

Department of Germanic & Romance Studies, University of Delhi

First Interdisciplinary Research Scholars Conference

January 11-15, 2016

Delhi, India

EXPLORING BORDERS AND BORDERLANDS IN FACT AND FICTION

“The boundary is not a spatial fact with sociological consequences, but a sociological fact that forms itself spatially” [Georg Simmel]

‘Borders’ and by extension ‘boundaries’ – both physical/geographical as well as symbolic – are lived, created, crossed, resisted, hardened or dissolved on a daily basis. Though the concept of ‘border’ emerged primarily in the fields of geography and political science, it has long ceased to be associated solely with a physical/geographical line demarcating set physical spaces called countries/nations. The drawing and redrawing of maps brought about by the historical processes of nationalism, imperialism and decolonisation made evident that borders are not natural phenomena but man-made demarcations which are integral to the exercise of power in physical and mental forms. This has thrown up questions related as much to colonial subjection as to class, race, gender, language and epistemology. Within the current contexts of accelerated globalization and the development of communication and information technologies, which aim to create a ‘borderless world’ but in reality have ‘globalised’ the very borders they claimed to dissolve, and with simultaneous shifts in thinking in the social sciences and cultural studies, under which the borders between various disciplines have become increasingly permeable, the concept of ‘borders’ has been opened to new reflections and debates. Seen against the recent backdrop of accelerating migration, not infrequently burgeoning into distressing crises, the rethinking and debates have taken on certain urgency.

Borders and boundaries manifest themselves not only as demarcations of physical spaces but also as categorizations in “mental landscapes”. Some scholars in border studies (Schimanski and Wolfe) have moved beyond the concept of ‘borders’ and ‘boundaries’ as essentially only disabling and limiting in order to explore simultaneously their enabling and dynamic features as sites of contact, communication and exchange. Others underscore the enduring consequences of colonialism in the geopolitics of knowledge and emphasize the need for “border thinking” (Mignolo) that shifts the location from which borders are perceived and acted upon.

How does this attention to borders and boundaries and the debates it has generated impact on the way we look at fiction? It has, for one, problematised the borders between fact and fiction,

between the real and its representation. Moreover, focusing on representations of physical as well as symbolic borders and border processes as well as exploring fiction through borders opens up new and insightful ways of engaging with fiction. Such explorations perceive borders not as lines but as spaces (borderlands, borderscapes) inhabited by bodies in dynamic engagement with specific border conditions.

The concepts of borders and borderlands as liminal spaces or zones rather than lines of demarcation are similarly applied to translation to rethink the opposition between original and translated text, source language and target language. They also have repercussions for methodologies of teaching foreign/second languages and for engaging with multilingual learners.

The exploration and problematization of borders and boundaries is not limited to the humanities and social sciences, but also reverberates in the natural sciences, in the fact that the 'natural world' and its exploration is increasingly subjected to and thus limited by man-made borders, in the cultural process of making and maintaining the borders between 'science' and 'non-science', in the problematization of the borders between 'natural' and 'artificial' in biotechnology and genetics, and in the debate around notions of the transhuman/posthuman and the concept of cyborgs as 'borderlands' (Donna Haraway).

Taking this spirit forward, the conference will engage with and problematize the language as well as categories and multiple manifestations of borders and how they are negotiated in interdisciplinary multi layered settings. Abstracts are therefore invited that explore these questions from various disciplines, including the natural sciences.

Key Areas include (but are not limited to)

- Border Thinking and epistemologies
- Translation as border crossing/border creation
- Transgression of borders/boundaries
- Boundaries, space and liminality
- Hybridity
- Migration and Displacement
- Multiculturalism, Multi/ Plurilingualism in the context of language teaching
- Post humans and Cyborgs as borderlands
- Inter-disciplinary perspectives and dialogue

Abstracts should be of 200-300 words.

Deadline for Abstract: November 05, 2015

Please send an abstract and cover sheet with the title of paper, name, affiliation and contact information (including phone number and e-mail address) to: abstract.grs@gmail.com

Paper Presentation should not exceed 15 minutes.

Eligibility

Papers are invited from post graduate research scholars in variety of disciplines such as Social Science, Humanities and Natural sciences from recognized universities and research organizations.

Local Hospitality will be provided by the Department.

For information contact: grs.wintersch.info@gmail.com

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