

## FIRSTING IN THE EARLY-MODERN TRANSATLANTIC WORLD

### CALL FOR BOOK CHAPTERS

*Firsting* is the process through which an act, circumstance or phenomenon generated by man, or accomplishment is represented or acclaimed as having occurred for the first time. Firsting necessarily implies *seconding* and *lasting* as concomitant processes that help structure historical exchanges. Firsting involves complex issues that conflict our present, including those of race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, religion and language, and place of origin. These issues inform firsting within scholarship devoted to a diverse range of fields, from classics and Ottoman studies, to Australian and African studies, in addition to transatlantic scholarship, which is the focus of this project.

Scholarship on historical transmigration and exchanges between peoples tends to participate in firsting one way or another, a problem acknowledged by J.B. Harley and David Woodward thirty years ago in their introduction to Volume I of the now-seminal *History of Cartography*. Firsting manifests itself in scholarship through declarations, such as “Vikings were the first Europeans, not Columbus, to come to the Americas,” or by not acknowledging the presence of Indigenous peoples when discussing the activities of Europeans on American soil. Comparably greater interest in European activities rather than those of Indigenous or non-European peoples exemplifies the deep-rooted nature of firsting.

Firsting can be detected in language that supports overtly or incidentally the doctrine of discovery, or seconds those who came after (in the case of Africans and African-Americans, in addition to immigrants from other parts of the world who willingly came). This taxonomy of arrivals manifests itself in socio-political and economic contexts, as Jean M. O’Brien recently observed in her important book, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England*. Lasting, or unfirsting through effacement and extinction, is a critical issue gaining increased scholarly attention throughout the Americas with respect to the Indigenous peoples of these lands. Lasting involves the real or fictional disappearance of Indigenous languages, spiritual beliefs and practices, territories, and sovereignty, which gives rise to a sense of loss or absence rather than presence in scholarship on the early modern period.

We seek innovative scholarship that critically addresses firsting and its related discourses anywhere in the early-modern transatlantic world before 1900, and which might touch on one of the following themes:

1. Firsting in translations and scholarly editions of primary sources and proposals for how scholars can use this documentation differently or address/overcome firsting;
2. The use of historical cartography and other forms of documentation as a means of asserting claims and rejecting or ignoring the presence of others, relative to firsting;
3. Racial and sexual taxonomies that implicate firsting and recommendations for how scholars can navigate this problem in disciplinary contexts (African studies, Indigenous studies, gender studies, colonial and post-colonial studies, etc.), particularly with respect to the preponderance of male voices and perspectives on the early-modern transatlantic world;
4. Firsting as a technology of western culture, and the implication of both in the rise of international relations and law, and globalization;
5. Taxonomies of arrivals to the Americas in early-modern sources, and proposals for how scholars can go about not replicating them in scholarship;
6. The unfirsting of Indigenous or non-Indigenous peoples (i.e. between European powers) in primary and scholarly sources.
7. Medial and material exertions of firsting, for instance in visual, textual, oral, and aural forms, as well as through material culture, in scholarly sources, art and fine art, anthropological contexts, as well as from the perspectives of book history, archival and library sciences, and museum studies;
8. Firsting in modern approaches to understanding the early-modern period (in scholarship, archives, libraries, museums, film, etc.).

Other innovative approaches that highlight, analyse, and provide insights into how to mitigate the deeply-engrained practice of firsting are also welcome.

Proposals for chapters should include a title and not exceed 250 words; the proposal should outline the content of the chapter as well as briefly describe its critical approach. Please send proposals as well as a CV to the editor, Lauren Beck ([lbeck@mta.ca](mailto:lbeck@mta.ca)), no later than November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017. Guidelines for the preparation of accepted proposals will be sent by December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017. Completed chapters (6000 words) will be expected August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Routledge is interested in considering the volume for publication.