

# Border Poetics De-limited

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## Entry Points: An Introduction

I wish to hypothesize provocatively that all stories require borders and border crossings, that is, some form of intercultural contact zones, understanding "culture" in its broadest sense to incorporate the multiple communal identities to which all individuals belong.

—Susan Standford Friedman, "Spatial Poetics" 196

### I

The study of borders/boundaries/frontiers has experienced a renaissance in the last fifteen years, both as an interdisciplinary study in geography, politics, and sociology, and also as central to literary and cultural studies in the United States, Canada, Latin America, South Africa and throughout much of Europe. Additionally, the idea of the border itself as a form of legal or national identity has been contested from many perspectives, and new and more inclusive views of borders and border studies have been put forward in both local and globalized settings. The location of cultures and the location of cultural studies has recently been a vexed question for literary history; and more formalist approaches to literature have already extensively problematized the location of textual and generic borders. Taken together, these efforts signal the need for continued interrogation of borders from the point of view of literary and broader, aesthetic fields.

What recent theoretical and practical studies in a number of disciplines have articulated is a more complex way of thinking about border formation and border crossings, along with the intricate relationship between the two. Thinking through border crossings has become a way of imagining constraining as well as liberating desires. Border practices and border theories are fast revealing borders as zones of instability in which ethical, political, cultural and national questions are negotiated. Critical examinations of these boundary formations in the case of national histories, ethnic groups, and migrant

populations are on the brink of widening out into a more general study of identities and mobilities in all their forms. Within the field of literary studies they have led to attempts to conceptualize a *border poetics* in which the status of borders as forms of representation can be accounted for. Border poetics is a set of strategies for analyzing the successful or failed crossings of institutional, national, or generic borders. Such crossings usually, perhaps always, call forth an occasion for story or narration. The space through which characters move and in which events happen—the space of location and action within the story—is the site of meetings, of border crossings, and cultural encounters (see Friedman, *Mappings* 134–40).

Narrative establishes borders and moves across them marking differences and establishing connections. Narrative activity, as Michel de Certeau suggests, “tiredlessly mark[s] out boundaries. It multiplies them” (126), while at the same time building bridges that “weld” together writers and readers, speakers and their audience, and opposing insularities. His main focus is the ways in which narrative is built upon interactions in space: what he calls a complex network of differentiation in a combinative system of spaces (Certeau 125–28). Narrative stories can often function to authorize (“found”) and then to specify (show) spaces that the historical or contemporary subject acts upon and within.

Certeau’s work sets out to focus on “spatial stories” used in everyday situations: instructions, gossip, popular travel writing, journalism, and not least the internal stories we make for ourselves while moving through space. While we agree with some of the assumptions of Certeau and his strategies for exposition, there is also an urgent need to define a series of practical strategies for examining the role of a particular set of narratives of “bordering”, either focused on individual border crossings or the grand narratives of border formation and erasure. This need is definitely not limited to literary studies; while we suggest that literary studies have an important role to play in examining border narratives, border poetics must be an interdisciplinary effort and have import for many fields outside the literary or the aesthetic (in the narrow sense). Such an effort, we suggest, must attend to the role of new methodological paradigms and new problematizing challenges in literary studies, media studies, and cultural studies, but also in the social sciences. The situation we are describing is further complicated by the current use of metaphors of border formation and border crossing in models of identity

formation and in attempts to map the contours of literary and cultural theory. Along the way there will be need for discussion of the shifting locations of identity, gender, class, ethnicity, and cultures as they are linked together for immigrants, migrants, and travellers of all kinds, or for nation states and more urgently for transnational collectivities.

We believe that research in border poetics must follow a number of different lines of approach, both theoretical and empirical, and preferably both at the same time. There is a tendency in border studies to see borders everywhere, a tendency which is in itself of great interest to border studies, telling us as it does something significant about the border and its metaphorical applicability in any number of cultural formations. However, if border studies and border poetics are to make a significant contribution then they must retain a specificity and a methodological discipline in order to develop and be able to contribute to other fields and other problems. One way of doing this, as the following essays show, is precisely by attending to a sense of the concrete, however temporary and contingent, and not shying away from the seemingly banal borders which are part of everyday life in our globalized world.

Such empirical touch points must necessarily be brought into contact with theoretical perspectives in different ways, and it is also part of the specificity of border studies that these theoretical concepts, models and processes must remain open to a multiplicity of perspectives, for reasons to do with the nature of the border itself. As suggested below, we are always situated in relation to the border, and there is never one perspective from which we can take in the whole border from all sides. Thus different writers will approach the border from different perspectives, and while we might strive towards certain common grounds of discussion, there will never appear an obvious indicative ladder leading to a universal theory. Only by using concepts from the humanities and social sciences to disrupt texts, images, and experience, and thus bringing different models and theories into dialogue, can writers working within the framework of border poetics be able to throw into relief historical, cultural, or literary practices that otherwise appear as inevitable.

In a sense, the common grounds for discussion must be the discussion itself, in which different concepts and approaches may be interrogated. It is however clear from the following essays that certain common concepts or topoi are in circulation at this juncture of research in the field. The border marks a relation, in both spatial and temporal terms, between a limit/horizon and

a connection. The border has a performative dimension of border creation and maintenance, as either deed or aesthetic act, which often has unpredictable or strange effects. The border is always presented, marked, represented and medialized. Identity is unthinkable without border processes, whether individual or communal. Borders involve movements of people from one place to another; attempts to control space with borders, creating situations of radically asymmetrical relations of power; and attempts to imagine the spatial dislocations of people, objects, or ideologies within the globalized economy. But such topoi must not be allowed to delimit the subject of enquiry in any substantive way. In these introductory re(-)marks we attempt to avoid fixing the essays in this collection in too strong a frame or contextualization, attempting rather to suggest some traces between formulations that ask for response and continuing commentary. As important as common points of focus are, we also need to account for the meaningful differences in methodologies, epistemologies, modes of inquiry, metaphors, and rhetorical frameworks.

These attempts to open up the subject may of course be in vain. Or perhaps not? We have made a plea that common topoi should not delimit the enquiry for the fear of limiting it. We should have said rather that such topoi *do not allow* such delimitation. While *delimitation*, a usage first recorded, according to the OED, in the Eighteenth Century, is usually used to mean "to mark or determine the limits of, or to define, as a limit, or a boundary", it hides within its very construction the counter-intuitive meaning of "removing limits": *delimiting*. So while an introduction is placed on the outer limit of a book and may be expected to delimit the book's subject, we trust that however much our efforts here to avoid framing and contextualizing might fail, they will in fact, by token of the formal play revealed in the above etymology, succeed.

## II

It would seem that the creation of categories is a form of border formation, in the sense that categories are understood as dividing phenomena belonging to one category from those belonging to another. The divide between categories is synonymous with what some border scholars would call—using a categorical term—a *conceptual* border. Others would (as we do within the context of border poetics) call it a *symbolic* border. Whatever it is called, the categorical

divide may be called a border in the sense that it maps the difference between two territories within a mental landscape. Various authors (such as Paul A. Chilton) have gone one step further, by asking what the consequences are of the fact that the categories of border studies—ways of seeing the similarities between certain kinds of border, for example—must themselves be regulated by the law or logic of the border, with all its peculiar potentials for shifting, blurring, ambivalence, mixing, deconstruction. A radical take on the border as something that is spuriously fictional or inherently self-destructive, would deny the utility of categories all together; if borders are to be erased, so are categories. Yet it appears that we cannot live without borders or categories, however unstable they might be; indeed, the argument above could not be made without the use of categories (including the terms "border" and "category") or the division between different concepts. We must then be content to live with two views of the categories we use, the one being that they are useful ways of sorting out different forms in an orderly way, and the other a constant reminder of our need to be open to other definitions of the borders between concepts, in which these borders are not only seen as divides, but also as joins, fuzzy areas, overlaps, in-between zones, etc. Thus, for example, it is important to see the difference between the *topographical* borders and the *symbolic* borders we are dealing with here, without losing sight of the fact that these two kinds of borders can be visualized as articulations of each other on different, layered planes.

Some would prefer to exclude symbolic or conceptual "borders" from the field of border studies all together, since they must more properly be called *differences* or (in some cases) polarities. Some would also exclude the idea of the border as a space (rather than a line) from that same field, since such dividing or joining spaces should more properly be called *distances*. But in both these cases of possible exclusions, we suggest that one must remain aware of the potentials for increased insight in the application of the category "border" to phenomena which are often empirically present as versions of the linear border.

We do not however choose to see the problem of categories as one of fixing the border within polarities of exact vs. fuzzy or ideal vs. practical. We suggest that the border must be seen as dynamic, a phenomena constantly undergoing processes of both fixing and blurring. We have thus chosen to include an article in this otherwise aesthetically orientated anthology by a political

geographer, David Newman, who has helped make the idea of “bordering” a key to border studies in the social sciences.<sup>1</sup> “Bordering” is a category which joins onto and mixes with the category of the “border”; it implies that borders are first and foremost processes rather than fixed phenomena. However, while Newman accepts that a homogenous border theory would be difficult to put into place considering the different usages of the word *border* in different disciplines, he does ask for “a glossary of border-relevant language”, and suggests that disciplines borrow “common terminologies” from each other. Some of the categories he uses seem to us very useful as ways of ordering the field of border poetics. Process is contrasted to pattern, institution to line; and both process and institution are seen as central to the idea of *bordering* through different kinds of demarcation and management. Borders can thus be seen as narratives and rhetorical strategies used by different forms of elite to regulate and discipline. Newman uses many terms widely circulated within border studies, such as allocation, antecedence, subsequence, superimposition, reconfiguration, removal, disappearance, construction, opening and closing, all of which may be inserted into different narratives of what we would call *border formation*. He also uses terms such as other, barrier, bridge, borderland, and transition space, which might be termed *border figures*. They are highly suggestive of the ambivalence between the border as a dividing line and as a contact zone.<sup>2</sup>

Newman also points to the tradition within geography in which borders are treated as multifaceted phenomena that are formed and which do their work on different *scales* (micro/macro) and *levels* (territorial, economic, cultural, ethnic etc.). His argument is also a plea to cross the divide between the territorial (or topographical) borders of geographers and the more abstract (conceptual/symbolic) borders favoured by sociologists. Whether one groups all these categories under the label *levels*, or as we suggest, the slightly less

- 1 Newman's essay also gives a useful overview of the present state of border studies in the social sciences, with references.
- 2 This is a division mirrored in a terminological distinction in English-language political geography between *border* or *boundary* (lines) on the one hand and *frontier* and *borderland* (zones) on the other; we will not be using this distinction here, as it does not hold in other disciplinary contexts or, as Müller-Funk points out in his contribution here, in other languages.

hierarchical and Cartesian *planes*, the underlying potential is here one of geometrical projection, mapping, or juxtaposition—of the movement from one plane onto another and the layering of one plane upon another. The central double level Newman returns to, between the topographical and the symbolic, is to be found in our conception of border poetics, supplemented by a juxtaposition of the *presented border* and the *border on the level of presentation*: the border in the world of the text and the border of the text itself. Or as Svend Erik Larsen suggests, in his article here, the levels of tangible *manifestation* and the *conditions* of this manifestation. The border, as a mapping between levels, is always in itself already a border crossing.

Underlying Larsen's choice of starting point is an acknowledgement of the semiotic status of the border: the border is a sign; it is indeed an aesthetic event, taking place in a specific medium. “Aesthetic” is in this case to be read in the sense of “making a sensual impression”, and not something limited to works of art. As Wolfgang Müller-Funk points out in his essay, for Georg Simmel, one of the earliest social theorists of the border, the border is in effect both an aesthetic and social act. The two levels (presented/presentational) of the aesthetic border, we suggest, are central to all border-crossing narratives specifically, indeed to any kind of narrative—for a narrative without a border crossing of some sort is difficult to imagine. As Larsen points out however: “With a less simple starting point, of course, the number and the nature of such levels may be much larger and more complicated.” He is thus able to trace *thematic*, *medial*, *communicative* and *contextual* versions of the border within the artwork (see also our final chapter in which we suggest a similar set of terms, some of which may serve as elaborations of those proposed by Larsen<sup>3</sup>).

- 3 Tentatively, *thematic* corresponds to *symbolic*, *medial* to *textual* (which after all is just a subset of the medial); *contextual* may on the one hand be a version of the *topographical* (when the contextual is taken as an extension of the world presented) and on the other hand a version of the *textual* (since it concerns borders between “texts”); and *communicative* signifies an overlap between the *textual* (which includes the border between reader and text) and *epistemological* (which includes the readerly act of interpretation). Other aspects of the *epistemological* would refer back to Larsen's more basic theoretical discussion.

### III

The border can be the object of negotiation between the pull of community and the push of a spatial memory, as Debra A. Castillo, Malene Vest Hansen, Jane Aaron and Reinhold Göring argue in their essays here. In our present globalized societies with global communication, and transnational citizenship, we have created multiracial, multiethnic, and multicultural social contexts for our acts of translation and metaphoric expression, but the ideological implications of such acts often remain unidirectional or simply from the centre to the margin. While it has become a commonplace that the empire writes back, it may also be true that the peripheries may be now actively forming the centres. That is to say, the core places and spaces of nations and power blocs have turned into multivalent and ambivalent networks that project the periphery internally within the larger society; as Aaron suggests, all cultures are border cultures. Global migration and other forms of displacement have acquired a new historical and theoretical importance in the post- or transnational context (Bhabha, "Editor's Introduction" 436). The recognition of the peripheries within our midst offers another possibility of envisioning narratives and the uses of figurative language. Border poetics investigates the ways in which borders are negotiated within medialized forms of production. We might call this the new aesthetics of border poetics and of the border-crossing narrative in particular.

Larsen and Müller-Funk's insistence on borders being medial and aesthetic phenomena suggest that border crossings may be purely informational, not involving the movement of people or objects. The fast-growing field of mobilities studies is at the moment very much concerned with attending not only to physical, but also to virtual movement, such as in the use of internet and mobile phones (Sheller and Urry). These movements are combined in and regulated by what are variously called "landscapes", "technoscapes" or simply "scapes", formed in constant interaction with cultural conceptions of mobility. The kernel of border poetics, that borders on the level of presentation and on the level of the world presented are intimately connected, is based precisely on an equal attention to movement of information, be it through the dissemination of texts and artworks, through acts of translation, or through reading. Malene Vest Hansen shows for example how a mobile, site-specific artwork may negotiate a sense of community by questioning the borders between

private and public spheres not only in its mapping of the borders of a specific place, but in its very participation in the flows, movements and displacements involved in its presentation to different audiences through varying media in different exhibition spaces.

In much recent theory, as we mentioned above, the use of boundaries in discussing the formation of identities for an ethnic, political, or national group has often been phrased in the tropes of border building or border transgression. The paradox of identity building through boundary drawing for a number of ethnic and political groups has been described by Henry Louis Gates:

Inevitably, the process of constructing a group identity, at the margins as at the very center, involves active exclusion and repudiation; self-identity requires the homogeneity of the self-identical. Ironically, then, the cultural mechanism of minority self-construction must replicate the mechanism responsible for rendering it marginal in the first place. (295-96)

Edward Said and other postcolonial theorists argue that the pressures to essentialize in this process of inner cultural homogeneity and outer cultural separateness have very real limits and dangers in the construction of ethnicities, but the issue we want to raise here is that it is very difficult to think about the problem (let alone its solution) without using the figurative language of some kind of "travelling theory", involving, in turn, tropes of border crossing. This is an argument which has been made forcibly in Homi K. Bhabha's essay "DissemiNation" (*Location of Culture* 139-70), which focuses on the transports of metaphor central to the construction of national identity (146) and traces the borders internal to all communities which these transports must cross (see especially 148).

Underlying Bhabha's argument is the notion that the border is a space that separates and marks a distinct cultural *différance*—a deferral and a difference—while it is also joined. Joined because you cannot imagine the *différance* without the connection which maintains but denies both a temporal and spatial distance. Linkage in this case is separation, but the linkage is hard to see without acknowledging the spatial dimension of *différance*.

This kind of ambivalence about the border is mentioned by most writers addressing the border in a general fashion, often in the simple form of a figure of the border as both a wall and a bridge. From a border poetics point of view, such figures often regulate the *border-crossing narrative*. They provide ways of answering such narrative questions as: Does the protagonist manage

to overcome the border? Is the border an opponent or a helper? Is the border and the symbolic difference it projects affected by the crossing? Does the border cross the border-crosser? Is the border-crosser a *border subject*?

We see however a challenge to such basic figurations of different entities involved in the border crossing, precisely in the temporal and medial complications which the notion of *différance* introduces. What border figures are adequate to the presentation and representation of the external and internal borders of collective identities, and of the multinational subject?

The category of the border subject, variously known as the *hybrid*, the *GrenzgängerIn*, or the *frontizero*, is strongly connected to the borderland, a place where people often live in a repeated narrative of failed or successful border-crossings, and dwell in the shadow of the larger historical narratives of border formation. We are suggesting above, and Vest Hansen, Newman and Castillo in their essays underline the fact that *border experience* is not only the realm of the elite, but also that of the individual political, economic, or social emigrant and immigrant. Developments in the aftermath of the interest in globalization and within the fields of migration and mobility studies have made the question of access, membership and the selective permeability of borders crucial to an increased sense of social polarization in contemporary society (Sheller and Urry 14; Wood and Graham 177; Jordan and Duvel), also touched upon in Lene Johannessen's essay here. The border crossing becomes a technoscape regulating speed according to privilege. Our interest in this collection is in the prolific (if seldom clearly articulated) dialogue between individual experiences of failed or successful crossings and larger historical contexts and cultural narratives. We would also suggest that one of the main implications postcolonial perspectives have for border studies is that we are all border subjects, in the sense that all of our identities are related to the internal and external borders of identity, and indeed, to the topographical borders which now run both between and through nations.

#### IV

It is clear that many of the border phenomena—such as those of the umbilical object, bodily borders, exilic claustrophobia, lost/contested spaces, public/intimate spaces, transgressive love, transcendent romanticism, mappings, and

resistance to de-symbolization—examined by the different contributors to this volume can be analysed with the help of the safely ordered categories of border studies and border poetics. However, some of the essays suggest the necessity of an open and flexible approach to borders, which does not let us be caught in an overly structural logic of the border. The notion of process and bordering shows one way out of this dilemma; Rudiger Görner's *culture of borders* brings with it a plea to cultivate a (precisely *transitional*) notion of the border compatible with our social, intellectual and artistic ideals of a civil society. For Larsen, approaching a border entails a choice of method, while Müller-Funk asks us to discuss the way in which we want to organize the borders around us, rather than discuss the borders themselves. The latter's demand is based on the insight that our attempts to understand the border are limited by our own embodied situatedness: referring to the phenomenologist Waldenfels, Müller-Funk points out that there is no perspective from which we can get or from which we can give authoritative knowledge of the border—we always see the border from one side or the other (a point also made by Johannessen).

Notably, this concern with avoiding closure, with being open to the border in both an epistemological and ethical sense, is repeatedly addressed in gendered terms in these essays. Castillo (supported here by Görner), Aaron and Görling suggest that women are better equipped than men to handle post-transgression melancholy and other negative side-effects of displacement across borders. Male migrants from Latin-America into the United States may find "immigration more culturally challenging than women". In Turkish-German cinema, Turkish women are presented as being on the receiving end of violence precisely because the "loss of a gendered topography" has allowed them to become full subjects, while men feel threatened by this border-crossing and express their helplessness in verbal anger, physical violence, or socially disruptive comic ironies. Görling suggests that to be up against the wall, facing the border, is to be in a stubborn, inflexible position, caught in a repetition compulsion from which the subject must break free. In women's writing on the English-Welsh border, the border is less of a "no man's land between two enemy camps" than it is in men's writing on that same border.

Integrating questions of gender and sexuality into a descriptive poetics of border crossing narratives is one of the threads running throughout this collection. By invoking Bracha Lichtenberg-Ettinger's psychoanalytical theory of the *matrixial borderspace*, Castillo points to a gendering process, in no

sense exclusionary, between the opposition of the cultural and the biological. In this theory, our ethical approaches to the border and the way in which we negotiate and redefine borders, are based on models established by our very first experiences of borders. Specifically, these are states associated with a psychoanalytical narrative of the origin of the subject, in which the subject comes into being through the establishment of a border between the child and its mother. Lichtenberg-Ettinger posits that behind the cut- or barrier-like border established by the father's phallic intrusion into this mother/child space, a model favoured by Jacques Lacan, there lies a hidden "borderspace" already established during the child's existence in the womb. Partly inspired by the object-relations school, in which the border of the subject finds its origins in a play of partial objects between the child and its mother, Lichtenberg-Ettinger characterizes this "matrixial borderspace" as a place of linking rather than of cutting. The ethical aim of psychoanalysis is thus to uncover the matrixial borderspace, using it to replace the Lacanian cut, and thus provide us with a different conception of borders in general. While the child and subject-to-be is here ungendered, Lichtenberg-Ettinger does suggest that the process of uncovering the matrixial borderspace is easier for women than for men, because the womb is for women an immediate, internal reminder of the possibility of such a space.

In the essay mentioned above, Certeau compares the spatial action at a border to the contact of two bodies:

Thus, bodies can be distinguished only where the "contacts" (*touches*) of amorous or hostile struggles are inscribed on them. This is a paradox of the frontier: created by contacts, the points of differentiation between two bodies are also their common points. Conjunction and disjunction are inseparable in them. (126-27)

Many of these essays find that gender is also written on the body and into the body of texts. In the words of Susan Lanser: "Texts, like bodies, *perform* sex, gender, and sexuality, and it is the interplay of these categories—the ways in which they converge and diverge in normative and transgressive ways—that may yield the most interesting for narratology" (Lanser III:127). While many essays and books have studied how a person's location in a culture effects their perception of the geopolitical border, or how the body can be an indicator of a carefully calibrated exploration of the other within and outside the frontiers of a nation, little has been written on the personal borders of the body as they create gender roles and gender consciousness within border subjects. This is a

key issue in the work of the essayists Aaron, Castillo, Görner and Görling. The intersection of the gendered/national/transnational subject with the borders of individual body will often effect a perception of a personal border, and vice versa. In one sense, this is a question of scaling, of topographical bodies on the two different scales of landscapes and of bodyscapes. In other senses, bodily and national borders are often figured as transgressing each other. It is at the national border that the law of *habeus corpus*, discussed by Görner, most easily breaks down, as State apparatuses suddenly feel free to invade the body in physical and symbolic body searches.

We find a need to take account of the ways in which the borders of the body are presented in texts in their physical form—involving the skin, but also entry points such as the mouth and the eyes—and also how these physical aspects of bodily borders inform the symbolic form of the body. Bodies too are border sites, marking the distinction between inside and outside, self and other. But bodies are also flesh and blood upon which the social order marks its hierarchies based on bounded systems of gender, race, class, religion, sexuality, ethnicity, and so forth.

## V

The sense in which borders may be treated as divides between territories is strongly relativized by figures of the border in which it is conceived of as a join or a transitional phenomena. Even more radically, Görling dismantles the idea of binary structures as the origin of the border, pushing the dualities of presented/presentation, conditions/manifestations into a realm of rhythm and trace. Thus, as also Aaron, Castillo, Vest Hansen and Johannessen suggest, our access to borders is not only one of experience, but also one of memory. Borders that are seen from a distance, either through memory or from a backward perspective on having been crossed, can take on imaginary qualities or even become the repressed and displaced causes of traumatic figures and erasures. They can also be repeatedly invoked in their physical reality for having been created and used to keep people in, or for those who have stayed behind, to keep them out. These borders imagined at a distance become lived spaces in which people carry on their daily lives.

The essays of Vest Hansen, Aaron, and Castillo also analyze the border itself as a place with traces. Memories and saved objects such as tickets, souvenirs, lucky charms or household objects retain traces of the time before the border crossing, and simultaneously recreate the time of border crossing. The trace leads back to the border and back across the border, to an imaginary repetition of the original experience. Its corollary is the trace by which people who have not crossed the border may vicariously cross it, may construct an experience of the border and of the other without actually having had that experience. The philosopher Jacques Derrida has called this citation of the other "participation without belonging" (*participation sans appartenance*); his use of border figures of light and vision in that context are revealing, for they imply again that the border is a phenomena dependent on medialization. Indeed, all traces of the border in the form of "umbilical objects" are medializations; and we would also claim that all medializations of the border—all narratives, images, literary and other aesthetic works presenting the border—are indeed such umbilical objects, in themselves crossing a border.

Actions of border crossing for immigrants, migrants and refugees are often imagined in the form of narratives of exile. Back before or beyond the border is a place or a condition which has been lost, but which you can return to through the action of memory, or the use of objects to carry traces of a previous "time" or place. The rhythmic movement of these texts is a doubling back, a retracing of lines of embarkation and departure, and then a reconnection. The trope for memory that connects these bordering actions is that of weaving: to weave together, to connect remembered experiences together into likenesses of things in the past. Yet the text itself is that which has been and is being woven, a point made in various forms by Castillo, Görling and Schimanski and Wolfe. Writers weave their weaving and their text, their narrative, is woven out of memories that are themselves in process, continually taking on new forms—even as a writer like Conrad describes memory in *Heart of Darkness* by way of a metaphor of weaving, the sailor's yarn. Thus the weaving of memories into a narrative or into a film text—or an installation such as described by Vest Hansen—will simultaneously compose and decompose the text. Such actions are, for the narrators, both real and imagined, an act at once painful and pleasurable, at once necessary and almost impossible. The rhythm of the tides in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is another example of such a process in which the tide creates as it destroys, marking a place or a space only to have

it erased upon the next ebbing of the tide. Görling uses the same metaphor at the beginning of his essay: the "trace" upon the sand.

The structure pointed to above is that of autobiography and of most Western music; a teleological model of time organized in terms of a beginning, a middle, and an ending which is also a return. In these narratives each text has a double function, like Penelope's act of weaving in the *Odyssey*: knitting a shroud for Laertes by day and undoing it by night in order to keep the suitors at bay.

But there is also another sort of rhythm that defines the experience of bordering: the feints and dodges, the cut across, the criss-crossing of time and of the orderly chronotope. Here we have the ambiguous experience of suspended relation on the border—the attempt *not* to fix, map, formulate, at least in the languages of physical geography, chronology, or space such places. The border becomes, as Emily D. Hicks reminds us, a fluid sense of movement, of indecision, which affects and infects representations of it and upon it (Hicks xxvi-xxviii). The reader has to cross a mediational border into a different set of referential codes. For example, while we know that a national border may be the site of, or be the framework for, increased metaphoric and representational activity, a whole range of tricks occur which effect that framework. There are obstacles, reversals, conflicts, delays, surprises of a temporary or final form that to some degree affect the certainty of the outcome. As Johannessen makes clear, drawing on a temporal model of the border also clearly stated by Görling, Müller-Funk, and Schimanski and Wolfe, such rhythmic arrests and breaches may provide a form of resistance to the threat of a global process of de-symbolization and homogenization. No matter how much we know or assume in advance that the staged confrontation and negotiation between cultural dichotomies will be resolved—that "reason" or completeness will prevail—there is an inscribed ambivalent parsing out of time and space which constitutes a problematic pacing in the modern experience of the border. The tension between the fixing and blurring of the border is repeated as suggested in the opening pages of our essay.

Müller-Funk, Görling, Johannessen all emphasize this element as a performative dimension to some experiences of bordering, that is, a deed or act which has unpredictable or strange effects. The border has the form of a paramnesia, that psychological disorder "in which words are remembered but not their proper meaning, or the condition of believing that one remembers



events and circumstances which have not previously occurred" (OED): the Border has to be made strange.

## VI

Most of the following essays were first given as lectures at an international symposium held at the University of Tromsø, Norway, in November 2004, as part of an ongoing Border Poetics Project (<http://uit.no/humfak/borderpoetics/>). The symposium was entitled "Border Poetics? A Comparative Perspective", and its purpose was to discuss the following statement:

Territorial borders and textual frames have received renewed academic attention in this age of transitional mobility, though often in a fragmentary and isolated fashion in the humanities. As an ever-present element in human life, they are commonly represented in narratives and often take symbolic forms in both historical and contemporary artistic expression such as literature, film, the creative arts, and design. This symposium focuses on the development of practical strategies (a border poetics) for examining the function of these forms of representation in the intersection between territorial borders and aesthetic works.

A problem that arises when we try to answer this and related questions is that borders and frames are often used as concepts in contemporary cultural research without being specified in detail and often without being rigorously problematized. As cultural researchers in aesthetic subjects, it is important to develop strategies to handle how we discuss boundaries, their importance and their artificiality, and the interests they stake out, but also to recognize the practical and theoretical importance of concepts such as "framing a text", or studying the "thresholds" or "transgressions" in media and aesthetic representations.

The participants in this first symposium spoke within a broad interdisciplinary perspective involving art history, literature, media studies, film studies, aesthetics, ethics, comparative literature, and cultural studies. A year later, a second symposium was held under the title of "Borders Differences Distances": an attempt to address precisely the connections between borders and two central phenomena which are often represented as borders.

This book comes out of these symposia and further discussions which have lead to each writer here expanding their contribution. Our hope is that it will help conceptualize more clearly the potentials for further work in the field, both by creating points of discussion and by making gaps in research more visible. We also hope that it contributes to the crossing of borders between different regional traditions of border studies in the humanities.

Our feeling is that there is need for more analytical work around the structure of border narratives, both those of border crossings and of the processes of border formation: the creation, maintenance, change and erasure of borders, involving both state institutions and individuals. We believe that individual experiences of the border are mediated in their most marked form through aesthetic works and narrative texts. Additionally, with the proliferation of narratives of border-crossing, there is a need for examination of the way in which individual experiences of the border are connected to the larger historical narratives of border formation—to the extent that every border-crossing is a performative renegotiation of the border. The relationship of individual but iterated border-crossings, failed or successful, to the creation of border identity in *contact zones* such as border regions also deserves more attention.

While this book mainly concerns itself with aesthetic works, there is much room for transferring lessons learnt in this context to ways of dealing with all kinds of border narrative and figuration. One might imagine developments in research on the use of narrative and fiction in public debates on the redefinition of borders in a globalized world, or on the narratives of migrants, refugees, and tourists. The application of analytic practice developed in border poetics—with its own specificity of terms—is not hindered in these other contexts, or the use of theory developed in other contexts within border poetics. Several of the essays here suggest that a focus on borders in literary texts and other aesthetic works can have an exemplary force for the analysis of the concentrated complexity of narrative and figurality found in other forms of discourse within a wider political and cultural field.

## Works Cited

*Note:* Reference to essays by Aaron, Castillo, Görling, Görner, Vest Hansen, Johannessen, Larsen, Müller-Funk, Newman, and Schimanski and Wolfe are to essays in this collection.

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