

Border Seminar 2023 CALL FOR PAPERS

Migration Narratives and Border Studies

May 23-25, 2023

Faculty of Languages, University of Gdańsk

The Border Studies Group (BSG) at the University of Gdańsk welcomes proposals for the **Border Seminar 2023** on the theme of '**Migration Narratives**', as well as the wider field of Border Studies, especially as it relates to accounts of migration experience and the emerging interdisciplinary field of border aesthetics.

The *Border Seminar* is an interdisciplinary conference organized at the University of Gdańsk by the BSG, an international team of literary/cultural scholars, linguists, historians, sociologists, artists, and educators interested in research and pedagogy centered on the notion of the border.

Johan Schimanski and Jopi Nyman (2021) argue that migration is the "master narrative" underlying the conceptual metaphors and concrete images of "the path, the bridge, the door (and implicitly the threshold) and the window," which Georg Simmel, in his pioneering work on "border aesthetics," proposed as "the central figurations of the divisions and joinings between different spaces". Schimanski and Nyman apply Simmel's concepts to explain that "migrants follow routes (paths), they pass through crossing points (bridges), they are excluded and have to wait outside selective barriers in order to enter (doors), and they can see a better life on the other side of the border (windows)" (Schimanski and Nyman). In other words, border aesthetics can be thought of as imaginings of migration or movement articulated as border-crossings and bordering processes.

At the same time, borders are now understood as "contingent social and cultural productions and as instruments of power, which determine and often *substantiate our perception* of the world" (Fellner 8; our emphasis). As such, their function is cognitive and semiotic, their figurations (in narratives, stories, photographs, films, images, and sounds) are constitutive, sustaining, and generative of relations of privilege and exclusion. In fact, as David Newman says, "it is on the level of the narrative, anecdote, and communication that borders come to life" (in Fellner 11). Migration narratives of necessity engage and negotiate such borders' power in both content and form.

If border aesthetics and poetics inquire how cultural representations deal with borders and related concepts investigations of borders in narratives and images of cultural crossings and migrations can reveal unique, dynamic study material. It is there that the narrative trope of the border in its, what Astrid Fellner calls, "defining narrative function" akin to that of a "literary giant" or to what Harold Bloom calls the "precursor" or the "strong poem", comes into contact, negotiates, and grinds against other, larger and smaller narratives/images articulated as border-crossings.

Following these suggestions, we want to think of migration narratives as the ground upon which these negotiations occur, that is we propose to discuss imaginative representations of migration as borderscapes (Brambilla 2015) and bordertextures (Weier et.al. 2019), where multiple border-crossings and bordering processes take place, interact. Concomitantly, we want to investigate the border-crossings/migrations of narratives as we probe the scope of the border aesthetics.

We welcome contributions from the wider interdisciplinary fields of Border Studies and Migration Studies, especially as they relate to the narrative/representational challenges of borders and migration,

where themes such as the crisis of language and memory, the clash of time-frames and generations, haunting, notions of flows and porosity, transgressions of gender, class, race and genre, labor relations, questions of authenticity and decency, scholarly practice and intellectual theft, real and imaginary landscapes, and more may be present.

In connection with the above, the BSG at the University of Gdansk looks forward to receiving proposals that relate to but are not limited by the following categories:

- migration narratives in connection with education and alternative forms of education
- migration narratives as a guiding principle in performance
- the theorizing of practice in terms of migration narratives and border aesthetics
- language teaching theory and /or practice underpinned by migration narratives
- new digital technologies and narratives of migration
- migrations of objects, migrations of narratives
- migration as the master narrative in border aesthetics
- migration narratives in diasporic literatures and other media
- formal challenges to representing migration as bordering experiences and processes
- visibility/invisibility and migration
- spectrality and the spectacular
- border imaginaries and ethnic loyalties
- coloniality, colonialism and routes of migrations
- decolonial migration imaginations
- migration narratives and the intermedial critique and practice
- migration narratives and hospitality studies

The *Border Seminar 2023* will involve international special lectures, individual presenters, panel discussions, workshop sessions, performances, and screenings.

The Border Seminar 2023 will be **held on site** at the Faculty of Languages, University of Gdansk. A **hybrid option** of participation is being **currently considered**.

Please submit:

- **proposals for individual 20-minute papers (max. 250 words)**
- **or proposals for thematic panel sessions (max. 750 words).**
- **short bios**
- **state your affiliation**
- **Deadline for submissions: March 1, 2023.**
- **send by email to grzegorz.welizarowicz@ug.edu.pl**

For details regarding registration and more information please visit: <https://ibsc.ug.edu.pl/>

Border Seminar 2023 Organizing Committee:

The Border Studies Group/Pracownia badań and granicami: Dr. Ross Aldridge; Dr. Martin Blaszk; Dr. Anna Mazurkiewicz Dr. Grzegorz Welizarowicz, Chair.

Sources:

- Bloom, Harold. *Anxiety of Influence. A Theory of Poetry*. New York Oxford UP, 1973.
- Brambilla Ch., 2015, *Exploring Critical Potential of the Borderscapes Concept*, "Geopolitics", vol. 20, issue 1.
- Fellner A.D. (ed.), 2020, *Narratives of Border Crossings: Literary Approaches and Negotiations*, Baden-Baden: Nomos.
- Weier S., Fellner A., Frenk J., Kazmaier D., Michely E., Vatter Ch., Weiershausen R., Wille C., 2019, *Bordertexturen als transdisziplinärer Ansatz zur Untersuchung von Grenzen. Ein Werkstattbericht*. "Berliner Debatte Initial", vol. 29, issue 1.
- Schimanski J., Nyman J. (eds.), 2021, *Border Images, Border Narratives: The Political Aesthetics of Boundaries and Crossings*, Manchester: University of Manchester Press.