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Borderlands

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Tracing the roots and uses of the concept of borderlands, this article explains how this concept has gained prominence in Border Studies beyond its use in Chicanx Studies.

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Borders refer not only to demarcation lines per se, but also to border regions, border areas, or so-called borderlands. The term borderlands can be traced back to Chicana author, theorist, and activist Gloria Anzaldúa, who gave the impetus to a new research direction of Border Studies in the USA in the late 1980s. Since then, this concept has gained global prominence, referring to spaces of transition between states and cultures. Its meaning and usage remain open; the term is used both in the singular as well as the plural. This article not only traces the development of this concept in Border Studies but also shows up the differences between borderlands, the French term 'frontière,' and the English term frontier, elaborating on the strengths of the concept of borderland(s). As fluid and ambiguous spaces pervaded by power asymmetries and violence, borderlands constitute places in which meanings are in flux and in which a productive and creative area of tension for cultural debate arises. Borderlands have therefore become the focus of interest in Literary and Cultural Studies, as they can represent places of creativity, hybridity, and avant-garde aesthetic spaces. In spatial Border Studies, the concept of borderlands has come to refer to globalized, transnational, and transcultural spaces, which are ruled by complex interrelationships between space, state, society, culture, and borders.

Borderlands

Introduction

Since the 2000s, which have seen both "a 'cultural turn' in border studies and a 'border turn' in cultural studies" (Nyman and Schimanski, 2021, p.5), the border has generally become an important paradigm in research. As it turns out, the border has come to figure as a space of difference and cultural encounter which is governed by the laws of the periphery that can be at odds with those at the center (Lamping, 2001, p.12). Borders fulfill various functions: while they separate entities and act as dividing lines, they can also connect and unite as a suture. But it is not only the territorial borders of the nation-state which divide or hold together the world; as becomes especially visible in these pandemic times, it is also social borders which separate and unite people through categorizations and distinctions and are thus responsible for privileging and marginalizing people. Conspicuously, as topographical phenomena, borders also act as meaning-making metaphors, which refer not only to lines per se, but also to border regions, border areas, and so-called borderlands. Borderlands, as most Border Studies scholars agree, are, first of all, names for spaces adjacent to borders, "geographical regions surrounding international borders" (Spark, 2009, p.53), but they are also often places of "active tensions between antagonistic logics," in which borders materialize (Bossé et al., 2019, p.10). They can be described as

> zones of varying widths, in which people have recognizable configurations of relationships to people inside that zone, on both sides of the borderline but within the cultural landscape of the borderlands, and, as people of the border, special relationships with other people and institutions in their respective nations and states (Donnan and Wilson, 1994, p.8).

The term borderlands, as I will show, is, however, not quite synonymous with the terms border zones or border areas, which both are more general terms, lacking the unique characteristics of borderlands. To make terminological matters more difficult, as Anderson stated in 1996, when borders became important in the conception of the modern state, the vocabulary has changed, there being differences between the terms borders, borderlands, and frontiers, with meanings varying from place to place. While, according to him, frontier is the term with the widest meaning, despite its military provenience, it can also refer to a region, as "in the description of Alsace as the frontier region between France and Germany" (Anderson, 1996, p.9). Similarly, the term border can also be applied to a zone, albeit a narrower one; boundary, then, "is always used to refer to the line of delimitation and is thus the narrowest of the three terms" (ibid.). Casey, however, believes that unlike a border which "is presumed to possess one exact location," a boundary "is rarely demarcated with any precision, varying in contour and extent depending on environmental or historical circumstances" (2011, p.385). Most importantly though, the term frontier has different connotations in the U.S.-American and French traditions, as Brunet-Jailly has explained: In French, a 'frontière' is a borderland or border region, such as the French Alsace, which is a 'région frontalière.'[i] In the U.S. context, however, frontier refers to a "moving zone of settlement" and has acquired special meaning since Turner's use in *The Frontier in American* (1920) (2010, pp.1-2). Because of these terminological difficulties, the concept of borderlands has proven fertile in current research on borders to refer to territory near or around borders on

the margins of states which constitute culturally identifiable units, zones of cross-border interaction, in which because of a heightened sense of transnational awareness, special borderland identities develop.

In the last years, the term borderland(s) has acquired a series of specialized meanings in different areas of border research. On the one hand, it refers to social reality, describing the lives and everyday practices of people living in border areas; on the other, it works on the level of analysis, where it is employed as either a "research re-focusing concept for scholars who study cross-border regional development" or as a "meaning re-making metaphor designed to disrupt normalizing notions of nation and the nation state" (Spark, 2009, p.53). The term borderland(s) can be used in the singular as well as in the plural; depending on its various connotations, it can also be capitalized. Clearly, the ontological status of this concept is slippery, which, however, gives the concept its cultural strength. Since the rise of Border Studies in the 1990s, the concept has, therefore, enjoyed great popularity, appearing in countless titles of field-defining studies (Anzaldúa 1987; Lecker 1991; Martínez 1994; Benito and Manzanas 2002; Konrad and Nicol 2008; Agier 2016). *The Association of Borderlands Studies*, founded in 1976, has since its initial years of focus on the U.S.-Mexican borderlands, broadened its interest in global borderlands. Its journal *The Journal of Borderlands Studies* aptly carries the term borderlands in its title. Since 1986, this journal has been careful in staking out cutting-edge borderlands research.

My approach in teasing out the historical development and various usages of the term is that of a North American Cultural Border Studies scholar with a background in Chicanx Cultural Studies, for whom this concept has a special American-Studies meaning. The term borderlands can be traced back to Chicana author, theorist, and activist Gloria Anzaldúa, who gave the impetus to a new research direction of Border Studies in the U.S. in the late 1980s. Since then, this concept has gained global prominence, referring to spaces of transition between states and cultures. This entry explains how this concept has proliferated in Border Studies beyond its use in Chicanx Studies. The concept of borderlands has helped direct critical attention to the liminal margins and border zones which have surrounded lines of demarcation. Consequently, borderlands have become the focus of interest in a great variety of disciplines, ranging from anthropology, geography, spatial planning, sociology, etc. – in other words, all disciplines involved in Spatial as well as Cultural Border Studies.

From Turner and Bolton to Anzaldúa: The Evolution of the Concept of Borderlands

Research on borders and border areas was, for a long time, part of the fields of geography and regional development. As Tyrell has pointed out, in the European context, the book *Politische Geographie* by Ratzel can be regarded as an early attempt to study borders and borderlands (cf. also Newman and Paasi, 1998, p.189): "Ratzel considered the state as an organic entity and borders as a peripheral (but important) organ of the state. Therefore, borderland was considered a place of interstate struggle and conflict" (Tyrell, 2016, n.p.). In the North American context, it was historian Bolton (1964) who coined the term borderlands in the 1920s to stress the similarities in the histories of various nations in the hemisphere (cf. Sadowski-Smith, 2011). Surely, the notion of the border was not new in American culture. In fact, it had served as a powerful conceptual framework ever since the historian Turner argued for the significance of the frontier at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 (cf. frontier in this Border Glossary). Famously, Turner articulated a deeply rooted myth of Westward expansion, which equates the movement of settler colonists to the West with the proliferation of civilization, technology, and destiny for Americans of European descent. For Turner, the frontier was a moving line, "the outer edge of the wave—the meeting point between savagery and civilization" (Turner, 1920 [1893], p.3). Since the publication of his thesis, critics have pointed out the limitations of Turner's thesis, recognizing that this myth speaks from a Eurocentric, hegemonic point of view. Bolton, who was a student of Turner's, already criticized the East-to-West model of American development from 1902 onwards, when he began work on his landmark study *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest*. Using the term borderlands to refer to the Southwest of the U.S., he argued:

> The rule of Spain has passed; but her colonies have grown into independent nations. From Mexico to Chile, throughout half of America, the Spanish language and Spanish institutions are still dominant. Even in the old borderlands north of the Rio Grande, the imprint of Spain's sway is still deep and clear (Bolton, 2018 [1921], p.vii).

His view, as Gutiérrez and Young have argued, offered a conceptualization of the U.S.-Mexican border region as a transnational space with hemispheric unity, which, however, because it was "blind to the complexities

of state formation," failed to gain popularity and was soon dismissed (Gutíerrez and Young, 2010, p.30). Designed as a "regional antidote to totalizing narratives of the development of the United States," Bolton's writings "remained at best a regional inflection, a minor irritant, to the grander narrative of U.S. history" (Gutíerrez and Young, 2010, p.31).

Conspicuously, the notion of borderlands only really gained prominence with the publication of Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* in 1987, in which she claimed that border theory emerged from the historical specificity of the border region of 'la frontera,' the border culture between the United States and Mexico. According to Anzaldúa, a borderland is a "vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary" (2012 [1987], p.25). In the Anzaldúan sense, the term borderland does not necessarily have to be tied to geographical place but may also metaphorically refer to in-between spaces. As Anzaldúa explains,

> The actual physical borderland that I'm dealing with in this book is the Texas-U.S. Southwest/Mexican border. The psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual borderlands are not particular to the Southwest. In fact, the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy. (ibid., p.19)

In order to underline this distinction between the notion of borderlands as both a physical as well as metaphysical reality, Anzaldúa suggested capitalization of the term: "Borderlands with a small b is the actual southwest borderlands or any borderlands between two cultures, but when I use the capital B it's a metaphor for processes of many things: psychological, physical, mental" (Keating, 2000, p.176). However, this differentiation between borderland and Borderlands has not really caught on, with critics spelling the term both with capital or small b. Similarly, attempts have been made to differentiate between the singular and plural use of the term. Already in 1983 did Stoddard, founder and first President of the *Association for Borderland Studies*, suggest the pluralized use borderlands as

> a reminder that the multidisciplinary approaches contain slightly varied designations of what constitutes the region or its people. By avoiding the monistic terms "a border" and "the borderland" (singular) except when a single discipline or framework is being employed, the term "Borderlands" reflects a collection of unique overlays—with some similarities and some differences being manifest in each (Stoddard, 1983, p.5).

In his InterAmerican Wiki entry on Borderlands, Tyrell also follows this pluralized use when he speaks of the difficulty in pinning down exact definitions of the term borderland(s) (2016, n.p.). Here I want to suggest that while borderlands can be used both in the singular and plural when it generally refers to a geographical area that features the unique characteristics of border areas outlined in this article, the plural form Borderlands, capitalized and followed by a singular verb form, is especially useful in an Anzaldúan sense to signal a theoretical understanding of a space in and around borders which also entails the symbolic and social location of marginalized subjects. Borderlands, in this sense, refers to an area, which, as Anzaldúa has it, is inhabited by "los *atraversados* […] the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead" (Anzaldúa, 2012 [1987]: 25, emphasis in the original). It is the locus for alterity to emerge, for queer subject positions which struggle for "massive uprooting of dualist thinking" (2012 [1987], p.102). Clearly, Anzaldúa's provocative list of borderlands inhabitants highlights 'mestizaje,' the status of in-betweenness and cultural hybridity in the Mexican context, which in the 1990s fell on fertile poststructuralist ground, engendering borderlands theory. Relying on this understanding of Borderlands, then, entails a conception of identities in terms of notions of hybridity, creolization, multiculturalism, and postcolonialism—all key concepts and central concerns of social and cultural theory today.

In the wake of Anzaldúa's book, the border has become the most widely used conceptual framework for the study of identity, difference, and cultural encounters in North American Studies (Fellner, 2009, p.259). Crucially, the concept of borderlands has replaced Turner's concept of the frontier, which has for a long time served as *the* dominant metaphor in the understanding of the making of the American nation. Critics like Kolodny, José David Saldívar, Ramón Saldívar, and others have substituted borderlands for frontier, and, in doing so, have enriched our understanding of the complexity and contingency of intercultural relations. The historian Kolodny, for instance, has called for a reinterpretation of the frontier that "privileges no group's

priority and no region's primacy" (2003, p.51). As she states, in the new literary history of the American frontiers, "there can be no Ur-landscape because there are so many borderlands, and, over time, even the same site may serve for seriatim first encounters. There can be no paradigmatic first contact because there are so many different kinds of first encounters. And there can be so single overarching story" (Kolodny, 2003, p.51). As a consequence, the figuration of borderlands has to a large extent replaced the older paradigm of the frontier in U.S.-American historiography. In that sense, it has become a research-re-focusing concept. Inaugurating the transnational turn in American Studies—a field which from beginning on had been conceived of as an Area Studies (with Fisher Fishkin, for instance, also honoring the legacy of Gloria Anzaldúa), calling on scholars to make use of critical models that take into account the global and transnational dimensions of the study of the literatures and cultures of the United States. Anzaldúa's notion of the crossroads thereby became important. Echoing Anzaldúa, Fishkin writes that the U.S. "is and has always been a transnational crossroads of cultures" (2005, p.43). "And that crossroads of cultures that we refer to as 'American culture' has itself generated a host of other crossroads of cultures as it has crossed borders" (ibid.). Especially Anzaldúa's poem "To live in the Borderlands means you […]" has been echoed in many discussions of American literature, and her last line "to survive the borderlands/you must live sin fronteras/be a crossroads," has become a resounding call in the institutional landscape of American Studies (Fellner, 2022, p.153).

Even though we can still find studies that claim that the terms borderlands and frontier work as synonyms (e.g. Naum 2010), in the North American context, the concept of the frontier, because of its mythic significance in nation building, remains an ideologically charged concept with critics preferring the term borderlands. Moreover, Adelman and Aron have pointed out a difference in the meaning of these two concepts when they claim that while a frontier is "a meeting place of people in which geographic borders were not clearly defined," borderlands refer to areas of "contested boundaries between colonial domains" (1999, pp.815-816). As it turns out, power relations become particularly pronounced in borderlands, as they are often areas of political contestation and competing ideological interests. Much like Pratt's definition of the contact zone, that is an area in which "disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (Pratt, 1992, p.4), borderlands thus refer to shifting sites of transition and movement, where space is contested and negotiated.

Borderlands as Unique Types of Border Areas

Borderlands, as should have become clear then, are not just any areas in proximity to the border. Crucially, for a borderland to emerge, "a specific state of awareness needs to develop among the inhabitants of a particular area" (Król, 2021, n.p.). In that sense, B/borderlands are rare, as Marc Boeckler has acutely observed. They are unique border areas that exhibit special characteristics. According to Boeckler, they are often "stubborn, contradicting and unnatural" places, indefinable spaces that defy unambiguous attributions, which take pleasure in the moment of irritation (Boeckler, 2012, p.49, translation AMF). They are peripheral places which are co-created by the people who dwell in them and who cross borders (sometimes on a daily basis).

Firstly, as places of the in-between which are often perceived of as being irritating and ambivalent, borderlands are contested and often wounded places, in which "tension grips the inhabitants" (Anzaldúa, 2012 [1987], p.26). Living in the borderlands, in turn, is not an easy task: Following Anzaldúa, borderlands-dwellers can only cope "by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity" (2012 [1987], p.101). Borderlands ask for intercultural competencies of its dwellers who often have to deal with a multicultural and multilingual reality. Most importantly, borderlands are often marked by trauma. Anzaldúa has described the U.S.-Mexico border as "*una herida abierta*" [an open wound] where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds" (2012 [1987], p.25, emphasis in the original), and this image of the violent character of the boundary line dominates the current imagination of U.S.-Mexico borderlands. As it turns out, though, many borderlands are wounded places in the sense that they bear the marks of territorial fights and warfare.

Secondly, borderlands follow their own logic and display key characteristics in social and cultural overlaps. In the social sciences, a series of typologies have been brought forth that determine the economic, social, and cultural cohesion of borderlands. Political geographer House, for instance, developed a model for studying the functional dynamics of border regions. As Newman explains:

> In particular, House brought the geographic, social, political, and economic discourses together by developing the notion of double peripherality, namely an area located in the geographic periphery of the country, in close proximity to the border, within which the residents of the region suffer from economic, social and political peripherality in terms of their economic status or their access to the power elites and decision-makers. Such regions would, by definition, suffer from underdevelopment due to their distance from the spatial and social cores of society. (Newman, 2006, pp.179-180)

Depending on the degree of cross-border cooperation and different forms of interaction across borders, Martínez (1994) distinguished between four types of border regions, so-called "alienated border regions," "coexistent border regions," "interdependent border regions," and "integrated border regions." As Newman explains, "Where the border is more open than closed, the borderland region can be transformed into a zone of interaction where peoples meet, rather than a barrier where peoples are separated from each other" (Newman, 2006, p.180).

With reference to European borderlands in the East, Król has suggested a differentiation between two different types of borderlands, a so-called "contact borderland," which is characterized by "clear linguistic distinctiveness" found on both sides of the border (such as along the Polish-German border), and a "zonal borderland," such as Slavic communities, in which "the focus of division is often blurred" (2021, n.p.). Król sums up the unique character of borderlands: "Settlement processes, migrations, and the national, linguistic, religious, cultural, social, and economic diversity among the inhabitants provide the basis for the borderland zone delimitation. They are also the main factors that determine its distinctness and dissimilarity to other regions" (ibid.)

The degree of uniqueness of borderlands is then contingent upon the permeability of the border and the level of cross-border interaction and collaboration. Clearly then, because of a heightened border consciousness in borderlands, the high level of conflicts, and the various processes of contestation and negotiation, borderlands have attracted border researchers. Most borderlands research, especially in the 1990s, dealt with the U.S.-Mexican border, which, to this day, has been the iconic borderlands in Border Studies. Academic interest has been high because of the strong "inequality of power, economics, and the human condition" (Alvarez, 1995, p.451). However, the U.S.-Canadian borderlands also soon emerged as privileged research areas. In 1989, McKinsey and Konrad, for example, started to study the U.S.-Canada border, defining borderlands as a region

> jointly shared by two nations that houses people with common social characteristics in spite of the political boundary between them. In a more narrow sense, borderlands can be said to exist when shared characteristics within the region set it apart from the country that contains it: residents share properties of the region, and this gives them more in common with each other than with members of their respective dominant cultures. More broadly, the borderlands is an area in which interaction has a tempering effect on the central tendencies of each society (1989, p.4).

In recent years, other borderlands have become prominent in research, with there being studies on the Greater Region (SaarLorLux+), the German-Polish borderlands, the German-Danish borderlands, the Finnish-Russian borderlands, to name but a few. Famously, Étienne Balibar has referred to "Europe as borderland," arguing that political space in Europe should be "imagined in terms of overlapping open regions" (2009, p.210). A borderland, for him, is "the name of the place where the opposites flow into one another, where 'strangers' can be at the same time stigmatized and indiscernible from 'ourselves,' where the notion of citizenship, involving at the same time community and universality, once again confronts its intrinsic antinomies" (2009, p.210). The outburst of recent studies that have adopted the paradigm of borderlands testifies to the fact that because of their unique characteristics and the many challenges they pose, borderlands can be seen as prisms for larger processes of societal transformations.

Thirdly, and most importantly from a Cultural Studies point of view, borderlands constitute privileged spaces of otherness, which engender heightened cultural activity and give rise to the production of new subjectivities. They are zones of otherness, which exhibit a special borderlands consciousness. Borderlands "enlarge the geopolitical space" (McKenna, 1997, p.11), becoming places of innovative aesthetic phenomena. In her definition of borderlands, Anzaldúa drew the attention to the emergence of specific forms of cultural interaction and exchange which emerge in interstitial border spaces: As spaces of

difference, borderlands are overdetermined places in which the "the lifeblood of two worlds" merge "to form a third country – a border culture" (Anzaldúa, 2012 [1987], p.25). Pervaded by asymmetries and violence, borderlands then are hybrid places in which meanings are in flux and in which a productive and creative area of tension for cultural debate arises (cf. Fellner, 2023, pp.21-25). Consequently, borderlands offer unique locations of culture and have, therefore, become especially interesting for postmodern and postcolonial ways of thinking, which place the marginal, the liminal and the transgressive in the foreground of scientific debates. Especially Bhabha's works have become important, as he speaks of a "third space" that arises when cultures meet and that forms a zone in which "cultural difference" underlines the constant interaction between cultures and their flexible nature (1990, pp.207-221; 1994, pp.36-39). Since the early 1990s, Chicanx criticism has focused on borderlands as places of "politically exciting hybridity, intellectual creativity, and moral possibility" (Johnson and Michaelsen, 1997, p.3) and the study of border literature, narratives of border crossings, 'arte fronterizo' (border art), and performative border practices have flourished since (Benito and Manzanas 2002; Sadowski-Smith 2008; Sheren 2008; Staudt 2014; Fellner 2021). Especially Chicanx literature, but more generally narratives of border crossings, are marked by a special form of border aesthetics, which testifies to a borderlands consciousness. Transgressive in nature, this borderlands consciousness is the expression of alterity and difference.

With her call for what is termed a "new *mestiza* consciousness," Anzaldúa shaped an identity rhetoric that saw the design of a third element in borderlands as a positive evaluation of the diversity and the acceptance and tolerance of contradictions and ambiguities (2012 [1987], p.99). For Anzaldúa, 'mestizaje,' that is racial/ethnic and cultural mixing, signals a special awareness of borderlands, which allows heterogeneity and difference to persist and has learned to endure the state of the transitory. It refers not so much to the common intersection of two cultures, but to the development of a separate system of meaning that is now coming to the fore in the discussion: "a third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts. That third element is a new consciousness – a *mestiza* consciousness" (Anzaldúa 2012 [1987], pp.101-102, emphasis in original). Borderlands consciousness is thus an epistemological position of otherness, which posits new, transcultural forms of knowledge as a resisting element that resignifies dominant forms of knowledge from the point of view of the non-Eurocentric rationality of subaltern subjectivities.

Similarly, in the French context, Agier has also conceived of borderlands as spaces in which new forms of subjectivities can develop, "where a new cosmopolitan subject is emerging" (2016, p.9). As a space of radical alterity, the border, for Agier, is "a place, a situation or a moment that ritualizes the relations to the other" (ibid., p. 7). As a place that decenters subjectivity, a borderland is the home of the "*other-subject*" that becomes "a factor of disturbance for an existing sedentary order" (ibid., p.9, emphasis in the original).

In borderlands, culture is in transition. Recently, the concept of "border culture" as a unique distinguishing feature of borderlands has also become the focus in cultural geography (Konrad and Kelly 2021; Konrad and Amilhat-Szary 2023). Border culture appears in multiple planes, emerging "within nations, between nations, across and at borders" (Konrad and Kelly, 2021, p.18). It becomes "negotiated culture, one type of the fluid, syncretic cultures that appear in bordered areas" (ibid.). Importantly, culture, as produced and circulated in borderlands, Border Studies critics argue, should no longer be seen as marginal but as being "at the heart of geopolitics, flows, and experience of the transnational world" (ibid., p.17). Putting borderlands center-stage, however, involves a shift in perspective, a multi-perspectival approach that involves "seeing like a border" and "far beyond the border" rather than just looking across the border (Rumford, 2014, p.52).

Fourthly then, borderlands are areas that become vantage points, special sites that allow the border dweller as well as the border researcher to "think from the border" (Bossé et al., 2019). As sites of decentered viewpoints, borderlands open up a way of thinking across borders and a space for hidden knowledge that is resistant to Western hegemonic knowledge production (cf. Castro Varela, 2018, p.29). In this context, Walter Mignolo's concept of "*pensamiento fronterizo*/border thinking" (Mignolo 2000; cf. border thinking in this Border Glossary) has gained prominence, which stimulates a kind of thinking that not only takes place *across* the border, i.e. sees the border as an object, but also thinks *through* and *from* the border (cf. Fellner and Kanesu, 2024). The decentering shift that a borderlands perspective entails, "also means to no longer build a subject of research from afar, but instead to engage in a reflexive process, on of self-analysis, of what is transpiring, and which is built by one's personal history and the research process itself" (Bossé et al., 2019, p.20). In Literary and Cultural Studies, border theory involves a "borderlands approach," a "revisionist position which sees literatures and cultures not as finished self-contained projects isolated from other influences, but as constructs based on interaction and dialogue, and which evolve and unfold relative

to each other" (Benito and Manzanas, 2002, pp.2-3). Theorizing from the borderlands, Schimanski and Wolfe (2007 and 2017) have offered the concept of border poetics as a specific type of borderlands reading that examines the question of which strategies and narratives are used in a literary text to create and cross different borders such as national, institutional, and generic borders. Most recently, the concept of bordertextures (see bordertexture/ing in this Border Glossary) has been developed as a methodology of the borderlands which offers a revisionist position to help untangle the complexity of global borderlands. As an interpretative strategy, the bordertextures approach allows border critics to analyze the constitutive interwovenness of borders and borderlands (cf. Fellner forthcoming).

Conclusion

In sum, borders engender borderlands, unique contested and often disputed areas, which follow their own logic, are privileged sites for cultural activity, give rise to new borderlands identities, and call for a special borderlands theory. As fluid and ambiguous spaces pervaded by power asymmetries and violence, borderlands constitute places in which meanings are in flux and in which a productive and creative area of tension for cultural debate arises. A B/borderland(s) is a special type of area, an in-between space, "an indeterminate, potentially shifting and broad terrain across and through which intercultural traffic and transaction circulate" (Friedman, 1998, p.135). Borderlands have become the focus of interest in Literary and Cultural Studies, as they can represent places of creativity, hybridity, and avant-garde aesthetic spaces. They have also gained interest in spatial Border Studies, referring to globalized, transnational, and transcultural spaces, which are ruled by complex interrelationships between space, state, society, culture, and borders. Providing "prismatic lenses on to the changing geography of power in the context of globalization" (Spark, 2009, p.53), borderlands are places "where the multiplied madness of global modernity has recreated a territorial being with anti-essentialist intent" (Boeckler, 2012, p.49; translation AMF).

[i] Because of the different uses in English and French, borderlands is often used as a translation to the French word 'frontière,' as in Michel Agier's book Borderlands, which, as he says in the preface to the English edition, carried the working title *Frontieres* for the first French edition (2016, p.viii). See also the French version of Etienne Balibar's 'Europe as a borderland,' which appeared in the book *Europe Constitution Frontière*.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Astrid M. Fellner is Chair of North American Literary and Cultural Studies at Saarland University. She holds a Ph.D. from the University of Vienna, where she also received her 'Habilitation' in American Studies. She is the Head of the University of the Greater Region-Center for Border Studies at Saarland University and is co-editor of this trilingual Border Glossary. She is also co-founder of the trinational and trilingual UniGR-Master in Border Studies, in which she (co)-teaches several classes in the field of Cultural Border Studies. She has been interested in Border Studies since her studies on Chicanx literature and culture as a Fulbright Scholar at University of Texas Austin in 1990/91. In 2002, she published her monograph *Articulating Selves: Contemporary Chicana Self-Representation* (Braumüller). Within the field of Chicanx Studies she also edited the volume *Body Signs: The Latino/a Body in Cultural Production*. (LIT Verlag, 2011) and authored several articles on Chicanx literature, Indigenous border literature and artistic practices, forms of (queer) border knowledges and decolonial practices. She also engages in Comparative Border Studies, working not only on cultural practices in the US-Mexican borderlands but also on the US-Canada border as well as in European border areas. Currently, she is working on a project entitled *Alterna(rra)tives in the Canada-US Borderlands*.

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