Limit Thinking and Boundary Rhetoric: A Genealogy of Borders

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> The sum of all the possible objects of our cognition seems to us to be a level surface, with an apparent horizon—that which forms the limit of its extent, and which has been termed by us the idea of unconditioned totality. To reach this limit by empirical means is impossible, and all attempts to determine it a priori according to a principle, are alike in vain. But all the questions raised by pure reason relate to that which lies beyond this horizon, or, at least, in its boundary line.
> —Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (1787)

> At once conserving and annulling inherited conceptual oppositions, this thought, like Saussure's, stands on a borderline: sometimes within an uncriticized conceptuality, sometimes putting a strain on the boundaries, and working toward deconstruction.
> —Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (1976)

> Borderline feel like I'm going to lose my mind.
> You just keep on pushin' my love over the borderline.
> Keep pushin' me
> Keep pushin' me
> Keep pushin' my love.
> —Madonna, *Borderline* (1983)

The words "border," "boundary," and "limit" come up with surprising regularity in US critical discourse of the last thirty years or so, and it may be worthwhile to look at their history. Instead of dismissing them as merely partisan badges to carry around in conferences or as ironic allusions in popular culture and journalism, I will try to create a bilingual frame of reference for them. They have a common genealogy, and the discourses they occur in belong to certain formations. I will look at these three words, their distribution, multiple meanings, and the changes they undergo, mainly in the nineteenth and twentieth century. They may turn out to be cultural keywords that need further research along the lines that Raymond Williams has opened up for cultural studies (Williams; Jay; Koselleck 9-102). My main thesis is that the German words *Grenze* or *Gränze* (both spellings occur) in the texts of Friedrich Nietzsche (and his debts to Ralph Waldo Emerson, as I will argue below) form one of the main nodes for the contemporary use of "border—boundary—limit." I will also look at related or opposite terms like "horizon," "frontier," "margin," and others. A short conclusion, an

"arbitrary closure," will summarize the findings.

Let me begin with a piece of metafiction. In *The Location of Culture* (1994) Homi Bhabha has a strange story to tell. His "Chapter Ten" is called "By bread alone: Signs of Violence in the mid-nineteenth century" (Bhabha 198-211). Bhabha retells a story he found in a subaltern-study project by Ranajit Guha, which is concerned with the Indian "mutinies" of the 1850s. Peasants carried chapattis, a type of Indian bread, from one village to another just before the rebellion. Bhabha quotes British reports on rumours and panic which also invade the colonial discourse of the authorities, and he concludes: "A contingent, borderline experience opens up in-between colonizer and colonized. This is the space of cultural and interpretative indecidability produced in the 'present' of the colonial moment" (206). Bhabha adds a little later on:

> It has been my argument that historical agency is no less effective because it rides on the disjunctive or displaced circulation of rumour and panic. Would such an ambivalent borderline of hybridity prevent us from specifying a political strategy or identifying a historical event? On the contrary, it would enhance our understanding of certain forms of political struggle. (208)

Bhabha clearly delights in having created such a "mad talk about group psychosis and flying chapattis" (208) out of a re-reading of Guha's research on the subaltern.

How did we get there? A story is lifted from another book of research, it is re-contextualized in borderline metaphors, no attempt is made to clarify the meaning of this social practice in nineteenth-century India, on the contrary, the chapatti is celebrated as a floating signifier in a history of subversion, and the reading becomes a (half-humorous) pastiche of Jacques Lacan's reading of Poe's short story "The Purloined Letter."

Genealogy of *Grenze*

"Borderline" is a philosophical term. The early modern use of "boundary" and "horizon" begins with the Enlightenment metaphor of John Locke in his introduction (Section 7) to *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690):

> Thus Men, extending their Enquiries beyond their Capacities, and letting their Thoughts wander into those depths, where they can find no sure Footing, it is no Wonder, that they raise Questions, and multiply Disputes, which never coming to any clear Resolution, are proper only to continue and increase their Doubts, and to confirm them at last in perfect Scepticism. Whereas were the Capacities of our Understandings well considered, the Extent of our Knowledge once discovered, and the Horizon found, which sets the Bounds between the enlightned and dark Parts of Things; between what is, and what is not comprehensible by us, Men would perhaps with less Scruple acquiesce in the avowed Ignorance of the one, and imploy their Thoughts and Discourse

with more Advantage and Satisfaction in the other. (47, historic spelling)

The bounds between the enlightened and dark parts of things, indeed, become of primary epistemological concern for such philosophers as David Hume and Immanuel Kant. One of the dark parts of things for human reason and understanding since Aristotle and Plato had been the thought of infinity in space and time. The scholastic philosophers identified the concept with God, and one major contribution of the Enlightenment (Koselleck 307-39) was to re-frame this thought in mathematical language. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz created the mathematical term "limit" (*Schranke*) and closed its definition with the calculus of the infinite (Ritter 3: 874-78).

Kant wanted to transfer the procedures of logic and mathematics to reasoning. In his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1787) he tried to delimit the bounds of reasoning, to limit metaphysical speculation and at the same time put it on firmer grounds. In the quote opening my article, Kant harks back to Locke's metaphor of horizon and its bounds, but focuses his attention on the borderline (*Grenzlinie*) of the knowable and the unknowable. Indeed, the word "limit" appears in the English translation 32 times, "boundary" only once, in a context with "horizon." Both "boundary" and "limit" are *Grenze* in the original.

The problem with the German language (and Kant's terminology) is that they only have one word for the formation of abstract concepts (*abgrenzen*, delimiting), for geographic national borders, and for the boundary of thought (transferred from perception). All three are *Grenze* in German (the older German word *Mark* had been replaced by the Polish loan word *graniza*). *Grenze* in German everyday language still retains strong political associations. In other words, whereas French, English and Spanish speakers develop a variety of words (Lat. *limes, terminus, modus*; It. *frontiera, confine, faciata*; Fr. *frontière, confin, marche, born, limite, but, terme*; Sp *frontera, límite, borde*,) to distinguish various meanings of *Grenze*, German speakers and writers mostly have to manage with one word. Now, Kant makes the Latin loan word "*limitation*" one of his pure categories of reason, uses it frequently to reason, and relates it to another fundamental concept in his table: *Allheit* or totality: "limitation is merely reality conjoined to negation" (122). Thus, Kant generally tries to control his use of *Grenze*, keeping it close to logical questions of categories and terminology (*Terminus* was the Roman God of borders and he also rules in such keywords as "determine"; see Williams 98-100), but where Kant illustrates his argument with the Lockean metaphor of "horizon," the translator chose "boundary" instead of "limit" as an English equivalent. Kant drew the boundary line in *Critique of Pure Reason* between *noumenon* and *phenomenon*, between the unknowable *Ding an sich* and its representation in the human mind, and he called terms on the boundary line *Grenzbegriffe* [limitative concepts].[1] This boundary line drawn by Kant through limitation has not only given rise to the schools of phenomenology and the genetic structuralism of Jean Piaget, whose use of cognitive schemata Kant anticipates in part, but it also has provoked a long line of denials, rebuttals, protests, not only by philosophers.

The most important answer in the nineteenth century comes in *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807), where Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel uses negation (as limitation) throughout, but generally avoids the concept of *Grenze* until the very end of his long argument for a progressive approach to knowledge. There is simply no limit to human knowledge as it develops through history, and only the absolute spirit of science can impose (momentary) limits on itself: "Das Wissen kennt nicht nur sich, sondern auch das Negative seiner selbst, oder seine Grenze" ("Knowledge is aware not only of itself, but also of the negative of itself, or its limit.") (Hegel 563). Thus Hegel continues the rational project of the Enlightenment to enlarge the horizon of human reason, but he replaces Kant's table of pure categories by the continuing dialectic play of totality and negation. Left Hegelians like Karl Marx also avoid the use of *Grenze* in its cognitive dimensions.

Where Kant was eager to fend off Hume's skepticism, Hegel made skepticism a phase that human knowledge passes through to reach new insights beyond it. The price is high: the "unhappy consciousness" combining stoicism and skepticism. This phase of consciousness is the first to produce the "sad sentence" that god has died (Hegel 523, 546).

The term *Grenze* becomes a building stone in Arthur Schopenhauer's attempt to rewrite Kant's boundary line between *noumenon* and *phenomenon* as a border between Will and Representation. Both meet on the human retina (Schopenhauer 3: 322-23). That is, Schopenhauer circumvents Kant's attempt to limit speculations about the *Ding an sich* by identifying it with the "will to life" which he equates with reality (I, 155-57). Significantly he calls Kant's *Critique* a little "frontier fortress" (*Gränzbefestigung*) which has locked itself into categories and cannot leave the fortress (I, 148). This metaphorical strategy characterizes *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (1818) throughout. Schopenhauer not only uses derivations from *Gränze* very frequently (138 times), but he freely moves between metaphoric, mathematical and categorical uses of the term. And he delights in the denial of limits by frequently using *gränzenlos* (limitless, *aporein*), a word that Kant does not use at all in the *Critique*. That is, he deliberately undermines the very limitations Kant had tried to impose on reason, and he claims to have found the *Ding an sich* (Will) by intuition, something that Kant had explicitly tried to eliminate from rational philosophy. In another passage of the same text, however, he comes to the conclusion that the mystifying use of *Gränze* in Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling and others has turned the word into a shell empty of meaning (Schopenhauer 3: 101).

A second denial of Kant's attempt to limit metaphysical thinking and at the same time a rejection of Hegel's principle of infinite approximation to knowledge comes from Søren Kierkegaard, whose strategy relies on using "infinite" very frequently in his denial of limits, limitations or boundary lines. In his non-theological work, especially in *The Concept of Dread*, *Fear and Trembling*, *The Sickness to Death*, and *The Repetition* (Kierkegaard, 57-640), he continuously plays off his favourite words "love," faith," "man," and "woman" against the other set of key words: "fear," "dan-

ger," and "to dare." And this double set links most often with the infinite or "boundless." Kierkegaard clearly reacts to Hegel's unhappy consciousness and plays on the vertiginous possibilities of unthinking the bounds of science and the sacred, a rhetoric exercise in ambiguity:

> The notion that every scientific problem within the great field embraced by science has its definite place, its measure and its bounds, and precisely thereby has its resonance in the whole, its legitimate consonance in what the whole expresses this notion, I say, is not merely a *pium desiderium* which ennobles the man of science by the visionary enthusiasm or melancholy which it begets, is not merely a sacred duty which employs him in the service of the whole, bidding him renounce lawlessness and the romantic lust to lose sight of land, but it is also in the interest of every more highly specialised deliberation, which by forgetting where its home properly is, forgets at the same time itself, a thought which the very language I use with its striking ambiguity expresses; it becomes another thing, and attains a dubious perfectibility by being able to become anything at all. By thus failing to let the scientific call to order be heard, by not being vigilant to forbid the individual problems to hurry by one another as though it were a question of arriving first at the masquerade, one may indeed attain sometimes an appearance of brilliancy, may give sometimes the impression of having already comprehended, when in fact one is far from it, may sometimes by the use of vague words strike up an agreement between things that differ. This gain, however, avenges itself subsequently, like all unlawful acquisitions, which neither in civic life nor in the field of science can really be owned. (466-67)

Most readers will get lost in the meandering thought winding through the first sentence of 149 words. Kierkegaard turns his strategic concept of the infinite into a syntactical manipulation of meaning (he hardly ever uses the concept of limit or border), itself a zone of romantic lust (*jouissance*), difference and daring, where the leap into faith (instead of skepticism) becomes the final act. English translations use the verb "to bound" which strangely tunes in with another pet phrases of Kierkegaard's : "boundless" and "bound to," all having to do with binding and religion. Like Schopenhauer's will and representation, Kierkegaard's brilliancy and masquerade mean a radical turn to the single individual.

Kierkegaard clearly tries to ward off the rational atheism of Ludwig Feuerbach who used the infinity of God to put reason in its place. Reason discovering itself without limitations becomes God.

> God is the infinite being or the being without any limitations whatsoever. But what cannot be a limit or boundary on God can also not be a limit or boundary on reason. If, for example, God is elevated above all limitations of

> sensuousness, so, too, is reason. He who cannot conceive of any entity except as sensuous, that is, he whose reason is limited by sensuousness, can only have a God who is limited by sensuousness. Reason, which conceives God as an infinite being, conceives, in point of fact, its own infinity in God. What is divine to reason is also truly rational to it, or in other words, it is a being that perfectly corresponds to and satisfies it. That, however, in which a being finds satisfaction, is nothing but the being in which it encounters itself as its own object. (*Principles of a Philosophy of the Future*, Part I, § 6)

God mirrors reason, and reason discovers itself divine in this mirror. While philosophers debated God, rationalism and irrationalism (Williams 252-58) as well as the limits of knowledge, romantic writers like Sir Walter Scott and William Wordsworth celebrated borderlands in border romance and border ballads. In the USA writers like James Fenimore Cooper turned the Scottish border into the Native American frontier. Idealistic philosophy and literary thinking moved in a common discourse formation. There was at least one other writer in the United States who moved border thinking into the same direction and partly anticipated the next move made by Nietzsche in German philosophy: Emerson. The connection between Emerson and Nietzsche is quite well established, especially for ethics (Lopez 1-35) but there are also direct links in the use of boundary and limit metaphors. Emerson shares a radical individualism with Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard. He deliberately uses metaphors to enlarge his thinking. The anticipation of Nietzsche emerges clearly in the following quotes from "Compensation" and *Conduct of Life*.

> In a virtuous action, I properly am; in a virtuous act, I add to the world; I plant into deserts conquered from chaos and Nothing, and see the darkness receding on the limits of the horizon. There can be no excess to love; none to knowledge; none to beauty, when these attributes are considered in the purest sense. The soul refuses limits, and always affirms an Optimism, never a Pessimism. (Emerson 35)
>
> His use of limits and horizon clearly echoes Locke, and even more clearly it rejects Kant's transcendentalism.

> Thus we trace Fate, in matter, mind, and morals,—in race, in retardations of strata, and in thought and character as well. It is everywhere bound or limitation. But Fate has its lord; limitation its limits; is different seen from above and from below; from within and from without. For, though Fate is immense, so is power, which is the other fact in the dual world, immense. If Fate follows and limits power, power attends and antagonizes Fate. (Emerson 498)

Emerson here anticipates Nietzsche in linking limitation, which he no longer thinks of as negation, with power. In his conclusion to *Conduct of Life*, he thinks of "real"

existence as transcending everyday life (circumstances, employments):

> Riches and poverty are a thick or thin costume; and our life—the life of all of us—identical. For we transcend the circumstance continually, and taste the real quality of existence; as in our employments, which only differ in the manipulations, but express the same laws; or in our thoughts, which wear no silks, and taste no ice-creams. We see God face to face every hour, and know the savor of Nature. (Emerson 572)

(Martin Heidegger will call this authentic existence.) Emerson stands between Kant and Nietzsche (who owned a heavily underlined and annotated copy of *Conduct of Life*) and, like Schopenhauer, Emerson delights in "crossing thresholds" (556), in trespassing the boundary line drawn by Kant. He makes transcendentalism the exact opposite of the limitation of reason and registers the metaphoric power of language to unmake categorical distinctions.

Nietzsche frequently mixes border metaphors with Kant's concept of limit. He creates compounds like Schopenhauer to extend the border metaphor into little allegories, and he associates the transcendence of boundaries with power, just like Emerson. In his early work *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche binarizes the Appollonian and the Dionysian, the first principle associated with boundaries and the second with transgressions of them (I, 7-134). "Limit" and "boundary" (as *Grenze* or *Gränze*) appear more than 150 times in the digital edition of his work, and "limitless" and "unlimited" become favorite epithets. Where Kant used limitation for negation of totality, Nietzsche like Emerson prefers to negate limitation itself. A concept is a schema that limits thought and that has to be transgressed by metaphor. And the transgression of terminological boundaries shows the intellectual's daring and his loss of fear. Long before *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-85), borders have become a ruling metaphor in Nietzsche's thinking, applied to science, knowledge, experience, but also to music, the arts, and ultimately to class divisions in society. The aphoristic quality of his thinking masks the contradictions in his use of border metaphors, open paradox becomes daring. Contradiction becomes just another transgression of the limits of logic. The philosopher and artist fuse. Border thinking with Nietzsche becomes border rhetoric, mixing images, inverting metaphors, punning on madness (*verrückt*):

> Wer die Menschen einst fliegen lehrt, der hat alle Grenzsteine verrückt; alle Grenzsteine selber werden ihm in die Luft fliegen, die Erde wird er neu taufen—als „die Leichte." ["He who one day teacheth men to fly will have dislocated all boundary stones; to him will all boundary stones themselves fly into the air; the earth will he christen anew—as 'the light one.'"] (Nietzsche 2: 440)

Kant's limit concepts become thoughts free as the birds, gravity lightness, science gay,

etc. when landmarks begin to fly. Dislocation of concepts leads to mad freedom. By re-visualizing the old metaphors of the horizon and the border, Nietzsche creates a poetic paradoxical way of thinking that owes a lot to Emerson. The mathematical limit, the religious and epistemological boundary (connected with infinity), and the political border fuse their possible connotations (enriched by the intertextuality with Emerson, Schopenhauer and Kant). Nietzsche applies *Grenze* mainly to science, concept, logic, experience, knowledge. But he also finds it in (Greek) music, in death, in power, and in social classes. Metaphoric thinking relies on multiple analogies, many of the spatial (Lakoff and Johnson 14-86). It magically allies art and philosophy against the sciences and Kant's rationalism. Kant and followers become border patrols, the world a limit concept for the daring thinker.

Nietzsche and his double Zarathustra play with the multiple meanings of *Grenze* or *Gränze*, and freely shift from symbolic compounds like "border posts," border patrols," or "border paths" to philosophical questions of terminology or sociological questions of class. The virtuoso display in his aphorisms and essays clearly laid the ground for the border rhetoric of existentialists and postmodernists in the twentieth century. And by declaring the death of God he abolished another limitation to thinking the infinite. John Locke's unsure footing turns into a creative dance (Nietzsche 2: 275-561).

Putting a Strain on the Boundaries

Nietzsche as philosopher-poet, as a metaphorical thinker, in particular his border thinking in the later writings, offered a model for the European avant-gardes from 1890 to 1945. As Norbert Reichel argues, the social isolation, the relative powerlessness of intellectuals, their restriction to reading and writing books made Nietzsche's vision of the Superman and the dream of a higher life attractive to writers such as André Gide, Gabrielle D'Annunzio, F. T. Marinetti (3-76), so they celebrated border consciousness in images of speed, illness, dying, solitude, "death of god" (28-37), melancholy, violence and destruction. In their works they celebrated the power of words in the orator who showed attributes as superman in his demagogical power over the masses (Reichel 88-137). Images of horizons replaced concepts, the transcendental invaded immanence, and Super-time and Super-space began to condition human existence (Reichel 6). The philosophy of life faded into Existentialism. It is no coincidence that the development of border writing during the nineteenth century as I have sketched it here—the rebellion against Kant and Hegel—coincides largely with the tradition of irrationalism as Georg Lukács has outlined it in his 1952 study *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft* [The Destruction of Reason]. More German writers could be added especially Wilhelm Dilthey (Lukács 363-86) and his attempts to defend his hermeneutics against the limitations of reason, and the pre-fascist and fascist followers of Nietzsche in the twentieth century. As disciples of Nietzsche in Germany stand out Ernst Jünger and Alfred Rosenberg (Lukács 458-73).

As is well known, Nietzsche's border rhetoric also reaches to certain postmodern-

ist, feminist and postcolonial discourse strategies, and it leads from Karl Jaspers and Heidegger through Derrida, Lacan, Luce Irigaray, and Michel Foucault (Dosse 1: 503-44). Again, a thumbnail sketch must do.

Jaspers, relying explicitly on Nietzsche and Kierkegaard (248, 255), created a new compound in German, namely *Grenzsituationen*, variously translated as limit-situation or boundary-situation. Jaspers distinguished four such limit situations: struggle, death, contingency, and guilt (257-73). All four are situations "antinomian" to life (a twisted echo of Kant) and make human life "existential" (see Williams 123-25). Jaspers, who sets out to define types of ideologies, based on these antinomies, adds that rationalism keeps thought within boundaries, while irrationalism looks for the infinite (304, 327).

Heidegger, who reviewed Jaspers's book extensively (*Wegmarken* 1-44), echoed Jaspers in *Sein und Zeit* (1927), at first only in footnotes, then, towards the end, limit and boundary concepts emerge together with "time" and "history" into the main body of the text (272-432). Heidegger's basic metaphors are territorial (ground, horizon, region, district), but limits and boundaries play a minor role except for the time from 1927 to 1935, when he turned to Metaphysics, Nietzsche, and National Socialism. Heidegger mainly used boundary words to distinguish his terms from others, but occasionally he would daringly venture into the utmost boundaries of existence, as in his public proclamation to vote for Hitler:

> Diese letzte Entscheidung greift hinaus an die äußerste Grenze des Daseins unseres Volkes. Und was ist diese Grenze? Sie besteht in jener Urforderung alles Seins, dass es sein eigenes Wesen behalte und rette. Damit wird eine Schranke aufgerichtet zwischen dem, was einem Volke angesonnen werden kann und was nicht. Kraft dieses Grundgesetzes der Ehre bewahrt das deutsche Volk die Würde und Entschiedenheit seines Lebens. Der Wille zur Selbstverantwortung ist jedoch nicht nur das Grundgesetz des Daseins unseres Volkes, sondern zugleich das Grundgeschehnis der Erwirkung seines nationalsozialistischen Staates. [. . .] Keiner kann fernbleiben am Tage der Bekundung dieses Willens. Heil Hitler! ("Deutsche Lehrer und Kamaraden" 13-14).
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> [This ultimate decision reaches out to the utmost boundary of the existence of our nation. And what is this boundary? It consists in this primal desire of all being to preserve and save its own essence. With this a limit is erected between what can be demanded from a people and what not. Authorized by this fundamental law of honor the German nation preserves the dignity and resoluteness of its life. The will to autonomy is not only the fundamental law of the existence of our nation, but simultaneously the fundamental process of establishing its national socialist state. [. . .] Nobody can be absent on the day of articulating this will. Heil Hitler!]

Nietzsche's will to power is not far, and Heidegger uses both words, *Grenze* and *Schranke*, to point at the limit value of tolerance for the German nation. His lectures on metaphysics in 1929 and 1935 also contain clearer examples of the metaphorical use of boundaries (1967, 10-21; 1935, 4-5) where the full rhetoric of existential daring, introduced by Kierkegaard, begins to ring—sometimes openly alluding to national socialist thought (Heidegger, Wegmarken 104-05; Einführung 4-5; 208-12).

After World War II Heidegger's thinking began to dominate French existentialism, first through Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus (who reflected more on the Kierkegaard themes of suicide and rebellion), then through Foucault, Lacan, and Derrida. In the latter two, Nietzsche perhaps was more important than Heidegger, but border rhetoric or thinking comes up in the work of all three.

In Lacan's *Écrits* we can read his rhetorical flourishes at the end of each session, accumulating limit words and Heidegger allusions as he draws to a closure (103, 142, 175, 220). A typical sentence would read: "By his discovery, Freud brought within the circle of science the boundary between the object and being that seemed to mark its outer limit" (Lacan 175). Lacan also indulges in some Nietzschean rhetoric with earthquakes on "this sensitive frontier between truth and knowledge" (296) and discovers gaps and margins too numerous to quote (196, 201, 203, 205, 206, 211, 217, 318 etc.). In his later writings, he moved on towards mathematical notations where the bar in an algorithm becomes a boundary, crossed by a plus sign. This sometimes leads to hilarious results, as shown by Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont (36-54; 40) who charged him with abusing science and also with "secular mysticism" (55). The two also exposed other notorious mis-readers of mathematical concepts like Irigaray, who added the French bord (fringe) to the confusion (127-44), Jean Baudrillard and his use of transfinite numbers (169-76), Paul Virilio who confused speed and acceleration (193-99) and, easily out-bordering everyone else, Giles Deleuze on limit values (177-92; 180-81). The new concepts were mainly transferred from differential and integral calculus, topology, sometimes returning beyond Leibniz (183), and often deliberately mixing them in an irrational confusing rhetoric. Spatial metaphors and terms from topology served to displace historical thinking (Dosse 2, 535-43). *Gödelitis*, the transfer of concepts of closure and openness formed another line of attack on reason and limitation (Sokal and Bricmont 201n). "Difference" and "limit" became keywords in postmodern discourse, especially their irrational and their theological formations in Michel de Certeau, Felix Guattari, Emmanuel Levinas, Nikolai Berdyadev and others. Regis Debray wrote an irrationalist *Critique de la raison politique* (1981) and Gayatri C. Spivak followed with *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999).

These latter and others correctly pointed at the Eurocentric and conservative tendencies in Kant and Hegel. Is it too far fetched to see their work in a continuity with that of Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Heidegger? Is the postmodernist attack on a rational modernity (Sokal and Bricmont 229) a continuation of the destruction of reason outlined by Lukács, and, if so, what are its politics: liberal pessimism or a regime of unreason (Goldstein 162-219; Leitch 171)? Maybe the politics

of poststructuralist thought, ranging from Maoism to Gaullism, have been covered thoroughly enough (Dosse; Jameson; Leitch).

Foucault, although under the strong influence of Nietzsche and Heidegger in using spatial concepts, generally stayed away from the aphoristic border rhetoric of his masters. But when the occasion arose as in an homage to Georges Bataille (another Nietzschean border rhetorician and another admirer of Hitler) Foucault would not be left behind:

> Transgression is an action that involves limits, that narrow zone of a line where it displays the flash of its passage, but perhaps also its entire trajectory, even its origin; it is likely that transgression has its entire space in the line it crosses. The play of limits and transgression seems to be regulated by a simple obstinacy: transgression incessantly crosses and recrosses a line that closes up behind it in a wave of extremely short duration, and thus is made to return once more right to the horizon of the uncrossable. (*Ethics* 269-78)

Foucault would avoid the celebration of transgression in his later works (*Aesthethics* xxxii).

The striking paradoxes—line as zone and space—and the puns on flashing and short waves (including a Biblical allusion) are vintage Nietzsche or simply pre-Derrida, who will play on limits a few years later. But when called upon to write on Kant's "What is Enlightenment?" he identifies the Kantian position as "limit-attitude," but not as abstract negation (as in Kant). Foucault insists on the cross-over (*franchissement*) as a turn against Kant:

> We have to move beyond the outside-inside alternative; we have to be at the frontiers. Criticism indeed consists of analyzing and reflecting upon limits. But if the Kantian question was that of knowing [*savoir*] what limit knowledge [*connaissance*] must renounce exceeding, it seems to me that the critical question today must be turned back into a positive one: In what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory, what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints? The point, in brief, is to transform the critique conducted in the form of necessary limitation into a practical critique that takes the form of a possible crossing-over [*franchissement*]. (*Ethics* 315)

By reading Kant on images of frontiers and crossing-overs, Foucault keeps closer to the Emerson-Nietzsche line than to the first *Critique* where *Grenze* was a result of limitation, the negation of totality. Foucault rather preferred to study the social and discursive practices of exclusion that followed from the limitations of reason: exclusion or regulation of madness, crime, resistance, or sexuality. He turned to border

metaphors towards the end of his life, more in his interviews than in his books. The later inflation of the term limit-situation, analyzed by Martin Jay (1998), takes its beginnings from the Bataille article and Foucault's own death. (Jaspers himself later had added more limit-situations to his catalogue.)

Derrida knew the difference between a limiting negation and the play of/with limits (*Die Schrift und die Differenz* 10). In this early article "Kraft und Bedeutung" [Force and Signification] from 1963 he already ends quoting from Nietzsche (51). As he moved on, he picked up the metaphoric play with borderlines and limits, including Emersonian cross-overs where the occasion arose.

In *Of Grammatology* Derrida uses Nietzsche's border rhetoric not only when dealing with him and Heidegger (6-26), but also elsewhere when he sets out to undermine the structuralist ideas of oppositions or systems by pointing out ambiguities and paradoxes. Most of his terms serve to make limits (as "closure") impossible: supplement, difference, trace, play, deconstruction. In particular, he attacks Saussure and Lévi-Strauss (the latter through his reliance on notions taken from Jean Jacques Rousseau): "At once conserving and annulling inherited conceptual oppositions [such as nature / culture] this thought, like Saussure's, stands on a borderline: sometimes within an uncriticized conceptuality, sometimes putting a strain on the boundaries, and working toward deconstruction" (105). Or, more in Schopenhauer's metaphors, the unnamed Saussure here plays the role of Kant: "The advent of writing is the advent of this play; today such a play is coming into its own, effacing the limit starting from which one had thought to regulate the circulation of signs, drawing along with it all the reassuring signifieds, reducing all the strongholds, all the out-of-bounds shelters that watched over the field of language" (*Of Grammatology* 7). The debt to Foucault is obvious, but the use of the Schopenhauer image of the stronghold (Gränzfestung) is striking. Later articles use "limit" and "border" more frequently, adding "crossing-over" and "limit-experiences," even "specters" to mystify the interpretation of laws, the power of discourse, or the limit experience of the holocaust (*Of Grammatology* 28, 39, 121; see Cornell, *The Philosophy of Limit* 91-115)

US literary criticism first fell under the influence of existentialism and border rhetoric between the two World Wars, either challenging or reinforcing the theological bias of New Criticism. Vincent B. Leitch (*American Literary Criticism* 1992) and others have identified the main players, conflicts, and changes. There were perhaps three major waves crossing the US borders: an early emigrant version leading to a crisis theology and a death of god school in the 1960s, the 1966 Baltimore (Johns Hopkins) invasion, where Derrida soon outflanked the other Europeans; and the recognition of (British) cultural studies in the 1990s reinforcing the rise of Foucault.

Jaspers's term "boundary situation" entered the scene with the exile of German theologian Paul Tillich. In an autobiographical sketch, entitled *On the Boundary* (1936), Tillich described the exile's situation as truly advantageous: "The boundary is the best place for acquiring knowledge" (13). By generalizing and inflating Jaspers's limit situation and combining it with Heidegger's in-between state of life in *Sein und*

Zeit (Sein und Zeit 132, 347, 409) Tillich found interstitial boundary situations everywhere: between father/mother, country/city, classes, reality/imagination, theory/practice, heteronomy/autonomy, etc.

The influence of Karl Barth and a German theology which expanded the Christian notion of "crisis" (Koselleck 263-77) into a renewed belief began after World War II. A 1949 symposium in the *Partisan Review* played an important role in linking religion and myth criticism with the anti-communist propaganda book The God that Failed (Karrer 43-58). Crisis theology or "negative theology" sustained another interface with literary criticism through hermeneutics where Paul Ricoeur, Levinas, or Hans-Georg Gadamer led, via Wilhelm Dilthey and Heidegger, all the way back to Friedrich Schleiermacher and Protestant bible exegesis (Leitch, *American Literary Criticism* 170; Cornell 67). The word of God became silence, absence, or the void. Theologizing the Other formed another rhetorical bridge, already used by Lacan. Others, again, attempted to constitute a theology out of Nietzsche's challenge that God had died (Murchland 1-16). All these schools made ample use of boundary situations, limit values and border crossings (Cotkin 35-158, 225-84).

If the postmodernists in France fell under the spell of Nietzsche and Heidegger, parts of US criticism came to rely more and more on Derrida, who had written on Edmund Husserl and who was made palatable and respectable by a largely sympathetic introduction from his translator Spivak (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* ix-lxxxvii).

Soon after Derrida started to come to Yale regularly in 1975, his attacks on the structuralism of Saussure widened into attacks on any "logocentric" tradition, where logos also retained its traditional theological connotations. His agnosticism found resonance in the Yale school (J. Hillis Miller, Paul de Man), enriched New Criticism with a new philosophical vocabulary (paradox, aporia, presence), and converted some critics like William Spanos from a Christian hermeneutic to Heidegger's destruction. Others resisted (Esch in Greenblatt and Gunn 379-88). Some of the battles in secularizing literary criticism in the USA were fought in Spanos's periodical Boundary (Leitch, *American Literary Criticism* 169-72). And very often the notions of Nietzsche, Heidegger and Derrida, especially the latter, were in the background. Young US scholars could stake out theoretical claims by adhering to the poststructuralist positions developed in France. The many US websites and digital articles on Derrida, Levinas, François Lyotard, de Certeau, Baudrillard, Deleuze speak for themselves. Christian Hermeneutics and "sacramental aesthetics," as opposed to a more secular criticism, spoke an eloquent language, took refuge to hermeneutic "infiniting," debated the "presence" of meaning in the word, the miraculism of the metaphor, etc. The humanities found themselves surrounded in a godless scientific world in the USA (Leitch, *American Literary Criticism* 33, 116, 170, 289) as well as in France (Dosse 1: 544-62).

The postmodernist critics were of little help. They replayed Nietzsche's death of God in many variants, partly as an import from France: the disappearance of God (J. Hillis Miller in 1963), death of the author (Roland Barthes in 1967), the death of the

novel (John Barth in 1968), the death of the sign (Derrida 1976), the death of literature (Alvin B. Kernan in 1999), the death of metaphysical man, language, the subject etc. Much of the existential rhetoric of the 1960s and 1970s masked a crisis in the Christian belief systems under the assault of agnostic or atheist critics from Europe (Leitch, *American Literary Criticism* 321-22, 296; 148-81).

So, one can hardly dismiss this critical debate as marginal, and it obviously owes a lot to a renewed interest in Nietzsche, as for instance documented in *Boundary 2* (O'Hara 1981). Neither can the influence of Derrida and Foucault be restricted to literary criticism in the USA. Drucilla Cornell, who has proposed to rename Derrida's "deconstruction" as "a philosophy of limit," tried to extend it to philosophy and legal studies in the USA (1992). Limit, border and boundary writing has generated new metaphors like cutting edge, gap, fissure, fault line, barriers, threshold, liminality, interstitiality and has joined other images of territories, mappings, nomads etc. These metaphors, again, easily link with prefixes like "post-," prepositions like "beyond" and "after" all meaning transgression, border crossing, or other infinite movements in time or space. And, sometimes, these words have become passwords of a postmodern affiliation, associated with Derrida, Foucault, Lacan and others. Still another line of limit thinking in political discourse derived from German philosopher Carl Schmitt to Leo Strauss and their disciples. Here thinking focused not only on the limits of law, but also on limits of representation and limiting the hegemon.

Limit thinking and limit rhetoric spread within three decades into many other areas of the humanities. There are simply too many discourses even within the fields of literary or cultural criticism. Websearches for "limit" + "name of a critic" will lead to dense clusters around postmodernist critics like Derrida, Deleuze, Lacan, de Certeau, Slavoj Žižek and feminist critics like Judith Butler, Donna Haraway, or Irigaray. A "Borderlands" portal conveniently supplies links to major sites with border terminology: cyberspace discussion, cyborg feminism, gay and lesbian studies, diaspora and border-crossing studies, and Without-Borders movements. There is also a noticeable absence of such links when searching for critics like Fredric Jameson, Edward Said, or even Spivak, the translator of Of Grammatology. Border rhetoric is not exclusively a conservative or irrational practice, but it seems to be largely absent from a left or neo-marxist position.

Over the Borderline

After this long sketch of a *Grenzwort*'s journey through time and space, we can try to unpack Bhabha's mystifying quote with which I began this article: "A contingent [Jaspers], borderline experience [Jaspers] opens up [Goedel] in-between [Heidegger] colonizer and colonized. This is the space of cultural and interpretative indecidability [Derrida] produced in the 'present' ['Derrida'] of the colonial moment [Roberts, *The Colonial Moment*]" (206). Border rhetoric uses limit, border, and boundary interchangeably, and mixes them with words of closure/openness, experience and other existential or interstitial words to achieve a mystifying theoretical-sounding effect

which these words carry over from their semantic history. In an extreme case, like in this quote from Homi Bhabha, they become a patchwork of allusions where each second word draws its meaning not so much from its neighbors in the sentence, but from its intertextual connotations, thus creating an undecidability of reference. Border rhetoric replaces limit thinking, and it has spread in the USA.

In the following, I will briefly look at three different fields of US criticism to test this thesis. Firstly, in the volume *Redrawing the Boundaries* published by the Modern Language Association in 1992 (Greenblatt and Gunn), a 1991 conference volume on Cultural Studies (Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichel) and more recent work in Chicano and Chicana Studies. I will conclude with a look at Walter Mignolo's proposal in 2000 to renew border thinking, possibly as an alternative to Bhabha's rhetoric.

My first example, *Redrawing the Boundaries* (Greenblatt and Gunn) is a review of the state of art in English and American literature studies published by the Modern Language Association. The collection including 20 scholarly articles follows earlier stock takings in 1967, 1982, and it clearly includes more conservative scholars than the second example, the cultural studies conference, although leftist and Marxist scholars are also represented. Significantly, there is no overlap at all, except for Bhabha, who appears in both publications. This is not a conference book. The editors invited scholars to summarize the recent research in one of the twenty fields, and to keep to a certain terminology of "boundary" vs. "frontier" (Greenblatt and Gunn, "Introduction" 4-7). Many contributors accepted the editors' invitation to consider "the redrawing of the boundaries" in their respective fields.

Greenblatt and Gunn take "boundaries" (some prefer "limits," a few "frontiers") to refer to discipline (psychoanalysis and literature), periods (Renaissance or Early Modern), genres (new prose genres), and gender divisions (new women writers). The editors themselves in their introduction suggest a conflict between literature and academic criticism:

> The provisionality, pragmatism, and occasional capriciousness of disciplinary distinctions should also remind us that there will always be something about literature that resists the language of boundary, limit, jurisdiction. The power of literature, and of literary study, lies in its ability to infiltrate any speech and writing, transforming what seems outside itself into something else, into its own odd being. (10-11)

Notice how the distinction the first sentence makes is subverted by the parallel between literature and literary study, and how the power question is shifted from the discipline to literature. Its own odd being, whatever that is, pertains to both, literature and literary studies. These categories are shifting, the editors say (Greenblatt and Gunn, "Introduction" 5). Their equivocal position comes out as well in the division of the topics (eight articles on English literary studies, two on American literary studies and nine on different critical positions in literary studies; the remaining two are

dedicated to teaching composition). Now "Postmodernist Studies" is placed at the chronological end of English literary studies (179-208), it equivocally means studies of postmodern literature and the beginnings of postmodern criticism, which John Carlos Rowe dates with the Yale manifesto in 1979 (192) and which deals with both, postmodern US literature and criticism. This allows the editors to commission another contribution called "Deconstruction" under the critical positions (Esch 374-91). The strategy to contain the Derrida followers in two chapters, one largely critical, the other largely affirmative, works only in part. Deborah Esch's attempt to focus on Derrida's deconstruction as an anti-institutional move (376-77) supports the editors' frame, but references to Derrida spread throughout the volume (44 times), running close to the 50 references to Foucault. It is significant to list those who resist Derrida's rhetoric about "the reality of a border which some would cross and others wouldn't. It is always being crossed, erased and retraced, retraced by being erased" (qtd. by Esch in Greenblatt and Gunn 383).

Thirteen of the twenty contributors retain another terminology, that of "margin" and "center," some very deliberately avoid "limit" and "boundary" as words: Walter Cohen in "Marxist Criticism," Henry Louis Gates Jr. in "African American Criticism," Gerald Graff and Bruce Robbins in "Cultural Criticism (in Greenblatt and Gunn 320-48, 303-19, 419-36). Some only use them in quotes: Marjorie Perloff in "Modernist Studies," William Kerrigan in "Seventeenth-Century Studies," Catharine R. Stimpson in "Feminist Criticism (154-78, 64-78, 251-70). It is remarkable that African American Studies where racism, segregation and the "color line" have been at the center of interest for so long, that feminism, focusing on sexism and discrimination, and postcolonial studies, dealing with colonial mappings of the world, that all three argue without applying any border rhetoric in this volume. Almost all of the contributors to the volume find the margin-centre terminology more useful to raise the question of power which the existential and French border rhetoric often eliminated. Nietzsche had made power a major knot in his web of metaphors.

Derrida tried to subvert this thinking in centres and margins (by de-centering it), and thus weakened the dimension of power always present when talking about centre-margin or center-periphery distinctions. One single article, (John Bender on "Eighteenth-Century Studies") clearly refers to "frames of reference" throughout. Another contributor builds his narrative on "centre" and "central" without using "margin" at all (Cohen 320-48). He is "centrally" concerned with power and hegemony. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in "Gender Criticism" (271-302) restricts her use of the keyword to "professional boundaries" (294-98), and does not cast gender differences (with one exception on page 277) as borders or boundaries. Nobody in *Redrawing the Bound aries* uses border rhetoric as excessively as some of the critics in Chicano and Chicana Studies (a field that is absent from the volume *Redrawing the Boundaries*).

Since 1992 the MLA has shifted its position into a frame less dependent on disciplines and nations, and a "theoretization of cultural boundaries" (Desmond and Dominguez 470) seemed to be more in tune with the new hegemonic role of the USA

after 1991 (Lauter qtd. in Desmond and Dominguez 487). The MLA's call for a Transnational American Studies couched in border rhetoric has evoked mixed reactions in Europe (Lenz 1999). Mel Van Elteren in a recent article (2006) finds even imperial tones, presenting the multicultural US society as a prototype for a future world society. Tones like these have drastically increased during the Bush administrations.

The volume *Cultural Studies* (1992), edited by Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichel, my second example, assembles papers and discussions from a 1990 conference in Illinois that brought together scholars from Australia, Britain, Canada, Hungary, and the USA. In its 40 contributions an outline of the main fields and alternatives of research in cultural studies emerged (Bennett 18-22). The honour seat belonged to Stuart Hall and the Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies, but the Australian group, British feminists, and postcolonial critics also met with representatives of African American studies, media studies, gay and lesbian studies, popular culture studies in the USA. Although leftist critics dominated, there was a wide variety of discourses and theoretical positions. Border thinking or border rhetoric, the patchwork terminology, are surprisingly rare in the volume. Except for Donna Haraway, who uses it intensely (295-337), another feminist who considers skin as the boundary of self (Martin 409-23), and Henry A. Giroux, who calls his cross-cultural pedagogy "border pedagogy" (206-12), most cultural critics in the volume *Cultural Studies* use "boundary," "border," and "limit" sparingly (e.g., 30, 109, 179, 394) or in quotes (140, 179, 714). Occasional mixtures of concepts like those present in the following example are rather rare: "Localizations of the anthropologist's objects of study in terms of a 'field' tend to marginalize or erase several blurred boundary areas, historical realities that slip out of the ethnographic frame" (Clifford 99). Most of the uses deal with institutions, disciplines, and conceptual boundaries (21, 299, 231, 535, 714 etc.). Some contributors explicitly mention the web of border metaphors in Derrida (140), the "deconstructive deluge" (Hall 286), or criticize the postmodern appropriation of postcolonial discourses: "Hooks, and Chabram and Fregoso, oppose 'poststructuralism's reappropriation of the decentered conditions of marginal people of color' (Chabram and Fregoso 207) into an abstract, depoliticized, and internally undifferentiated notion of 'difference'" (Mani 392-93). It is indeed, the elimination of power relations in the border rhetoric (where it does not refer to institutional or disciplinary restraints) that leads to another kind of rhetoric, one that Derrida partly sought to disseminate.

The terminological pair of "center" and "margin" dominates in many papers and in their discussion (41, 65, 99, 134, 139 etc.). And whenever it is used the pair focuses on power relations and refers to multiple places of resistance to them. It seems not incidental, that most of the discourses in this volume come from people of color, and that many have moved away from simple binarism into complex relocations. When Stuart Hall calls his home institution "a marginalized Centre in a university like Birmingham" (285) he is not simply ironic or paradoxical. African American critics point at various movements from the margin to the centre and back (666, 691-702). As Henry Giroux claims: "A more critical version of cultural studies raises questions of

the margins and the center, especially around the categories of race, class, and gender" (202). This position seems to be shared by many of the participants in the discussions reprinted in the volume, and fits in with the strong concern for the teaching of cultural studies (Bennett 20; see Peterson).

Compared with the MLA volume the references to Derrida and Foucault are more lopsided in *Cultural Criticism*: seven to Derrida, some critical, and thirty-three to Foucault. Support for a Foucault approach comes from keynote speakers like Hall (277-94) and Cornel West (689-705), other references scatter over many papers. The alliance of women of color with postcolonial and cultural studies together with a focus on discourse and disciplinarity finds more affinity to Foucault than to Derrida.

My third example comes from Texas. Early Chicano studies began with a book called *"With His Pistol in His Hand." A Border Ballad and His Hero* (1958). In this seminal folklore study, Américo Paredes linked border ballads with border conflicts, to celebrate a strong (pre-industrial) community spirit, its cohesiveness and isolation from the rest of the USA and Mexico, its egalitarianism, its closeness to medieval European (especially Scottish) border ballads (9-13, 241-42). At the same time, Paredes began to challenge the dominant historians on Texas history. Literary critics began to build on this study to connect the budding Chicano literature with these traditions of folklore and resistance. Gloria Anzaldúa, a new Chicana voice, originally from Texas, added a feminist line to these early literary attempts. Her book *Borderlands/La Frontera. The New Mestiza* (1987) enriched the folklore tradition fusing it with Nahuatl myths, spiritualist, feminist, and postmodernist vocabulary to make the Southwest a new kind of borderland:

> The actual physical borderland that I am 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 classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy. ("Preface" n. p.)

Borderland here becomes the intersection of gender, race, class, a model not only for the postmodernist situation but also a model for her own patchwork aesthetics, mixing genres, languages, and voices:

> I see the barely contained color threatening to spill over the boundaries of the object it represents and into other "objects" and over the borders of the frame. I see a hybridization of metaphor, different species of ideas popping up here, popping up there, full of variations and seeming contradictions, though I believe in an ordered, structured universe where all phenomena are interrelated and imbued with spirit. (66)

Here the concepts begin to dance: the older phenomenology and structuralist terms briefly pop up, to be overwhelmed by postmodernist and existentialist metaphors, freely mixing border, boundary, and frame. As in the first quote everything runs into "spirit" and the spiritual borderlands where Karl Jung's archetypes became presences of gods and goddesses in the psyche. Allusions to Nietzsche's will to power, allusions to Derrida, Ilya Prigogine, and others remain second-hand, but add powerfully to a plea for a life "sin fronteras," without borders (Brunt 77, Clifford 97).

A feminist ally Emily Hicks, associated with Guillermo Gomez-Peña, who also promotes border rhetoric as a performance artist on a "desiring machine to explore postmodernism" (Saldívar 153-54, 206n), provided more feminist border rhetoric to support Chicano studies as a model for a renewed American Studies. Her book *Border Writing* (1991) again is a series of interpretations, this time leaning more to Deleuze and Guattari in its vocabulary: the border machine produces deterritorialization (4-6), border logic is an alternative logic (40), border writing is "a new multidimensional holographic ordering of desire" (123). She believes with Julia Kristeva that the speaking subject thus escapes the prison house of language (Hicks 17). Like for Maggie Humm in *Border Traffics* (1991), another exuberant exercise in border rhetoric, drawing on Irigaray, patriarchal structures in language justify terminological subversions or metaphorical transgressions.

In *The Dialectics of Our America* from 1991, José David Saldívar, also from Texas, connects what he calls "The Chicano Border Narratives as Cultural Critique," Paredes, Anzaldúa, and Rolando Hinojosa Smith (1991, 94-84) to Latin American writers south of the border who plead for "a trans-geographical conception of American culture," including cultures oppositional to the USA (xi). In an afterword on "Postcolonial Borders" (149-53) Saldívar lines up Chicano and Latino critics supportive of a transnational border approach to American Studies. Nietzsche is quoted twice to support a revision of history, Derrida is mentioned only second-hand, but his and Bhabha's rhetoric of deconstruction and hybridity enter Saldívar's text long before the afterword.

In his next book, *Border Matters* (1997), Saldívar again proposes Chicano borderland studies as a model for a renewed transnational American "Cultural" Studies, "one that challenges the homogeneity of U.S. nationalism and popular culture" (ix). That is, Saldívar has recognized British Cultural Studies (via Paul Gilroy, his colleague at the Center for Cultural Studies at Santa Cruz), and now he bases his claim for a transnational, (but still American) Cultural Studies on two models: Chicano Studies and Black Atlantic Studies, as proposed by Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic*. Derrida and Nietzsche have ceded to Williams in citations, and Saldívar again affiliates with Foucault (xiii), whose Nietzschean concept of genealogy he had already used in his earlier book, *The Dialectics of our America* published in 1991 (1-21). But the old border rhetoric enters an uneasy alliance with postcolonial discourse: culture groups are continually crossing and re-crossing national and class boundaries (*Border Matters* 3, 8), against modernism's border patrols (the old Schopenhauer metaphor revived on page

20), writers are nurtured in "liminal spaces," deconstruct and decenter to move into "a trans-frontier border culture," and into working with "the molecular and molar dialectics of the cultures of US imperialism" (*Border Matters* 159, 12, 163). The quotation marks around slogans multiply, even "theory" comes in quotation marks: "Moreover borderland writers, move cultural 'theory' in and out of what Cliford calls 'discrepant cosmopolitan' contexts" (*Border Matters* 35). Saldívar is confident that "border" will become the successor of Turner's "frontier" as the academic "field-Imaginary" (xii). The two interpretations and the end of the last chapter (*Border Matters* 182-83) hardly fulfill the book's promise to remap "American Cultural Studies." Saldívar repeatedly gets bogged down in local interpretations and autobiographical narratives.

"Border" resurrects in Chicano Studies because Kant's epistemological concept and its multiple metaphorical extensions have found a new political mooring in the problems on the Mexico-US frontier. Here metaphors found a new grounding: migrants, capital investment, as well as organized crime had created a common zone where postcolonial interests and national boundaries contradict each other (Valk). It is this together with NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), mentioned only once in passing by Saldívar (*Border Matters* 34), which seem to foster the hope in promoting Mexican border studies as transnational Cultural Studies. A recent German publication continues this line of program (Pisarz-Ramirez).

There is at least one postcolonial critic who notices the dangers of transgressive border rhetoric and the need for refining and sharpening one's concepts: "Although 'border' is an overused word (e.g., border writing, border culture, border matters), none of the discussions I read using the word dealt with knowledge and understanding, epistemology and hermeneutics, those two sides of the intellectual frontiers of European modernity" (Mignolo 5). In his book of essays called *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges and Border Thinking*, Argentinian critic Walter D. Mignolo tries to restore border thinking to its epistemological dimensions (xii) by freeing it from its romantic metaphoric mooring in ballads and heroes and transnational romances. Mignolo defines border thinking as a postcolonial strategy based on colonial difference (23), and connects it to subaltern studies and Immanuel Wallerstein's world-system analysis. He submits Kant, Heidegger and Derrida to a severe interrogation to show their territorial Eurocentrism (63, 82-84, 161, 251, 259, 328), confronts them with a long list of Latin American thinkers (91-171), and repositions border thinking firmly in a perspective of subalternity:

> Border thinking can only be such from a subaltern perspective, never from a territorial (e.g., from inside modernity) one. Border thinking from a territorial perspective becomes a machine of appropriation of the colonial differe/a/nces; the colonial difference as an object of study rather than as an epistemic potential. Border thinking from the perspective of subalternity is a machine for intellectual decolonization. (Mignolo 45)

And in a later essay, after examining Latin American theories Mignolo revises them

as follows:

> [. . .] border thinking structures itself on a double consciousness, a double critique operating on the imaginary of the modern/colonial world system, of modernity/coloniality. As such, it establishes alliances with the internal critique, the monotopic critique of modernity from the perspective of modernity itself (e.g., Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Marx, Freud, Derrida) at the same time it marks the irreducible difference of border thinking as a critique from the colonial difference. (87)

Conclusion: Keep Pushing

I should probably close with the above quote, but I would like to add a few thoughts on why the word *Grenze* and its various translations have undergone the major changes I outlined in this bilingual genealogy. Let me sum up:

> 1. The rationalist project of the Enlightenment from Locke and Hume to Leibniz and Kant has hinged on two terms drawn from metaphors: horizon and boundary line.
> 2. The irrationalist tradition (which often took rationalism for atheism) opposed Kant's attempt to limit metaphysical speculation, and thinkers like Schopenhauer, Emerson, and Kierkegaard in the first generation, Nietzsche in the second, re-metaphorized border, boundary, and limit to transcend or deny the very limitations imposed by Kant. Hegel and Marx developed the abstract concept of limitation (negation of totality) into a rationalist dialectics.
> 3. Nietzsche's metaphors of *Grenze* became a major source for existential thought after 1920, now in a double opposition to the Kantian and the Marxist tradition, and professional philosophers mixed Nietzsche's border metaphors with other key words of that time: "situation," "death," "contingency," "in-between" (Jaspers, Heidegger).
> 4. These existential words of the first half of the twentieth century reached philosophy, literary criticism, theology, and psychoanalysis in France, where they entered new powerful collocations with transgression, difference, genre, death of god, the Other, and the unconscious (Foucault, Derrida, Levinas, Lacan).
> 5. French writers exported this new way of writing about texts of all sorts to the United States (Johns Hopkins Conference; Yale), where border rhetoric first entered literary criticism, feminist thought and theology, somewhat later legal studies. Critics announced the death of the author, of the novel, of literature, of the sign, of language etc. Derrida dominated this discourse in the 1970s and 1980s.
> 6. The last twenty years in the USA have seen a rise of Foucault's type of historic discourse analysis (where borders play a minor role), and a relative

decline of Derrida's influence, except for Chicano studies where the border metaphor gained new virulence and aims to become a prototype for transnational American Studies (Saldívar).

7. The MLA which had largely resisted the border/boundary rhetoric seems to make transnational American Studies its new project since 2000, and only cultural and postcolonial studies, both coming from outside the USA seem to keep a critical (anti-hegemonic or subaltern) perspective on borders in Europe and the USA alike (Grossberg, Mignolo).

It is tempting to relate the last two changes of a keyword like *Grenze* to political events, the new mass migrations into Europe and the USA, the collapsing and fortifying of borders against Mexico, Palestine and other countries, or to identify border rhetoric in the USA with a new hegemonic move into Latin America and other continents. German writers' concern with borders in the nineteenth century could have had similar causes. After all, the word entered the German language from Poland. Germany entered its imperial phase in the 1880s, mapping borders with its main rivals, Britain and France. One hundred years later, border could also stand for patriarchal power or sexual difference, and border crossing thus could open new spaces for feminist, gay and lesbian movements from the 1960s on.

But there probably are longer durations: the rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century, the many violent border conflicts in Europe (and the USA where they were couched in frontier terms), the gradual progress of the sciences, especially in mathematics, as far as limit and boundary values are concerned, and the loss of faith in God which went along with this progress. Much of the border rhetoric of Christian or atheist existentialism was and is a heavily coded debate about infinity and the limitations of human life. Along with the disenchantment of the world came bureaucracy. Thinkers after Nietzsche often found themselves embedded in academic institutions, where an increasing specialization and departamentalization limited the freedom of thought and teaching. Academic capitalism forced many to spend more time in fund raising for interdisciplinary projects. At the same time, international conferences of specialists made traveling theory (and concepts) easier. Scholars experienced border crossing and differences at first hand. Globalization taken as the border-crossing of multinational corporations seemed to have its benefits for academics from Europe, Japan, and the USA, as well. And some scholars, at postcolonial conferences in Asia, Africa, or Latin America encountered subaltern views, perhaps for the first time, in the field they considered their own. And maybe that is why critical border thinking about the social constitution of *limites ingenii definire* (Bourdieu 48) could become an important cognitive frame for all us, whether from Europe, Asia or the United States.

NOTE

[1] Unless otherwise stated, I am the translator of all subsequent German texts. W.K.

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