



FRONTIÈRES & DÉPLACEMENTS

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CROSSING / BORDERS

Lorraine is a land of passage and immigration. It is emblematic of constantly shifting borders and populations. The region's history is a reminder of the fragility of political borders (annexation of Alsace-Lorraine to Germany, 1871-1919; redrawing of the "great regions" in 2015), but also of the transitory nature of economic territories and social spaces. Industrialisation in the nineteenth century forged the identity of the region and encouraged the movement of populations from afar (waves of Polish and then Italian immigration) or from nearby areas (exile of Moselle residents during the Annexation). These shifting borders thus gave rise to a new linguistic and cultural identity for a region where French and Germanic languages coexisted. From these exiles emerged artistic movements such as Art Nouveau in Nancy at the beginning of the twentieth century. Today, as a region bordering Germany and Luxembourg, Lorraine is still located at the crossroads of a European area without borders.

The notions of borders and displacement, and the articulation between them, can be conceived in many ways. Borders, whether natural or arbitrary, sealed or porous, fixed or mobile, as limits or confines, spatial or temporal (the COVID lockdowns are still not so far behind us), can be seen as an obstacle or a wall. They are also a challenge to be taken up and overcome (expansion, threshold to a new era), hence the notion of displacement (movement, transfer, transformation). As delimitations, borders help to constitute an identity (in terms of gender and sexuality, for example), which refers to the outside as otherness – unless we consider, as the Chicana poet and artist Gloria Anzaldúa invites us to do, that borders are not meant to separate beings and countries, but rather map out a hybrid linguistic, cultural and ontological territory that we all inhabit.¹ In our age of globalisation, we can see a twofold movement of border crossing on the one hand, and identity fragmentation on the other. From a

¹ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands. La Frontera. The New Mestiza* (1987), San Francisco, Aunt Lute Books, 2012.

disciplinary point of view, the concepts raise the question of defining a specific field and categorising the objects of study. From an interdisciplinary point of view, they lead us to question the reciprocal contributions in terms of knowledge and methods generated by the crossing of these borders.

The questioning of borders, their abolition or their reinforcement, seem characteristic of certain political developments in the English-speaking world. The devolution of power at the end of the twentieth century and Brexit are reminders of the fragility of the geographical and nationalist consensus from which the United Kingdom emerged, while the more recent consequences of Brexit highlight the impossibility of re-establishing a border for Northern Ireland. The post-Brexit vision of Global Britain is confronted to increasingly stringent migration policies. US policy is also tightening around immigration, at the border with Mexico, and the US is questioning free trade treaties and closing its borders in response to geopolitical (Travel Ban) or health (COVID) crises. In the face of the climate crisis which has made an ever-growing part of the planet uninhabitable and thrown millions of refugees out of their homes, the proliferation of borders materialised by walls and protected by militarised surveillance devices, particularly in nation-states that are themselves largely involved in the extractivist logic responsible for global warming, is a response that is as cynical as it is ineffective, and paradoxically underlines the profound instability of borders. Finally, we can reflect on the multiplication of borders other than those that separate nation-states: immaterial borders (colour lines) or material borders that structure the unequal distribution of access to the planet's resources. To quote Boaventura de Sousa Santos, writing from the global South: "The world is divided by two kinds of borders: those we accept with reservations and those we refuse without reservation. The former are the national borders wherein we were born or raised. We accept them to save our energies and because we think they are a lesser obstacle compared to the other borders. The others are the walls, trenches, ditches, barbed wire fences, cordons of police cars, and checkpoints; above all, they are the maps that have traced the abyssal lines in people's minds, laws, and politics and banished us to the other side of the line".²

The crossing of linguistic and cultural borders, as well as the dialectic of the same and the other, is ever-present in debates about translation. To what extent is translation akin to cultural cross-fertilisation for the host culture? It may prove interesting to question the boundaries between the translation practices of academics and those of writers, professional translators or publishers, who sometimes take liberties in the name of logics external to the text (such as a target market) and whose choices contribute to shifting the meaning or scope of that text. As for translation studies, is it not a discipline that is still negotiating its territory(ies) and boundaries? How do translators in France transmit their methods, and what are their links with the dominant practices in other linguistic areas? In the more technical field of localisation and specialised translation (technical, legal, medical, etc.), individual practices are

² Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South. Justice Against Epistemicide*, London and New York, Routledge, 2014, pp. 6-8.

gradually disappearing due to the use of Computer Assisted Translation, or neural translation (RLHF models – Reinforcement Learning with Human Feedback –, such as DeepL), which blur the traditional means of transmitting words or expressions. The question of transmission and the borders between languages is also played out in oral form. We will be able to reflect on the specificities of simultaneous and consecutive interpreting (where the translated oral production partially co-exists with its translation), and on the borders that have become increasingly tenuous due to globalisation, which allows interpreters to work via videoconference (Zoom proposes virtual booths): this transforms the way in which the translated speech is transmitted (from co-presence to virtual presence), no longer requiring translation or interpretation professionals to travel, which can sometimes prove detrimental to the quality of their productions.

In linguistics, crossing boundaries may suggest, among other things, the history of languages, diachronic, diatopic or diastratic divisions, as well as the distinctions marked by accents. In the field of sociophonetics, one may want to look at the emergence of varieties of English in relation to the displacement of borders, or at the movement itself. In cognitive linguistics, one may wish to discuss the limits between categories that have generally been considered as quite distinct (such as lexicon/syntax, or semantics/pragmatics), while in the field of enunciative linguistics, one might think of the way a notional domain is defined in relation to its complementary domain, the two being separated by a boundary which may be a mere line, or a third domain open to negotiation (*I don't call that a dog, do you?*). Boundaries between units and displacements (word order, intonation units, stress shifts, limits of phonemes...) are also a matter of reflection in syntax. And finally, if one thinks of one of the richest topics in linguistics, namely aspect, the notions of telicity, of external or intrinsic boundaries are essential to describe how tense and aspect contribute to structure a narrative.

Borders and their displacements (or the impossibility thereof) are a recurrent motif in travel literature, exploration stories, education novels (spatial displacement as a corollary of inner evolution), and more recently in diasporic literature, the literature of exile and migrant literature. A large part of contemporary American literature conjures up a fantasised and ambiguous image of the American-Mexican border, from Cormack McCarthy's *Border Trilogy* to Jeanine Cummins's controversial *American Dirt*. The theme of the congress also invites us to look at the work of the young generation of Chicano writers who, following in the footsteps of Anzaldúa, are seeking to invent a language to express the experience of living on the border, or of always carrying it with them (Daniel Peña, Myriam Gurba, Rigoberto González, Helena María Viramontes, etc.). It also invites us to question the broader meanings of the word "border", and to consider all the implications of Kafka's idea that "all literature is an assault on frontiers" (Diary, 16 January 1922): generic, linguistic, and even narrative borders (metalepsis as a transgressive figure of border crossing between different levels of the narrative) are undermined by all the figures of hybridization, porosity and ambiguity.

In didactics, the shifting boundaries between the many contributing disciplines (psychology, sociology, linguistics, neuroscience, etc.) contribute to the richness and complementarity of the research, which is often based on very diverse theoretical frameworks. Furthermore, the teaching contexts (primary, secondary, higher education, and adult education), objectives (English as a language of instruction or English as a language of learning in the cases of EMILE or CLIL), the teaching and learning methods (face-to-face, distance learning, hybrid learning), the types of teaching and learning methods (e.g., English as a language of instruction, English as a language of learning), the types of teaching and learning methods (e.g., face-to-face, distance, hybrid), the types of learning (formal, non-formal, informal), the very conception of language teaching (plural and integrated approach or exclusively singular/monolingual approach) are all elements with shifting boundaries in the teaching-learning situation of English as a language-culture. The effects of moving the cursor in one direction or the other on teaching practices and on learning can thus be examined.

In the field of English for specific purposes (ESP), one may wonder whether the linguistic approaches on the one hand – aiming at the description of specialised varieties of English – and the didactic approach on the other – focusing on the ways in which the teaching of these ESP lead to learning – are as exclusive as it seems. Does the boundary between these two approaches, which are characteristic of the work of the French school of ESP, benefit from remaining watertight, or would shifting the boundaries be appropriate in order to have a greater body of research gathering linguistic descriptions and pedagogical applications? Similarly, the opposition, in the field of ESP in particular, between teaching so-called “general” language and teaching specialised English – i.e., teaching the speciality of the students in English – still deserves to be questioned today. Finally, from an institutional point of view, the boundary between ESP and students specialising in English studies seems somewhat blurred, in the case of applied languages programme in particular, insofar as many courses in English for specific purposes are part of the curricula.

Finally, borders and boundaries are being questioned from an epistemological point of view, as transnational studies invite us to invalidate the space of nation-states in order to observe electoral changes, economic crises or social movements, both historical and contemporary, in wider spaces.³ From this point of view, Anglophone studies have always observed the Commonwealth as a whole and have long embraced approaches that were first comparative and then connected.⁴ Do the boundaries of English studies as they are mapped reveal processes of consolidation or fluidity in our practices? Has the desire to shift the gaze beyond disciplinary boundaries, however,

³ See for instance *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, ed. Thomas Bender, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002 or Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, London, New York, Verso, 1993.

⁴ See Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson, *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2013, and Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*, Cambridge, Zone, 2010.

led to a crisis of historical approaches insofar as the usual delimitations (class, race, gender) lose their stability? Or has the crossing of borders allowed the emergence of new objects and practices for cultural history, visual studies or material history, or for transnational perspectives?