed down to him is fairly reliable, as long as under normal circumstances knowing something about “type or style of events [he] may encounter” is enough for him to be able to manage them, and as long as his fellow in-group members share his recipes (96). The failure of any of these assumptions, throws a wrench into his system: thinking-as-usual becomes untenable.

In Hank Peters, we see a man who has clearly been comfortable and confident in his recipes for getting along in his life-world. He is a successful businessman, community volunteer, husband and father. Although he and other community members had encountered random changes in the functioning of the border over the years, the particular changes encountered by Hank on a particular evening as he attempted to bring a pizza home were a devastating shock to both him and, as it turns out, his fellow borderlanders from both sides of the line.

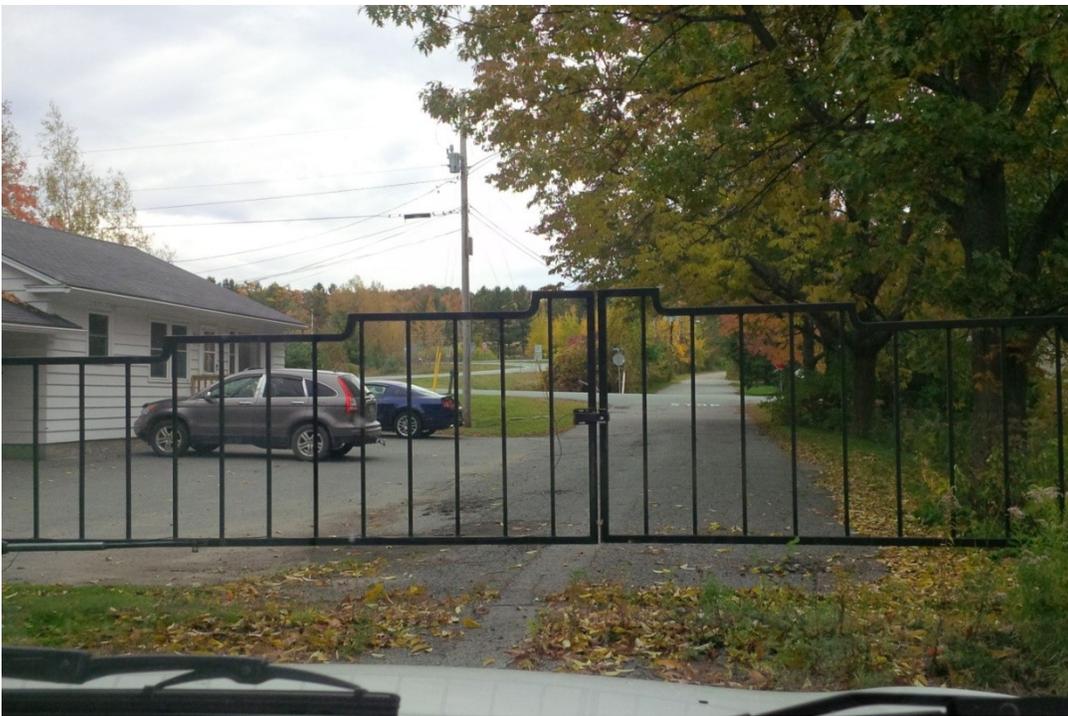
Prior to 9/11, security ramped up at the border occasionally in response to particular situations. For instance, one middle-aged informant whose father had been a border agent recalled that when she was a child she was able to bicycle freely back and forth across the border without reporting unless she had purchased something in the United States. During the Munich Olympics in 1972, her father warned her that from now on she would have to report to customs every time she crossed the line on her bike. She also recalls security tightening, and lines to cross the border getting very long during the height of the battle against tobacco smuggling in the early 1990s. However, for the most part, informants told me that prior to 9/11, crossing through customs often involved nothing more than a wave. Residents were free to use the through roads that are now blocked off, and although in theory they were expected to report to customs every time they crossed, there seemed to be an understanding that villagers need only do so if they were driving across or had purchased something across the line. Hank describes the pre-9/11 border situation this way:

You just didn't, I can't impress on you enough that you didn't even think of a border. It just wasn't there. It was not there. There was no such thing to us. It was—we—you know if you were driving you always stopped at customs, if you were walking, you never were stopped at customs, either side. Ever. Riding a bicycle was the same way, we just didn't, they were just—the border was not there. . . . You know, you knew there was a border but it wasn't really a border, it was just a formality that you'd, you know, and you got waved off, you know, I mean, you know when you're a teenager around here you could get beer in Canada much easier and all the kids went to Canada and either partied over there or bought it and smuggled it back—and there was nothing to smuggling it back in those days—you know—they'd just—people—they didn't check. It was the border that wasn't, you know.”

As I describe in Chapter Two, immediately following the events of 9/11, there were dramatic short-term changes in the functioning of the border, but changes that made



**Figure 17. Gate across the border on Lee Street, from the Canadian side.**



**Figure 18. Gate across the border at Ball Street, from the Canadian side.**

sense to residents given the seriousness of what had just happened to the world. These initial changes were responses that were intended to protect everyone from ill-intentioned “strangers”.<sup>1</sup> What happened to Hank in 2010 when he crossed the border with his pizza without reporting to customs was indicative of a kind of border change unprecedented in living memory (and one perhaps only equaled in the past by Vermont’s closing of the border during the War of 1812). Although the changes may seem to an outside observer to amount to inconvenience—after all, it only takes a few moments to walk to customs from most areas in this borderland region, and the line ups are usually not long (although they can be)—for people who inhabit this borderland life-world, the changes have been difficult. The force of habit, and the map of the world that inhabits the bodies and minds of these borderlanders was suddenly invalid. Redrawing that map in the minds of locals was no simple task. Hank’s detention marked a turning point for people on both sides of the border.

While Schütz’s phenomenology of everyday social life would continue to work as a framework for analysis of the drama that unfolded in Stanstead and Derby Line following Hank’s pizza protest, I have decided to turn instead to Victor Turner’s related idea of the social drama as a tool of analysis. His emphasis on expression and performance will enable me to excavate how the life-world of Stanstead and Derby Line has been transformed by the drama initiated with Hank’s detention, but also what has remained unchanged, and why that is so. I will begin with a brief discussion of Turner’s

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<sup>1</sup> I set the word “strangers” apart, because here it is used not in the sense of Simmel’s stranger who “comes today and stays tomorrow”—who becomes part of a group even as he is always also outside the group (Simmel 1950:1) Instead, the strangers referenced here are those unwanted others who are thought to not only desire to remain outsiders, but who may be actively seeking to do harm to those on the inside. Of course this represents a kind of categorical thinking that in recent times has proven to be problematic (ie “new” problem of the “home grown terrorist”).

perspective on the anthropology of performance before I turn to the social drama in particular.

## **Performance**

[T]he anthropology of performance is an essential part of the anthropology of experience. In a sense, every type of cultural performance, including ritual, ceremony, carnival, theatre, and poetry, is explanation and explication of life itself . . . . Through the performance process itself, what is normally sealed up, inaccessible to everyday observation and reasoning, in the depth of sociocultural life, is drawn forth. . . . ‘Meaning’ is squeezed out of an event. (Turner 1982:13)

Eduard Bruner, writing about the enterprise of anthropology in the mid-1980s—in the midst of the crisis of representation—argues in favour of letting people themselves define the objects of anthropological investigation by collecting their expressions of experience (Bruner 1986:9). In effect, by anchoring anthropology in people’s accounts of how they experience their lives we might minimize the imposition of our own categories of thinking on others. In this section, I will explore the linkages between experience, expression and performance as conceived of by Victor Turner. Expression and performance in particular offer effective ways to wedge open a gap where we can better understand individuals, groups, and societies as active producers of meaning, and see culture as processual and dynamic, while allowing people to speak for themselves.

Turner, influenced by German intellectual, Wilhelm Dilthey, describes an experience as something that “erupts” from the normal passage of time, and movement through the ordinary (Turner 1986:35). An experience is not arbitrary, but rather is something defined by “isolable sequences of external events and internal responses to them” (35). Experiences are happenings (“shocks of pain or pleasure”) which are processed and structured through the human capacities of thought, emotion,

remembrance, and expectation (35). Turner writes that “the emotions of past experiences color the images and outlines revived by the present shock. What happens next is an anxious need to find meaning in what has disconcerted us, whether by pleasure or pain, and converted mere experience into *an* experience” (36). With an experience comes a perception that something out of the ordinary has occurred which in turn evokes “clear images of past experiences” (Turner 1982:13–14). If emotion associated with these images is recovered, then meaning emerges out of emotionally connecting past and present happenings (14). Turner writes that past and present must be brought into “musical relation” with one another in order for meaning or sense to emerge in the form of an experience. Traces of past experiences form and shape every new experience. But, as Turner points out, the strict factual reality of the remembered past is irrelevant. What is relevant is the meaning that emerges out of the relationship between current and past experiences and how that tempers the value of an experience in the conscious present (Turner 1986:36). Bruner, citing Victor Turner and Dilthey, writes that “lived experience is . . . the primary reality” (1986:5).

Turner argues that we can only know ourselves most fully by combining introspection with contemplation of other people’s expressions of experiences—experience can never be complete without expression—it must be communicable, made graspable to other minds (1982:14). The relationship between experience and expression is complicated—each shapes the other: “[E]xperience is culturally constructed while understanding presupposes experience” (Bruner 1986:6). Expressions of experiences therefore are perspectives on rather than reproductions of reality. Some aspects of experience might be incommunicable, or in telling an experience, we might overlook

aspects of how we felt or what we thought as the experience unfolded. Because expressions are incomplete, they are open to change in every repetition. The “gaps between” and “tension among” reality, experience and expression—this is where the anthropologist must be mindful of expression as a “socially constructed unit of meaning” (7).

It is in the act of expressing, telling, performing, that transformation happens. Here beginnings and endings are delimited, and meanings are produced out of the “flow of memory” (Bruner 1986:7). And it is in attending to expressions that we are able to have our own experience of someone else’s experience. Turning this around, here we see that experience is personal—we only have experiences from our own point of view, our own perspective. We can never truly share someone else’s experience, we can only interpret his or her expressions of that experience. Taking it further, expressions as performances are reflexive acts: “in performing, [man] reveals himself to himself” (Turner 1988:81). Likewise, a group may come to understand its world through participation in or observation of performance. Echoing Schütz, Turner argues that we are mirrors of one another, and see ourselves in the actions of others. Really, an experience is only complete if it is expressed in some kind of performance (1982:13).

Expressions and performance may take any number of forms—from field notes to public ritual, from poetry to interpersonal performance. Turner writes that

. . . the basic stuff of social life is performance, ‘the presentation of self in everyday life’ (as Goffman entitled one of his books). Self is presented through the performance of roles, through performances that break roles, and through declaring to a given public that one has undergone a transformation of state and status, been saved or damned, elevated or released. (1988:81)

But, as we have already seen, Turner differentiates himself from Goffman by arguing that although performance may be part of everyday life, performance is something that happens outside of everyday, same-as-usual behavior and interactions, in events that he calls “social dramas”. He argues that while Goffman may see “all the world’s a stage” (1988:75), for him “. . . the dramaturgical phase begins when crises arise in the daily flow of interaction. Thus if daily living is a kind of theatre, social drama is a kind of metatheatre” (76).

### **The Social Drama**

For Turner, social dramas, the “dramas of living” are a universally evident units of social process by which social crises are addressed and dealt with in “groups bounded by shared values and interests of persons and having a real or alleged common history” (Turner 1982:68–69). Social dramas are particular kinds of happenings that follow a process analogous to those of cultural experiences such as ritual or aesthetic performances. From beginning to end, Turner argues that a social drama more or less takes on a tripartite structure similar to that of Arnold van Gennep’s rites of passage (1992[1960]:11) and so familiar to us from Turner’s analyses of ritual and cultural performance: The first phase is the breach and its recognition in the form of a crisis (something has happened, a problem must be addressed, a status must be changed; Turner 1982:69). The second is the redress phase, a period of “liminal reflexivity” (76) out of which new meanings and narratives may emerge. The final stage is the reintegration or reconfiguration of the old into something new that has a sense to it (77).

A social drama, according to Turner, begins with some kind of a breach—“of a norm, the infraction of a rule of morality, law, custom or etiquette in some public arena”

(1982:70). The breach may be an intentional show of, or challenge to authority, or it may come out of an emotional exchange, but once it has made itself visible, it creates a crisis that must be dealt with. Following the breach, a crisis phase ensues which if not effectively contained may escalate into a wider social division (Turner 1974:38). The crisis phase of the social drama, because it is a departure from the former “stable” phase, and has yet to be resolved into a new stabilized phase, has “liminal characteristics”—is a kind of threshold between an old order of understanding and something new (39).

The pizza protest story certainly became a dramatic happening in both Stanstead and Derby Line. Although in this drama borderlanders were not confronting a breach generated from within, the chasm was centred at the heart of this border region. It was an unanticipated alien invasion that caught Americans and Canadians alike by surprise. The alien, made visible by Hank’s detention, was the new geography suddenly imposed from without (by Homeland Security in the U. S.) on people whose knowledge of the lay of their land was inscribed on their bodies from an accumulation of lived experience. Hank’s detention united people from both sides of the border in response to this unexpected development: They wanted the world they had known returned to them. They wanted their communities to continue functioning as they had prior to the change in border security. They wanted a say in how their movements were being monitored and regulated. They wanted to be treated with respect—not to be treated as criminals, smugglers, or terrorists just because they desired to cross the border into, or back into the United States. The borderland community was in crisis.

Overnight, word of Hank’s border skirmish made its way around the community on both sides of the border, and he found himself a reluctant local hero. Locals were

infuriated by the sudden change in the rules. Several weeks later, in March, hundreds of people from both sides of the border wearing Hank Peters masks and “Free Hank” buttons gathered to march and protest at the border. The event was covered by media outlets from across Vermont, and Canada (Risen 2014:208; Peritz 2010:par 9). Many people sent money to help cover the cost of the fine that Hank incurred. And of course, Hank’s story became a chapter in Pulitzer Prize winner James Risen’s book. Ultimately, Homeland Security officials had little choice but to acknowledge that they had made a slight strategic error with the local population. The local head of the border patrol was replaced, and an apology was issued to Derby Line officials.

The redress phase certainly began with these actions of the border patrol and Homeland Security, which were an acknowledgement of the outcries and discomfort of locals. The publicity surrounding Hank’s detention increased local awareness of the new rules, perhaps saving a number of people from the humiliation of detention, and the expense of large fines, but it did little to take the edge off the frustration of not being able to move freely in a place that the borderlanders claimed as their own. Church Street, at this point not barricaded, nonetheless remained closed to through traffic and continued to be a problem for local residents. Some local people continued to cross the border at Church Street the way they always had, perhaps accidentally (out of habit), or perhaps purposefully. A local politician explains to me:

Robert: Well I’m going to tell you a story. There was a lady who lived down where Hank went through which was Church Street. The lady lives on, was living on Church and for years and years and years, she goes up Church street to go, and she goes in to report. And she was walking because for her to go up and go down the other way, go up the hill, well it’s quite hard. So she turns around, she goes through. And this was after Hank, and anyway, they [the border patrol] told her, “you can’t do that, and bah, bah, bah,” and they wanted her to get in their car. She told them “I ain’t getting in that car and I’m going to go over there, nobody’s

going to stop me.” And she was giving them shit. And they let her go, eh? But they told her “You can’t do that no more”. You know, there’s quite a few cases of that. There was a guy that went over [across to Vermont], they were going to McDonalds, and they went [up] Church [Street], and they went over, got picked up [by border patrol], kept them 4 hours.

He continued:

Well people were coming in and they walk over there, or even crossing over with a car, and they were getting picked up, fingerprinted and well they were, because, they weren’t taking them to the customs, they were taking them to the thing in Newport. Then they were going to fine them and this and that.

Most of the errant border-crossers seemed to be elderly residents who were taking the shortest path over the border (“thinking as usual”) with every intention of reporting at American Customs, but who were intercepted by the U. S. border patrol before they got there. Any kind of resistance in the moment seemed futile.

Turner argues that the breach is contained or perhaps limited in the redress stage, the part of the social drama process in which various tools and mechanisms are brought to bear on the situation—ranging from personal advice to public ritual (1982:70–71). In the early efforts by Homeland Security and the border patrol to appease locals, we see this. According to Turner, this is the phase that should be attended to when one is concerned with social change: Here is where one can examine whether available tools and mechanisms have the stuff necessary to smooth over the breach. One may also ask, if efforts to redress fail, why (Turner 1974:41)? He writes:

It is in the redressive phase that both pragmatic techniques and symbolic action reach their fullest expression. For the society, group, community, association, or whatever may be the social unit, is here at its most ‘self-conscious’ and may attain the clarity of someone fighting in a corner for his life. (41)

Returning to Stanstead and Derby Line, we can see that a number of measures were taken by authorities on both sides of the border to help locals understand and remember the new border rules—to redress, to help contain the crisis. A number of new visible reminders of the rule change were put in place, including the added presence of either an idling border patrol car, or RCMP cruiser at the Church Street boundary line at any given time. When that failed to stop people from crossing the line at Church Street, the Mayor of Stanstead had a row of ornamental planters placed along the line as a friendly and noticeable reminder of the requirement to return to Dufferin or Main Streets to cross the border. This caused something of an international incident, because although the flowerpots were intended to keep people from crossing into Vermont from Church Street, it also kept Derby Liners from crossing into Canada at that point. According to the new rules, it was illegal to cross one way or the other at this location, but the rules were not being enforced on the Canadian side. The Mayor said to me:

Well I put the flower pots so nobody could cross no more. But then people from Derby Line got mad at me. “Oh you can’t do that” cuz what they used to do, they come down Church, okay, and they cross over to the, on Rue Cordeau to go to the customs. And what happened, that was not legal to do that. So I told them, I said, “That’s not legal, you can’t cross there” I said. “We’re doing the same thing over there, we tolerate it over here but you don’t tolerate it over there”, so, but the flowerpots saved a lot of problems.

Those crossing into Canada, even via the officially closed Church street boundary, did not face the same threat as those going the other way. The flowerpots, placed in order to protect Canadians infuriated Derby Line residents.

The novelty of a flowerpot border marker, and the hard feelings it had caused across the line generated additional media attention. As locals talked about, fought over, and I’ll add, performed for various news reporters, and media outlets, a new normal

began to take shape, and a new story began to be told. Although my interviews and historical research led me to wonder if Stanstead and Derby Line had ever functioned as a singular, monolithic community, it became clear to me as I delved into this story and talked to people on either side of the border about it, that residents on both sides of the line, even almost a decade after the events of 9/11, had a common understanding of what they shared and what the links were between them. That included a common understanding of what it was to live bodily in this place between places, this place at the edge of places. They shared this experience together. The flower pots placed across Church Street were a problem for locals, because as well-intentioned as their placement was, and as unusual as it seemed to be to mark the newly secured border with something as benign and friendly as flowers, the fact was that they had been placed there by one of their own. As the mayor suggests, those on the American side saw the flower pots as retaliation for the actions of Homeland Security against Canadians. Indeed, in the interview extract he does seem to put Derby Liners, Homeland Security, and the U. S. together into one lump. One constituent of this cross-border life world seemed to be taking its anger with an outside other (the Department of Homeland Security) out on the other constituent of the collectivity. At the same time, the flower pots signaled a weary acceptance of the imposed rules. How did locals make sense of this?

Cracks began to appear in the singular facade that the two sides of the border liked to present outwardly. Evidence that each was beginning to sense something Other about the other began to emerge. While I suspect the seeds of this crack were perhaps sown with the Quiet Revolution in Quebec, and it was undoubtedly widened with the bitterness that lingered following the closure of the Canadian side of the Butterfield

factory, the process of negotiating the new border rules turned the crack into more of a chasm, especially for those on the American side of the line.

There is never a guaranteed outcome for the redress phase of the social drama process. The process always has the potential to break down, and revert to crisis (Turner 1982:71). The redress phase is a reflexive time, a time where available mechanisms for contending with the crisis are assessed, and a time when meaning is constructed to account for the events leading to and comprising the crisis (75). Turner suggests that this phase shows us that meaning making and “figuring out” are processes that emerge out of indeterminacy (77) and that “social being” is never a static entity, but rather something that shifts and changes alongside meanings, understandings, narratives, and perceptions. This is where narrative is constructed, where sense is made.

Turner argues that the final phase of a social drama is marked either by a putting back together of the social group (reintegration) or a recognition and acceptance of an irreparable divide. In either case, there is a reconfiguration—and this, as Turner points out, is a valuable point for the social scientist to stop and “take stock”, to take note of what has changed and what has remained the same—rules, norms, alliances, power relations, and hierarchies—some aspects that seemed of crucial importance may have shifted, while some aspects of social relations which may have seemed unimportant may have remained unchanged (1974:42–43). In other words, this is an opportunity to consider why things have shifted as they have. In Stanstead and Derby Line, the redress phase started with Homeland Security’s feeble apology, and it continued with efforts of local politicians to educate people about the new shape of their worlds. I believe that the mayor of Stanstead’s attempt to redress the situation on the border with flower pots

perhaps pushed the situation back into crisis. Ultimately however, as unhappy as borderlanders were with the changes to the border and their freedom of movement, for the most part, they adjusted to the new normal. Their bodies relearned the new geography, and they moved on with their lives. But something else emerged out of the process of adaptation. Social relations across the border in Stanstead and Derby Line were ultimately reconfigured in response to the new rules of movement and in response to the uneven application of those rules. To illustrate how the region changed in the aftermath of Homeland Security's interference with the border I would like to tell another story about the communities, a social drama in its own right, in which the alien that reared its head had nothing to do directly with border services or Homeland Security. Instead, the alien, I believe was the altered relationship between those on either side—the slowly dawning realization that the places on either side of the line were beginning to become Other to each other.

### **The Great Windmill Debacle**

It was about one month into my stay in the Stanstead/Derby Line region when I finally met the mayor of Stanstead. The mayor's name first came to my attention in a news story about a conflict over the planned construction of a windmill on the Vermont side of the border. As we shall see, the mayor was the hero of the story on the Canadian side, and the villain on the American side. The windmill story is an apt example of local ingenuity in using the border to one's advantage. The border people of Stanstead are accustomed to living on the edge, and for all of border life's apparent disadvantages, people in the area are also very aware of its many advantages. I would argue however, that this episode was more than play or resistance. It became a significant social drama



**Figure 19. The innovative and controversial flower pot border.**



**Figure 20. View from the Canadian side of the proposed wind turbine site.**

for the people of this border region because of how it highlighted a new and surprising development in cross-border relations for the people of this area. I approached the mayor about doing an interview and was delighted when he offered to do the interview with me in his vehicle while giving me a tour of every nook and cranny along the Canadian side of the border between Lake Mephrémagog and the eastern edge of the municipality.

The windmill story began quite simply. A Vermont developer filed a plan with state regulators to build two industrial-sized wind turbines on a pair of dairy farms in Vermont, just south of the border near the eastern edge of Stanstead town limits (Ring 2012). The farmers were enthusiastic about the project because it would provide land rent money that would help offset losses due to unstable dairy prices. Proponents of the project in Vermont argued that the turbines were expected to provide enough green energy to power as many as 1800 homes, and would create much needed construction jobs (pars 5 and 15). The plan met all state requirements for setbacks. The windmills would be located well beyond the required 1000 foot buffer between each and the nearest Vermont home. Before Vermont regulators could approve or disapprove of the planned turbines, Stansteaders caught wind (sorry) of the project, and immediately began to vocalize concerns about noise pollution and the potential health concerns of living in proximity to large wind turbines. Quebec regulations call for a 1640 foot buffer, which the proposed turbine would most certainly fail to provide for a number of nearby Quebec homes (Par 2-3, 10). In fact, during the tour of the border zone that I did with the mayor, he drove me to the site of the windmill controversy:

Me: That's the American side. I see a [small] windmill over there.

Mayor: That was, yah, he was going to put one there, take the small one and put one. I'll show you where the other one was supposed to go.

Me: Oh my, there's going to be quite the view up here.

Mayor: Yah, the guy—this guy here had a fit because he bought that land and was going to put a house up, and the back of his house was going to be a windmill! And he has a view there. There should be a marker here somewhere—

Me: So we're that close to the line?

Mayor: Yah, we're probably only—it comes up almost to this fence here [pointing to a fence that is perhaps twenty feet from the road we are on]. You see? The American side right there! Now you see that tree there, okay, that's where the windmill was going to go, say about four feet this way from the tree.

Me: Oh wow, like right on the Canadian side almost.

Mayor: Yah and the American side didn't bother because there's nothing close there.

In fact, plans did call for the windmills to be placed very close to the Canadian border and certainly close to at least seven Stanstead residences. In one news interview, the mayor perhaps overstates the case: “ ‘They [Encore Redevelopment] want to build two wind turbines only 150 metres away from about 50 or so houses’ the Stanstead Mayor declared, ‘While on the American side, there are no houses within at least six kilometres from the proposed location of the wind turbines’” (d’Astous 2012:par 6). Many local residents on the Canadian side began to express concerns about property values, and the protection of migratory birds, in addition to their worries about noise and health. The mayor, feeling helpless, decided to draw some attention to the plight of Stansteaders. Given the fact that the Americans seemed to have forgotten that Stanstead was on the other side of the border, and that at the very least, it should have been consulted about the planned wind turbines, he decided to bring Stanstead back into their awareness. He let it

be known in a statement made to a gathering of citizens, that if the windmill project were to go ahead, Stanstead would shut off water to Derby. Word got out to the press, and the mayor was able to reiterate his threat to reporters from across the U. S. and Canada.

Suddenly the story was being framed as another “international incident”.

Here the mayor explains his attention getting strategy:

Me: I remember reading the thing in the paper about the windmill, and I remember you saying “You know like, you can put that windmill there, but we’ll just cut off your water.” Did that—

Mayor: It worked! Oh yah. You know what happened, eh? Because, don’t forget I was dealing with, that was Derby, okay? I was not dealing with Derby Line, but we furnish the water, remember I told you, in Beebe Vermont?

Me: Yes.

Mayor: When I said that, that was just to get his [the chairman of Derby’s] attention, eh? And it did, eh? I had three, I think uh, how many hours after that, three TV stations, American. I got what I wanted. I got my attention there completely.

The wind turbine conflict turned into a community crisis on both sides of the border.

Many on the Vermont side were very distressed by the Stanstead Mayor’s threats.

Mayor: Derby Line...what do yah call that, he was like the chair—

M: They don’t have a mayor down there?

Mayor: No. Well I says “well” and of course we were arguing, and I says “I went”, of course, we went to those meetings—I think they wanted to jump on us, threatened us and that. There’s [a] guy down there in that farm there [where one of the turbines was going to be located], he got pretty hot and heavy. I told him, I said “Listen” I said, “Come up with me, come over and meet me. Come, I’ll take you for a ride” I said, “I’ll take you for a ride”. And I showed him everything. [He said] “What? Now I understand”. But then it was a question of money, eh? Because the guy from the windmill phoned me. “How much would it cost” [he asked]...Me! “How much would it cost to make you guys happy?” I don’t think so! “It’s not a question of making me happy” I said, “It’s a question of not” you

know and back then if they would have pushed it back, then we couldn't have done nothing. It was just too close, eh? It was quite a war, that was, right?

In the end, the wind turbine developers were denied permits.

I asked Hank about the Windmill story.

Me: What about the windmill? I heard there was this huge controversy about a windmill?

Hank: No, that was a huge controversy. People didn't want windmills, yah.

Me: But there was one approved to be built here. . .

Hank: Well, it never got approved.

Me: Okay, okay, they were just talking about it then.

Hank: Uhhm, nope, but it divided the community, and Canada became Canadian, people became very involved in it, they didn't want it.

Me: Ah. . . So there's the Canadian—U. S. divide now

Hank: Uhhuh.

Me: Do you think that's going to happen more now with the community more physically divided?

To this, Hank gave me, the outsider, the media pipeline answer. Even though he had just told me that the story was very definitely a cross-border conflict, Hank said:

Hank: Um No. . . and that wasn't really a divide there between them, they were, those were pro wind and negative wind on both sides and you they had nothing to do with the border.

Me: Okay, good

Hank: No it was just how you felt about wind.

Both Hank and the mayor were quick to tell me that the wind turbine story was a cross-border conflict, but equally quick to retreat from that position. It seemed that telling me the story was akin to airing a dirty family secret, albeit one that had made headlines across Canada and the U. S. It was incredible to Stansteaders that the Derby Liners would even entertain the idea of building wind turbines without fully accounting for their impacts on those on the Canadian side of the border. It was equally shocking to those on the American side that the Canadians would threaten to shut off their drinking water in retaliation. Most shocking of all, was the very public nature of the dispute. I would argue that this event could only have happened as it did because of the increasingly visible and solid barrier that continues to accumulate material substance on the line between these sister communities. I do not believe that one could point to a final integration or reconfiguration following the redress phase of these crises—after all, locals continue to be bombarded by changes in the functioning of the border<sup>2</sup>—but I do argue that a trend is evident. While I believe that the sense of borderlander kinship that each side holds for the other remains, and that common sense of understanding what it is to live at the edge of a country persists, and that borderlanders know that those on the other side aren't really so different from themselves, there is also a worry that the hardening border is causing borderlanders to lose sight of one another.

Chaos and indeterminacy are brought to order in the sense-making redress phase.

Turner notes that “social being only ‘exists’ as a set of cognitive models in actors’ heads

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<sup>2</sup> When I visited the area in the fall of 2016, American border services had set up a new stop point just south of the border on Main Street—on the very steep hill (a challenge for those of us who drive manual transmission cars!) that leads up to the official border kiosk. Here, everyone must stop, and state his or her understanding that they know where the kiosk is, and that they also know that they must report. Additionally, an electronic sign has been placed on the Interstate Highway that states expected wait times at the big highway crossing. This means that savvy border crossers from outside the area are now diverting off the highway to use the community border crossings and are therefore increasing wait times for locals trying to navigate around their communities.

or as more or less ‘objectivized’ doctrines and protocols” (Turner 1982:77). Turner characterizes crisis and redress, the in-between, liminal-like, “what is this?”, “what do we do with it?” and “what does it mean?” phases of social drama, not as the absence of social being, but rather as a phase of social becoming. Behind what Turner lays out as the processual structure of social drama is the understanding that the key to both conservation and transformation of social being is in the chaos and indeterminacy that are always present but backgrounded in any situation, and which are pushed, or perhaps pushed to, front and centre in moments of breach and crisis. He points out that “sociocultural systems are never logical systems or harmonious *gestalten*, but are fraught with structural contradictions and norm-conflicts” (76). These contradictions and conflicts come to the surface during moments of crisis, and are tamed or subjugated in the processes of social drama and cultural performance. We can see this in *Stanstead* and *Derby Line*. Social dramas highlight how Schütz’s topography maps that represent knowledge of the life-world do not line up exactly from actor to actor in a given community. The crises described in this chapter serve to bring to the fore some of the inconsistencies and incoherencies of the collectivity that have in the past not interfered in its successful functioning. The windmill story, however, highlights a subtle shift that has perhaps been part of the fall out of the first story.

We can understand experience, expression, and performance to be the processes out of which something new emerges—the processes in which we can identify the liminal characteristics of in-between-ness that arise with the failure of something old to contend with a breach or crisis, and the resultant emergence of new or shifted explanations, meanings and mechanisms. Here we can see how in expression and performance, “we re-

experience, re-live, re-create, re-tell, re-construct, and re-fashion our culture” (Bruner 1986:11). Liminal moments are those moments that lie between two ways of being, two ways of grasping the world. It’s in liminal moments that old understandings are deconstructed, and new ones are constructed—and it’s a one way street, there can be no turning back. Turner’s social drama approach offers a framework, a schematic, by which some pivotal border happenings, as identified by my informants, can be examined in order to better understand the ways of being in the world of borderlanders who live daily with the ever-changing, yet never-changing line that is the border. The hardening of the border has had consequences for the citizens of Derby Line and Stanstead. I believe the windmill story brought something into awareness for the people on both sides of the line that they do not like: They are beginning to feel alienated from one another. And they are saying it, and performing it out loud, in desperation, in every interview they do, in every news story. The new border rules are changing their world. But this too is a process that continues to unfold. Both Hank and the mayor retreated from the conclusion that the communities were now separate. The people on either side of the line are discovering that their perspectives on the world might be slightly less similar than they remember or like to think. And the border continues to harden. Nonetheless, something of the borderland way of being in the world persists. In the next chapter I will delve more deeply into the uniqueness of this borderland way of being in the world.

## Chapter Four

### Passing Through or Living Here: Body and Self In-between and On Edge

In the last chapter, I introduced several recent community wide social conflicts and used them to open the door to an exploration of what it means to live in the borderlands community between Quebec and Vermont and to explore how that meaning shifts and changes in response to outside interference with the local life-world. In this chapter, I will explore what it is to be an embodied self in such an in-between place. I intend to focus on the relationship between living on the border and the shape of the life-world of Stanstead and Derby Line residents. I will argue that the local meaning and significance of the border betrays itself in a certain style of being in the world evident amongst borderlanders.

I will begin this chapter by returning to the scene of Hank's infamous pizza revolt: the mysterious bit of geography that exists between the Canadian and American ports of entry at Rock Island and Derby Line—a part of the borderlands region that during my field work time I began rather quickly to refer to as “the liminal zone”. My experiences in this part of Stanstead and Derby Line brought to my attention not just my conscious understanding of what it means to move across the boundary, but also an unexpected glimpse into the contradiction between my body's understanding of my world, and the world given to me in this new and complicated place. I will begin my exploration of this contradiction by considering the concept of liminality as fleshed out by Victor Turner. As we shall see, my understanding of what it means to be in a threshold place fails me in the borderlands. I will turn to the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty to assist me in framing how I have come to inhabit the world I know: how my

bodily experiences in the liminal zone might enable me to better understand something of the pre-subjective world that I inhabit even as my natural attitude puts me in a subject-object relation with a particular social and cultural reality. I will then turn my discussion to the intersubjective space shared by the people who perpetually live in what we on the outside experience as an in-between place. In particular, I will consider how the local manifestation of national identity reflects the lived experiences of borderlanders.

Merleau-Ponty points to the lived, mindful body as the means by which we come to share the styles of perceiving, experiencing, and responding to our environments and situations that might be thought of as culture. I will argue that life in this place which is so marked by liminality, in this place where one is always both on the edge and in the middle, has fostered a particular style of being in the world that embraces and always reflects the peculiar kind of in-between-ness that inhabits and is inhabited by the selves that live along the border between Stanstead and Derby Line.

### **Discombobulation and Bewilderment in the Liminal Zone**

One of the most profound experiences that I had during my time in the Stanstead/Derby Line border region had nothing to do with stories or events that I uncovered, was told about or witnessed. It really had nothing at all to do with anyone other than myself. Mind you, it took the natural and comfortable movements of a local borderlander to make me aware that something as mundane and everyday as my “knowledge” of the structure and functioning of a port of entry was particular to my own history and experience—in other words, it was an interpretation that reflected my point of view—and that this knowledge was also something that had been carved into my body. To even begin to get a sense of what it means to live in a place defined by the boundary



**Figure 21. The "liminal zone"—the eerie bit of geography between the ports of entry. ©OpenStreetMap contributors**

in its midst, this little, almost insignificant event drew my attention to a most simple idea—the communicative relationship between the body and the world, the world and the body, and how that might be shaped in such an extraordinary place. What follows is my description of crossing the line for the first time in the company of a local person.

From my field notes:

Today I went through the same entry point that I walked through four days ago in the Rock Island/Derby Line sector. This time I was a passenger in Kelly’s car. We were heading to Newport, Vermont for lunch. Kelly is a local woman, and is about my age. She was born in Newport, and holds dual citizenship. I felt at ease with her almost from the first moment that we met. We drove to the U. S. precisely the same way I had walked there a few days earlier: down Dufferin Street, past Canada Customs, over the bridge, and up the hill on Main Street. As we approached the U. S. port of entry, I wrestled my passport out of my handbag. There were no vehicles ahead of us. Kelly didn’t stop at the stop sign and white line ahead of the kiosk, but instead drove straight up to the kiosk window. Kelly rolled her window down. The officer on duty, wearing latex gloves, asked for our

passports. Kelly had hers in her left hand and thrust it out the car window towards the officer, and then grabbed my passport with her right hand. She offered the officer first hers with her left hand and then mine with her right hand. “No,” he said “Both at the same time”. Kelly put both hands out the window, a passport in each. “No,” he said, “Put them together”. Kelly rolled her eyes, and gathered the passports into her right hand and handed them over. The officer was visibly annoyed with Kelly’s familiarity and ease with the process, but proceeded to ask the traditional questions: “Where are you from? Where are you going?” As we pulled away from the kiosk, she said to me “Why did he have to be like that? As if it matters whether he gets them at the same time!”

While this interaction gave me a taste of how bizarre things can get in the border crossing process, nothing could have prepared me for what happened next.

Kelly drove forward and stopped at the road, but instead of turning right and continuing south deeper into the U. S., she deftly turned left and headed back in the direction from which we had just come, back into the ill-defined, liminal, in-between Canada and the United States space. It was a jolt not just to my mind, but also to my body. My body felt like it had hit a wall of impossibility. “We’re going back???” I asked. “No” she replied, I’m just heading over to the interstate. That’ll get us to Newport faster.” And off she drove, with me, dumbfounded in the seat beside her. Just before the boundary line with Canada, she turned the car right onto a road [Caswell Avenue] half-way down the hill. Prior to this moment, I hadn’t even noticed that there was a road there. For Kelly, this was obvious and natural. For me, it made no sense. A border, in my experience equated with the port of entry, is something to be crossed, to be moved through in a straight, perpendicular line. It was something to put behind oneself. My mind was seized with shock. I tried to picture what was happening on a map. I couldn’t do it.

Once we were on the Interstate, I managed to turn my attention back to the project of getting to know my new Stanstead friend better. We drove ten minutes or so to Newport and had lunch at a lovely lakeside restaurant. When we left, Kelly said “I’ll take you back through Beebe.” I was pleased—I hadn’t been through the Beebe port of entry yet. We drove up a road that veered west of the Interstate. Kelly and I were deep in conversation when suddenly she pulled up beside the Canada Customs kiosk. I had not even noticed the border. And once again, I was caught completely off guard when after an unremarkable interaction with the Canadian Customs officer, Kelly turned the car around and drove back south and around the corner onto Rue Canusa. I was stunned and disoriented. I had driven down Rue Canusa several times, and had made note of the orientation of both customs buildings on this road, and yet, in this moment, I could not visualize what was happening to me in space. I spent a few moments when I got back to my apartment studying a map, trying to make sense of it.

During this little adventure with Kelly, what struck me in the moment and continues to disturb me, was the violent physical response I felt in my body to a kind of movement that seemed outside of the realm of possibility for me, someone with a good deal of border crossing experience. To begin the process of teasing apart what happened to me in this episode, I feel I must first engage with the idea of liminality, an idea that I have woven throughout this thesis along with the related ideas of in-between-ness and indeterminacy. For now, allow me to stay with the idea of liminality, particularly as fleshed out by Victor Turner.

### **The Border as Experienced by an Outsider: A Threshold**

Liminality is a word encountered in many different contexts in anthropology. The idea of liminality, originated with Arnold van Gennep, who used the words “liminal” or “threshold” to represent the middle phase of what he identified as the tri-partite ritual structure of *rites de passage* (van Gennep 1992[1960]:11,21). Rites of passage are ceremonies that mark the transition from “one situation to another or from one cosmic or social world to another” (10). A rite of passage is a ritual event that symbolically marks and facilitates transitions of “place, state, social position and age” (Turner 2011[1969]:94). Turner points out that ‘state’ refers to any kind of “stable or recurrent condition that is culturally recognized” (94). Turner lists a number of characteristics that can be associated with rites of passage—whether they be those of an “agrarian” or “tribal” society (1982:25), or those of a society such as our own. These include a movement through geographical space that parallels the passage to a new status.

The first phase of a rite of passage is separation—marked by the symbolically mediated detachment of an individual or group from a former social condition, and a

separation of time and space from the ordinary and profane (Turner 1982:24). The liminal phase puts its participants into an ambiguous state of being that bears little resemblance to either the former or the anticipated future status. Limen comes to us from the Latin word for threshold. Liminality, according to Turner, is a “betwixt and between” period, and liminal beings are between categories of being—“neither here nor there” (2011[1969]:95). Liminality then is a place between places, and a time between times. Liminal people in a group are often reduced to a low common status—as though dead, or not yet born. Participants in this phase are often physically removed from non-participants, and are ground-down and weakened (Turner 1982:26–27). They may experience homogeneity and a deep camaraderie with fellow participants—Turner refers to this as “communitas” (2011[1969]:96). Finally, participants are reintegrated back into society in new social roles or positions—with clearly understood responsibilities and behavioral standards (95).

The work of any rite of passage is accomplished through the use of symbols. Turner’s lifelong interest in social drama of all kinds revealed much about humankind to him, but he argues that perhaps its most important lesson to him was the awareness he gleaned of “the power of symbols in human communication” (Turner 1982:9):

Each culture, every person within it, uses the entire sensory repertoire to convey messages: Manual gesticulations, facial expressions, bodily postures, rapid, heavy, or light breathing, tears, at the individual level; stylized gestures, dance patterns, prescribed silences, synchronized movements such as marching, the moves and ‘plays’ of games, sports and rituals, at the cultural level. (9)

Turner understands symbols to be living events rather than fixed things. He argues that the social and psychological meanings behind symbols and the work they might accomplish can only be evaluated “in relation to other events” (Turner 1982:21). He

states that symbols are “social and cultural dynamic systems, shedding and gathering meaning over time and altering in form” (22). They might appear in one ritual performance and then reappear somewhere else—moving from ritual to myth, for example. Their use is open-ended—their meaning and form is subject to shifts over time, and in many ways, from person to person. Turner points out that the symbols employed in rites of passage of traditional societies (in which cosmology, mythology and all aspects of life are inextricably linked) tend to be aspects of “relatively stable, cyclical, and repetitive systems” and have a more literal link to the changes they facilitate in bringing about compared to the more metaphorical sense that they tend to hold in large-scale, complex societies (29).

While it is clear that the process of border crossing and the changes that may result from such a crossing do not perhaps always belong in the same category as the traditional rites of passage with which we are familiar (weddings, coming of age ceremonies, etcetera), it seems reasonable to claim that there are parallels between border crossing and these kinds of rites of passage. Border crossing, for most of us, is a three part process laden with symbols that speak to us and change us, if even for a just a short time. Border crossing (of the legal kind) happens at well-defined, prescribed sites. Land crossings obviously happen both at the edge of and between countries. Always, we pass the Canadian port of entry as we leave Canada. Beyond this point we become separated from our fellow citizens. The gap between the Canadian port of entry and the actual boundary line is an uncomfortable no man’s land. Another eerie gap exists between the boundary line and the American port of entry. This is betwixt and between, neither here nor there, yet both here and there. The boundary lies in the middle and belongs to neither

country even as it also belongs to both. This is a liminal place and time for those passing through. It is not a place to linger. Already in this place, we are outsiders to our own country.

Whether one walks or drives across, the border crosser is quickly funnelled into a chute or queue in the approach to the actual port of entry. He or she is subjected to numerous warning signs (on the U. S. side) and other symbols of the state and its authority (flags, surveillance equipment, and militarized looking officers, agents and vehicles), and then must perform appropriately for the agent of the state in order to be allowed to move out of the in-between place and be given recognition as either a legitimate resident or sanctioned visitor. These interactions are more or less scripted, but the demands of the border officer dictate the responses given by the crosser. We see this in the interaction between Kelly and the border agent as she attempts to hand over our passports. He dictates the terms of the transaction, and although she does not appreciate his tone or attitude, she ultimately complies. We see that here the border crosser as ritual participant becomes separated from his or her everyday life identity, and for a few moments becomes a valueless suspect—a person with no citizenship or status. Of course, politics and public opinion (no matter how ill-informed) also have a profound impact on the script. Regardless, the crosser has intentionally opened him or herself up to vulnerability and personal danger by choosing to be in the threshold place, a place where one does not have recourse to the rights and privileges that one might have held prior to this moment and that one might hold anew once across the line. In the end (in most cases), having met all required conditions, the border crosser becomes transformed into a recognizable entity: either the legitimate stranger or the home-comer.

This is the border as I have experienced it on countless occasions. It is a threshold place. I am familiar with the symbols, the rules, the procedures, and the undeniable feelings of vulnerability and anxiety that one experiences when being scrutinized by a border agent. After all, there is a great deal at stake. One does not tarry in such a place. When I am told I am free to move on and into whichever country lies before me, I do so without hesitation. Until the moment that Kelly turned her car and drove us back the way we had come before entering the port of entry, such a movement for me was unthinkable, unimaginable. Liminality is an in-between state, an in-between place, but it should not be without a time limit. Liminality is part of a process that moves forward, or cycles—it changes people, if only just temporarily. It is not something that stands still. In this moment in the car with Kelly, I began to catch sight of something different about her relationship with this threshold place, and I began to question how I had come to have the understanding of it that I had. Furthermore, given the violent physical response I felt to what was for me an impossible, yet evidently very possible movement, it became clear that my understanding of this world was not simply a product of my mind, but was something that had somehow been carved into my body.

In this early moment during my time in Stanstead and Derby line, questions were already beginning to enter my mind that strayed from my initial research focus on how increased border security was changing this place and the people who lived here. I started to wonder what it might mean to always live in an in-between place, and how that might be inscribed in body and mind. How does it shape one's way of being in the world to have dual citizenship? To speak and understand two languages? To not just venture across an international boundary for major shopping or travel adventures, but to do so

sometimes many times in a single day in order to pick up mail, or buy gas, or eat at a fast-food restaurant, or do any of the other countless mundane activities we non-borderlanders don't think twice about doing within the confines of our own communities? What does it mean to inhabit different worlds simultaneously? The phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty offers a way of thinking about how we come to have the worlds we inhabit because we are embodied selves. In the next section then, I will use Merleau-Ponty as a lens for thinking about what it might mean to be an embodied self in a perpetually in-between place.

### **Embodiment and liminality**

It is clear at this point (to me, anyway) that I had brought a particular world with me into this borderland region. Even though my geographical location had changed, my body nonetheless situated me in this new place within the world that I knew given the experiences I had had in my life. I began to *understand* (even though I already *knew* it) that the border as I experienced it was not, and could not be the same as the border experienced by locals who frequented both sides regularly. This brings me back to my original research interest—but from a slightly different angle. The changes that are constantly implemented in the functioning of the border are put in place by those from without, people who do not have the embodied knowledge of living in-between that local borderlanders have. There is a disconnection between the world of locals, and the world of policy makers, journalists, and fellow countrymen who live elsewhere. It is, I believe, important to consider at this point how we come to inhabit the worlds that we do in order to do justice to the claims of borderlanders that the tightening of the border is wreaking havoc on a way of life, and perhaps a way of being in the world.

“Being in the world” is a phrase that is often deployed in anthropology, but perhaps not always in the sense that phenomenologists such as Merleau–Ponty have intended. Most simply, as an idea it represents a style of existence—a certain kind of coherence in the way our body opens to the world. It also encompasses the reality that arises for us as a result of the communication between the body and the indeterminate world in which we live. It captures the idea that our reality is neither initiated by nor built upon by purely physiological or cognitive processes, but instead emerges from an indeterminate place that underlies, or is prior to the differentiation between I, the subject, and me, the object. In what follows, I will expand on some of the ideas captured by this phrase.

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Maurice Merleau–Ponty explores various aspects of lived experience and demonstrates how they necessarily emerge out of and reflect embodiment. He argues that no experience arises in a subject separated from object, that the body is not “an object among objects . . . nor an object of thought for an ultimately separable and constituting consciousness”, but that instead there is a middle way of conceiving (Landes 2012: xxxii). Merleau–Ponty’s project was to break free of the dichotomies that have historically shaped both science and philosophy—to underscore the unity that underlies the appearance of subject and object, and mind and body. We are embodied, our bodies are in constant movement toward a world which is given to us by our senses, pre-objectively, and in fullness. In other words, our bodies exist in relation to the world—have a perspective on and in the world—without the mind as intermediary. This pre-objective world is the complex upon which personal existence is built. I will spend the next few pages reflecting upon this.

Phenomenologists aim to “bracket” off, or disconnect from the assumptions that underlie our natural attitude towards the constitution of our world. As Merleau–Ponty writes, “[o]ur perception ends in objects, and the object, once constituted, appears as the reason for all the experiences of it that we have had or could have” (2012:69). In other words, our perceptions are always already interpretations. Recall the idea of fullness that I discussed in the last chapter: Objects appear to us in completeness despite the fact that we can only ever have partial experiences of them at any given time. There is always something more available in any object that presents itself to consciousness—there is always something more to be grasped. This is indeterminacy.

We experience objects as existing independently of our perception of them, and we expect to be able to experience them from different perspectives. If we move, we expect to see an object from the new vantage point, even if we can only have a general rather than specific sense of what we might see from a new position. We are oblivious to the communicative processes between our bodies and the world that give rise to the appearance of objects, that give us the distinction between self and other, subject and object. It is in moments such as the anecdote I shared above, in which something as simple as a left turn was able to completely disorient me, that one realizes that there might be glitches in our natural attitude toward the world, glitches that provide clues to help us understand how our experiences of the world are structured by the ongoing communicative relationship between body and world, a relationship which is always subject to shifts in perspective as we move through both time and space.

Merleau–Ponty shows us that objects do not exist in and of, or for themselves—they always emerge out of contexts. The horizon metaphor captures this idea, and is

useful not only for considering our relationship with objects that arise through sensory and perceptual experience but also for more abstract and ethereal objects. If we look up and out toward the edge of the visible horizon, we see that its edge is ill-defined and indeterminate. Keeping our gaze on the edge, the field within the horizon swirls with vaguely meaningful yet indefinite shapes and colours that our body has a sense of but which are not given the appearance of full objects unless we consciously attend to them. The thing, the object, comes to us out of the indeterminate field first as a sensed tension that foretells its impending emergence in awareness (Merleau-Ponty 2012:4). It looms on the fuzzy edge, part of nondescript nothingness and everythingness until it suddenly appears in focus, bringing with it a sense that “announces more than it contains” (4).

Merleau-Ponty writes that the object-horizon structure is the mechanism by which objects both hide and reveal themselves: “To see is to enter into a universe of beings that show themselves, and they could not show themselves if they could not also be hidden behind each other or behind me” (2012:70–71). When an object is sensed, it arises before us in consciousness because our body has reached into it. When I see a cup on a table, I place myself within it, and experience the objects around it from its vantage point, but I also experience it from the vantage points of the objects around it: “I can see one object insofar as objects form a system or a world, and insofar as each of them arranges the others around itself like spectators of its hidden aspects and as the guarantee of their permanence” (71). The glass appears as a composite of every perspective from which it might be visible, even though I only actually see it from one. I know that if it is tapped, it will emit a crystal ring. It is part of a world that my body and all of its senses knows and understands.

An object is manifested in a spatial horizon, but its appearance is also woven into a temporal horizon. That is, the glass presently on the table occupies a point in time that remains in communication with past moments, but is also evocative of possible futures—all of which allow a moment to rise up as “an identifiable point in objective time” (Merleau–Ponty 2012:72). Objects that spring into being are accompanied by wisps of the past: memories arise of experiences with like objects. The mind does not think its way through sensations and perceptions to yield the objects that appear before us. Rather, edges, colours, textures and sounds suddenly spring into being as objects according to “present givens” and “acquired experiences” (15). Knowledge is pulled forward into the present from the past and pushes into possible futures. All is built out of successive reachings of the body into the world, and reachings of the world into the body.

Suppose I allow my gaze to drift vacantly across a field that lies before me. My attention is abruptly grabbed by a shape that springs into being before me—a thing that a moment ago blended with rocks and shadows has suddenly emerged as a dog. I have had no need to interrogate a checklist in my mind, comparing known and previously experienced contours, textures, and sounds to finally pull together the idea that I am looking at a dog. When the dog grabs my attention, when my body’s senses grab the dog, I have no need to piece together what I sense. It already comes to me as a dog. My senses have worked together to constitute this dog. I have no need to interrogate my eyes, then my ears, then my nose. In concert, they give me the dog, but I am unaware of the multiple sensory horizons out of which it has emerged (Merleau–Ponty 2012:73). It is full and determinate, three dimensional, and occupies all my senses, even though I can actually only see or sense part of it at a time. Likewise, in my awareness of the presence of this

dog, I am unaware of how prior experiences are knit together to yield my understanding of this dog as dog, as a particular kind of dog, as a friendly dog, or as an anxious dog. If the dog suddenly changes the way it moves, it blurs into the background while I make sense of what has happened. Suddenly a red ball manifests itself. And without a thought, the thrower comes into focus. Aspects of the scene come in and out of focus and awareness as my body reaches into, out of, and around various objects that are part of the world before it. Through my body reaching out from a particular perspective, I believe in the completeness of the world before me. I fill in its fuzzy undetermined edges from the world of my prior experience—if I can't see the landscape over the knoll, I nonetheless have a sense of what it must look like. And the dog, which is only partially visible to me, is initially completed in my mind with a fully white head, until it spins around, and I must make sense of the senseless, and understand that half of its face is black. The horizontal structure applies to everything that is indeterminate in bodily experience: space, time, knowledge, ideas, memories—any aspect of experience is borne out of such a horizontal structure. The horizontal field is always a pre-integrated context that reflects an embodied understanding of the world, and a perspective on it. It is more than simply the background to the figure that the object becomes. Any objects that arise in conscious awareness always emerge within the field of this horizon.

Merleau-Ponty would argue that my body has a world that it spreads out around me, anchoring me in the richness of my personal history as a body in the physical world and also as a body in relation to other bodies that live in the same physical world (2012:137). Our body gives us natural objects whose fullness bears witness to the threads of the very existence that reaches into them. The first objects that necessarily appear in

consciousness must be composed of properties that avail themselves to the senses which function pre-personally (363). These become the building blocks that allow other, more abstract objects to come into awareness, including language. Our sense of every object is changed every time we encounter it, if only ever so minimally. No object ever remains the same in subsequent encounters. These changes are registered in the body as our understanding of the world is continually etched upon it, adjusted and re-etched. Knowledge and language, always anchored in the body are no different: They grow out of and build upon previous encounters between body and world. Sensing then, is not the presentation of reconstructions of things in the world outside of our bodies to our minds so that they can be identified by cross checking against catalogued ideal types (53). Things in the world have meaning and sense because we have bodies and our bodies place us in the thing we perceive, and incorporate a temporal perspective into our experience which carries with it our past experiences and future expectations.

Objects arise in perception without a thought, and likewise my body moves towards the world it knows without a thought. The intentional arc—something of a style of being that unites “senses with intelligence”, and sensation with motor impulses—“projects around us our past, our future, or human milieu, our physical situation, our ideological situation, and our moral situation, or rather . . . ensures that we are situated within all these relationships” (Merleau-Ponty 2012:137). If one side of intentionality is perception then the other is the movement of my body toward the world. Merleau-Ponty refers to naturalized forms of movement as habit, and argues that they are neither “a form of knowledge nor an automatic reflex”, but instead are indicative of the understanding that the body has of its world (145). Understanding is not cognitive knowledge—instead,

“To understand is to experience . . . the accord between what we aim at and what is given, between the intention and the realization—and the body is our anchorage in a world” (146). Acquired habits, he argues, are no different from other movements such as touching our nose or toes. Movements like these are not carried out in objective space, but rather are reflections of intention: the body’s movement into the world. When our body has learned to do something, when that something has become second nature to us, it is because our body has grabbed the significance of what we are doing and has “dilat[ed] our being in the world” (146). This kind of understanding is held in the body and does not enter conscious awareness. The body is the starting point, the originary place for our world. It is the foundation for everyone, for everything, and this world that we inhabit is not simply a world we sense, it is a world we act on. Merleau–Ponty argues that in this way, our body “gives the form of generality to our life and prolongs our personal acts into stable dispositions” (147). Our body situates us in the world it knows—an indeterminate, never fully graspable, but fully human world. And the body, through the course of its existence as a movement towards the world accumulates a certain style of being in the world.

### **Intersubjectivity and Identity in an In-between Place**

My body has been the foundation for an accumulation of experiences which layer by layer have structured my understanding of the world. My reach into the world continues to stretch outward towards the horizon, but my point of view necessarily limits me. There is always something more than I can see. And anything new that presents itself, must be understood through the structures of my prior experiences. Merleau–Ponty reminds us that just as we are born into a physical world so we are also born into a social

world (2012:377). People emerge out of the social milieu which like any other horizontal structure, surrounds us. Merleau-Ponty argues that “[j]ust as nature penetrates to the center of my personal life and intertwines with it, behaviors also descend into nature and are deposited there in the form of a cultural world” (363). Other people are present in the objects we use, and are evident in the structures that surround us, or in the way the land has been altered or shaped. When I look out to the world, my sense of vision engages me with it, and when I see another face, I understand that I am in the presence of a consciousness not unlike my own, that also is situated in the world with a point of view (367–368). Perception gives me a perspective on the world, and I understand that another person also has a point of view that may or may not overlap with my own—an object or thing in view presents itself to both of us, even if we experience it from different angles (369). When I perceive another body in action, I have a sense of that body’s intentions because I have a sense of my own. From infancy I communicate in this way with others who share my world—I see them act on objects and I learn to do likewise because I understand the correspondence between my body and that of another perceived person (370). We are both in the world and in our communication we construct a shared world—this is intersubjectivity. That is not to say that our worlds are exactly the same: when I perceive a living being like myself acting, in the perception much more is given than simply the act. The action reveals another subjectivity to me, but like all other perceptions, this one is anchored in a context: each of our perceptions arise from unique points of view and reflect the indeterminacy of the fields of our own particular beings (378).

Taking this to the idea of the border, the border as an object (concrete or abstract) therefore arises for each of us out of the horizons of our own experiences. We enact it in the space between us, and as Alfred Schütz points out, we can usually take it for granted that our worlds coincide adequately enough for us to relate to one another (Schütz and Luckmann 1973:68). He stresses that the intersubjective world, the life-world, as he refers to it, is “not my private world nor your private world, nor yours and mine added together, but rather is the world of our common experience (68). I would like for a moment to consider my private world—the starting point of my particular sense of the border. This means thinking about it in terms of my identity as a Canadian.

My Canadian-ness undoubtedly began with the rudimentary sense of belonging that I experienced first as a physical participant in a mother–infant dyad, then as a member of a family, and then perhaps as a member of ever widening circles of community. It must have been and continues to be informed by conversations and interactions with friends and family, stories teachers have told me, news media reports, celebrations of national holidays, beer commercials, as well as the occasional actual venture beyond Canada’s boundaries. My awareness of what it might mean to be Canadian has always been tied to an equally important awareness of what it might mean to not be Canadian: My first memory of grasping a raw sense of Canadian-ness—when my body first leapt to its feet and cheered with national pride along with my fellow third graders was during the 1972 hockey series that pitted the Canadian team against the Soviets. Suddenly I was very aware that I was Canadian, and that there were people out there who were not. For the most part, exposure, proximity, and a sense of powerlessness in the shadow of such a large and powerful country as the U. S. have ensured that it has

almost always been the entity against which I define my Canadian-ness. My point is that there is and always has been a line that defines my identity as a Canadian. It has perhaps become more sophisticated, and reflects the broader perspective I have gained over the years. It has shifted and moved in response to what has called from the other side over time—but as a person who has only ever lived in Canada, there is a line, and I define myself as much by difference from what is on the other side as I do by what makes me similar to my fellow countrymen. This is the way the world has unfolded and presented itself to me—slowly, in incremental additive, or perhaps sometimes sideways steps. The world has come to me through my body, and ultimately, through my body I know and continue to learn about my world.

For me, the border is the physical manifestation of the line between the essence of what it is to be Canadian and what it is to be American. It is not that I actually think this, it is more that the entirety of my being understands it to be so. The entity that is “I” and “me” insists on choosing sides. Border crossing remains an unsettling process that always highlights the precarity of my own existence: my name, where I live, my citizenship. All these things that I have accumulated, and that anchor me in the world I know seem somehow less real when a border officer has my passport in his or her hand. I either want to be a legitimate visitor to the U. S., or I want to be home. I do not want to be in the middle. My body knows, and moves accordingly. A shock runs through it when Kelly’s car turns and takes us back into the contentious middle earth. For Kelly and my other informants in the borderlands, the same things are at stake, are they not? When I arrive in Stanstead it does not occur to me to think otherwise. My experience with Kelly in the car throws a wrench in the works. What then does the border represent to borderlanders?

Their movements tell me that even though I believe we are sharing a world when I interact with them, and for the most part I think that this is true, there is indeed something different about what the border means for many of the people who live along it.

I did in fact see and hear things in Stanstead and Derby Line that indicated to me that the meaning of the border is perhaps weighted differently for those who live alongside it and cross it regularly than it is for those of us who live somewhere else. I would argue that for borderlanders, who together share a particular kind of intersubjective space, a particular life–world, the border does not represent national identity or citizenship in the way it does to those from away. Borderlanders certainly identify as citizens of one country or the other, but that citizenship is not so tightly confirmed by geography as it is for outsiders, even as it is perhaps more tightly confined by geography. I would argue that borderlander markers of national and ethnic identity are necessarily more nuanced and complicated than for those of us for whom such identity is not always in question. Here it seems prudent to turn to Fredrik Barth.

Although national and ethnic identity are not quite the same thing for those of us who live away from the border, I believe for borderlanders they are necessarily closely linked. Barth asserts that what matters in the formation of ethnic identity is ascription: self–identification and classification (1998[1969]:10). Cultural differences matter, but only the ones that are most meaningful to the players. Aspects of culture that are likely to be woven into ethnic identity are those that might function as “overt signals and signs”, such as “dress, language, house–form, or general style of life”, as well as value standards by which an individual’s identity performance may be judged (14). Ethnic identity is not a representation of culture but rather is a performance that signals belonging. Barth

argues that the genesis and persistence of ethnic identity requires the existence of boundaries between ethnic groups. The groups are defined by these perceived boundaries rather than by the cultural content contained on either side of boundary lines. The lines are social, not territorial, geographical, or biological. They are conjured, affirmed, and maintained each time there is an interaction between different groups. Barth states that ethnic groups can only be meaningfully maintained with the understanding that they mark difference, (whether or not the difference is significant).

For those of us who live away from the border, the degree of one's Canadian-ness does not matter on a day to day basis. The border serves to place us well inside of Canada, well beyond the need to perform Canadian-ness. For borderlanders however, the situation is more complex. Regular movement back and forth through the port of entry demands the performance of national identity while also ensuring that at any given time, on either side of the line, there is a vexing mixture of Canadians and Americans. Recall the high rate of dual citizenship amongst Stansteaders: those with dual citizenship almost universally identify as Canadians, but this is not an identity defined and confirmed by the border. And through intermarriage, and employment, Canadians and Americans live on both sides of the line. The border does not act to differentiate what it is to be Canadian from what it is to be American, but its presence makes it necessary for locals to know how to differentiate themselves. Local borderlanders have become skilled at identifying who is who—they have learned to deploy and read markers of identity, regardless of which side of the border they happen to be on in any given moment. Informant Bruce told me this little story which illustrates my point:

I talk to everybody, the other day I was down on the street here, and I, there was two ladies on the street, I'd just been talking to the dentist over there, and uh, I see

these two ladies, and I say, “You are ladies from the states for sure, eh?” “How do you know that?” “Well,” I said, “just, you know, it was your look” I said. I love Vermonters, they’re very friendly. She says “Yep,” she says, one of the ladies says, “You know we always know when Canadian women are in Newport.” And I say “What makes you say that?” She says, “They’re always better dressed than we are.”

In this story, Bruce identifies several important markers of citizenship, and also informs me that people on both sides of the line can read them: Vermonters are friendly and outgoing, and Canadians are well-dressed. Most of my informants were very clear in telling me about other people’s identities: “he’s French” or “she’s English”, or “she’s American”. Sometimes I would ask how they know this, and I was often told, “I can just tell”. They could identify a person’s nationality as though they were describing hair colour. Citizenship was almost always the first thing I was told about a person who came up in any discussion.

The border insists on an identity from borderlanders and makes national citizenship a salient and important identity claim, but being on one side or the other has little to do with the claims one makes as a borderlander. For borderlanders, there is a very real distinction between Canadians and Americans, but the distinction is not determined by the border, even as the process of crossing the border demands the performance of citizenship. My point here is that while the line to me is an intimidating threshold that marks the outer limits of two different countries populated by two different, yet similar peoples, for borderlanders, the border is not a site of differentiation, even as it makes it necessary to perform difference. For borderlanders then, the border is not a threshold. Every person who crosses it is confronted with their own identity claims, and those identity claims are important to borderlanders, but the border itself does not have the transformative power for locals that it has for those from away. For locals, it functions

more as an irritating and inconvenient stop light that slows down movement in and through a place that feels like home.

Now that I have boldly stated that the border may not be experienced as a threshold to another country in the same way for locals as it is for outsiders, I believe that for locals the border nonetheless succeeds in pointing to an other. Strangely, it can only do this by highlighting the common experiences of those who live on either side of it. All the locals on either side routinely suffer its insults. Everyone on either side of it lives on the edge, and in-between. What I am trying to say is that for most borderlanders, the border does not point to the other on the other side of the line at all, but in fact points to another other: the non-borderlander—the policy makers, journalists, and people from far away who constantly interfere in the day to day functioning of the ports of entry. In this way, when locals claim that they share a community, they are expressing something about their reality. The sense of what they have in common is their shared experience of this thing that they maneuver around and through and with as part of their daily existence, this thing which is always imposed on them from the outside and which is now increasingly being managed from afar.

I would argue that this similarity that I claim exists across the border in the borderlands also reflects more than simply a way of life. It may reflect a way of being in the world. Above I have been writing about identity as something that emerges in the intersubjective spaces between people, as an aspect of a life-world. Identity therefore speaks to social organization and a way of life rather more than it does to a way of being in the world, although the two are connected. Through Merleau-Ponty, we are able to consider another side of the social world. We can put together how as a group we come to

share (more or less) a particular way of experiencing and responding to the world that might be called culture. In the next section I will consider how living in an in-between place might give rise to a particular style of responding to the world.

### **An In-between Way of Being in the World**

Like every other aspect of our experience as embodied beings, perspective, incompleteness, and fullness also structure our cultural worlds. Merleau-Ponty writes:

. . . I do not feel myself to be the constituting force of the natural world, nor of the cultural world: I introduce into each perception and each judgment either sensory functions or cultural arrangements that are not actually my own. Transcended on all sides by my own acts and immersed in generality, I am nonetheless the one through which these acts are lived; my first perception inaugurated an insatiable being who appropriates everything it can encounter, to whom nothing can be purely and simply given because it inherited the world, and consequently carries in itself the plan of every possible being, and because the world has been, once and for all, imprinted upon his field of experience. (2012:374)

Our body opens us to physical, temporal, spatial, historical, and social horizons that exist prior to our births, the edges of which may continually expand and shift according to our perceptual engagements. We are immersed in social worlds from our birth that our bodies come to know, and that give us as collectivities, particular views of the world and therefore particular styles of engagement with it. One might call this culture—culture not as a thing, but as an embodied style of being in the world, a way of responding to the demands of any situation. Culture is necessarily open-ended, and therefore frames the possibilities for how a situation might unfold while never with certainty limiting its meaning or sense (Leistle 2015:295). And of course, just as two people may interact in a constructed and shared intersubjective world, each with the appearance of fullness, yet neither being totally graspable by the other, so too is it possible for shared spaces to open between two different “experiential regions”—an intercultural space (Waldenfels

2011:74). Neither side will be able to fully grasp an understanding of the other in such a space—for each side, something of the other will always remain beyond comprehension, beyond imagination, outside the realm of possibility.

Merleau-Ponty has provided an effective framework for considering how it is that we come to experience the world the way we do, how we relate to it, and how we are all indeterminate beings—there is always something more to grasp and see than we can. Determinate objects arise in consciousness out of indeterminate horizons that radiate out from us, but even determinate objects which have the appearance of completeness are only ever partially experienced. There is always something that eludes me in my perceptions of anything and anyone. My body places me in a world that fits my understanding of it, unless of course, I'm jarred from complacency and forced to respond to something that makes no sense to me—such as turning back in the direction from which we had come after Kelly and I left the American port of entry in Derby Line on that fateful day. My perspective is always limited, therefore it is always possible for something beyond my vision or understanding of the world to grab my attention. Until that moment in the car with Kelly, turning back into the liminal border area was inconceivable. It wasn't that I thought that it was perhaps unacceptable or even illegal to navigate the border the way Kelly did, rather, it was that such movement was outside the realm of possibility for me. I was in an intersubjective moment in which the world Kelly and I were attempting to share was showing some cracks. Kelly and I certainly could interact effectively across the gap between us, but it was clear to me that my perspective on the world was not quite the same as hers.

Phenomenologist Bernhard Waldenfels refers to the inconceivable, the unimaginable, the thing beyond our ken, as the alien, and argues that when the unknowable alien grabs our attention, we must respond and make sense of it, but by doing so, something of the alien always escapes (2011). In the making sense of what we do not understand, we domesticate it. It is changed to come into alignment with our understanding of the world—which does indeed broaden, even as the alien has run off. Everything that has become part of our understanding of the world since our birth has come to us in this way. We incorporate, we literally embody what comes to us in a way that makes sense to us given our accumulation of experiences. The physical jolt I felt when Kelly turned her car around and drove back into the liminal zone was an alien call. After the fact, looking at maps and understanding the rules that dictate movement through the murky area between the ports of entry helped me to “make sense” of what had happened, but I also know that something escaped my understanding that day. While I believe that it is perhaps not quite accurate to say that in the sense-making part of this experience I may have been operating in an intercultural zone, on the other hand, I have come to believe that as much as I have grasped something of what it might mean to be a Stanstead–Derby Line area borderlander, I can never quite catch hold of a particular way of being in the world that hasn’t been years in the making in the experiences of my own body.

On the other hand, I did catch glimpses of difference that I believe are worthy of discussion. Towards the conclusion of one of my early interviews, the man I was interviewing remarked to me that he “loved living at the edge of a country.” I’ve mentioned this previously—the remark was important to me. It seemed representative of

the feelings of almost everyone with whom I spoke. I noted during my stay that just as local people are quite comfortable living in an in-between place, there is something “in-between” in the interactions between French and English Canadians in this region. What follows is small excerpt from a conversation that I had with Wanda, a woman younger than my mother who had nonetheless taken a motherly interest in me during my stay in the region. Having already interviewed Wanda, I was at her home to interview her husband Bruce, a local small business owner:

The phone rings, Bruce answers in English then quickly switches to French.

Wanda: When I came here that really amazed me [referencing his switch from English to French], because from, in [the town I grew up in] we were very separated, the French there, and the English people were down below, then we had, we worked at the office, the English mostly and we didn't, one French boy came to our school one year, that was really something.

Wanda, who identifies as an English Canadian was born and raised in another Quebec community. She moved to Stanstead to attend business school for a year at Stanstead College. After graduating, she worked in the office at the Butterfield's plant, on the Canadian side. In her childhood community, her experience with French Canadians had been very limited. Her father, as an English Canadian, was a manager at a mine. French Canadians were manual labourers, and worse than that, Catholics. There was little fellowship between the French and the English. When she arrived in Stanstead, Wanda was surprised at the degree of interaction between the English and the French. At the Butterfield's plant, French Canadians were well represented in the front office, a situation that was very different from what she knew to be the case in other parts of the province. Although English is her first language, she is a very competent French speaker. Her husband Bruce was born and raised in Stanstead. He also identifies as English, but his

mother was French. Like many people in the region, he is completely bilingual, and moves easily back and forth between English and French.

This easy back and forth movement between speaking French and English was something I had noticed very early in my stay in the region. Although a significant number of locals were functionally unilingual, I nonetheless had the sense that there was a different relationship between the French and English in this region than I had seen in other parts of Quebec in which I had spent time. Often I could hear people code-switching from French to English and back to French again in a single sentence. Sometimes one person in the conversation spoke only in French and the other spoke only English. I was curious. I decided to raise the topic of language in my interview with Richard, a middle aged man who moved to the area twenty years ago:

Me: I find it interesting here because I can be listening to people talk and there will be somebody speaking in French and then somebody answers in English, and then the person responds in French again, so there's these crazy conversations where there's the two languages, or then somebody will be speaking in French and they use an English word, and then this person is all of a sudden speaking in English and then uses a French word and all of a sudden the conversation—

Richard: Very fluid. It's remarkable I think . . . .The language is very fun around here.

Me: Yeh . . . . I've spent quite a bit of time in Quebec this past year, and I find it's different here, that there's a great tolerance I think, and a great interaction. I've really enjoyed watching the language thing in action. I've found it fascinating.

Richard: Yah, me too. Being from away, I'm intrigued by it still. Even yesterday, um there was, watching a soccer game here, there was a local girl and her dad, don't know if he'd call himself English or French, I think his mom is English, his dad is French, and he's a musician. The mother is French for sure, but speaks English. So the daughter was having a conversation with them, and it was mostly English, and then it just switched to French all of a sudden, and that's where you see it, like you go to a, because parents, one parent French, one parent English, or bilingual, like this like Mike who's both, and you go to a soccer game or a baseball game and you hear the kids and the parents and it's hilarious.

Me: Yah, like when there's, when you can't find the right word in one language to describe something, you switch language, or at least that's what I've been hearing.

Richard: Yah there's—I like to say that there's a—for a new relationship, if your meeting someone for the first time, there's that sort of jockeying for which language you're going to do, um depending, so you usually end up in the language that the person is more comfortable in the second language. So my French is weak, and your English is strong, we'll go English, if my French is stronger than your English, we'll do my French. Or there's sometimes where like I have a French associate, he talks to me in English and I respond to him in French. It's like we're, it's almost like a pig-headedness. “We're just practicing our second language.”

Waldenfels writes (and this is dangerous because I am deliberately pulling this out of a particular context):

It may be assumed that every epoch (more specifically: every culture, society, environment, or form of life) behaves within certain boundaries, but that the relation to the boundaries, which is always accompanied by a certain politics, is subject to significant variations. The ways one handles boundaries serve as a clear indication of the underlying spirit of an epoch . . . . (2011:9)

The Stanstead and Derby Line region is remarkable in that it is bisected by a line that is incredibly solid and real to those of us who don't live beside it, but which is not quite so solid or real for those whose everyday lives are literally wrapped around it, even as authorities are literally and physically hardening it up. The truth is that the border is not the only identifiable boundary in the region. This is a place where two countries meet, but it is also a place of two languages, and historically the intersection of two, arguably three, cultures. I will note here that the people that I met in the region were quick to claim and proclaim identities. Americans were Americans. Those with dual citizenship always declared one country or the other as their home or place of origin. Canadians either identified as “English” or “French”, even if they were completely bilingual. Since my stay in Stanstead and Derby Line I have been trying to understand how people have come

to feel at home in such a liminal place. I am not trying to argue that by virtue of their proximity to all of the borders and boundaries with which they live that they have somehow become immune to the effects of liminality. As Waldenfels says, humans are liminal beings<sup>1</sup>—we are always subject to transformation by experiences that come to us from beyond the limits of our understanding. The people of this region can be no different.

I would like to bring back into play a question that I posed earlier in this chapter. I asked what it means to inhabit different worlds simultaneously. In hindsight, that was a poor question. Borderlanders do not inhabit two worlds simultaneously. The question reflects my response to a situation that I can only make sense of in my own way. I experience the border as an entity that that creates two sides, two places, but this cannot be their sense. Borderlanders have for centuries been comfortable dancing along the lines that in theory should divide, and that do in fact divide many of us. They are comfortable in those in-between places that make most of the rest of us nervous, if not totally uncomfortable *because this is their world*. The line that divides us, unites them. They are and always will be, like the rest of us, liminal beings who adapt and expand as they deal with confrontations with the unknown. The unimaginable remains incomprehensible. Borderlanders, like everyone else, are called by the alien, and must grapple with eerie objects that start to take shape along the murky edges of their being. They respond in ways that make sense to them given the world they inhabit. And the world they inhabit is a place between places—it is both Canadian and American, and for those on the Canadian side especially, it is both French and English. For borderlanders, the

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<sup>1</sup> This is from the title of the first chapter in Waldenfels' book *Phenomenology of the Alien: Basic Concepts* (2011).

unimaginable is not what lies on the other side of the line, or the other side of town. It's the events of September 11, 2001, it's the unanticipated changes to the way the line works (such as when the bodily inscribed geography of one's community is violently and unexpectedly altered by fences and gates), it's the way people who used to be neighbors on the other side of the line are now becoming strangers. Perhaps the alien for these borderlanders is the fact that the line that has always united them is, more and more, showing signs of becoming a line that divides.

I want to end this chapter with an amusing story that points to how impositions from outside the region are making even longstanding locals a bit worried about moving around in the liminal zone when they are not planning to cross the border. Before I get to the story, here is an observation that I jotted down in my journal mid-way through my stay in the region: "Fluidity of this place—ease of movement of thought, language, spirituality—an acceptance of where others live and stand. Will the material presence of the border eventually impede this flow?" What follows is an extract from my interview with a local French Canadian politician. Here he speaks about how American Border Patrol officers are interfering with Canadians who are moving about within the Canadian part of the liminal zone:

Me: . . . That border is scary when you're from away.

Robert: . . . they get a little nervous when they see you. Like, downtown [Rock Island], down here, once you cross the custom[s] at the bridge there, you're still on the Canadian side, but they [the Americans] want you to report. Why should I report? I didn't go into the States? I remember once, that white building [which is on the Canadian side], I do income tax for people, older people and that. There was an old couple living there so I went over to pick up their income tax. And I parked on the Canadian side and I walked over. So I went over there, picked up their papers, come back out, and I got to my car, and border patrol was there. He says, "You got to go report."

I said, "I don't have to report, I didn't go on the American side."

"Yes, you did."

I said "No I didn't"

"Your car is on..."

I said, "Look, the marker is there, I'm on the Canadian side." Anyway,

"Well" he says, "we'd like you to go to report."

So I turned around and went up the hill and reported, and I told the customs, and they said, "Well what were you doing out there?"

"Well" I said, "I went to pick up the people's income tax."

"What gives you the right to do their income tax?"

"What gives me the right? Well they're Canadian, I'm doing their Canadian income tax." "Okay, Now I want to know what were you taking in there? The boxes you were taking in there the other day."

"I'm so sorry, cuz I didn't go there the other day."

Then the guy says "Well, from now on, you go there, you got to go report here first."

"Oh yah? Okay."

So you gotta go up and report to American customs. When you come back down you can't stop there because you're on the Canadian side. By rights you gotta go and report on the Canadian side, but then when you back...

Me: In an infinite loop!

Robert: Yah, so I told the Canadian customs, I said "You're not coming to report me over here if you're going there" I said "so listen, I ain't going to play any games here." So I called the man, and I said, "when your papers are ready, I think you ought to come and get them. I'm not going there no more!"

Me: That's...wow! That's a crazy story.



Figure 22. A border building.



Figure 23. Plaque marking the border on the border building.

This story is a strange counterpoint to the one with which I opened this chapter. In my story I was afraid of going back into the liminal zone after having crossed the border. In this story Robert is afraid of getting trapped at the border because he's in the liminal zone. We are two different people, from two different places who come face to face with two different disturbances to our understandings of our worlds. And we make sense of those disturbances in our own ways.

In this chapter I have interrogated the in-between-ness of the borderlands. I have reflected upon how my own understanding of the border as a liminal place is different from that of those who live in the borderlands region of my study. I used my understanding of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology to explore how we come to live in the worlds in which we do, and then used the border's relationship with the performance of national identity to wedge open a place in which I could argue that while the border for the rest of us is a place that divides, for borderlanders, has always been an entity that unites. I argue that this is a manifestation of an inbetween way of being in the world.

At the risk of bringing something new into the conclusion of this chapter, I would like to return for a moment to Victor Turner's discussion about liminality in ritual—as a way of pointing toward what is ahead in the next chapter. Turner argues that liminality is often a time of “topsy-turvydom”, a time in which social order is turned upside down so that something new can be inscribed in the bodies of ritual participants (1982:42). In traditional societies, recognition of the inversion of social order in the ritual process is mandatory for all community members. Turner remarks that for us, recognition of the upside-down-ness in liminal situations is optional. I have argued in this chapter that for

borderlanders the actual process of crossing the border is not experienced as a liminal event in quite the way it is for those others of us, yet I also argue that borderlanders have an in-between way of being in the world. In the next chapter, I will contend with an aspect of the borderland life-world that I believe is a reflection of its perpetual in-between-ness. I will address a particular form of creativity that is manifested in the day to day lives of borderlanders: their playful attempts to turn upside-down something of the expected function of the border. I will turn my attention to the everyday enactment of the border by borderlanders and border officers.

## Chapter Five

### Making It Real by Playing the Part: Everyday Interaction across the Border

In the last chapter I contended with the in-between-ness of the borderland life-world and the liminality of the border. In this chapter I will push liminality in a slightly different direction. The border is not only liminal in the sense that it is a threshold between places. It is also liminal in the sense that performances are liminal: the border is created by people, but the situations in which these people interact in order to create the border are always subject to change. The border is never the same border from one encounter to the next, from one person to the next. I will take up the question of how the border is enacted by local players, and contemplate further about how these border performances reflect a uniquely “borderly” perspective on the world. I will identify and explore several key themes running through border performances. I will explore what it might mean that for local borderlanders and border officers, crossing the border is played as a kind of game in which there is an expectation that Canadian borderlanders will attempt to cross back into Canada without declaring goods purchased in the U. S., and that while this is technically frowned upon by border officers, it works as long as borderlanders put on a smart performance. I will consider why local borderlanders assist border guards in managing the line by reporting suspicious activities by outsiders. I will also address why the game is different on the American side, where border guards are more aggressive and more likely to challenge one’s personal liberty. The border is a peculiar site of separation and yet cooperation. I am interested in what this might say about what it means to live in such an in-between yet on edge place. I will use Erving Goffman’s framework for thinking about social interactions as performances, as well as

John Austin's notion of performativity as my theoretical lenses to think about how the performances of everyday life in the borderlands might be different than those we might expect to see in non-borderland places. I will also invoke Jacques Derrida as I dig into the ideas of iterability and the trace—how the particularities of context and situation that structure border performances serve to both hide and highlight the paradox of the border as an entity. In the next section I will briefly outline some of the key aspects of both Goffman and Austin's theories which I have put to use in this chapter. I will begin with Goffman.

### **Goffman and Austin: Theories of Self-Presentation and Performativity**

Erving Goffman uses theatrical performance as a metaphor for understanding social interactions among people. He argues that in everyday life, people take up roles in order to navigate the framework of the social world. To participate in any social situation, people are motivated to present themselves to others in ways that suit the situation in which they find themselves (Goffman 1959:4). This is not to say that people consciously play a part, but it is to say that they are motivated to behave certain ways in certain situations. As in Schütz's life-world, for Goffman, there are taken for granted ways of behaving in most social interactions. All participants in a situation are stakeholders in how it is defined. Each acts in such a way so as to give off the impression that best suits his or her motivation (conscious or not) in the moment. Goffman stresses that the main concern of a group of interacting people is that there be one predominant definition of the situation being expressed and sustained regardless of "a multitude of potential disruptions" (254).

When entering a situation, we use tools we have obtained through past experience to decode and read signs that will help us to understand what is going on and how we should act and respond (Goffman 1959:1). We have a sense of what kinds of people might find themselves in this kind of situation, and we infer things about the particular people involved, given their words and actions, and also given visible clues such as the way they are attired. Consciously or not we present ourselves in accordance with our understanding of the definition of the situation in order to either maintain this definition or to tweak it to better suit our immediate motivations (3). Our motivations can range from simply wanting to be seen as thinking highly of those we are with, to wanting to be thought highly of, or to wanting to materially benefit from an interaction (for example, by selling something to someone). Goffman argues that regardless of objective or motivation, it is always in our

. . . interests to control the conduct of others, especially their responsive treatment of [us]. This control is achieved largely by influencing the definition of the situation which others come to formulate, and [we] can influence this definition by expressing [ourselves] in such a way as to give them the kind of impression that will lead them to act voluntarily in accordance with our own plan. (3–4)

Each participant in a situation is similarly motivated. The overarching goal of all participants in a given situation is to project some kind of consensus regarding the understood definition of the situation, even if the projected harmony is only superficial. Goffman is less concerned with social drama in Turner's sense than he is with the mechanisms that allow day to day life to proceed smoothly. In other words, he is not principally concerned with how things might go wrong in situations, and is rather more concerned with why they go "right". Turner turned to social drama as an ideal site for the ethnographer to think about what changes and what does not through the process of

conflict resolution. For Goffman, however, everyday interactions that carry on with minimal conflict are also rich with telling creative expression and response.

Goffman identifies two key and related principles that might be considered the backbone of interaction: 1) an individual who presents him or herself in a particular light expects to be treated accordingly, and 2) people are expected to be who they present themselves to be (1959:13). People go to great lengths to protect a definition of the situation that has been established through even dodgy self-presentation. “Performers” use “defensive strategies” to protect their projected identities, and equally important and significant, other participants abet them by deploying “protective practices” (13).

The social role is a particular kind of self-presentation that involves acting out the duties and responsibilities associated with certain positions (Goffman 1959:16). Social roles are played out for particular people, or particular kinds of people, on particular occasions. Mothers, fathers, doctors, and border officers are examples of social roles. As we shall see, the border crosser, and the borderlander at a port of entry fit this definition as well. Often people adopt social roles that have well-established precedents. In such cases, whether they come into the role with the primary intention of doing a particular job, or looking the part, they usually find themselves doing both (27). Performers may or may not feel they are being honest in their performance, and most performers have at least some doubt some of the time. Goffman argues that sometimes social roles are performed insincerely purely for personal benefit, but often enough insincere performances happen because an audience will not accept another kind of performance (18).

Goffman uses the term “front” to describe the parts of a performance deployed by the performer that are specific to and consistent with particular definitions of situations (1959:22). For example, the front may refer to a particular geographical setting associated with a defined situation (such as the kiosk at a port of entry). It may also be reflected in the costumes and props (signs, traffic cones, uniforms, hats, badges, guns) that alert us to the role being played (border officer, perhaps). There is often a “back stage area” where social performers are not on display to a particular audience and where it is possible to relax performance standards (112). Generally the audience expects there to be coherence between setting, appearance, and manner, although as I shall explain, borderlanders perhaps have different expectations than outsiders (26).

For Goffman, performance is rarely simply “an expressive extension of the character of the performer” and more often its function may be to “express the characteristics of the task that is performed” (1959:77). People often perform as members of a team, and individual team members therefore project the definition of the situation that befits the organization which they represent. Sometimes a person acting on behalf of a team internalizes team standards, which may in turn lead to an experience of dissonance—a conflict between one’s own values and the values of the team. Goffman uses the term “self-distantiation” to describe the resulting alienation from self (81). An individual may continue to play a role on behalf of an organization in the absence of other teammates: In such a situation, he or she has “creat[ed] a non-present audience for his activity” (81). Often an interaction between two individuals is effectively an interaction between two teams, each performing for the other side as well as for their internalized team audience.

Goffman's approach leaves room for flexibility and creativity of expression on the part of all participants in a social situation. His approach does not lock people into social roles but instead places them in situations defined by social roles. People must gauge for themselves what the demands of the situation are and they respond creatively. Goffman's framework allows people to switch roles and performances freely according to their values and motivations in the moment even as they are motivated to present themselves in accordance to the demands of the situation. People cooperatively agree to an understanding of the definition of any given situation, even as the role each person plays reflects his or her own subjective evaluation of what is going on. Goffman is useful for thinking about how people regulate their behaviour in order to maintain a more or less unified definition of a situation—how people co-create a coherent intersubjective reality in which everyone involved can function satisfactorily. His framework allows participants to come into situations with unique perspectives even if they opt to compromise on how a situation should unfold. The strength of this approach however does not lie in its use for evaluating why people's subjective experiences in social situations differ. At this point I would like to think more about the complicated idea of context. To do this I will bring in the idea of performativity.

Like Goffman, John L. Austin is also very concerned with situation—which becomes more nuanced when it is broadened into the idea of context. Austin argues that saying is actually a kind of doing, that utterances don't just describe the world, but act on it (Austin 1975). In essence, he claimed that certain kinds of words, such as “promises, assertions, bets, threats, and thanks” act on the world simply in their utterance (Loxley 2007:2). He called these utterances “performatives”. In his words, where performative

utterances are concerned, “. . . to utter the sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to describe my doing of what I should be said in so uttering to be doing, or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it” (Austin 1975:6). Performatives construct and transform reality: for example, using Austin’s examples, two individuals become married with the words “I do”. Ships are named, objects bequeathed and bets are made with performative utterances.

Words, however, are not magic. Performatives only have their effect in the proper context. The “I do” only works if both partners are available to be married, and if the marriage ceremony is performed by a qualified person. In other words, there must be agreed upon understandings—conventions—in order for a performative to succeed in having its effect. Unlike descriptions or other more ordinary kinds of statements, performatives cannot be effectively evaluated in terms of how truthful they are, and instead are evaluated in terms of their validity (Austin 1975:14). Austin uses the terms “happy” or “felicitous” to describe a successful performative, and refers to unsuccessful ones as “infelicitous”, or “unhappy” (14). Some conditions that determine whether a performative is “felicitous” are situational: Is the situation appropriate for the performative to be “happy”? Some conditions are procedural: Has the procedure been performed correctly and completely? And are the participants the right sorts of people to make the outcome felicitous (for example, is the minister qualified to perform the marriage ceremony)? Some conditions involve the intentions of the actors and their subsequent behavior (for example, does a person intend to keep a promise they have made?).

Some of the errors to which performatives are vulnerable include misfires (mis-invocations, mis-executions, and misapplications), and abuses (insincerities, Austin 1975:17–18). The problems that may arise rarely emerge out of performatives themselves, but rather, emerge out of elements not contained by them—elements required in order for them to have their effect, but elements that are not theirs alone (Loxley 2007:12). These sorts of errors are suffered by any activities that rely on convention (including formal ritual). Austin briefly mentions the hollowness of the performative uttered on stage, in a poem, or soliloquy, but indicates that he will not explore such “non-serious performatives” further (Austin 1975:21–22). Loxley argues that we should not conclude that Austin sees a fundamental difference between serious and fictional performatives. Rather, he suggests that for Austin, non-serious performatives fail to take effect simply for different reasons than an infelicitous serious performative: “they are void in ‘a peculiar way’” (Loxley 2007:15). The take away point here is that all utterances are repeatable and reproducible outside the normal context, and that stage performances represent one end of the performative scale (2007:13).

Austin argues that constatives and performatives rarely exist in pure form (1975:91). He points out that “. . . considerations of the happiness and unhappiness type may infect statements (or some statements) and considerations of the type of truth and falsity may infect performatives (or some performatives)” (55). Speech acts are therefore best evaluated within a total situation (139). Austin breaks down units of speech along three axes. These include the locutionary act, itself comprised of the phonetic act (the act of making the sound), the phatic act (which involves the grammar and vocabulary of a language, and the rhetic act (“the performance of an act using those vocables with a

certain more-or-less definite sense and reference”—what we identify as the meaning; 95–96). The second axis is the illocutionary act, which he characterizes as “the performance of an act *in* saying something as opposed to performance of an act *of* saying something” (100). Austin stresses that the illocutionary effect of any utterance depends on its conformity to convention (105). An illocution becomes “an event in the world” when uttered in the right circumstances, by the right person, in the appropriate and accepted way (Loxley 2007:19). The third axis is the perlocutionary act, which is a consequence (in terms of “feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience”) to the utterance (Austin 1975:101).

Austin’s key points are that the things people say are always part of a “speech situation”, and that saying something is also always doing something:

And statements do ‘take effect’ just as much as ‘namings’, say: if I have stated something, then that commits me to other statements: other statements made by me will be in order or out of order. Also some statements or remarks made by you will be henceforward contradicting me or not contradicting me, rebutting me or not rebutting me, and so forth. . . . And certainly in stating we are or may be performing perlocutionary acts of all kinds. (1975:139)

There is no way to argue that statements are of a special category that can be assessed for truthfulness or falseness:

[I]n the case of stating truly or falsely, just as much as in the case of advising well or badly, the intents and purposes of the utterance and its context are important; what is judged true in a school book may not be so judged in a work of historical research. . . . It is essential to realize that ‘true’ and ‘false’, like ‘free’ and ‘unfree’, do not stand for anything simple at all; but only for a general dimension of being a right and proper thing to say, as opposed to a wrong thing, in these circumstances, to this audience, for these purposes and with these intentions. (143,145)

For a constative utterance, we attend to the locutionary act of the utterance and judge its truth or falseness according to the demands of the context in which it was uttered (146). For the performative utterance, we pay the most attention to its illocutionary force and background our judgment of the factual. Both axes are present in both kinds of utterances, and each is fore-grounded or back-grounded according to intention, the situation, expectations, remembrances, thoughts, and feelings. Austin's excavation of the speech act presents every situation as a performance and an event, if not an experience. And every performance knits together subjectivities, traces of the past and also opens possibilities for alternative futures.

### **The Game: Co-conspirators in the Construction of Border Reality**

In this section I will explore the first of several recurring performance themes that emerged during my Stanstead/Derby Line field work. I refer to this first theme as "the game" because it involves players from different sides (border officers and border crossers), and rules implicitly understood by its players. Outsiders are excluded from this game. I will also clarify here that this game is played by Canadian borderlanders and Canadian border officers.

Before I introduce the game, I would like to interject with an example of a border crossing, with the warning that it is hardly representative of a typical border crossing. Additionally, it is also a crossing into the U. S., rather than back into Canada. Nonetheless, I will use it as an example of how a crossing by a non-borderlander might unfold. This short extract from my field notes is a report of my first field work crossing into Derby Line on foot. There are two players—the U. S. border officer and the border crosser (me). The interaction has an unexpected outcome in which the border guard

surprises me by not playing his role as expected. The border crossing situation therefore becomes unsettling:

On my second day in Stanstead I ventured across the border into Derby Line, Vermont on foot. I walked south on Dufferin Street, past Canada Customs to the east, and paused briefly to admire the view from the bridge over the Tomiphobia River. I became aware that a Canada Custom's officer was watching me, so I took a few photographs of the water and mountains and moved forward, somewhat nervously. Just a bit further on, to my right, I encountered a rundown, red brick apartment building with a plaque on it: a building bisected by the border. Looking down at the sidewalk in front of the building, I noticed a marker embedded in the concrete that delineated the more or less exact spot where Canada magically and mysteriously ends, and the United States of America equally magically and mysteriously begins. I took a picture of the marker with the toe of my right foot visible just inside the frame, on the Canadian side. It's a short but steep climb from this point on the road to the heart of Derby Line, where U. S. Customs is located. Foreboding signs and barricades, lines and large words written across the road oriented me and demanded that I walk briskly south towards the U. S. Customs kiosk. As I neared the top of the hill, I paused to retrieve my passport from my purse, and also to figure out how to line up at the customs building. There were two booths, but it seemed that only one was regularly used. As I approached it, a car came up the hill from behind me and pulled in ahead of me. I followed it. I stood behind the thick white line on the pavement next to the red "Stop until lane cleared" sign and dutifully waited for the car to clear. I didn't wait long. A hand came out the window of the booth and beckoned me forward. I walked up to the booth, smiled at the officer and handed him my passport. He casually opened it and cocked his head to one side. He was wearing latex gloves. He seemed a bit bored. He pronounced my name in a very long, drawn out, and bad fake French accent: "Sandra Jean Vandervalk".

I replied, "Well, I'm not French, so..." He looked at me, and said my name again, this time without the put-on accent. He added, "So you're from Toronto."

"No, I was born there, I'm from Brockville."

"What are you doing today?"

"Just visiting Stanstead and wanted to see what was on this side."

He whistled. "Pretty exciting" he said with a twinkle in his eye. "Are you ready? There's the store" He pointed to the convenience store across the road. "There's the gas station", he continued to point across the road, "and the park is there," he pointed south. "Have fun."

Not what I was expecting.

It is a straight forward exercise to think of this episode in terms of Goffman. This encounter occurs in a very specific setting—the U. S. port of entry, with the kiosk serving as the front stage area. I have clearly taken my time assessing the situation, trying to determine what “the right way to behave” is: I watch a vehicle drive into the kiosk ahead of me in order to figure out where to go. There are plenty of cues that I have observed (signs, barricades, lines). I also have enough border crossing experience to know to follow the lead of the other performer in this little drama who has a well-defined role to play: the American border officer. I have an expectation of how he will play his role, and I am prepared to play the role that I anticipate will be expected of me. Because of his position, he and I both understand that he is the one who will set the tone for our encounter. He is wearing a uniform, a badge, a gun. He is in the kiosk behind all the threatening signs. He is the one who has the power to detain me, deny me entry, or let me through. He is the border for me in this moment. He, however, turns out to be something of a trickster. There is a contradiction between the setting in which I find myself and his behavior. The effect unsettles me, and makes me feel unsure of what behavior is expected of me in this moment. He has somehow already rendered me an alien by virtue of his presumptuously friendly tone. This short and seemingly pleasant interaction has yielded precisely the same results as a less pleasant encounter might have. By foiling my expectations, this border officer has somehow with his utterance “Have fun”, both legitimized my presence in the U. S., but has also foregrounded my strangeness here. In the end, these simple words, have had, in Austin’s terms, the illocutionary effect of transforming me into a legitimate and nervous stranger in the U. S., and the

perlocutionary effect of causing me to quickly walk away from the kiosk and into the U. S. proper.

I tell this story here because the U. S. border officer's behavior was a surprise to me, given how borderlanders had already by this time regaled me with many woeful tales of their mistreatment at the border. While all the unpleasant stories I heard were about crossing into (or back into) the U. S., when Canadians told me their stories, I began to realize that what they were pointing to was a sense that the American border officers are not performing appropriately given the long established convention in the region. When they tell these stories to outsiders, the point that borderlanders intend to make is that they (locals) are not being treated how they should be, given the kinds of people that they represent themselves to be. Here is a small story told to me by Bruce and Wanda that gives a sense of the annoyance people feel at being treated "rudely":

Bruce: One time in the winter I pulled up there, and course it was cold, so all I did is uh, you know, put down the window and I said, "just going to the post office and service station" "I'M ASKING THE QUESTIONS HERE!" he said,

Wanda: And don't leave your sunglasses on, the officer said one time "TAKE THOSE SUNGLASSES OFF!" really rude like!

Previously Wanda had told me this story with a little additional editorial content:

. . . a friend of mine, her husband or her sister's husband, was a customs officer, he said, take their badge number and report them when they're like that, he said they're not allowed to be rude. They can ask you questions, but they shouldn't be rude because you can't be rude back. They know that you can't sass them back. And one time Bruce said, he often goes for gas and we have, my son started a post office box over there, he's had it forever there in Derby Line. So sometimes he'll order stuff. . . so we check, Bruce always goes through for gas, and he'll check for mail. So he opened the [car] window [at U. S. Customs] and said I'm just going for gas and the post office. And the officer said "I'll ask the questions" you know. So I thought, "Oh Bruce, just don't say anything...excuse me...oh my dear". Well they're authority, eh?

In Wanda's expanded version of the story, we see that as locals, she and her husband are mindful of upholding the definition of the situation as established by the border officer during this border crossing. He aggressively asserts himself, but there is a sense of defiance in their version of events that is, I believe, more pronounced than what one might expect to hear from a non-borderlander. Bruce and Wanda are overtly signalling their frustration with the relatively recent changes to the cast of characters on the American side. The role of border officer on the U. S. side has changed, and so has the script. Local borderlanders, who often cross the border several times a day for purposes as unremarkable as grocery shopping or dining out, do not understand the necessity for the rude treatment they now experience at the hands of some American border officers, especially because they cross as frequently as they do. The ports of entry on either side of their travels back and forth are nuisance enough.

I believe that Bruce and Wanda are also signalling something else with this story, although perhaps not consciously. As I explained in Chapter 4, for many Canadian borderlanders, even though they identify as Canadians and live in Stanstead, the other side of the line is still part of their home territory. As I indicated in Chapter 2, there are very different narratives on either side of the border about the unpleasantness of some American border personnel (I will come back to the differences between the American and Canadian experiences of this). What I want to highlight here is something else that the Canadian narrative perhaps unintentionally points toward—the very different relationship that exists between borderlanders and Canadian border officers (at least some of them). The sense that comes with the repeated assertions of Canadian borderlanders such as Bruce and Wanda that they do not like being treated as though guilty despite

presenting themselves as polite and “good” people when entering the U. S. is that this is not how things are supposed to happen. What is both hidden and highlighted in these claims is that for Canadian borderlanders, crossing the border is expected to be something of a game played with mutually understood rules. Canadian borderlanders regularly cross into Vermont, where they feel quite at home. They are large contributors to the economy south of the line. Very few borderlanders were rumoured to be involved in the kinds of activities that would be of any concern to American border officers at the port of entry.<sup>1</sup> They expect to be welcomed politely, if not warmly by Americans so that they can go about their day to day business in the U. S., which often involves making mundane purchases or picking up parcels that they have no intention of declaring to Canadian border personnel when they come back. What is not so obvious in this telling of the story is that perhaps the most frustrating aspect of what is going on at the U. S. port of entry for Canadians might be the fact that American border personnel are not open to playing *the* game, or any game at all. There are no allowances for being local, there are no perks for those who on a daily basis must deal with the difficulties imposed by the securitized border. Complaints about the American port of entry are attention getting, so much so that what is almost always completely overlooked is the story on the Canadian side—the quiet cooperative enactment of the border by Canadian border officers and local borderlanders.

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<sup>1</sup> I was told on a return visit that I had at some point met someone who apparently did help people cross the line illegally occasionally. I was also shown by an informant how simple a matter it is for “baddies” to toss packages over the border line—there is one location along the border in this region where both American and Canadian roads run side by side. Smugglers drive their cars along this stretch, and before border patrol or RCMP can get there, a package has been tossed out of one vehicle and picked up by one on the other side. The port of entry in Derby Line is not a place where locals take unnecessary risks.

Here is another story that Bruce and Wanda tell me that gives a sense of how this game is properly played on the Canadian side. The story dates from the 1970s:

Bruce: I'll tell you a story that happened at the customs when the kids were young. It's a pretty funny one. We bought 'em a swing set so I had an uncle that lived in Beebe Vermont, you know, on Canusa Street? So we had brought it there. So at night . . .

Wanda: It's your Mom that bought it.

Bruce: Yah, my mother bought it, but at night, we had a truck, I had a store at the time and had a pickup truck and uh, I said well at night, well I'll go get it with Mom and whatever. So I pulled up over there, picked it up and course you were allowed to bring that across if you had it for, if you stayed across there for 48 hours. So I went over, and come to Beebe and one of the guys I worked with at one time was a customs officer. So I come over, and I said that I've got a swing set there that my mother bought for my kids and she'd been over to the, to my uncle's for two days, and I'm taking it across after 48 hours. So he came outside and we signed the papers and all that. And he says, "Bruce it's all alright", he says, "I'll tell you," but he says, "you know, this afternoon I went to your store and your mother was there." I mean I worked with him at the A & P when I was a kid. Good guy. He says, "Yah, next time make sure your mother stays out of sight for 48 hours"

Wanda: But I mean it was not like we were smuggling to profit, they kinda took that a bit into consideration.

In this era, most border officers were not assigned to their border posts from outside the region. They were hired locally and were therefore members of the community. In effect, even though at this time they represented the government when working at the port of entry, they also had relationships within the community and were able to use discretion in their interactions with fellow borderlanders who were crossing. We can see this in how Bruce tells the story: he tells me that he had known this officer since they were both "kids", and he was "a good guy". He is informing me that this officer was working at the border, but he was also a member of the community. The events that unfolded during the

crossing were in keeping with the definition of the situation—the traditional border crossing ritual in the appropriate environment with its conventional script—even though the border officer knew that Bruce was perhaps not being entirely honest about the circumstances surrounding the purchase of the swing set. Wearing his border officer hat, he asked the required questions, and received answers that suited the occasion, and let Bruce go. This is a situation in which the truthfulness of Bruce’s utterances was backgrounded and the felicity of his performance was foregrounded. The situation is complicated by the fact that the border officer is both a border officer and a borderlander.

Goffman writes “[s]ometimes when we ask whether a fostered impression is true or false we really mean to ask whether or not the performer is authorized to give the performance in question, and are not primarily concerned with the actual performance itself” (1959:59). I would argue that while Bruce was guilty of telling a lie, the border officer was willing to “let it go” because being a local borderlander, there was a certain expectation that Bruce might be attempting to bring something across the line without declaring it appropriately, and that is part of being a borderlander—this is the game. As I explained in Chapter 2, for many years, smuggling has been woven into the local way of life, and for many years, local border officers who often had grown up in the area were not uncomfortable looking the other way if they suspected minor infractions from locals. This is the context in which the great swing set caper was set. As Wanda points out, as long as the goods that people were bringing over were for personal use, officers would typically neglect to ask questions that might demand answers that would disrupt the expected interaction. Ellery is a retired border officer who worked at the local port of

entry during the era when Bruce brought over the swing set. He describes the role of the border officer during this time:

Ellery: Well you know, we were dressed in uniforms um, but not battle dressed, it was blue serge suits, wore a cap all the time, and no guns, and um you know, Americans coming up here and stopping on the way back and handing in their permit cause each American car, you wrote a permit for the car and then they had to hand it in on the way out, then they said, many of them, we got letters that if entering our country was half as easy or comfortable as your country, it would be more enjoyable. They'd throw the book at them across the line. The customs back, way back then— it's changed now in Canadian customs a bit, but we used to consider ourselves, uh, you know the welcoming committee and something has changed.

Sandy: Do you ever talk to the guys that are working now about...?

Ellery: Well there are still some that I know, but uh, there's nice guys. We've got some that couldn't use their head you know, make a decision, they go by the book.

Ellery implies here (and this was something he said again to me at a later encounter) that border officers in the past were not paramilitary or law enforcement “types”. They were the “welcoming committee”, and they had discretion over how they handled situations at the border. He suggests that the new generation of border officers no longer has that flexibility, although he qualifies this by adding that there are still “nice guys”. Of course, border officers are now routinely moved around to different ports of entry. Some local Canadian officers have worked at local ports of entry for many years, but most originate from outside the community. Outsiders would not have the same sense of community values, and would certainly feel less pressure to maintain the older shared definition of the situation than would the “old-timers”. In the past, Canadian border agents also understood themselves to be tax collectors rather than policeman. Canadian border

officers are now armed. Current Canadian border officer Claude told me that he had been carrying a gun for about six months by the time I arrived in Stanstead and Derby Line.

One other factor that challenges the ease of playing the game is changing surveillance technology since 9/11. Earlier I suggested that the kiosk was the front stage for interactions between the border officer and the border crosser. In the past I suspect that when an officer was confronted with a friend and neighbour at the kiosk, the privacy of kiosk may have facilitated its shift into a back stage area in which both sides could relax performances to a degree. In effect, both could act as borderlanders. Here Bruce describes his recent declaration to a border officer that he is bringing some take-out food from Newport into Canada:

It's pretty well all recorded. . . . you know, when I came, one time when I came over, I pulled up and I said I got a bunch of Chinese in the back there, and then the border guy said (a guy I'd known forever) "Bruce, don't ever say anything like that, it's recorded and they're on camera."

The border officer here is kindly advising Bruce to choose his words carefully lest someone listening somewhere jumps to the conclusion that he is bringing "illegals" over the line. There is a sense here that this border officer is willing to play along with local border crossers, as long as they play the game "smartly".<sup>2</sup> There are many factors that work together to make it more challenging for borderlanders to play the game with Canadian border officers, but not impossible.

On the surface at least, it seems that policy changes implemented by Ottawa that have changed the structure and functioning of Canadian ports of entry have perhaps given borderlanders pause for thought when coming across the line with goods. They are no

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<sup>2</sup> I have placed "smartly" in quotations in order to distinguish my use of smart from the idea of the smart border which references technologies (for example, biometrics) being used to manage border crossings.

longer always certain that the officer in the Canadian kiosk will play the game. How has this changed their behavior? During my long initial stay in the region, there was no talk about current smuggling at all (active denial of it actually!), and I began to wonder whether the only kind of smuggling that happened in this area now was of the bad and dangerous kind done by proper criminals. It was only after I had been gone for a few months and then returned for a brief visit that this impression was replaced by something a little closer to what may be the truth. Here is an excerpt from my field notes:

During my return visit to Stanstead and Derby Line, I agreed to accompany Kelly to a folk concert in Mansonville, a little Eastern Townships community on the west side of Lake Mephrémagog. I volunteered to drive. Kelly told me that the best way to get to Mansonville was via Vermont. This would be a 45 minute drive each way, whereas travelling north around Mephrémagog, through Quebec to get to Mansonville would probably take at least an hour and a quarter. I was game—after all, this would mean crossing the border at a new point. We decided to stop for dinner in Newport. Before we left Stanstead, Kelly needed to run an errand in the Beebe sector. I drove to Beebe and dropped her off, and wandered into the flower shop to buy a grapevine Christmas ornament that I had heard could be found at this shop. I then went back to the car to meet Kelly. Kelly was waiting for me. She saw what was in my hand and shook her head.

“Sandy, you are NOT thinking like a border person yet!” she said.

I felt a little confused and concerned. “Why?” I asked, “What’s wrong?”

“That thing” She replied, “That’s made of grapevine, isn’t it?” I sheepishly answered that yes it was indeed made of grapevine. She shook her head, “The American guys will confiscate it. You can’t bring bark over.” I looked helplessly at my prized purchase and suggested returning it to the shop, or hiding it somewhere in the area to pick up later. Kelly rolled her eyes.

“No” she said, “Hide it in your car.”

So I lifted the back floor of my wagon, and stuffed the offending item in with my spare tire. And then we headed to U. S. Customs. The officer asked the usual questions, but I was quite relieved when he asked if I was going to be leaving anything in the U. S. rather than if I was bringing anything in. At least I didn’t have to lie! As always, he also asked what the purpose of our trip was. I said we

were going to Newport for dinner. He was fine with that, and off we went. In Newport, I parked in front of a local arts and crafts boutique. We had some time, so Kelly agreed to go in to the boutique with me. I, of course, purchased a handmade hat that was expensive enough that I knew I would have to pay duty. And I said so. Out loud. Kelly looked at me as though I were an alien. “You are not paying duty on that!” she said, “I will wear that hat if I need to, but we are not declaring it when we cross!” And for good measure, she added “We don’t declare stuff like this!”

I quietly requested no packaging for my hat. When we got to the restaurant, I took the tag off the hat, and Kelly instructed me to get rid of the receipt. I obeyed by balling it up in a napkin and tossing it into the garbage. When we returned to the car, I tossed the hat (more or less) nonchalantly onto the back seat of the car. Later in the evening, when we crossed into Canada at the Highwater/North Troy crossing, the Canada Custom’s officer asked where we were from and what we had been doing in the U. S., and I explained that we had stopped for dinner in Newport enroute to a concert in Mansonville. He asked “What kind of concert, country?” and I said “No, folk”, and that was the end of the questions. After the concert, on the return trip, the U. S. Custom’s officer asked where we were from, and what the purpose of our entry into the U. S. was. Again, I explained that we were cutting through Vermont to get back to Stanstead. Coming back up into Canada at Stanstead (Rock Island), the border services officer asked us where we were from, and what we had been doing. I told him. He asked if we had purchased anything during this visit to the U. S. I smiled because, in fact, I hadn’t (on the last visit yes, but on this pass through, no!) I said no. And into Canada we came. I had officially been initiated into the world of small-time smuggling.

For Kelly, the idea that I might declare the hat was preposterous. She insists that even today, in spite of the more secure border, a proper “border person” would never voluntarily pay duty on a small personal item such as this. I was not playing the role properly. Clearly the game continues.

In the next excerpt, Claude, a border officer on the Canadian side who has lived in the area for more than thirty years, confirms what I have gleaned from Kelly. He explains his understanding of some of the sneaky local techniques for avoiding duty payment at the border:

Claude: But the locals got smart, because we [Canadian border officers] all go [to the U. S.]. You know, I got a post office box, and most of the customs officers do.

Most of the people in town here have got one. And for a while what happened is we'd go in, and there'd be open boxes in the post office, with the names and everything on it. Now they cut their names off. They go to that much trouble. They cut their names off the boxes, so we can't see who it's for or from.

Me: Ya, but it's all sweetness and light, they deny all of this when you talk to them!

Claude: It's a game. It's in our minds that when you go through customs you have to try to trick or get away with something—when all you have to do is tell us what you got, and everything's fine!

Claude says that "it's a game," and that suggests that trickery remains part of coming across the line as a borderlander. He is certainly suggesting that life would be easier for all sides if borderlanders would declare what they bring over—that is the official line. He adds:

I don't see anything. I think we [border officers] should all do a month somewhere else during the year. You know. Keep people on their toes, but also, good for us to beef up. . . . But uh, yah, the locals are so good at lying that it's almost impossible to catch them. I mean "You bringing anything back?" "Nope." "Okay."

To my ear, even though he says that borderlanders are very good at smuggling, I also sensed his hesitancy to challenge their honesty every time they cross back into Canada. This is a confirmation that border officers do sometimes treat borderlanders in a way that corresponds to how they present themselves at the border: honest and decent folks who deserve to be treated as such. Claude has also given me a little glimpse into the backstage area of border officer performance: he signals the conflict he feels between his loyalty to his neighbors and his commitment to his job. Before our interview was over, he had told me a number of "stupid" smuggling stories. Sometimes the smuggling was so obvious that it was very easy for him to do his job. In the end I was left with the sense

that he could live with himself misjudging some Canadian borderlanders as long as they were smart in their subterfuge, and also as long as no one would be hurt or endangered by their actions. There is a certain sense then that the definition of the situation at the border, at least for self-identified borderland Canadians crossing back into Canada, more or less carries on as it mostly has for many years.

Having written about the local propensity for game playing at the border, I would like to remind the reader of my initial motivation for doing field work in this area: recall that I was intrigued by the various news reports that I had read of injustices suffered by locals at the hands of border officers. During my initial field work time in the region, locals vocalized how deeply offended they were to sometimes be harassed and treated like criminals by the border authorities. There is a certain amount of irony then in the fact that borderlanders do seem to take some pride in their wily border crossing ways. To add to this irony, I would like to add yet another layer of complexity to the story. Locals who regularly cross the border may expect to be able to bring over goods without declaring them, but they have little tolerance for outsiders who attempt to do the same. On the Canadian side, outsiders are not afforded the same privileges as insiders. In the next excerpt I tell Claude about my husband who works just over the border from home in New York State:

Me: The plant he works in is in the free trade zone right at the bottom of the bridge, just beside the border, and he's often there working late in the evening. He's the engineer, and he sometimes just stays late to work, and he'll look out the window, and there's a car in the parking lot unboxing a bike, and he calls the border people and he says, this is the car, this is the plate, they've just unboxed a bike.

Claude: People around here are pretty good about that too. Well. Pretty good about it. Not necessarily about merchandise, although we do, we get you know,

people come through, and say “Hey Claude, uh, I was at the gas station and someone’s unloading a box of shoes”, or whatever. But you were just talking before about surveillance. The best surveillance we have is the locals.

My husband has his own motivation for informing on people who discard packaging in the parking lot of the company for which he works, but it seemed somewhat inconsistent to me that borderlanders would be so willing to work with border officers to enforce regulations. Claude hints at the fact that borderlanders actively assist border officers in monitoring for illegal activities along the border. The mayor confirmed what Claude told me during my car-ride interview with him:

Mayor: People made a big thing when they put those gates up [the gates that blocked streets that once went through the border]. Course it was the mayor back then, just a lot of pressure on him. And after they were up there, you never heard no more about it, and the neighbours are happy about the gates, because it saves them a lot of problems. You know, there was people going through there at night, so now they, you know, feel safer, you know, because they were going through there full blast, this and that. And you don’t know who you’re, now they don’t even try to go through there. Before they put those gates there, there was people going through at night. I remember a guy said that he was coming down the second street, remember the first gate we saw? He lived right on the corner of the street. He said it was in the summer. “And I could hear somebody running” He says “I could hear him, my windows were open” and he says “All of a sudden, I heard hollerin’ and screamin’. They were running at night to get across” he says “he hit my clothesline and almost killed himself” [we both laugh]. But you know, those people [who live right beside the border]. Most of the time they got a chance, they’ll call, you know, “someone’s just crossed”. . . . Well, like, the lady that’s on the border there, she was saying that, cause the people say that they like having it more open, so tourists can visit on the weekend with bus tours and this and that. Well, you know, she says, you got to have your eye on everybody. . . .

The mayor is not talking about people reporting strangers for not declaring merchandise, and he is speaking about some of the more ominous activities carried out along the boundary line by strangers. Nonetheless, he gives a sense that locals work with border officers to maintain the line in a way that makes good safe sense to them. It is possible to think of it in terms of you scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours: Perhaps locals actively

assist border officers because they are grateful for allowances by the officers when they have crossed. I suspect that the relationship between the borderlanders and border officers is much more complicated than this.

Goffman helps us to see how the players in the borderlands life–world understand their roles, and how they understand specific situations. Thinking in Austin’s terms, however, it becomes necessary to ask what is accomplished in the enactment of the border by the local players. I will come back to the line used by my informant: “I love living at the edge of a country”. This region is only the edge of a country because of the border that runs through it. The very thing that is such a challenge to day to day existence is the very thing by which these people define themselves. This quirky cat and mouse border game is part of life in the region, and strangely makes it home for the people who live here. Proper borderlanders are able to demonstrate their knowledge of how to play the line and they show an effortless ownership of both sides. This is what distinguishes borderlanders from non–borderlanders. By the same token, as insecure as that ownership seems to be in recent years, Canadian borderlanders continue to want to feel safe from outsiders to the region who possess no understanding of local community, history, or way of being in the world who nonetheless feel entitled to “get away with something”. In a very real sense, what is being enacted in the border crossing routine at the Canadian port of entry is not just “the border”, but is also borderland belonging. The unspoken game distinguishes insiders from outsiders. The rhythm of a properly executed crossing is somehow like a secret handshake that acknowledges who belongs and who doesn’t. Canadian borderlanders value the line, it is their home, and they enact it with their co–conspirators, the border officers in the way that suits them—even if their co–conspirators

occasionally refuse to play the game in the expected and traditional way, which seems to be ever more the case in recent years.

### **The American Experience**

There are very real differences between how the American and Canadian ports of entry are experienced by people. As well, complaints about treatment at the American ports of entry tend to be framed differently by Canadians and Americans. Politeness (or lack thereof) is the main issue that Canadian borderland travellers have: They tend to be offended by being treated as though they are guilty of something (their guilt or innocence does not seem to be the point). On the other hand, the Americans with whom I spoke were offended by the impact of border operations on their right to freedom. Although I was unable to collect as much data from Americans in the region as I was from Canadians, I nonetheless feel that this observation is significant. In this section I will consider how and why the American experience of the border seems different than the Canadian one. I will reflect on what this means for American borderlanders, and how it is that despite the differences, borderlanders on both sides of the line can and do claim membership in a singular community.

I will open this section with an excerpt from my interview with Hank Peters, the infamous pizza smuggler. Here I tell him about an unpleasant interaction with the American border officer on my way over to Derby Line:

Me: Well, I'm a little afraid. When I came over here today, the border guy gave me a hard time because I walked over, and he was somebody new to me. Every time I come it's a different person, it's never the same guy.

Hank: Why did he give you a hard time? Because you walked?

Me: Um...well he asked me “Where had I walked from” Noo! That’s not it. He said “Where do you live?” and I said “Brockville, Ontario” and he said “You walked from Brockville?” and I wanted to say “Well you didn’t ask me where I walked from, you asked me where I lived”, but I didn’t. I said “No I’m visiting in Stanstead. I’m staying over there, so I walked over.” “Well, why are you here?” And I said “Well, I want to go to the bank (which was true), then I’m going to have a coffee with somebody.” “Who are you having a coffee with?” And so I told him. He said, “Why are you having a coffee with him?”

Hank: [Laughs loudly]. Oh yah, they...

Me: And I said “We’re just going to have a chat.” And he says, “Well where do you think you’re going to get a coffee?” [I laugh] And I said “Well maybe we won’t have a coffee, but I hope we’re going to have a chat.” So anyway, he finally, he wanted to ask me more, he did, and I thought maybe I was going to get arrested.

Hank: [Laughing loudly]. No, that wouldn’t happen, but they would obviously question you quite a bit, you know, because they don’t particularly like me.<sup>3</sup>

In Goffman’s terms, again, the border officer has defined the situation, I agree to maintain this definition, and our behaviour in the situation reflects our independent histories and understandings of what border crossing means. Thinking about the same situation in Austin’s terms offers a more nuanced understanding of the mechanics of the interaction—how the parts function together to give rise to an outcome in which I am a) allowed into the U. S. and b) am nonetheless afraid. For a moment then, let’s overlook the fact that this small excerpt is a transcript of an oral report of a conversation to an informant, perhaps made with its own particular illocutionary intentions. The setting is the U. S. port of entry. The players include the border officer and me, the Canadian

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<sup>3</sup> This was interesting: one week later I received a call from my husband wanting to know what I had been up to “down there”. He sounded annoyed. His car had been flagged for a search three times in one week at the border. His car had only been searched a handful of times during the previous twenty five years.

looking for permission to enter. The dialogue that follows takes the form of a series of questions asking for answers which are to be judged for their truthfulness and acceptability by the officer. The situation legitimizes his right to demand answers to the questions and places a demand on me to achieve a particular outcome by both reading and staying within the bounds of the illocutionary intent hidden within his questions. Each question he asks bears the warning that I am without status or rights in this moment. Every answer I give should demonstrate at least a minimal show of deference—the desired perlocutionary effect. None of my answers contain everything that he wants to know, but enough for him to judge them to be “truthful enough”. In the end, my field notes record that I was dismissed abruptly with a “Here’s your passport”. His illocution admitted me to the U. S. In this moment, which was neither friendly nor welcoming, I understood that I had been judged to be a minimal threat and had been granted admission. The perlocutionary effect of his utterance was my sense that his suspicion of my character remained, and that I was still at risk. With documentation in hand however, I had been legitimized as a Canadian visitor to the U. S.

My encounter with this American border officer intimidated me in a way that no encounter with a Canadian border officer ever has. All of my informants, Canadian and American, agreed that the American port of entry was the worrisome one. Sarah, an American who works between the border and the U. S. port of entry told me that she has seen “little old ladies” who have accidentally wandered up the hill from Canada being tackled by officers with their weapons drawn. She also told me that once when the line up for the U. S. port of entry was very long, a motorcyclist on the hill made the mistake of putting his bike up on its kickstand and found himself surrounded by officers with their



Figure 24. A Canadian warning sign at the border.



Figure 25. An American border warning sign.

weapons drawn. She once watched a female officer pummel a car with her baton until it was covered with dents. Sarah says she has asked several American border officers why they need to be so difficult. She says they always answer “because we can.” Hank Peters is also very angry about what sometimes goes on at the U. S. port of entry. In this next extract from my interview with him, I’ve just asked him if he thinks people in Derby Line were surprised by what happened to him when he stood his ground with his pizza:

No, no they were, by this time, people were angry with customs. They were being treated rudely when they crossed the border, they were denied, you know, liberties that they had. There was a church on, well on Church Street by the library, just a little further down in Canada that had a large U. S. participation, and those people would park on Caswell Avenue [on the American side] and walk over to church and walk back and go home and they couldn’t do that anymore. And that was despised. There was just all these little things that got under people’s skins that you know, people felt that they were making this terrorism thing a bigger story than what it was. You know, the people that blew up the twin towers, they entered the country legally, they went through customs but now we’re meant to, we have to suffer the consequences of some paranoia.

It is the word “liberties” that stands out for me in this. I also heard it when I spoke with Sarah. There was a sense that for American borderlanders, the border is not experienced as a place to enact local belonging. Instead it is a physical barricade imposed by an authoritarian government which serves to marginalize borderlanders even as it prevents them from moving beyond the edges of the state—it acts as an eerie double boundary. The border crossing ritual serves to bring into question national identity, legitimacy, legality—border officers often assume guilt on the part of American border crossers. Sarah told me that the border officers even try to make U. S. citizens feel disloyal for leaving the U. S. at all. One dual citizen who identifies as a Canadian told me that the Americans insist that she travel with her American passport, and then hassle her for living in Canada. The net effect has been to make the American borderlands a zone of

exclusion. The people who live within 100 miles of the border on the U. S. side are all question marks—they are watched and listened to, and chased by border patrol. They are subjected to an overt kind of scrutiny that few of their fellow citizens from further away can imagine, all perhaps to reinforce a particular discourse that serves particular political purposes. Their proximity to the border renders them somehow less authentically American.

The enactment of the border by the American government is only one part of a complicated story. American borderlanders dislike the impact that the secured border has had on their day to day lives in the American border region, but this has not necessarily changed their movement back and forth across it. Recall from Chapter 2 Sarah's assertion that for most Americans the world ends at the border. I would like to bring into my discussion comments from another informant who I interviewed on the American side. Marianne is a Canadian who has lived in Vermont for more than thirty years. She is married to an American. She lives close to the border and commutes more than an hour and a half to work every day further south in Vermont. Her husband also works a considerable distance away. For Marianne it was very important to raise her children near the border so that they would have the experience of the other side. She claims that Vermonters are very conservative—they are afraid of the French language, and the culture of Quebec. She argues that Canadians are "more open-minded. We [Canadians] all know about the U. S." She says that she is deliberately "throwing her kids over the wall to learn about the culture of Canada." Border security, it seems, is not the only impediment to crossing the line. Both Sarah and Marianne expressed the opinion that

most Vermonters are reluctant to venture north of the border either out of fear of the unknown, or the perception that there is nothing on the other side worth visiting.

According to Sarah and Marianne, even borderland Americans know little about Canada, and are, generally speaking, not inclined to cross over into Canada. Why then, do Derby Line residents (including Hank and Marianne) claim that Derby Line and Stanstead until recently have functioned as a singular community. I cannot argue with this claim, it is their experience of their world. I suspect, however, that this claim means different things depending on which side of the line one hails from. While Canadians feel at ease crossing physically back and forth across the border, and consider the other side to be part of their home territory, I believe that the Americans are pointing towards the flow of people from the other side over into their space and their comfort with Canadians navigating around and through their space when they talk about the former singular community. Certainly in the past, Americans ventured north more frequently than they do now to play hockey or curl or go to church, but the consensus among the people with whom I spoke was that Canadians have always been more willing to go into Derby Line than Americans have been to cross into Stanstead. The local economy relies on Canadian shoppers doing business on the American side. Canadians have been a big part of life on the border, even if Canada has not been. The shared community was and in many ways continues to be real, even if the geography is not shared equally. Canadians live in a world that opens spatially into Vermont. Vermonters live in a world that makes space for Canadians.

## Different Sides, Different Histories

Although a detailed exploration of how people who live side by side have come to have such different perspectives on what the border means is beyond the scope of this thesis, I will stop for a moment to consider the repercussions of history that continue to play out along the border. I wish to remind the reader of a few points that I have made elsewhere in this thesis. First, recall that this border was an early border between modern nations—dating back to the American Revolution. Recall that the first Americans to settle in the Vermont region had misgivings about both the British and the Abenaki Indians who lived on the other side of the line in what is now Canada. Historically for those who live south of the border, the north side of the line has had an aura of Otherness and danger to it that their side has never had for northerners. Consider the lightness of border origin stories from the Canadian side: the mythology of the drunken surveyors who were tasked with drawing the line in the first place. My point is that there are traces of history that seem to continue to resonate in the enactment of the border on either side, even if the actors have no conscious awareness of this. A strange and complicated history saw an imaginary line come into being that presupposed the existence of two separate nations—the one on the south having parted ways dramatically with the empire that claimed the north.<sup>4</sup> In this history, the people who initially settled in the border region on either side of this line hailed from the American side and were unconcerned about which side of the line they settled on—in part because no one knew where it really was. Those who settled north of the line (whether accidentally or on purpose) have historically never been troubled by a sense of division that the line should perhaps have created—and this

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<sup>4</sup> I borrow from Derrida here specifically, his argument that the Declaration of Independence created the people whom it purports to represent (2002:49)

still seems to be reflected in the configuration of local border interactions today.

Borderlanders from north of the border have always moved, and continue to move back and forth across the line, while those from south of the line have never had and continue to have little need to cross over to Canada. Furthermore, the border has a very solid meaning and existence for the people from away who are involved in its enactment, and this meaning has been inscribed into their persons in a very different way than the traces of the past that are written into the bodies of borderlanders, and which inform their ways of being in the world, and their every communication.

In using the word trace, I am purposefully referencing Derrida's idea even as I admit I have not perhaps quite got a hold on it. It is an acknowledgement that absence and presence are two sides of the same coin, and that hidden in the present, and in what is present, are the strings of iterative performances, presentations of self, contextual enactments that have led to a border that changes shape and meaning according to both how close it is, and on what side of it one lives. The border is a strange entity that is supposed to divide and designate, sort and categorize. My time in Stanstead and Derby Line made it clear to me that the border is much more complicated than this. Point to the border. Where is it exactly? Even the idea of the line itself is impossible to define. Look closer and closer at a line that must approach an infinite thinness. Where is this line? Yet there is a line. And what about the people who live on either side? They enact the line, but it is a different line for every one of them.

The border is a crazy absurd thing. But why is it absurd? Initially it seemed easy to suggest that its absurdity rests in the fact that it is a total invention, and that it takes forceful enactments to keep it real. Invoking Derrida again, each enactment is an iteration

of a previous one—the same, yet different (1988). This very real hard line that divides is troubled by the fact that nothing is present without absence—what is unspoken in today’s enactment of the border are the threads of its complicated history. From a distance, the line can be seen to be a divider—both in time and space. It points to the originary moment of the United States of America, and it points to the line that divides the United States from not the United States. When one zooms in and takes a closer look at the enactment of the line in the everyday lives of the people who live along it, something else begins to emerge. Borderlanders disrupt the common understanding of the border as a line that divides. From a distance, it is easy to overlook the long play of people moving back and forth across it who defy its cutting edge. The border can only mark difference by hiding similarity. Borderlanders are a problem because they mark similarity by hiding difference. As they participate in its enactment, borderlanders disrupt border discourse by their insistence on inhabiting both sides, even as they identify with one side or the other.

In conclusion, in this chapter I have examined the enactment of the border by borderlanders and border officers on either side of the line. I have argued that on the Canadian side there is something of a longstanding game in which borderlanders try to get away with something at the border. I also argue that Canadian borderlanders cooperate with border officers by monitoring for and reporting suspicious activities by non-borderlanders. There is a “backstage” knowledge in the relationship between borderlanders and border officers that comes to life in the enactment of the border and which is key to borderlander identity on the Canadian side. In this chapter I have also considered the very different and difficult situation on the other side of the line. The line on the American side and the 100 mile zone south of it have become zones of

exclusion—the enactment of the border on this side has served to marginalize the Americans who live there by constantly calling into question their loyalty and motivation. Finally I argue that the threads of history form the contexts that shape border enactment on either side of the line. In the end, in spite of the vast differences that seem evident across the line, there is truth in the claim that this region has always functioned as a single community, and in fact, this is the problem with this region: The people who live here are united across a line that should divide. Those of us who don't live there expect and sometimes demand that it should be otherwise.

## Chapter Six

### Conclusion

With this project I have sought to bring to life the dance that is the everyday and complicated life–world of the borderlanders of Stanstead Quebec, and Derby Line Vermont. I have argued that there is a unique way of being in the world in this region that reflects what it means to live in such an in–between and on edge place. This final chapter of the thesis will summarize its most important conclusions. I will briefly address how this research contributes to the literature of border anthropology and border studies. I will consider some aspects of border enactment that I have chosen to overlook for the purposes of this study, and will also summarize future directions for study that emerge out of my findings in this project.

I set the stage for an ethnographic examination of the border region of Stanstead and Derby Line by first describing the region geographically and demographically. I presented an abbreviated history of the area which tells of the long complex relationship that locals have had with the border since before settlement. I then described how changes to the structure and functioning of the border have affected borderlanders. In doing this, I was able to begin the process of identifying some of the subtle differences between the experiences of those living north of the line and those living south of the line. I use this to introduce my interest in the claim of borderlanders that the two sides of the line in the past functioned as a single community.

I chose to shift back and forth between performance theory and phenomenology in the ethnographic chapters that followed. I would argue that I have specifically worked where they intersect, that is, in their emphasis on indeterminacy, in–between–ness, and

liminality as the ever present drivers of social processes and meaning making. These are structures of human experience that enable continuity even as they also allow for the possibility of something new and creative to emerge out of the unknown. Through Victor Turner's notion of the social drama I explored how locals on both sides of the line struggle to contend with the impact on their day to day lives of border changes imposed from the outside. I described how signs have begun to emerge that the hardened border may in fact be taking a toll on the perceived unity of the cross-border community, even as a borderland way of being persists.

In the next chapter I reflected on the border as a liminal place, and how the borderlander experience of the border as a threshold is different than that of a non-borderlander. In fact, I argued that part of the borderland way of being in the world is the experience of the border as something that unites rather than as something that divides—this is a sphere of perception and experience that encompasses borderlanders on both sides of the line. In the final ethnographic chapter I considered some of the particulars of border enactment—border crossing as both a performance and as performative. I made the claim that on the Canadian side of the line, the border is cooperatively enacted, and that “smart” border crossing is a marker of borderlander identity. I contrasted this with the situation on the American side, in which border changes imposed from outside the region make the borderlands into a zone of exclusion—a place where the loyalty and motives of American borderlanders are always suspect.

Finally, I considered how despite the emerging differences in borderlander experience on either side of the border, and even as they necessarily participate in the enactment of the border, they nonetheless also trouble the non-borderlander

understanding of what a border does. They defy our insistence on the border being an entity that sorts and categorizes, on being a thing that divides.

In the introductory chapter, I claimed that the state is often most visible at its borders (14). I feel that I need to come back to what this means for those of us who do not live on the border compared to the experience of borderlanders. Benedict Anderson defines the nation as “an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (2006:6). The nation is imagined, because its citizens, most of whom will never meet one another, nonetheless envision themselves living as members of a common community. It is limited because it has boundaries, and other nations exist beyond its borders. We rely on our borders to contain us as a nation. We use the border to define ourselves against the others on the exterior. We use the border to create that exterior. Those of us who live away from the border expect it to be enacted cleanly and decisively. We are fascinated by places like Stanstead and Derby Line when they turn up in media stories precisely because the people who live there show us something real about ourselves and our relationship with the world—something that defies our understanding of how borders should work and what they do.

The unsettling fact is that since the first appearance of settlers along the border in this region, borderlanders have actively participated in the social construction of the border. Every time they cross it, they make it real through performance. But hidden in plain sight is the other side of this reality: the borderlander insistence on inhabiting both sides (in the American case perhaps, being inhabited by both sides). I believe that this is why every time there is a news story about the border, the media descends on eerie Stanstead and Derby Line. We are fascinated by them because their situation speaks to a

truth hidden in plain sight all the time for all of us. Our comfort zone is in neat categories of binary opposition that serve to organize our thinking: man or woman, black or white, Canadian or American. Zombies disrupt the categories of dead or alive by being both dead and alive. Transgender people disrupt hetero–normative gender categories. The alien (in the sense of Waldenfels) disrupts by being neither insider nor outsider but instead, something radically Other. And borderlanders disrupt our categories of national identity by living on both sides of the line. These are examples of what Derrida refers to as undecidables—entities who or which interrupt and poison categorical thinking. This is the effect that borderlanders have on those of us who do not inhabit border regions. They show us something about the arbitrariness of categories. They show us something about ourselves that we all must recognize somewhere in the bottom of our beings: that we all live in the middle all the time.

Turning this around, we see something else that is unsettling about borderlanders. Even though they have much in common across the border, even though they may continue to share something of a life–world and a way of being in the world (under threat as this might be because of the hardening of the border), borderlanders nonetheless always enthusiastically claim and perform one national identity or the other. In the world in which they live, in order to move back and forth across the border, and sometimes just to move near the border, borderlanders must always be prepared to prove their citizenship. In this short interview extract, Ellery complains about the difficulty this can present—a passport does not fit in a wallet the way the old and now unavailable enhanced driver’s license used to:

Ellery: Well, it was about the same price as the passport but the convenience was that a man had it in his pocket, in his billfold. So boy oh boy I’ve been caught

going to Newport or somewhere and get up to customs and “You got your passport?” Nope. Got to go home to get it, and I threatened to nail it to the telephone pole there once, and I’ve got now so I don’t forget it.

Me: Well I keep mine in the zippered part...

Ellery: Yah, well that’s okay for a woman, no problem. I don’t carry a purse.

Me: No that’s true, that’s something I hadn’t thought of, because you’re right, it’s very easy for me to have it sitting there. I’m so afraid I’m going to put my toe over the line in the wrong place, I always want to have my passport.

As I discussed in Chapter Four, borderlanders must always be prepared to enact their national identity. Sometimes they enact it many times in a single day. They must always be armed with proof. Unlike the rest of us, for borderlanders, national identity is not a simple assumption, but something that is only made real in its enactment, and then it is only made real for a moment. Ten minutes later, on the return trip from the mail box, or the gas station, it must once again be conjured in performance. Borderlanders are very good at reading signs of national identity in a way that corresponds to Barth’s conceptualization of ethnic identity. Barth argues that ethnic boundaries that divide groups serve to mark difference, even if culturally there is little difference on either side of the line (1969:14). Of course there is a difference between the line that divides in Barth’s sense and the borderline that divides Stanstead from Derby Line. The border that borderlanders enact has been imposed on the region. The visibility of the state is central to existence in the borderlands. Borderlanders must make national identity claims in order to inhabit their life–world, in order to live on both sides. Again, they unsettle us, because they proclaim difference in order to proclaim similarity.

I believe that this work makes an important contribution to the literature of border anthropology because of its focus on a region that has not been studied ethnographically.

I also believe that its contribution can be found in the particular theoretical approach that I have taken. By taking the performative and phenomenological approach that I have, I have been able to examine the particular experiential objects that trouble the taken for granted life–world of borderlanders. In this way I have been able to point to a mode of existence (the pre–objective realm that exists between borderlander bodies and world) that shows itself as liminal. Borderlanders are troubled by the barrage of changing rules imposed from outside the region that affect their ability to move freely in the border zone. This indicates a uniquely in–between way of being in the world: Borderlanders inhabit the middle space, they dwell in the in–between, moving backwards and forwards, in and out of it in ways that defy the understanding of those of us who do not live on the edge and in the middle. The back and forth web of existence that borderlanders have knit for themselves is their taken for granted world. That embodied knowledge of their world comes into question through interference from outside forces.

Performance theory and phenomenology have provided the tools to both construct a picture of a life–world and a way of being in the world while also allowing me to winnow out what is always hidden in plain sight for all of us: the in–between–ness of the pre–objective world, the liminality of social processes, and the indeterminacy of our understanding of our world. I believe that I chose to do my research in an in–between place, using theory that sits in the indeterminate areas of our existence, because it has something to say about the in–between–ness of life for all of us, and how it is in–between–ness that always propels us all.

This project also makes a valuable contribution to the interdisciplinary field of border studies. I opened this thesis with a description of a line dancing class that I

attended in Stanstead. I claimed that this anecdote was a fitting metaphor for life on the line. I believe that with my work I have invited the reader to attend line dancing class with me. That is, working at the level of local scale, I have sought to bring to life something of the on the ground borderland world—I have sought to humanize the border. This is a world in which residents live with routine and immediate bodily consequences for what are often far away events. In their everyday lives they contend with the aftermath of events that can only be abstract ideas for most of us. I have taken a bottom up look at what the border means in the lives of a particular group of people who live with it, across it, and around it, and in doing so, I believe I have illuminated processes by which both border enactment and meaning shift and change. I have therefore made a novel contribution to the growing theoretical framework in border studies of borders in motion.

In this era of increasing economic protectionism and political fear-mongering, it would be valuable to continue working from this theoretical perspective in comparable Canada U. S border regions. For example, Point Roberts, Washington (an American exclave only accessible through Delta, British Columbia), the twin border towns of Fort Frances (Ontario) and International Falls (Minnesota), Coutts (Alberta) and Sweet Grass (Montana), Saint Stephen (New Brunswick) and Calais (Maine) are sites with unique settlement histories that undoubtedly have had to respond in their own ways to the challenges of the hardening border. It would also be interesting and challenging to take this approach to the controversial border that troubles Akwesasne—the Mohawk community that lies at the intersection of the Canada U. S. boundary, as well as at the intersection of New York State, Ontario and Quebec.

In future border work it would also be fruitful to consider an aspect of borderland life that I deliberately overlooked in this research. There have recently been a number of news stories about the dramatic increase in refugees illegally crossing into Canada in the wake of the recent U. S. presidential election (for example, see Park and Sutton 2017). The tiny community of Emerson, Manitoba (population 670) by the beginning of March 2017 had already seen 200 illegal crossings into Canada by people seeking refugee status, many undertaken in dangerous winter weather circumstances (Lambert 2017). While illegal crossers are often greeted by RCMP officers, in many cases, asylum seekers are necessarily part of the life–world of borderlanders. In the Emerson story, borderland volunteers have come to the assistance of many people who feel justified in risking their lives to come to Canada. Doing field work in such a place during such a time would offer rich opportunities to consider the in–between–ness and liminality of a completely different aspect of borderland life. It would further humanize it.

That being said, I would like to conclude this final section of my thesis by telling the story of a woman who came across the border into Canada at Derby Line as a refugee. This story furthers my project of humanizing the border by reminding us of the unique perspectives of different embodied selves involved in its enactment. Near the end of my field work, one of my informants told me about Rebecca, a woman who would be coming to Stanstead for a business trip shortly after I was booked to depart. My informant contacted Rebecca on my behalf and asked her if she would be willing to do an interview with me. I was very pleased when Rebecca agreed to a telephone interview. I will retell a small part of her story now.

Rebecca is from El Salvador. She is a lesbian. In her life in El Salvador, Rebecca came from a middle-class family. She had an undergraduate degree and a job she enjoyed. She also lived a very secret life. Her female “roommate” was actually her partner. Together they were raising her partner’s child. It was very necessary for Rebecca to hide this part of her existence because of widespread unacceptance of homosexuality in El Salvador. At some point, a young man took an interest in Rebecca and asked her out. She said no, but he was unwilling to take no for an answer. He began to stalk her, and discovered the true nature of her relationship with her partner. He threatened to attack her. Rebecca did what she could to protect herself. She quit her job and began to work a series of irregular part-time jobs so that her schedule would be unpredictable. She also moved and changed her phone number. Her stalker had friends who helped him find her. One day, he succeeded in savagely attacking her. She went to the police to file a complaint, but they were uninterested in her case. Her stalker insisted that he was going to continue his efforts to “teach her what it is to be a proper woman”. One day, without telling family or friends, she fled the country and found a place to stay with a member of the Salvadorian community near Baltimore, Maryland. At the end of her legal time in the U. S., her stalker contacted her to let her know that he knew she would be home soon, and that he would be waiting for her at the airport. Fearing for her life, Rebecca decided to cross into Canada.

She talked with a woman she knew in Toronto who told her that she could not seek refugee status at a border crossing, but could only do this within Canada. Using the internet, Rebecca deduced that a good place to cross would be at Derby Line. She took a train to Montpelier, Vermont, and from there, paid a taxi driver \$180 to take her to Derby

Line. When she arrived in Derby Line, she decided that it would be best to have someone take her across. There was a man hanging around the little motel that she stayed at south of town who approached her with his suspicion that she was looking to cross into Canada. He told her that for a price he could help. She had no cash, so she gave him the contents of her backpack—some clothes, books, and a digital camera. He drove her to the border, and then told her to get out of the car. Not knowing what to do, she told me:

I started walking, and, uh, I just had a backpack. There was only one booth open at that time of the day, it was like, I would say, maybe 10:30 pm. Nobody stopped me. So I kept walking, but I had no idea where I was. And I had no money, and um I speak no French. Yah. I walked for about, I would say I stopped like around 3 in the morning. And it was raining so I was soaking wet, my feet were bleeding, and uh, I fell asleep under a bench in a little corner store, it was like a liquor store, and, it was a liquor store I think. A gift shop. And I fell asleep there, and woke up in the morning, around 5 am. This couple of elders were delivering newspapers. I asked them where to take the bus. They didn't want to speak in English, but in the end they did. They referred me to the diner that was closer and that they could call a cab for me. So I walked a little bit more, went to this restaurant. The lady was really nice. She actually took my credit card number and gave me cash. Called a cab for me, and the cab took me to the bus station, and then I went to Montreal. In Montreal I met another guy from Honduras, and um, at the bus station, he had this little coffee shop, and he kind of realized what was happening and he helped me out, let me use his phone, give me some food, and I called up this girl who was in Toronto, and she lent me the money for a train, and wait for me at Union station. And she took me the next day to the. No, sorry, she sent me to the Immigration Canada the next day, and I went to the Etobicoke office, surrendered my passport, got the package to file my claim, and then I moved to the refugee house. That's like a transitional home for women. And I stayed there for a couple of months, until I got my work permit, and started working, in, well of course, as every Latino woman, cleaning offices.

Rebecca has no idea what Quebec community she was in when she woke up under the bench. But she does remember the kindness of strangers who seemed to understand that for her, crossing the border was not just the way to an easy life, but was the only way to have a life. Rebecca, and other asylum seekers like her are willing to leave everything they know and have behind them in order to find a safe place. The Canada U. S. border

represents something very different for people like Rebecca than it does for either borderlanders or those of us who do not live on the border. And yet for borderlanders, for whom the border is key to a life–world, I sense a certain willingness to help people who are not playing a game, who are not taking advantage. This willingness is evident in Rebecca’s story, and in the story of the borderlanders of Emerson, Manitoba. The border is central to their life–world, its enactment is written into their bodies, and they willingly share it with those who truly understand its life–making and affirming capacities. New line–dancers are always welcome to the class.

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