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Border Renaissance in a Time of Border Perplexity? The Question of Renaissance/Renascence in a Post-Globalization World

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This essay explores questions of why and how there can be a border renaissance in a time of border profusion and confusion. Are we simply witnessing border renascence, a revival of the statist boundary, despite globalization? Or is the renaissance of the border new growth arising from incomprehension of the border in the 21st century? With reference to research in North America, Southeast Asia, and Europe, this article examines the entangled state of the border to discern what is unaccountable from what is complicated and to differentiate rebirth and revival of classical border thinking from that which addresses the perplexity of borders. In my view, a renaissance in border studies flirts with a return to the archaic through definition and explication of borders everywhere. A true renaissance in border studies must confront the entangled state as process, spirit, style, form, and other influences at once rooted in the classical and portrayed and performed in a post-globalization era of border rediscovery. The goal of this essay is to confront the notion of border renaissance, not to diminish the concept, but to reveal the fuller meaning and impact of border rebirth and revival.[1]

What is new about borders in a post-humanistic world, where humans are waking to the limits of their environment, and in an era of post-globalization, when boundaries are multiplying in number and complexity? Can the notion of border renaissance illuminate the broadening and deepening of border complexity, more than just account for a revival of statist boundaries—a renascence of borders? How do we situate the ideas of border renascence and renaissance into emerging border theory and discourse?

In this article, I explore the questions of why and how there can be a border renaissance in a time of border profusion and confusion. Are we simply witnessing border *renascence*, a revival of the statist boundary, increasingly dormant in globalization? Or is the *renaissance* of the border new growth in a newly defined era arising from the confusion, bewilderment, puzzlement, and incomprehension of the border in the early 21st century? Renaissance and renascence are synonyms, yet when these terms are applied to borders, a subtle and potentially rich differentiation is possible. Border renaissance is envisioned and theorized as a new order of border comprehension and realization as well as a clarified imaginary to illuminate border theory. On the other hand, border renascence is viewed as a more limited, somewhat reactionary, and constrained process and product of state control and confinement of the border. I argue that both border renascence and border renaissance emerge from the entangled state of the border in the 21st century, but whereas border renaissance transcends the entanglement with the

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creation and innovation of border spaces and places, border renascence only confirms and defends state presence at the border. For border renascence, the emphasis lies in reformation, the revival of something that has been dormant. Border renaissance, I suggest, is a rebirth that goes further to a strong, active, and vibrant renewal, where phoenix-like a new era is born. Renaissance becomes capitalized.

With reference to research in North America, Europe, and Southeast Asia, I examine the entangled state of the border to discern what is unaccountable from what is complicated and differentiate the rebirth and revival of classical learning and wisdom about borders from what simply addresses the perplexity of borders. My central argument is that a true renaissance in borders and in border studies must confront the entangled state as process, spirit, style, form, and other potential influences at once rooted in the classical and formative period of border studies and portrayed and performed in a post-globalization era of border re-discovery.

The goal of this discussion is to confront the notion of border renaissance, not to diminish the concept, but to reveal the fuller meaning and impact of border re-birth and revival, and the study of this avowed renaissance. In my view, a renaissance in border studies flirts with a return to an archaic and chaordic definition and explication of borders everywhere. Our approach needs to unpack border complexity and explicate border perplexity to reveal the nature of the 21st-century border in dislocated time and space and substantiate the essence and meaning of border renaissance in a context of post-humanism and post-globalization. At the same time, our approach to borders in the 21st century needs to capture the substance and unveil the connections of entanglement.

The essay is organized into several sections that contribute to a more incisive understanding and appreciation of border renaissance, and to differentiate renaissance from renascence. After establishing a border renaissance lexicon, the study builds a framework for understanding border renaissance in three steps. The first step is to explore the emergence of the idea of border renaissance. Then, I show how creating borders of the state has extended the dichotomy of reformation and renaissance. This discussion enables us to evaluate border theory at a crossroads. The theoretical discussion then is enlarged and illustrated within three regional contexts: the Canada–U.S. border and North American borders and borderlands, China's border with Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam, and Europe's multitude of live and raw edges. Drawing from these examples, and the theoretical discussion, the 'renaissance border' that I put forward is idealized as intertwining cultures, societies, and space in advanced places where, according to Jussi Laine (2021), ethical choice and equal representation prevail. The conclusions, however, express that a substantial gap remains between idealization and manifestation of the renaissance border.

A Border Renaissance/Renascence Lexicon

In 1912, Edna St. Vincent Millay, the renowned American poet, published her well-known poem *Renascence* (Millay [1912] 1991, 1–8). The memorable first stanzas read:

> All I could see from where I stood
> Was three long mountains and a wood;
> I turned and looked the other way,
> And saw three islands and a bay.
> So with my eyes I traced a line
> Of the horizon, thin and fine.
> Straight around till I was come
> Back to where I started from;
> And all I saw from where I stood
> Was three long mountains and a wood.
>
> Over these things I could not see;
> These were the things that bounded me;
> And I could touch them with my hand,
> Almost, I thought, from where I stand.
> And all at once things seemed so small
> My breath came short, and scarce at all.

Millay contemplates the limits of vision and experience, then death and burial, and new birth. She continues to encompass sky and land within and beyond her reach and concludes that the borders of body and mind may be surpassed by heart and soul. In the poem *Renascence*, the insights for border studies lie in the notions of revival and rebirth, yet also in a continuing predestination and sustained confinement, even in revelation. I would argue that renaissance remains elusive for Millay, that she takes the reader to the edge of realization, the renascent border. She concludes:

> The world stands out on either side
> No wider than the heart is wide;
> Above the world is stretched the sky,—
> No higher than the soul is high.
> The heart can push the sea and land
> Farther away on either hand;
> The soul can split the sky in two,
> And let the face of God shine through.
> But East and West will pinch the heart
> That can not keep them pushed apart;
> And he whose soul is flat—the sky
> Will cave in on him by and by.

Reading borders in this powerful finish conveys the impasse where the human being is obliged through faith to make sense of the bounded world. This is a world of renascent borders.

Before we explore the notion of border renaissance, it is both useful and necessary to familiarize ourselves with the terms emerging in the discourse of border change and evolution. Arising from the time/space dislocations inherent in globalization (Harvey 1990), the information overload that has accompanied the explosion of information technologies (Graham 1998), and the shift toward a world of flows (Castells & Cardoso 1996), borders now are viewed as in *motion* (Konrad 2015; Nail 2016) and *mobile* (Amilhat-Szary & Giraut 2015). States, which once used borders unequivocally to establish boundaries of sovereignty and territory, have become *entangled* as people, goods, ideas, and all manner of allegiances that transcend borders. Entangled identities, for example, are evident in the component nations of Europe and the construct of the European Union (Spohn & Ichijo 2016). Entangled heritages convey the uses of the past in relating the postcolonial nature of Latin America (Kaltmeier & Rufer 2016). The *entangled state*, however, has mounted resistance to these border-blurring tendencies with border re-building in the form of tangible enhancements including walls, fences, and other physical barriers, and raised already formidable restrictions against the movement of unwanted people and unwelcome ideas. Borders have gained new credence, "shifting to geo- and body-politics of knowledge" and 'borders' in the 21st century have become what 'frontiers' were in the nineteenth century (Mignolo & Tlostanova 2006). Yet is this reconstruction of borders renewal and revival, or simply transformation?

One argument for the significant renewal and revival of borders in globalization is their redefinition and adaptation to dealing with the burgeoning global cultural economy (Walker 2007). The cultural economy—people, enterprises, and communities that transform cultural skills, knowledge, and ideas into economically productive goods, services, and places—which consists of components such as cinema, television, fashion, music, publishing, videogames, architecture, and advertisement, crosses boundaries yet may also be bordered. This bordering invokes new technologies and novel approaches based on expanded conceptualizations of borders and borderlands.

Is this *turning point* in the construction and maintenance of borders, evidence of a culmination of what borders once were, and a climax in border thinking? Or do our theories of borders at this point constitute merely another crossroads in border epistemology? Two other aspects support a significant turning point. One is that borders are viewed increasingly as post-humanistic, that is out of the control of humans and gaining from the invocation of nature (Nail 2019). A second aspect is that borders are now beyond globalization, and a part of the post-globalization geopolitical force-field (Konrad 2021). A significant and growing literature now addresses the post-humanistic border and the post-globalization border, and this literature supports the notion of a turning point in border thinking. Whereas the notions of post-humanistic border and post-globalization border are key concepts to understand the turn toward both border renascence and renaissance, they do not convey a complete explanation of border reformation in the 21st century.

In order to achieve a border renaissance there needs to be new growth from both learned profusion and prevailing confusion. Border reformation amounts to a lesser change toward national aggregation and delineation. This is border renascence, and border renascence is focused primarily on the revival of the statist boundary.

Border Renaissance: Emergence of an Idea

Joshua Hagen (2018, 1), in commenting on the state of borders and boundaries, estimates that "by the turn of the twentieth century, border studies could justifiably claim to be experiencing a renaissance". Hagen attributes the renaissance to the breakthrough of viewing borders as a process. Other leading scholars in border thought, notably David Newman (2006a, 2006b, 2010, 2016) and James Sidaway (2011), see "something of a renaissance" in border studies as early as the 1990s. Newman (2006b) accounts for the renaissance in part due to the crossing of disciplinary boundaries by researchers. Vladimir Kolossov and James W. Scott (2013) attribute a renaissance in border studies in part to the emergence of counter-narratives to globalization discourses of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The counter-narratives are buoyed by the fact that borders in the 21st century have become ubiquitous.

David Newman (2010, 87) refers to the Green Line between Israel and the West Bank as the "renaissance of a border that never died" and constructs the notion of renaissance around the renewal of resistance at and distinction of the border. According to Newman (2006a, 143), "lines continue to separate us" and this continuation of separation at the border is at once traditional and evolved, established and novel. The idea of renaissance emerges from the twist in what is and what it appears to be.

In the early modern period, borders were drawn between humans and imagined others with renaissance technologies of difference including the visualization of the unbelievable and the fantastic, the relegation of beasts to peripheries, and the creation of natural philosophy (Fudge et al. 1999). In Renaissance drama, ideas were seen to have borders just like countries do (Hopkins 2016). In the 20th century, ethnic groups framed their cultural revival in terms of a renaissance. The borders of new ideas, however, remain aligned

with political boundaries. *Border Renaissance* (Chicano Renaissance) is portrayed in the emergence of Mexican-American literature and art (Gonzalez 2010). This is an aesthetic and political rebirth, and a vital turning point in the Mexican-American struggle. In 1936, the Centennial celebration of Texas independence cast Texas Mexicans outside the imagined community of Texas and the United States, yet this turning point enlivened and expanded Mexican-Americans and Latinos in the U.S., generally, to imagine their distinct place in the United States of America.

Elsewhere in the world, Peace Parks and peacebuilding are aligned with an African border renaissance (Griggs 2000; van Amerom & Buscher 2005). Back along the contemporary Mexico–U.S. boundary, the complex imbrications of culture and economy create a border renaissance in Tijuana (Walker 2007). In Europe, new policies of EU integration transform internal borders into valuable places for integration in a renaissance in territorialization (Darnis 2015). Branding Canada, and establishing difference from the United States, involves a significant shift from "bordering out" to "bordering in" strategies, and constitute a renaissance of Canada's commercial diplomacy (Potter 2004, 55–56). Additional references to border renaissance are relatively sparse in the literature, but this may change as more border scholars explore the implications and dimensions of the border renaissance concept (Wille 2021; Wille et al. 2021).

Renascence: Borders of the State Extend the Dichotomy of Reformation and Renaissance

Weaving the hegemonic fabric of modern sovereignty, and creating borders of the state, has its roots in the early modern period, and is often expressed as originated in the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) (Elden 2013). The Treaty of Westphalia ensconced a framework for modern international relations emphasizing state sovereignty, mediation, and diplomacy. Borders emerged as the manifestation and articulation of this framework. Codified borders of the state are in effect a renaissance, because the borders once established become an indelible mark on the land and in the mind, and, one could argue, that all successive adjustment and alteration of boundaries is essentially reformation. This position expands the dichotomy of reformation and renaissance because each cumulative step of reformation extends the distance from the original imaginary of the border, and creation of a geopolitical renaissance. Beyond this renaissance, a hegemonic fabric of modern sovereignty and a vital, yet predictable, lattice of global borders evolve with each step of reformation. One could argue that, in the 21st century, borders, buffeted by globalization, forces of post-modernity, and now post-humanistic and post-globalization inclinations, have again metamorphosed into something new and different. This reformation may be characterized as renaissance, yet it may also be viewed as renascence.

According to Antonio Gramsci (Gramsci 1992, 2012; Jones 2006), the unity of modernity is paradoxically the result of division, and identity is difference with subordination. Cultural hegemony is the dominance of a culturally diverse society by the ruling class who manipulate the culture of that society using cultural institutions, and the normalization of capitalist ideas, to maintain power in capitalist societies. In Gramsci's view, the process of *reformation* expressed the need for national aggregation of the masses. Alternatively, *renaissance* expressed the need for the autonomous development of intellectuals. Gramsci saw this dichotomy as more evident in the European south. Following Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Gramsci envisioned the state as a partial fusion of 'mass' and 'reason', 'religion' and 'philosophy'. This is bourgeois culture's most powerful source of hegemony.

For Fabio Froscini (2012), the hegemonic fabric of modern sovereignty emerged through division within the state as well as between states. He postulates that reformation and renaissance together express two sides of modern state power, but they are rarely synthesized except in the German Idealism of Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Hegel. The culture of modern Europe repeats the antagonisms of society and re-establishes no longer given substantialities of reformation and renaissance.

If we focus this discussion on borders, we may recognize reformation in the constructs of the European Union (EU), the United States–Mexico–Canada trade accord (USMCA), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Renaissance is more readily recognized in the post-globalization and post-humanistic border. Twenty-first-century borders re-engage the reformation/renaissance dialectic of the modern era, but also integrate the notions in novel articulations of bordering and boundary relations, including the concurrent vitalizations of European nationalisms and post-nationalisms, and the flexible bordering of Indigenous minorities along China's extensive border with Southeast Asia.

The confusion and profusion of bordering and boundary relations emerging from the impacts of globalization, resistance to these impacts, significant environmental change, and a global pandemic, all have contributed to border perplexity. Yet, it remains to be determined whether this is learned profusion, or a "natural system" effect, rather than information overload (Muller-Wille & Charmantier 2012). Are the entanglements discernable and perhaps by design, or are they chaotic? Is entanglement of borders a precondition to renaissance or a stage in reformation?

The entangled state in time/space dislocation is revealed at the border (Figure 1). We may differentiate separable states (state B and state C) from entangled states (state A and state C), and also discern different degrees of entanglement (state A and state B, versus state A and state C). The space between separable states is incised and decisive as portrayed by the demilitarized zone (DMZ) between South Korea and North Korea. Most spaces between states, however, display some degree of entanglement, and this entanglement varies along numerous axes of engagement, agreement, tradition, practice, and more. The border becomes both a turning point and crossroads as the border calibrates and expresses degrees of variation from the hegemonic fabric of modern sovereignty, all the while as the border sustains the underlying matrix of the fabric. Studies of the transformation to renewal in border regimes, for example, the changing national identity structures in the broader evolution of the European Union (Wille & Nienaber 2020), illustrate a relational yet discernable move from a process shift to a complexity shift (Wille et al. forthcoming). This shift to border complexity reinforces the notion that our thinking about the entangled state and its borders is at a crossroads. Chiara Brambilla (2023), in a current contribution to border studies, forwards rethinking borders through a complexity lens by articulating *complex textures* associated with borders. This work, following the French philosopher Edgar Morin, points to alternative political subjectivities and agencies in order to disentangle the border and cultivate a politics of hope.

Border Theory at a Crossroads

Although numerous and significant milestones and breakthroughs in border conception and theory building have occurred during the past four decades (Michaelsen and Johnson 1997; Newman and Paasi 1998; van Houtum 2000; Kolossov 2005; Brunet-Jailly 2005; van Houtum et al. 2005; Paasi 2005; Popescu 2011; Nail 2016; and recently many more), border theory remains at a crossroads, uncertain about which direction(s) to pursue. Is this juncture a renaissance in border studies? I would argue that border studies in their current situation could be envisioned as a border renaissance, if border specialists are able to discern and articulate, and differentiate, the prominences and interstices in the emerging framework of border theory (Konrad 2021). That is, can we ascertain what is essential and significant to creating a renaissance in border studies? A true renaissance demands knowledge beyond the *topography* of borderlands, borderscapes, and border agency and mobility. Otherwise, the 'border turn' will remain reactionary, antithetical, and a time when we are mindful largely of the branded border that is spectacularized, and anxious of our belongingness within and beyond borders (Konrad 2021, 716–718).

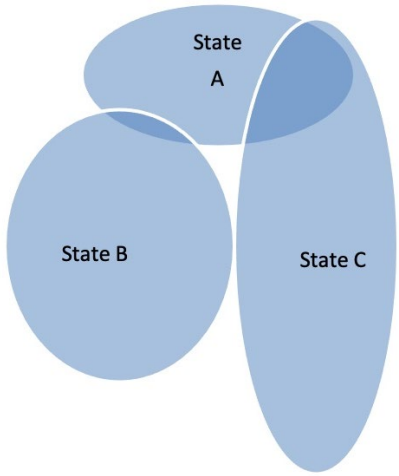

Figure 1. The Space Between Separable and Entangled States. Image prepared by the author.

The saga of how border theory has arrived at a 21st-century crossroads is entangled. There are numerous interpretations offered by scholars seeking a comprehensive theory of borders, and concluding, generally, that this goal remains elusive, and that we are indeed at a crossroads in border studies (see for example, Agnew 2008; Newman 2006a, 2006b; Paasi 2005; Scott & van Houtum 2009). Anne-Laure Amilhat-Szary and I offer an overview of these efforts in the second chapter of our recent book *Border Culture* (Konrad & Amilhat-Szary 2023). This current overview and critique traces the emergence of classical border theory from Boas (1940) to Barth (1969) and on to Minghi (1963), Prescott (1965), Gottmann (1973), and others. It engages with the debates about the path to a comprehensive border theory (Agnew 2008; Newman 2006a; Paasi 2005; van Houtum 2000; and many more), and the emergence of critical border studies (Parker and Vaughan-Williams 2014). It evaluates the contributions of a growing number of extensive multidisciplinary projects addressing borders in globalization and 21st-century borders. Concurrently, Thomas Nail's monograph *Border Theory* has offered an inverted framework (Nail 2016), and a post-globalization framework has been suggested by Konrad (2021). None of these theoretical contexts has yet garnered sufficient traction within border studies to predominate or elevate border theory consensus. Nevertheless, I would suggest that there is ample evidence that a consensus is growing in border studies, and that numerous new perspectives are contributing to a renaissance in border studies.

Meanwhile, the question of border renaissance also involves an enlarged and more balanced view of the entangled state of the border through celebratory and derogatory portrayal and performance. Substantial advances are evident in understanding the imagination of borders and the complex interactions of humans

with borders. The border may be a political construct, but to achieve, sustain, alter, manage, and remove borders, engages an extensive range of human agency beyond the political. The notion of border renaissance encompasses and is catalyzed by this expanded agency.

The fluorescence of border renaissance, I argue, is expressed in the intersection of aspects of this broader agency in the entangled state of the border. Although it is difficult to de-construct this border renaissance, it is possible to discern the components that contribute to its realization, and potentially illumination. Many of these components are discussed in the recent literature on interdisciplinary border studies. I will identify a selection of these components and then develop examples in the following case studies. Foremost among the components is *creativity* expressed in the bordering process, as well as in resistance to bordering (Heraud 2011). Borders and borderlands are also imbued with *spirit* (Hondagneau-Sotelo et al. 2004) and *style* (Alvarez and Collier 1994). These aspects characterize and brand borders.

There are many forms of borders and bordering (Konrad & Nicol 2008). One form that is increasingly evident is the *embodiment* of borders (Silvey 2005). Borders express *poetics* (Schimanski & Wolfe 2007) and *texture* (Fellner 2020a, 2020b). These components contribute to a *design* of borders (Kanai 2016). The border is a *text* and a *document* (Hicks 1991). Accordingly, the border enables *languaging* (Nossem forthcoming), and there is a *language* of borders (Konrad et al. 2019). Borders may be synonymous with *violence* and *warfare* (Staudt 2011) and they are complicit in *trauma*, *pain*, and *dislocation* (Schimanski 2019). All of these components of portrayal, performance, and stark reality, among others, engaged separately and in coordination, enliven and enlarge the border and contribute to border renaissance.

To achieve illumination of border renaissance, "overreliance on an idealized [notion] of entanglements, blurriness, or intertwining cultures, societies and space in the borderlands"[2] needs to be surpassed. As Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) has demonstrated in her visionary work, entanglement is multifunctional, ranging from a strategic response to imperialism, de-centering whiteness, and undermining the myth of the democratic nation-state based on borders and exclusions, but care must be taken not to conflate entanglement with equality or justice. Also, a focus on complexity without consideration of how power is wielded may render invisible the violence at the border. Dislocation, homelessness, Indigenous dispossession, and even death may be reduced to "theatre" or a broader range of performance, rather than material and meaningful loss and devastation. Border renaissance, like border renascence, is not necessarily illuminated as an advance in ethical, considerate, benevolent, and altruistic bordering.

Renaissance Border: Intertwining Cultures, Societies, and Spaces in Advanced Places of Ethical Choice and Equal Representation? Or, Renascence Border: Borders Lashed to the Evolving Nation State?

What could the renaissance border look like? In part, it could be a substantive advance beyond the confusion and dysfunction of the early 21st-century border. Also, the renaissance border could exhibit the intertwining of cultures, societies, and spaces in advanced places of ethical choice and equal representation. Entanglement would persist, but there could be greater logic and efficacy, more emphasis on what works and less perpetuation of what does not work. However, this vision needs to be tempered and grounded by the human propensity to amass and display power and engage in violence, often centered at borders. To portray the renaissance border, I offer an array of characteristics drawn from border research to color the vision. To develop the portrayal more fully, I also draw attention to the aspects that convey border renascence, thus outlining the conditions that take borders into a distinctly different direction and keep it tied umbilically to the evolution of the nation-state.

Table 1 lists the components of the divergence of border renaissance and border renascence. This is not necessarily an exhaustive characterization, yet it outlines major components of divergence and enables a comparative analysis. If we read across the table, the divergence of the renaissance and renascence borders becomes evident. The first component listed for the renaissance border is a celebration of entanglement and intertwining at the border, whereas the pursuit of the renascence border focuses on disentanglement and distinction at the border. Another step toward border renaissance is to view and engage reformation and renaissance as a continuum rather than a dichotomy. This is an approach consistent with allowing for a gradation of difference and a blurring of distinction rather than the focus on reformation in the move toward border renascence. Whereas, the renaissance border advances the core logic of balanced border effect, allowing for give and take, back and forth, and levelling out of border impacts, the renascence border maintains that borders divide, and it sanctifies this position. Accordingly, advocates of the renascence border are adamant that walls secure borders. Inherent in the idea of the renaissance border is the position that "walls don't work" (Dear 2013, 1), a position that has been proven repeatedly in human history from classical times to the Berlin Wall. Yet, the wall as a simple solution and panacea for entanglement, continues to appeal, and stands as a formidable barrier to the realization of border renaissance.

By taking down border walls, both metaphorically and physically, it may be possible to achieve and to expedite some of the other components of border renaissance.

Foremost among these is the rekindling of commonalities and connections that walls complicate if not prohibit. With walls, the state is more adept at establishing differences and enforcing division. Moreover, without the prominent, divisive symbol of the wall, cross-border agents and agencies can create and rejuvenate symbols of cooperation more effectively. The goal of border renascence is to emphasize symbols of distinction and building on these to extend mechanisms and tools for control, and ultimately border abuse. The renaissance border aims to diminish lines of control that are excessive and counter-productive to mutual engagement at the border. Thus, the renaissance border is constructed largely with responsible border imaginaries and valid border claims. The renascence border, on the other hand, built on distinction, division, alienation, and othering, revives directions of colonialism and imperialism.

The idealizations of border renaissance and border renascence, portrayed in the foregoing discussion and summarized in Table 1, simplify what is a complex and often impenetrable entanglement of states (and polities), societies, cultures, economies, and different people at the border. Separation and simplification at the border are increasingly difficult, given the increased mobility of people and ideas in successive eras of globalization and post-globalization. Furthermore, there are growing sentiments and initiatives, particularly among "borderlanders", to sustain and celebrate entanglement. In our contemporary world, replete with chaotic migration and environmental degradation, border people claim that entanglement is necessary for sustainability.

Table 1. Components of the Divergence of Border Renaissance and Border Renascence. Table prepared by the author.

Toward Border Renaissance	Toward Border Renascence
Celebrate entanglement as well as disentanglement	Pursue disentanglement
View and engage reformation and renaissance as continuum rather than dichotomy	Focus on reformation
Advance the core logic of balanced border effect	Borders divide
Walls don't work	Walls secure borders
Rekindle commonalities and connections	Establish differences
Create and rejuvenate symbols of cooperation	Emphasize symbols of distinction
Diminish lines of control	Extend mechanisms and tools for control: border abuse
Pursue responsible border imaginaries and valid border claims	Revive colonialism and imperialism

Yet, a danger is inherent in the valorization of border renaissance without consideration of how entangled state borders fashioned through cross-border cooperation and many forms of integration actually create layers of law and practice that are frequently manipulated by the most powerful actors, usually the nation-state, to enact violence, evade human rights, detain people, and then deny accountability. Anna C. Pratt and Jessica Templeman (2018) illustrate how overbearing state sovereignty performed by Canada and the United States constrains and diminishes Mohawk territorial rights and practices in Akwesasne through the Shiprider Program.

Can we advance beyond the separable to the entangled? What constitutes the active boundary between these states? Can articulation of this boundary lead to a fuller understanding of borders, and a renaissance of border studies? As Figure 1 (above) illustrates, there exists a theorized space, or at least a surface, between the separable and the entangled and this surface differs from the partially to completely entangled. I would suggest that this active boundary requires more exploration and theoretical consideration to advance our understanding of bordered space, and possibly lead to a renaissance in border thinking.

The Canada–U.S. Border and North American Borders and Borderlands

Along the extensive Canada–U.S. border, and North American borders generally, interwoven north–south and east–west process textures vary regionally (Fellner 2020a; Wille et al. 2021). North American border regions retain signature borderlands—Alaska–British Columbia cordilleran enclaves of cooperation, cross-border integration of New England and the Atlantic Provinces, the Tijuana–San Diego urban compact—yet, in these and other North American borderlands, the borders are being pushed back to binaries, and the antithetical border is taking hold. North American borderlands continue to exude creativity, style, spirit, and other features of border renaissance but the border has slipped into a danger zone. As emphasized in the case of the East Indian family attempting to cross the Canada–U.S. border near Emerson, Manitoba, caught out of their element, and frozen to death, North American borders have become perilous spaces where undesirable crossers are frozen at and in the border (Gowriluk 2022).

To cross, it is now mandatory to delineate and confirm where one belongs. This primary imperative has, over the past two decades, revived the dormant basic requirement of identity verification and shifted the border space into a state of renascence. However, the lines of control and resistance as seen in most North American border contexts, from El Paso to Tijuana along the southern border to Blaine, Washington, and Windsor, Ontario, along the northern border, are not

simply what they seem to be. The barriers may reveal beauty as revealed by the southern border fence and the renditions of protest that adorn it. The 2022 anti-vaccination convoy protests in Ottawa, aimed at reducing border restrictions on truckers, ultimately protested the action that would facilitate their crossing of the border (Ling 2022).

Although all North American border places have been impacted by Covid-19 restrictions on top of enhanced inspection protocols of identity verification and clearing of goods, community entanglements prevail due to well-established interactions and commemoration. On the southern border, Pancho Villa's raid still looms over Columbus, New Mexico, and Palomas, Mexico, where the historic moment is celebrated, because it confirms place identity and draws visitors to an isolated cross-border community. Similarly, a new interpretive center reveals the linkages and shared heritage between recently re-bordered communities of Stanstead, Quebec, and Derby Line, Vermont (Figure 2). This Border Theatre renews the imaginary of integration of community and adds to the well-worn images of the Haskell Library and other borderline features of entanglement. The Border Theatre marks and emphasizes renewal and may contribute to border renaissance, certainly in this border place.

Border renaissance is a celebration and recognition of connections over differences. Numerous examples abide along the Canada–U.S. border. One is the "celebration" of Canada–Minnesota connections which include common vacationlands and waters, historical linkages, integrated resource economies, and Indigenous legacies across the border. Along the southern border, *Border Renaissance*

Figure 2. New Interpretive Center Between Quebec–Vermont. Image: Peter Kerr, "The Redevelopment of the Border Theatre is a Key Part of Stanstead's Renaissance" *The Montrealer* (July 11, 2020), no copyright listed.

is a published rendition of the Texas Centennial in 1932, an event that marked both the differentiation and distinction of Mexican Americans in the U.S., and their struggle for identity and recognition. Border renaissance is found in re-kindled commonalities and rejuvenated symbols of cooperation and connection. Among the foremost examples of this re-kindling and rejuvenation are the Peace Arch Park celebrations and family meetings that occurred during the pandemic border closures at the Blaine, Washington, and White Rock, British Columbia, crossing. Peace Arch Park is a space in between the United States and Canadian inspection posts along the border. During the border shutdown, the Park, marked by the prominent Peace Arch monument, accommodated friends and relatives from the United States and Canada who met in the space without leaving one country or entering the other (Figure 3). The border

Figure 3. Meeting During the Covid-19 Border Closure in the Space In-between, Peace Arch Park, USA–Canada. Image: photo credit Laurie Trautman.

emerged to personify commonality, and in that moment, and in that place, the border revealed what it could be. Yet, the fact remains that the Canada–U.S. border is an increasingly dangerous, sometimes unpredictable, often stressful space, and like its counterpart—the Mexico–U.S. border—the northern boundary that separates the United States from Canada is a border fraught with renascent impulses amid semblances of border renaissance.

China's Border with Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam

China borders fourteen nation-states including Russia, Japan, North Korea, India, and Pakistan. Consequently, China's border relationships vary substantially, particularly in recent decades as China has opened its borders with many of its neighbouring countries. Initiatives like the "Belt and Road" strategy of China, to secure land and sea routes beyond its borders, have expanded and extended cross-border interaction with neighbouring countries (Huang 2016). In southeastern Asia, China shares land borders with Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam in a rugged, mountainous terrain characterized by James C. Scott (2008) as beyond governance. This cross-border region, referred to as Zomia by Scott, is home to numerous ethnic minorities who retain militias to this day, and remain at odds with central governments, particularly in Myanmar. Traditional territories of many of these ethnic minorities extend across the official border which winds through uplands for 3000 kilometers from coastal Vietnam to the Himalayan apex of India, China, and Myanmar.

The extension of China across its borders, and the migration of Chinese people into neighbouring countries confirm a long history (Stuart-Fox 2021). In Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar, Chinese engaged in a wide variety of businesses have long been a part of the social fabric of these countries. Kokang in Myanmar, for example, is essentially a Han Chinese exclave (Hu and Konrad 2018). With the proclamation of the "Belt and Road" initiative, China has enlarged its presence by building and extending roads, railways, ports, energy facilities, and other aspects of infrastructure. Part of the cross-border interaction is the traditional exchange activity of ethnic minorities. The Dai of the upper Mekong have expanded and integrated agriculture across the border (Grabowsky & Wichasin 2008). The Hmong in the Sino–Vietnamese borderlands have established unique frontier livelihoods from cardamom cultivation, textiles, and water buffalo trade (Turner et al. 2015). With the opening of the border by China, and then the activation of the "Belt and Road" initiative, both traditional and new exchanges grew although China has reacted strongly to contain illegal trade in drugs.

Does this growth of mobility and exchange constitute a border renaissance in southeastern Asia? It may well do so for China, because China appears to be the main beneficiary of the significant change in the border. Yet, a closer evaluation suggests that border innovation has been an extension of traditional linkages, and that the Chinese central government has depended significantly on the cross-border exchange template of ethnic minorities and the Yunnan Province (Konrad & Hu 2021). Also, China has moved quickly and decisively during the Covid-19 pandemic from border innovation to reactionary borders reinforced with a massive fencing project. This slight change may have substantial consequences to impact both Chinese imperial scripts and imaginaries of internationalism.

Meanwhile, the 3000-kilometer border between China and southeastern Asia reflects a shifting coalescence of decisive border, no border, and some border in a region that is remote from population centers and government control. Some border places are so isolated that they are selected by local inhabitants and international visitors for easy crossing. Recently, the ease of crossing was emphasized in a Chinese elephant's recorded two-hour nighttime tour across the border (South China Morning Post 2018). In other border crossing locations, Boten, Laos, for example, China is on the move and intent on following its initiative to build a trading hub inside Laos as well as enhance the infrastructure of the route to Thailand (Bosoni 2021). On the other hand, Hekou, China, and Lao Cai, Vietnam, until recently models of integration and exchange at the border, are now insulated from casual border crossing by a prominent border fence running along the Chinese bank of the Red River separating the countries. During the pandemic, Hekou and Lao Cai emerged as the antithetical border, although with the lifting of trade and travel restrictions in January 2023, by China, imports and exports in January jumped to almost 50 million USD (Vietnamplus 2023).

The surge of border walls now divides most of the boundary between China and Vietnam except for the most remote stretches. A similar pattern describes the much shorter boundary between China and Laos. The border between Myanmar and China, a boundary that is longer and extends through the most difficult terrain in the region, is being fenced rapidly, although only about one-quarter of the border is now fenced (Zhao 2021). This fencing is most prevalent in populated border areas. Overall, the expansion of fencing in a region that was largely free of walls and barriers, has exploded. Additionally, the fencing often follows natural borders such as watercourses, and invariably causes environmental impacts ranging from construction damage to impeding the movement of natural species.

Boundary claims in the region have extended significantly in the South China Sea, which China has essentially designated as internal waters (Mastro 2021). This geopolitical imaginary which essentially confines Vietnam with a thin coastal sea margin, is also apparent in the advance of Chinese presence in Laos and Myanmar,

where Chinese economic interests, cultural institutions, products, and media prevail in the borderlands. This borderland annexation begs the question, again, if this is border renaissance, whose renaissance, is it? Can a border renaissance benefit one side of the border over the other? Is this apparent renaissance of the border really an indication of border renascence?

Evidence of reaction to the new fencing regime at the China–southeastern Asia border suggests that the communities most affected by the barriers to mobility and trade are responding with measures to remove or diminish restrictions of the wall. The villages along the China–Myanmar border are fighting back by making breaks in the wall at traditional crossing points to sustain local mobility patterns in the borderlands (Figure 4). The exuberance of local cross-border economies, meanwhile, is apparent in the continued active promotion of cross-cultural and transnational business. Yet, the border also bites as Covid-19 restrictions halt trade and cross-border labour movement in communities all along the extensive boundary. Displaced people in the borderlands, the Kokang refugees, for example, remained in camps for years before being returned to Mynamar. China's border with Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam, only recently a model of border region evolution and advance, has slipped into a reactionary mode and a vestige of positive border entanglement.

Europe's Multitude of Live and Raw Edges: Renaissance or Relapse?

Although live and raw edges may offer the basis to serve a renaissance in border engagement, these conditions of trauma and uncertainty may also work counter to the realization of a new order. Within Europe, the success of the Basques in sustaining a live border, between the Basque cultural domain and surrounding Spain and France, is expressed in coincident Basque nationalism and transnationalism within a nation-state context (Konrad 2020). Whereas the entangled linguistic, social, political, and cultural edges of Basque country remain somewhat opaque, the volatility of the edges has dissipated, and the Basques are secure in their identity in the European Union (Bray 2004). At the edge of the European Union, the Finnish–Russian border evolved from a raw and fortified boundary imposed through Karelia in the twentieth century, to a working border that benefitted both Russians and Finns in the early 21st century, and now, during the Ukrainian proxy war between Russia and the West, to a potentially closed and walled boundary (Wolfgang 2022). The strains of the Russia–Europe power struggle are increasingly evident at the Schengen boundary of the European Union. Here, the live edge reinforces border renascence, and renders the sizeable Ukrainian borderland as a zone of conflict between ideologies and states of being. This live and raw edge of Europe, already serrated by the migration crisis, and torn by the disparate response to the Covid-19 pandemic, has further revealed the cracks in the European Union highlighted by Brexit. Yet, as European external, and to a degree, internal, borders show the strains and tensions of current events at the borders, the plight of Ukraine has solidified NATO and Europe.

Figure 4. Break in the China–Myanmar Border Fence made by Villagers to Sustain Informal Border Crossing. The sign warns villagers not to use the crossing. Image: the author.

The borders of Europe, both internal, and the Schengen external boundary, illustrate the ephemeral nature of borders and their proximity and proclivity to crisis as boundaries are redefined, re-crossed, and crossed off. The question prevails: is this renaissance or relapse? Does a boundary around Europe work? Is the pan-European border construct viable?

The Schengen border did not work to exclude millions of migrants from entering the EU. Instead, the Schengen border was revealed as a catalyst to create temporary places and in-between spaces in locales such as Calais, France, and Lampedusa, Italy. These places became at once spaces of refuge and containers of marginalized humanity in the volatile geographies of the migration crisis in Europe. Schengen's crisis became recurrent as it shifted from migration to pandemic. Border controls at internal European boundaries—Portugal/Spain, around Switzerland, France/Germany, between the Baltic States, and more—in many instances initiated during the migration crisis, were re-engaged or newly established with Covid-19. In Europe, stemming the flow of Covid-19 showed a variance and wispiness of response (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Europe's Wispiness of Covid-19 Response. Image: European Movement International, no copyright listed, 2020. https://archive.europeanmovement.eu/emi-a-european-union-response-to-covid-19-eurmove/

As the war in Ukraine passes its second anniversary with no resolution in sight, border specialists and the public at large are increasingly convinced of the futility of bringing forth and imposing a border to erase a border. Russia appears to be losing not gaining ground. Not only could Russia fail to take over Ukraine, and advance its border to the edge of Europe, but Russia could lose the territories gained by the invasion of the eastern portions of Ukraine's Donbas and Luhansk regions and the Crimea, and most significantly, solidify the border between Ukraine (now confirmed as part of the West) and a further diminished and beleaguered Russia. Potentially, Putin's stand-off with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) at the Russian borders with Ukraine may only amount to theater: a desperate performance, an ugly and deadly spectacle, and a confirmed antithesis of border. Meanwhile, at Baltic borders with Russia, the call to arms and the imperative to prepare for a potential Russian threat are evident. This is confirmed by NATO expansion on the northern front. Sweden and Finland are in the process of gaining NATO membership. Drama and trauma have returned to the region at once reformed with sustainable borders and threatened by hegemonic forces.

Conclusion

Following Hegel, Ioannis Trisokkas (2014) argues that the border pervades every phenomenon, that the border is universal, *and* the border is a dominant concept in the logic of being. In nature and culture, (or spirit) the structure of border is a fundamental ingredient of every cultural phenomenon. Yet, the border manifests as entanglement (Verwicklung) and contradiction (Widerspruch). And, the truth of the border is everywhere before us, and permeates everything there is. The border is a primitive ontological structure that characterizes being itself, not simply our thought of being. Whether humans exist or not, there are borders in the universe, well beyond the borders that we construct or envision.

Consequently, and fundamentally, we may establish that the border is not altogether subjective and arbitrary, but the border has a logical core that is objective and timeless. Secondly, the logic of the border requires acknowledgement of the immense complexity of the phenomenon, and that all logical features of the border are necessary, universal, and systematically interconnected. Thirdly, whereas all forms of border studies enrich our knowledge of the phenomenon, they cannot eliminate the logical concept of the border and its metaphysical contribution, and the potential of a general *logical* theory of the border. Finally, current research places borders immediately and uncritically in space before assigning a rich conceptual and purely logical content.

Why is this philosophical context important to our consideration of the renaissance of borders? Allow me to conclude this article with several reasons why we need to be mindful of the philosophy of borders. Initially, in a recent article (Konrad 2021), I have called for an interrogation of border logics, ethics, metaphysics, and epistemology in order to align border thinking within a rigorous framework. This philosophical approach will help to chart the field and identify significant milestones in border thought and substantiate if we have achieved a renaissance in border thinking. Next, renaissance entails elevation of thought as well as convergence and consensus. Although border studies are eminently interdisciplinary and broadly based, a renaissance in border thought should convey balanced, integrated, and effective advances in all fields. This remains a work in progress. Finally, a renaissance in border thinking offers the connective tissue, as well as the prominent thoughts, to extend insight and understanding among disciplines, and a broader public, about how borders work and why they are important universals in all worlds and eras. This challenge remains.

Notwithstanding the critical importance of exploring the theoretical and philosophical landscape of border renaissance, the idea of border renaissance remains entwined within the nation-state context. Clearly, the nation-state is not disappearing, and its ability to direct and control all manner of developments remains strong. This raises some important questions.[3] While the statist function of the state reinforces border renascence, what role does the state play in border renaissance? The nation-state could play a central role in creating a border renaissance, but it does not. So, what incentives exist for the institution of the nation-state to offer more support towards a renaissance view of the border? In this regard the answer is clear. The rapid transition to a post-humanistic and post-globalization era of border dynamics calls out for theoretical and philosophical advances in border studies in the same instance that a border renaissance demands the attention of the nation-state, as John Agnew (2008, 175) reminds us, to "reframing border thinking".

Notes

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2 Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this important point.

3 I am thankful to Randy Widdis for reminding me of these questions and the importance of linking my arguments made throughout the article to the theoretical conclusion.

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