

Fluid Borderscapes in Contemporary German-Speaking Literature

In a comparative analysis, the PhD project investigates the narrative representations and semantic functions of waterscapes in contemporary German-language literature. Amongst others, the corpus comprises texts which were published after the year 2000 by Esther Kinsky, Lutz Seiler, Saša Stanišić and Elfriede Jelinek. The texts engage with German re-unification, migration and exile narrating experiences of repression, displacement, (transgenerational) trauma and war. Despite their different historical, cultural and political settings, so the dissertation argues, they share the same context of fluid borderscapes. The narrated spaces negotiate boundaries and transitions against the background of geographical borders, processes of political demarcation and territorialisation, cultural identity and alterity.

Originating in the field of Border Studies, the borderscape concept offers a theoretical framework for analysing diverse implications of bordering processes on individuals and the(ir) notions of space in literary representations. In contrast to the idea of a border as a two-dimensional line, it brings together physical and metaphorical aspects of landscape(s) emphasising a notion of space, which is neither necessarily locally nor temporally fixed. In this context, the adjective fluid not only refers to a notion of space which is characterised by temporal as well as spatial discontinuities, transitions and transformations. It also refers to the physical qualities of water. The theoretical and methodological framework of the project further draws on concepts such as *Border Aesthetics* (Schimanski and Wolfe), *Chronotope* (Bakhtin), *Heterotopia* (Foucault) and *Writing-between-worlds* (Ette).

By analysing the respective texts from a transnational perspective, the project illustrates narrative strategies of addressing questions of identity, place and space, which on the one hand transcend the concept of nationhood while on the other hand negotiate various encounters and experiences with borders. It demonstrates the heterotopian quality of the narrated spaces, which imagine alternative approaches to identity and belonging. In this regard, water functions both as a physical and metaphorical scape.