

Azzi, Stephen – *Reconcilable Differences: A History of Canada--US Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. 312.

In *Reconcilable Differences*, Stephen Azzi faced two challenges: writing a textbook, and writing a book on Canadian-American relations. These two goals pull in opposite directions. Texts are highly prescriptive, even formulaic: headings *here*, questions *here*. It's not an easy form to make palatable. And in this case, the task was to fit an amorphous subject into texty form.

Canadian-American relations are simultaneously everything and nothing. They can be social, economic, intellectual, religious, labour, immigration, First Nations, political, imperial, or international. They touch every aspect of Canadian life. The trick is to fit all those categories, which add up to everything, into one matrix. Such is Azzi's skill that he has managed to make the intractable textbook form work for him: all are present, and not unnaturally so.

The result is the most comprehensive book to date on the subject. If you want to find out about immigration in the 1900s, here it is; about versions of racism in the two countries, it's here too; about American sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset's theories on , how the two countries' citizens differ, Azzi discusses them. The chronological boundaries are wide: effectively from the eighteenth century through to the present.

The book is the product of what must have been vast reading. Azzi has had a go at an extraordinary range of literature, which results in a splendid and usable bibliography that supersedes anything else in the field.

Azzi prepared the volume in what we can now call the "middle Obama" period of American history. It saw relative tranquillity along the border, and glances across it were rather fond. And, in fact, Canadian-U.S. relations in their many forms have been for many decades truly peaceable, sometimes actively friendly. It is a truism that you only notice something when it's gone, and one of the constants of bilateral relations until 2017 was their sheer predictability. After 1815, only the occasional American has thought of invading Canada, and, while annexation was on many Americans' agendas, it was a yearning for continental completion . Of course, it also signified that Canadians were not Mexicans or Cubans—a point with obvious racial and linguistic and cultural connotations.

To expand a bit on Azzi's bilateral focus, the peaceable frontier was an aspect of Canada's Britishness, as an appendage of the nineteenth-century superpower. "Poor Mexico," the saying goes, "so far from God, so close to the United States." Canada could do better than God: we had London, and Lord Palmerston and Mr Gladstone and the Royal Navy. And not just the navy, because U.S. political culture never severed itself entirely from its British roots. Woodrow Wilson once told a cousin that Mr Gladstone was the greatest man in the world, and Wilson was not alone in that belief—and although it was far from a majority opinion, it was never insignificant.

As for strictly Canadian-American relations, there have been occasional bumps. The American historian David Potter once characterized Canadian views of its neighbour in Freudian terms—the narcissism of small differences. Even

Lipset, beholding *Homo americanus* dwelling alone in a City on a Hill, had to admit that polls showed that the two neighbouring peoples resembled each other more than any others on earth—for good and bad, one hastens to add. Washington mostly ignored occasional differences with Ottawa and refused to connect—for example—the issue of U.S draft-dodgers in Canada in the late 1960s with tariffs and trade. Good relations with Canada were not a zero-sum game. Azzi is exceptionally good at conveying both the spirit and the details of allied mutual toleration.

But Canada's good relations with the behemoth related to the "deep government" in Washington, with the establishment, whose members had populated the White House ever since someone noticed that Warren Harding had died, in the 1920s, in a puff of corruption, sex, and generalized scandal. (After visiting Vancouver a few days earlier, for Harding was friendly to Canada.)

In a very curious way, the advent of Donald J. Trump in 2016-17 rang a familiar alarm on both sides of the border. Literate Canadians could reach for their copies of Sinclair Lewis (*It Can't Happen Here*) or James Thurber (*The Greatest Man in the World*) or Walter Miller (*A Canticle for Leibowitz*) for predictions of what might follow. A dystopian future is a common theme in English-language literature—indeed in Western literature in general. (And only lack of familiarity prevents me from extending that category from Western to universal.)

Azzi's point of view, liberal and generally progressive, did not really anticipate the rise of Donald Trump. We are not usually taught, these days, about Theseus and the Minotaur. It may be that if we all survive and Azzi writes a second edition of his excellent book, he will include a section on Trump and Trumpism. Let us hope it is a short chapter.

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BARBER, Marilyn and Murray WATSON – *Invisible Immigrants: The English in Canada since 1945*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015. Pp. 288.

Invisible Immigrants' greatest strength lies in its recounting of the multifaceted life experiences of the last major movement of English immigrants to Canada between 1945 and the mid-1970s. The English formed the largest national group—over half a million people—of the approximately four million immigrants who entered Canada in this period. From the decision to leave England to the struggles of settlement and adaptation to life, work, and community in Canada, the memories of over seventy English immigrants take centre stage. The authors deserve praise for not letting the "confused and contested state of theory" overwhelm or obscure immigrants' stories (p. 16).

With their life-story approach, Barber and Watson build on, and offer comparisons with, Jim Hammerton and Al Thomson's *Ten Pound Poms* (a study