In, Out and Beyond

In, Out and Beyond:
Studies on Border Confrontations, Resolutions and Encounters

Edited by

Antonio Medina-Rivera and Lee Wilberschied

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INTRODUCTION

ANTONIO MEDINA-RIVERA AND LEE WILBERSCHIED

> There are no borders here to divide fresh water from salt, river from sea. The tides reach as far as two hundred miles inland, and every day thousands of acres of forest disappear underwater, only to reemerge hours later. The currents are so powerful as to reshape the islands almost daily. Some days the water tears away entire promontories and peninsula; at other times it throws up new shelves and sandbanks where there were none before.[1]

Border studies are, in many aspects, a reflection of the confrontations, resolutions, and encounters of peoples' relationships in the world. These relationships are represented in many different ways through fiction, non-fiction, films, and other mass media resources. Literature and history, as well as other social sciences, introduce each one of us into a reality of multidimensional borderlands. It is not only the physical borders that exist within people in the world, but also the symbolic, metaphorical, and psychological borders that become part of our realities and experiences. The present compilation of essays is both a recollection and a reflection of some of those border confrontations, resolutions, and encounters that have an impact or a repercussion in today's world.

The essays presented in this volume are a peer-reviewed selection of some of the best papers presented during the 3rd Crossing Over Symposium at Cleveland State University from October 9-11, 2009. Scholars from the United States, Canada, Belgium, France, Spain, Italy, India, Israel, and the United Kingdom came together to examine border experiences from different points of view. Originally we called upon a diversity of borderland possibilities for this conference: cultural, political, educational, religious,

[1] Amitav Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide* (New York, NY: Mariner Books, 2006), 6-7.

international, intranational, linguistic, gender, ideological, age, tribal, social class/caste, identity, neighborhoods. The definition of borderland was not limited to territorial spaces, but rather was open to any kind of confrontation/encounter affecting different situations of our lives. The call for this conference was interdisciplinary in nature, and its intent was to open a discussion between the humanities and the social sciences on the dynamic issue of borders.

The reality of physical borders framed by political, religious, and social divisions has captured the attention of many humanities and social sciences researchers: the Mexican-US political border, the Northern Ireland and Ireland religious border, the first world vs. the third world border, the Palestine vs. Israel division, just to mention some of the more classical examples. These borderland realities are in many ways a search, discovery, or maintenance of a national or cultural identity among individuals of a group. The creation or disappearance of borders establishes the paradox of a society without borders but maintaining significant differences and distinctions between one group and another. Schimanski and Wolfe suggest that

> today we are living with discourses of globalization and hybridity which have paradoxically created both an illusion of a 'borderless world' and a world in which borders have multiplied as they are folded into nations, in the form of refugee camps, detention centres, urban enclaves, walled communities, and tourist spaces. They are even folded into the identities of individual subject.[2]

Schimanski and Wolfe also indicate that border theory is currently interested in examining contact zones, spaces of negotiations, and rhizomes.[3] In this volume encounters and confrontations are in some way related to contact zones and spaces of negotiations, whereas resolutions seem to be more correlated with rhizomes. However, the terminology used for the division of the chapters of this book employs nouns with a strong and active semantic meaning, rather than passive or potential. "Encounter" implies, more graphically, penetration or occupation of a space; "confrontations" imply the result of the contact or the encounter between two entities; and resolutions imply the ramifications of that encounter or confrontation—the results, the creation or development of something new, or the destruction or annihilation of one of the entities involved.

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[2] Johan Schimanski and Stephen Wolfe, *Journal of Borderlands Studies 25*.1, (Victoria, British Columbia, Canada: University of Victoria Press, 2010). 40.
[3] *Ibid.*, 42.

Border studies is one of the disciplines with the ability to create a harmonious and meaningful dialogue across disciplines. It is evident that many researchers are interested in analyzing relationships in a world in which globalization seems to become a dominant tendency, with both positive and negative repercussions. In some aspects, border studies represents the metaphor of the encounters, confrontations, and resolutions along the humanities and the social sciences, although it can also be enlightened by the contributions of other disciplines such as health sciences, or even management. Border studies creates a metalanguage, not only to analyze issues related to the field, but also to represent the nature of the field itself. This volume brings together the voices of people in a variety of disciplines, such as literature, education, linguistics and rhetoric, history, semiotics, cognitive psychology, religious studies, and management and economics. These voices provide evidence of the need to cross borders between disciplines to have a better understanding of the world.

In addition to the elements of globalization, and the general concept of the global village, in which human beings are becoming closer and closer to each other, the issue of identity cannot be omitted from discussion. Globalization becomes a serious matter when people of different groups must negotiate or reconstruct their identities with the people of the other side of the border. Gnanapragasam and Fiorenza see this process as a solution we have to endure:

> Border is a matter of necessity, if the new field has to emerge and establish itself. And the necessity is most urgent today when humanity experiences mega-changes in a relatively short span of time, and radically new insights, realizations, discoveries, inventions, etc., come into reality. One can witness this in almost all areas of life, and very much so in the disciplinary fields of knowledge.[4]

This basic necessity can undermine the basic essence of identity within a specific group or nation. At the same time, border experiences remind us about the complexity and dynamism of culture. Culture is always changing, is always re-inventing itself, it is always looking for new definitions and explanations. Today's global world makes this process of transformation unquestionably more accelerated than in the past, and we are now more aware of it than before. Crossing and transgression of borders are happening at every minute with an intensity that exceeds our time for analyzing and understanding those processes.

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[4] Patrick Gnanapragasam and Elisabeth Schüessler Fiorenza eds., *Negotiating Borders: Theological Explorations in the Global Era*. (ISPCK: Delhi, 2008), 1.

The intent of the present volume is to explain or examine some of the situations of crossing borders from the present and the past. But, at the same time, we are aware that many other border experiences occur at every instance and that each experience is particularly different and unique depending on the historical moment, the groups or nations participating in the experience, and the political, sociological, and economic factors affecting that specific situation.

Part 1. Border Encounters

The essays in this section analyze the processes of occupying a common space, whether the space is discursive or physical, figurative, or political. John Williams argues that, by re- conceptualizing physical borders, we can re-politicize them and thus create a medial space so that authentic political action can occur. [5]

We can get away from the 'border-as-fence' analogy and view it as a device for creating a space in-between, rather than a perimeter maintained and policed by a small diplomatic, political and military elite. This has served to close off politics into separate realms and forms, with politics occurring in one mode within states and a different one between them. Returning these realms to a human politics of diversity requires constant questioning of their legitimacy and role, including the devices that separate them. This occurs via active political involvement through the discourse of real individuals and real communities, not by judgment against either abstract absolute standards or an elitist monolith of diplomatic custom and practice.[5] The writers of the essays in this section do address the notion of interstitial encounters but take the notion even further, by considering encounters in realms without borders, and sometimes encouraging us to step beyond borders as we know them.

In the first essay regarding Encounters, Patrick Gnanapragasam makes a case for interpretative construction of self and of the Other during the cultural negotiations that occur in a world wherein many sorts of borders are increasingly shifting. In such a state of borderlessness, we may be in the process of creating a society in which we globally and continually engage in meaningful exchange of ideas. Then, Daniel Kotzin shows how the correspondence of Rabbi Isaac Klein with many Jewish servicemen during World War II enabled them to persevere in developing their sense of identity as Jews. Furthermore, Kotzin argues, in addition to providing

[5] John Williams. *The Ethics of Territorial Borders: Drawing Lines in the Shifting Sand*. Hampshire, UK, and New York, (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 104.

mentorship as described in this historical context, letters serve a unique function. They can cross physical, temporal, and figurative borders; they can connect us to the past and form a context in which it becomes possible to create a foundation of experiences, interactions, and situations that re-form our current identity. Describing the relaxation of political identity, Anat Maor analyses the process of bill passage in the Israeli parliament and outlines ten strategies that members of the parliament implement in order to ensure passage of bills they sponsor. This cluster of strategies results in private legislation, during which the initiator elicits the participation of all elements and factions. Such widespread participation in negotiations effectively erodes political borders so that sponsors may pass bills. Finally, Lance Cummings compares the discursive trends formulated by early and speculative historical linguistics in both Russian and American missionary education in Alaska. He concludes that scholars and policy-makers would benefit from stepping beyond the boundaries of the discursive field that dominates us and exploring various the ways in which mystical traditions could prompt reflection on the ways in which the purported enlightenment of our education can impact the Others whom we teach. Each article analyzes encounters, whether they be chance meetings or contentions that involve movement into in-between spaces and sometimes beyond. They help to show us the potentially facilitative nature of encounters.

Part 2: Border Confrontations

Border confrontations form the core of borders studies, and Part 2 serves as a way to examine some of these political, cultural, and social confrontations that shape our world, from perspectives of the present and the past. In the first essay of this part, Zebrowski and Diao describe how Chinese artists re-form the global musical elements of hip-hop in order to resist Western dominance. Chinese *Baidu* openly criticizes members of its community who have lost a sense of local and historic pride. *Baidu* promotes pride in a Chinese identity of superiority. Using discourse schema as a framework of analysis, they explore the tensions and confrontations between constructing a localized identity and one founded upon values based in Westernized ideology that exerts global dominance. Local ideology thus recontextualizes globally dominant values. Valerie Schutte considers a situation during the time of King Henry VIII, with a strong and significant relevance to today's world. The power and influence of women during this time was very limited and problematic, but the case of Anne Boleyn involved a process of confrontations that allowed

her to be more powerful than regular women of the Tudor court. Seth Weitz analyzes the relationship between the South Florida and the "Real Florida." This confrontation is exemplified by the separation existing within two territories that are divided not only by an interstate road, but also by the political ideologies that had an influence in both parts of the state. Weitz presents these divisions as having not only political implications, but also racial and social as well. Continuing with the topic of political confrontations, Gangemi and Vandi examine two kinds of confrontation in Southern Italy, showing the control of a territory by criminals: on one hand, the insurrection of African immigrants against the Camorra in Naples area, and on the other hand the reappropriation of the right of citizenship by a trekking association in Calabria. These two examples serve to demonstrate how such confrontations damaged the borders imposed by Camorra and 'Ndrangheta, two of the world most powerful criminal organizations. Each of the essays leaves us pondering the question of what is lost and what is gained during processes of border confrontation.

Part 3: Border Resolutions

The essays in this section expand the notion of resolution so that it seems to run along a continuum, ranging from creation to annihilation. Shapiro asserts that global space exists in ambiguity and is often unstable, that indigenous maps have historically been dynamic rather than static.[6] Like such spaces, maps, and borders themselves, resolutions will need to be dynamic and negotiable. The following essays reflect such vitality.

Dinah Volk grounds her study in the research base on syncretism, "the negotiated re-creation of cultural practices in an activity of transformation," focusing specifically on syncretism as it is created by those who cross borders. Her stratified analysis endeavors to construct "a critical syncretism that investigates practices and tools within the context of interactions embedded within the broader community and within the relevant social and political histories of the families studied." Volk analyzes the syncretic literacy projects of two young girls in order to investigate the processes of constructing identity through various literary artifacts and constructed dialogue. In a further analysis of discourse, Sorokin examines the ways in which reported speech can form identities of narrators of mixed ethnic,

[6] Michael J. Shapiro, "Introduction to Part III." In *Challenging Boundaries: Global Flows, Territorial Identities*, Eds. Michael J. Shapiro & Hayward R. Alker (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 138.

racial, or cultural heritage. These narrators live between cultures and are often outsiders, yet they also construct their identities as a result of responding to others. In addition, however, they employ reported speech as a causative tool in order to appraise statements and to create identities that are forceful, even antithetical.

Antithetical elements in culture are the focus of the next essay. Takao Hagiwara analyzes two sides of a cultural border as represented in Shūsaku Endō's *Silence* and Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory*. Endō examines the issue of transplanting Western Christianity in pantheistic Japan and, in doing so, describes the transformation of the Christian deity into a maternal, non- anthropocentric one. In contrast, Greene's paternal, anthropocentric, monotheistic God, says Hagiwara, represents the substance on the other side of the border. This juxtaposition, he argues, forms the center of tension between issues involving pre-modernity and modernity.

Terry Martin argues that the concept of self-reliance so famously promoted by Ralph Waldo Emerson, the principal 19th-century exponent of Anglo-American individualism, reveals a radical heterogeneity that makes him especially relevant to contemporary border theory. In Martin's chapter, "The Dialectics of Self-Reliance: Emerson as Prototypical Border Theorist," he argues that Emerson embraced a "dialectical concept of selfhood," in which the self-reliant person is "seen as both conformist and nonconformist, active and passive, egoistic and non-egoistic, existential and spiritual." For Emerson, selfhood could only be grasped by acknowledging each of its distinct phases, yet no single phase can be definitive, for the moment we try to pin down our identity, the very attempt becomes a barrier to be transcended in a kind of continuous Hegelian dialectic. Martin draws parallels between Emerson's theory of the self and the concept of mestizaje as outlined in Gloria Anzaldúa's Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza. Like Emerson, Anzaldúa affirms each of the heterogeneous strands of her identity, which in her case take a more pronounced ethnic form, as she identifies simultaneously with her Chicana, Native American, and American cultural roots. Each part of her ethnic heritage must be acknowledged and honored, yet not permitted to oppress or stifle the other elements of her identity. What emerges in both Emerson and Anzaldúa, then, is a fluid, contradictory, and evolutionary concept of selfhood, as each theorist affirms the distinct phases of identity while nevertheless seeking dialectically to combine them into a larger, if elusive, synthesis. In the absence of any such final unified resolution, this border clash of conflicting internal identities is what gives rise in each theorist to a pragmatically balanced discourse and an endlessly emergent concept of self.

The final chapter, contributed by Ria Snellix, Wouter Faes, and Gilbert Swinnen, concerns the interdisciplinary investigation of gender borders. The investigators examine the objectives, communication patterns, and outcomes of males and females involved in purchasing negotiations and conclude that the glass ceiling remains an important border to be broken. They recommend mixed-gender teams that would blend communication styles.

The essays in this section and the previous two illustrate the blending, loss, and gain that arise from movement in, out, and through border areas. Perhaps "in, out, and through" describes a varying quest for middle ground as Minh-ha describes states:

> Middleness in this context does not refer to a static center, nor does it imply any compromise or lack of determination. A median position, on the contrary, is where extremes lose their power; where all directions are (still) possible; and hence, where one can assure with intensity one's freedom of movement. […] a place of decentralization that gives in to neither side, takes into its realm the vibrations of both, requiring thereby constant acknowledgement of and transformation in shifting conditions.[7]

More important, such an idea of middleness captures the dynamic quality of border situations. The vitality of interactions facilitates the transformations that have been described in this volume and the studies themselves are illustrations of the vigor of the questions and investigations that comprise the area of border studies.

[7] Trinh T. Minh-ha. "Nature's r," in *FutureNatural: Nature, Science,Culture.* Eds. George Robertson, Melinda Mash, Lisa Tickner, Jon Bird, Barry Curtis and Tim Putnam. (NY: Routledge. 1996), 96.

PART 1:

BORDER ENCOUNTERS

AGENCY OF THE SELF AND CULTURAL NEGOTIATIONS OF BORDERS

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Spatiality and Border Experiences

Border experiences are very forcefully engaging human beings in today's context of accentuated spatiality. It could well be stated that humanity is gradually and steadily shifting its residence towards borders. Previous epochs wherein human beings dwelt, with self-assured and self-evident certitude, at the centre spaces of social, economic, political, and cultural worlds, with the support of traditional religious cosmology or metaphysics, are giving way to an epoch where human beings take shelter along or across borders.

The quantum of migration that has overwhelmingly increased during the contemporary era is perhaps the best indicator of the reality of "unsettlement" being experienced by human beings today. The Human Development Report 2009 estimates that nearly one billion (one out of seven) people the world over are migrants[1] today.[2] The world, as imaginatively captured by Jonathan Friedman and Shalini Randeria, is "on the move"[3] as never before. The physical migration is only an indicator of the cultural, religious, political, social, and economic migration that people undertake today. When movement becomes the predominant force of life, the nature of settlement keeps diversifying and multiplying. It is an era

[1] Vidya Subrahmaniam, "Migration Hugely Beneficial to the Poor," *The Hindu*, October 6, 2009, Chennai edition.

[2] The HDR 2009 makes a strong case for removing barriers to migration within and across borders, arguing that human movement had brought perceptible all-round benefits and held the potential to improve the lives of millions of poor and low skilled people.

[3] Cf. Jonathan Friedman and Shalini Randeria, eds., *Worlds on the Move – Globalization, Migration, and Cultural Security* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2004).

when settlement has begun to play to the logic and force of movement, rather than *vice versa*. Against this background, one may experience a reality of "unsettled settlement," whereby human beings characteristically pitch their tents along or across borders.

Living along or across borders requires newer capabilities and skills. As Mae G. Henderson, paraphrasing Edward Said, points out: "living outside the borders of the 'homeland' and inside the borders of 'another country' often entails a border journey into the memory and imagination that *negotiates* between old and new, past and present, self and other, safety and danger".[4] Negotiation thus becomes a matter of quintessential dynamics of life in the contemporary era. When it comes to that, it is the negotiation of selfhood that is at the core of the endeavour. This short essay is an attempt, made from the context of India, to reflect upon the negotiation a person undertakes in the project of constructing selfhood and otherness in relation to border experiences.

Contours of the Self

In a traditional context of life, both in the West and the East, "self" or "selfhood" was treated as something ontologically given for eternity, with enduring stability and unchanging characteristics. In most societies, they were also treated as religious entities (e.g. soul, *atman*, *jiva*,), bestowed upon the human being by supernatural forces / beings. The pristine elements of these selves were mostly intuited by charismatic individuals, and their knowledge was disseminated more esoterically. These forms of self invariably had supernatural characteristics. The kind of social relationship between the self and the other, born out of this supernatural experience, was typically hierarchical and, more often than not, discriminatory and oppressive. This model of self was the one constituted by the privileged sections of humanity or by those who had proximity to these privileged sections. When such a hierarchical scheme was religio-culturally legitimised, as in the case of the caste system of India, it perpetuated itself in a highly oppressive and discriminatory manner. The oppressed sections of the humanity were treated as if they had no self, not even the respectable otherness. The other could be understood and treated in diametrically opposite terms, either as the privileged insider or the inimical outsider, but never as someone embodying respectable relational capacity.

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[4] Mae G. Henderson, ed., *Borders, Boundaries, and Frames: Cultural Criticism and Cultural Studies*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), 4.

Humanity experienced a subsequent phase of life, known as the modern era, wherein the self was sought to be understood more rationally, with the illumination of what was termed as science. The Judeo-Christian religious traditions and Greco-Roman philosophies attempted to synthesise the religious vision with the modern scientific vision of the self, and they succeeded to a significant extent. Simultaneously, there were also non-religious attempts to speak of a rational self, home of a free will, which presided over the human person. The Enlightenment tradition made ostentatious claims to demonstrate the existence of this rational self. This tradition did not rest assured of the "givenness" of the self, but explored into its provenance and characteristics, and sought to defend it with the tool of science. It could not privilege any class of people to define the self on the basis of their special supernatural experiences. On the other hand, it demanded a common democratic yardstick to measure the self and the other.

In this modern context, especially as it emerged in the Western life-situation, a secular frame of reference provided the ethos, and such values as liberty, equality, and freedom became the normative ideals whose guarantor was the secular political agency in the form of modern constitutional nation-states.[5] Herein the individual was deemed to be autonomous on account of embodying a rational self and was expected to mature in his/her autonomy through a systematic progression based on a scientific methodology. While *the self* was treated as someone capable of being responsible for his / her decisions, *the other* was an equal agent with same capabilities, privileges, rights, and duties. The treatment of the other with equality was to be supervised by the political agency of the modern state.[6] This occurred in India too, as in many of the erstwhile colonial states, though in a minimal measure.

[5] It may well be stated that the constitution of selfhood and otherness takes place in a convergence of factors personal, social, and perceived normative ideal. While the personal is the repertoire of an individual's memory, desire, values, emotions, feelings, and beliefs, the social is the external conditions of life embodied in socio-economic, cultural, and political aspects of living, and the ideal is the futuristic standard projected by some agency deemed to give meaning or fulfilment to an individual's life.

[6] That this secular rational scheme of *self* and *other* did not help the Western selves rise above the Eurocentric sense of superiority is perhaps beside the point at this juncture. However, that this modernity became a powerful instrument for the relative emancipation of the subaltern classes of the people in the colonised countries is another story which needs separate treatment.

Contemporary Construction of the Self and the Other

Today, we are in yet another life-context, known in many circles as the post-modern era. This is a singularly specific context of life, wherein tradition and modernity mingle in varying degrees, propelling, however, a new experience of the self and the other. The religious vision of the traditional era and the secular frame of the modern era are being superseded today without, however, making them obsolete. The contemporary individual is a unique entity, emerging singularly with his / her creative negotiations, between the binaries of tradition and modernity, religion and science, inside and outside, and, native and foreign. The normative ideal is not one single vision, but a context-dependent ideal, whose standard however is the ever-expanding global standards. Herein, the other is as unique as the self. Both are shifting poles in a scheme of negotiations, the rules of which are sought to be guaranteed at times with regional socio-political agencies, and at other times with hypothetical global standards and institutions.

As social and cultural realities are becoming more complex in terms of diversifications, fragmentations, hybridization, commercialisation, and other similar dynamics, experience of selfhood and otherness, and theorisation on them, are also gaining immense complexity. Wading through the labyrinths of this theorisation, it is still possible to underline some salient features of the experience of *self* and *other* in today's context.

One speaks today about "fashioning" / "construction" of self, as different from "development" of a given self or a rational self.[7] It is fashioning a creative dimension of the self, a sense of identity, and a sense of unique agency. It is this which integrates the memories of the past, endeavours of the present, and aspirations for the future. It is this which makes Anthony Elliot say, "as directors of our own self-narratives, we draw upon psychic frames of memory and desire, as well as wider cultural

[7] The new understandings or experiences of self began gradually with the several challenges posed to the Enlightenment understanding of the self. Perhaps, one of the modern scientific inquiries which effectively pierced through the monolithic rational conception of self was the Freudian psychoanalytic tradition. By proposing to delve deep into the deeper layers of the self, the subconscious and unconscious, it began to unearth the non-rational contents of the self (desire, libido, etc) and pointed out to the indeterminate character of the self. During the subsequent phase, the critical theory too punctured the rational conceptions of self, calling into question the validity of the scientific reason. It laid bare the oppressive nature of the monolithic rational self, which denied selves emerging from peripheries, subordinations, and marginality.

and social resources, in fashioning the self."[8] This selfhood is, as stated by Elliot, "personally created, interpretatively elaborated, and interpersonally constructed."[9] It is this experience of self, a monitoring agency of oneself ("reflexive self" as proposed by Anthony Giddens) which is to be found predominantly in the reflexive modernisation that is taking place in the contemporary context. It is this self, as suggested by Margret Archer, which will take us beyond the impoverishment of determinisms, and help us face the future confidently.[10]

This agency of the self, or self-identity, is a dynamic "unity" which gets formed or re-formed in the process of interaction with other human agents, with external socio-economic, political, and cultural realities. As the Lacanian "mirror stage" theory would have it, it is, to a large extent, the image of the other. It gets formed, as suggested by George Herbert Mead in "the conversation of gestures," in a dialogue of interactive images. According to Mead, "our own selves exist and enter as such into our experience only in so far as the selves of others exist and enter as such into our experience."[11] As Elliot puts it, "[I]t is not only something that happens through our own actions. It is also something that happens to us, through the design of other people, the impact of cultural conventions and social practices, and the force of social processes and political institutions."[12]

As complex as the process of construction of the *self* is that of the *other*. Ours is an age where tangible, open and "accepted" boundaries of the *other* are fading away. The weakening of the nation-states is a case in point. These political units provided strong boundaries by which one could openly mark out the *other*. Today, it is increasingly becoming difficult to hold on to such a boundary in a global society. Recognising the religio-cultural *other* is also becoming increasingly difficult.[13] There

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[8] Anthony Elliot, *Concepts of the Self* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), 2.
[9] Ibid., 5.
[10] Margret Archer, "Theory, Culture and Post-Industrial Society," in *Global Culture–Nationalism, Globalisation and Modernity*, ed. Mike Featherstone (London: SAGE, 1990).
[11] Anthony Elliot, *Concepts of the Self*, 25.
[12] Ibid., 2.
[13] Ambivalence and inability to form a clear picture of the religio-cultural Other in a global space goes with certain ambivalence in the traditional mode of moral reckoning too. As surmised by Peter Beyer, "A global society has no outsiders who can serve as the social representatives of evil. Without these, the forces of good also become more difficult to identify, undermining, for instance, deontological moral codes and the salience of other-worldly salvation" - Peter F. Beyer, "Privatization and the Public Influence of Religion in Global Society." in *Global Culture – Nationalism, Globalisation and Modernity*, ed. Mike Featherstone

is no "outsider" in a global society. Dismaying of public institutions that marked out the outsider goes a long way in nurturing a global *ecumene*, cultivating characteristics of cosmopolitan personalities. It would lend a congenial space for people to converge, co-habit, and foster healthier forms of mutuality.

However, it is also the case that today's context generates more subtle and inimical ways of reckoning and dealing with the other. Stereotyping is one such technique, by which the other is violently classified under hostile categories, which are, more often than not, unwholesome and inimical. In the face of chronic ambiguity, people take to such a simplistic method of categorising the other. Generation and dissemination of prejudices, caricaturing, distorted labelling are other methods of inimical treatment towards the other, the outsider. Diana Eck, in her popular book, *A New Religious America*, speaks about the mechanics of prejudice and stereotype:

> Prejudice is prejudging people and groups on the basis of these images, often half-formed caricatures. As the quip goes, prejudice is "being down on something you're not up on." People "known" through stereotypes do not have the opportunity to tell us who they are. We do not let them get close enough to speak for themselves. We define them in their absence, on the basis of the images already present in our minds.[14]

Again, Michael Wieviorka's reflection on such negative forms of behaviour too is insightful:

> Examples of exaggeration are to be found in the way in which alterity, cultural, religious, or any other sort of difference become objects of fantasies and fears. The actors who are assumed to embody them are likely to become scapegoats, to the extent that they are frequently attributed a virtual violence that is almost natural or innate, whereas in reality they are very far from any such thing, if such a thing were to exist. This is, in particular, the case in countries with high levels of immigration, since immigrants are often considered to be "dangerous."[15]

(London: SAGE, 1990), 374. A borderless world, on the other hand, comes up with its own form of moral reckoning and religious practices.

[14] Diana Eck L, *A New Religious America–How A "Christian Country" Has Now Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (San Francisco: Harper, 2001), 300.

[15] Michel Wieviorka, "The New Paradigm of Violence," in Jonathan Friedman, *Globalization, the State, and Violence* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2003), 111.

These are some of the cultural forms, which emerge as serious hurdles today, scuttling the prospects of development of healthier cosmopolitan inter-cultural communication. When these techniques are combined with the negative approach towards the stranger, they lead to a situation which legitimises and provokes open violence and terror. However refined and developed our mental abilities are, our approach towards the stranger is still restrictive. Horkheimer, in his *Eclipse of Reason*, would say, that "the expertly processed mentality of this century retains the cave man's hostility toward the stranger."[16] In the present-day situation, when the prejudice against the outsider is also combined with threat to employment opportunities, the outburst of hatred can be easily triggered.

Cultural Facilities for Negotiating Borders…

In the process of fashioning of the self and constructing the other, we find today an overbearing role played by cultural institutions and resources. Questioning the "metaphysics of presence," Jacque Derrida's post-structuralism made us aware of the indispensable mediatory role played by signs, especially the linguistic signs.[17] According to him, the signs mediate not merely the external world to us, but also our intimate *selves* to *ourselves*. True to this realisation, the experience that we have of life today is tangibly sustained by culture or the cultural industry as Adorno and Horkheimer would call it. Life today is mediated to us, so to say, through a high voltage cultural power-line.[18] The powerful functioning of the ubiquitous media, enhanced through the facility of the hi-tech Information and Communication Technologies, *culturizes* our existence even to the point of *culturizing* the economy in the form of knowledge

[16] Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason* (OUP, 1947), 58-59.
[17] Cf. John Sturrock, *Structuralism* (Washington: Fontana Press, 1986).
[18] This predominance of culture, going along with its increasing complexities, can well be read in Freudian perspective as more severe chances for repression because according to Freud "the increasing complexity of culture necessarily entails escalation of psychological repression." Escalation of psychological repression means a weak self, which is at the mercy of the intractable forces of the repressed destructiveness. However, a clear Freudian scheme cannot be applied non-problematically to today's emerging scenario of cultures and cultural dynamics. Perhaps, today's complexity is not a comprehensively organising complexity, organised under a monolithic rational ego or superego. On the other hand, it is a fluid complexity interspersed with multiple fragmentations, ruptures, spontaneous expressions of diversities, and so on. Therefore, looking for severe repression against today's increasing complexity of cultures would take us beside the point.

economy.[19] All these point to the inevitability of culture in the experience of life today, and simultaneously, they also indicate the emerging cultural facilities for negotiating borders of self and other in healthier ways.

Openness of the Self: Post-structural Realisations

Post-structuralism has induced a climate congenial to cultural negotiation of borders in relation to self/other, insider/outsider, private/public, and the like. Taking us further on the linguistic experience of humanity, post-structuralism speaks about the endless referral of significations of signs (*differánce*) and the impossibility of the closure of any text. The meaning of any text is never a finished product, but an endless process of signification, which is radically open to the future.

This realisation can well be brought to bear upon the experience of self and other, of cultural universes and social institutions. The self, like the radically open text, is a reality radically open to the future, which gets continually constituted in the process of endless significations. This realisation dissuades any closure in the vision of self and the other, especially as induced by any absolutist pretensions; but, on the other hand, makes them partners of the dynamics of endless mutuality. Similarly, cultures as texts too avoid closures and enter into mutual fecundations in a climate of congeniality making a qualitative difference in human experience. Thus, the insights of post-structuralism intones a new era of living wherein cultural wholes, as much as human selfhood, are called upon to experience the radical openness inherent in them and begin to enrich themselves through a modality of border-negotiations with others.

Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism is one of the congenial modalities for border negotiation. Hannerz's understanding of cosmopolitanism given in the following words is useful here:

> cosmopolitanism is first of all an orientation, a willingness to engage with the Other. It is an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity. […] There is the aspect of a state of readiness, a personal ability to make one's way into other cultures, through listening, looking,

[19] This overwhelmingly cultural experience of life goes even to the extreme of producing, as in the words of Jean Baudrillard, "hyperreality," wherein image makes more powerful impact than real life, rendering reality-testing problematic.

> intuiting and reflecting. And there is cultural competence in the stricter sense of the term, a built-up skill in manoeuvring more or less expertly with a particular system of meanings and meaningful forms.[20]

Cosmopolitanism is a holistic experience involving mental, psychological, moral, aesthetic, cultural, and spiritual transformations. Basically it is a radical openness towards the other, an openness which seeks to be in constant dialogue with the other, never attempting to instrumentalize or manipulate the other. This constant dialogical relationship implies a certain cultural competence, as surmised by Hannerz above. It is a hermeneutical competence to progressively go deeper into the semantic layers of other cultures and be enlightened of the deeper dimensions of other cultures. Simultaneously, it is also an ability to go deeper into one's own culture in the light of other cultures. This cosmopolitanism, as much as an outlook, it is also a project of the self.

Engaged Detachment

It may well be surmised that the cultural negotiation of borders necessitates an attitude of "engaged detachment." It implies a deep engagement, on the one hand, and a certain ability to go beyond or be detached, on the other. This perhaps is real cosmopolitan openness. Even while one learns other cultures in order to acquire the ability to dwell within that culture, one should not be a mere "user" of that culture, engaged with an instrumental agenda. This process of learning needs to be from a sense of deep surrender and respect to other cultures. Similarly, one also needs to be rooted in one's own culture. The rootedness gives one the ability to be totally engaged in a culture and, simultaneously, the ability to go beyond, perhaps, with a reflexive sense of detachment. These attitudes will surely go a long way in negotiating the borders culturally.

Liminal Space

Victor Turner, the British social anthropologist, basing himself on the insights of Arnold van Gennep, explores into the theme of liminality, as a space beyond the borders. Studying an African initiatory ritual, he surmises that rituals connected with *rites of passage* take us to a liminal space by separating us from our original structured context; and then, after

[20] Ulf Hannerz, "Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture," in *Global Culture–Nationalism, Globalisation and Modernity*, ed. Mike Featherstone (London: SAGE, 1990), 239.

an experience of borderless liminality where new indoctrinations are made, they take us back to the original context. This is the process a pilgrim too undergoes.[21] This process renews the pilgrim continuously, not merely to look at oneself in a new light, but also to make oneself capable of receiving light from the other. Perhaps, today's migrant individual needs to undertake his / her journey as a pilgrimage, as an exercise of getting separated, going into a liminal space of otherness, and coming back with fresh insights into life. This attitude of a pilgrim cultivates the fineness of the art of cultural negotiations.

This needs, as in the words of Gianni Vattimo, a "weak ontology," a process of self-emptying. This is a process of cultivating an empty space, which Ananta Kumar Giri would call, a space of emptiness,[22] or *sunyata* in Buddhist theology. Developing these spaces of nothingness, even as we fill ourselves with our own cultures and that of others, is a congenial way of negotiating the cultural borders.

Constructing Emancipatory Identities

It might apparently look a little off the tangent when I suggest that constructing emancipatory identities is one of the important ways by which we can effectively negotiate the borders! However, this is the way by which a natural levelling can take place so that the process of "crossing over" could be without hiccups. In the global scenario, as well as in the context of certain nation-states like that of India, we always have forces which self-aggrandisingly universalise themselves at the risk of oppressing the powerless, poor, minorities, indigenous people, marginal identities, and so on. The former might impose themselves upon the latter by such cultural tactics as homogenisation and co-option. The market-led culture that is alleged to be at the heart of the globalisation process is a case in point. When this culture imposes a consumerist world upon others and exploits others through a hegemonic consensus,[23] the oppressed and the exploited can come up with emancipatory counter-movements against the market-led forces. These counter-movements, by resisting the onslaught

[21] I have developed this point in Patrick Gnanapragasam, "Shrines and pilgrimages: Liminal Experiences," *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, 73, no. 7 (July 2009), 503-518.

[22] Ananta Kumar Giri, "Nurturing Spaces of Emptiness and Striving from Fullness to a Different Fullness", in Patrick Gnanapragasam and Elisebeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Negotiating Borders* (New Delhi: ISPCK), 44-56.

[23] This concept could be understood with the analysis of hegemony provided by Antonio Gramsci.

of exploitation by the hegemonic forces, can induce a certain level-playing which would initiate a healthy negotiation between the forces at play. Feminist and other subaltern movements are other good examples, which, by constructing an emancipatory identity for their clients, can induce a process of serious negotiation with the non-negotiatory and non-dialogical dominant forces of the society.

Indian context, where I come from, is dominated by historical forms of oppression, which continue to keep the subaltern sections of people under subordination and exploitation. Caste-system, patriarchy, and other associated feudal systems of oppressive hierarchy continue to dominate over the subaltern people of India. As pointed out recently by Sudhir Kakar, "[I]rrespective of his educational status and more than in any other culture in the world, an Indian is a *homo hierarchicus.*"[24] Oppressive caste hierarchy informs everyday life-world as well as structured areas of life. That the subaltern people who have suffered centuries of oppression continue to suffer denial of civil liberties is a case in point. Dalits, the most oppressed of the subaltern people, continue to suffer these denials even today. In some of the rural areas of India, these people dare not contest elections to civic bodies lest they should be violently eliminated by upper caste violence. The hegemony of the upper castes holds sway over the lives of the subalterns. What would it mean for these subaltern people to envision a self in relation to the other in the context of negotiations? How do they negotiate an oppressive dominant other? Construction of an emancipatory identity becomes a need for negotiating liberation for them. This need seems to extend itself not merely within the local context, but in the global context too. The borderlessness of the contemporary world certainly offers new avenues for the subalterns to negotiate their lives respectfully in the global arena. However, the native forms of social hierarchy seem to reproduce themselves in foreign lands too. Similar is the case with class and gender oppressions. This only calls for a need of forging emancipatory identities across the borders.

A Global Civil Society

One of the important ways of forging an un-oppressive self and other in today's world is by shaping up a global civil society, which would offer a platform for continuing to negotiate the world for the subalterns. Be they people experiencing oppression under racism, caste, class, gender, cultural homogenisation, etc., they need to emerge as collective forces so

[24] Sudhir Kakar, *The Indians–Portrait of a People*, (New Delhi: Viking, 2007), 28.

that they can negotiate the oppressive other, in the global arena. Social movements that have been operative within the contexts of nation-states must begin to operate at the global level, too. That feminist movements are being organised across national, cultural, ethnic borders is a good beginning. Representing similar efforts, the global civil society, as a normative ideal, would help interrogate oppressions at different layers of the global world and negotiate the oppressive borders for the sake of the emancipation of the subalterns.

Conclusion

This short reflective essay has attempted to argue the following: the contemporary world is increasingly experiencing a *topos*—dominated consciousness, which has less and less of historical consciousness, but more and more of contemporaneity. This consciousness is being shaped, among others, by the ever-increasing process of migration, and its related process of negotiation of identity. This world "on the move" has come up with challenges as well as opportunities for humanity, especially for people hitherto held under subjection and domination in their construction of self and other. Looking at it historically in terms of the experience of the self in the traditional, modern and post-modern eras, we find the immense facility of culture in the shaping up of the self and the other in today's society. While such inimical dynamics as stereotyping and violent targeting of the stranger is very much visible in the public arena today, we also find such facilities as the post-structuralist realisation of radical openness and flexibility in constructing the self and other, the possibility for a radically open and yet responsibly committed engaged detachment in a cosmopolitan world, the experience of a liminal space in the whirlpool of migration, and so on. These facilities also come in handy for the subaltern people who have been oppressed by such realities as economic disparity, caste, and patriarchy in India. Forging of emancipatory selfhood or identity for these subaltern people is one of the most meaningful ways by which we can contribute to the emergence of a global civil society, which will be a freer society than the contemporary one.

DEVELOPING JEWISH IDENTITY ACROSS BORDERS: THE EPISTOLARY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RABBI ISAAC KLEIN AND AMERICAN JEWISH SERVICEMEN DURING WORLD WAR II

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During the course of WWII, American Jewish soldiers often became increasingly self-conscious of their Jewish identity. For some, it was the challenges they faced obtaining kosher meals. For others, it was simply wearing an "H" on their dog tag. Whatever the reason, through military service, Jewish servicemen were made very aware of their "Jewishness." As the American military placed Jews on an equal plane with Christians as part of its American democratic ethos, Jewish servicemen did understand that there was a dignity in proclaiming one's Jewish identity. Nevertheless, for many Jewish servicemen their Jewish identity in the military tended to be a very private identity. That said, and perhaps for that reason, Jewish servicemen sought out public spaces that provided a space for them to affirm and express their Jewish identity. Many Jewish servicemen, for example, placed high value on participating in Jewish services. Chaplains, by organizing and leading Jewish services, therefore, played a vital role for Jewish servicemen. They also played another equally significant role in the lives of many Jewish servicemen: offering themselves as a mentor.[1]

Popular conceptions of U.S. army chaplains, especially those who served during WWII, include images of them holding religious services before the D-Day invasion, serving as spiritual advisors, comforting the

[1] Deborah Dash Moore, *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2006), 10-11, 20, 54, 74, 139-140, 154-155.

injured, giving the last rights, and conducting funerals. Jewish chaplains, as Albert Slomovitz has argued, played important other roles as well. They confronted anti-Semitism within the U.S. armed forces, promoted interfaith dialogue, and found creative ways to enable Jewish soldiers on the front lines or stationed in isolated locales to celebrate Jewish holidays. In addition, they ensured that the religious services they provided did not exclude Jewish servicemen raised in one movement of Judaism or another. An Orthodox Jewish chaplain, for example, offered religious services in such a way that a Jewish serviceman raised in Reform Judaism felt comfortable. Simultaneously, Jewish chaplains addressed concerns about Jewish law and rituals during war-time. Questions about the availability of kosher food, for instance, needed to be constantly dealt with. Finally, during the final months of WWII, Jewish chaplains served as an important link when U.S. army battalions encountered Holocaust survivors.[2]

In all these ways, Jewish military chaplains crossed borders, both literally and figuratively, whether it was integrating the various strands of Judaism, reaching out in a cooperative spirit to non-Jews within the armed forces, or coming to the aid of Holocaust survivors. In some senses, even by putting on the U.S. army uniform, Jewish chaplains, like chaplains of other denominations, were crossing the borders of their multiple identities: Jewish clergyman, American, soldier.

In serving as spiritual mentors for servicemen, Jewish chaplains also crossed borders in a more nuanced way. Army chaplains of all denominations have served as spiritual mentors for servicemen. During the trauma of war, servicemen have often sought out chaplains for spiritual guidance. Jewish chaplains were certainly no exception to that. As Albert Slomovitz writes, Jewish chaplains during WWII "counseled innumerable soldiers, sailors, and marines."[3] The question historians have not asked is what happened when Jewish chaplains and the servicemen who turned to them as mentors were no longer able to meet with each other? So often during WWII, Jewish servicemen had few opportunities to actually meet with Jewish chaplains, and when they did, it was rarely on a regular basis. Often a mentor bond would form between a Jewish serviceman and a particular Jewish chaplain, and then the serviceman or the chaplain would be whisked off to another destination. Separated by borders, everything from the borders of different military units to international borders, the mentor relationship could be made nearly impossible to sustain. Some Jewish servicemen developed epistolary relationships with their chaplains, so they

[2] Albert Isaac Slomovitz, *The Fighting Rabbis: Jewish Military Chaplains and American History* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 74-108.
[3] Ibid., 108.