

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:10,780

Well...

I think I should maybe start about where I'm from,

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00:00:10,780 --> 00:00:15,780

because I think that the reason

why I'm interested in borders,

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00:00:15,780 --> 00:00:21,800

why I'm interested in border studies as

a scholar has very much to do with the fact that

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00:00:21,800 --> 00:00:28,490

I am from a borderlands area,

and I perceive myself always as kind of

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00:00:28,490 --> 00:00:35,940

living on the border.

And you made distinctions between different types of borders,

6

00:00:35,940 --> 00:00:38,690

so I follow that and I do the same.

7

00:00:38,690 --> 00:00:43,070

And I also start with geographical or territorial borders, so

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00:00:43,070 --> 00:00:49,370

my family actually is from the very north of Austria, very close to the Czech border.

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00:00:49,370 --> 00:00:55,270

My parents were born directly on the Czech border, so directly.

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00:00:55,270 --> 00:00:58,910

My grandmother always told me stories about

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00:00:58,910 --> 00:01:05,250

I mean, my grandmother was born in [Year] 19...10, I think.

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00:01:05,250 --> 00:01:12,990

And so, when I was born, of course,

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00:01:12,990 --> 00:01:15,970

The world was different, right

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00:01:15,970 --> 00:01:20,530

But she always told me about the Austrian-Hungarian Empire.

She told me about,

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00:01:20,530 --> 00:01:25,000

you know, the times before there was a border in her hometown

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00:01:25,000 --> 00:01:29,560

and then the border came, all of a sudden, there was a border there.

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00:01:29,560 --> 00:01:37,320

And then came the Second World War.

So then the border was gone again for a while,

and then the border came again

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00:01:37,320 --> 00:01:42,010

and then there was the Iron Curtain.

And when I grew up, we had the Iron Curtain.

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00:01:42,010 --> 00:01:49,760

And I was very well aware of the fact that there was an, you know,

an Iron Curtain

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00:01:49,760 --> 00:01:55,200

there that basically kept people on the other side

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00:01:55,200 --> 00:01:58,470

from, you know, coming to our side.

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00:01:58,470 --> 00:02:03,580

I was very well aware of the fact that  
the town had been separated by that Curtain.

23

00:02:03,580 --> 00:02:07,940

I was very well aware of the fact that families had been separated.

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00:02:07,940 --> 00:02:11,060

And I was really intrigued by that as a child.

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00:02:11,060 --> 00:02:19,600

I always considered myself fortunate that I grew up on the one side of the border.

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00:02:19,600 --> 00:02:24,060

And I looked across that fence and I could see those, you know,

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00:02:24,060 --> 00:02:27,470

guys who had these kind of [...]

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00:02:27,470 --> 00:02:31,610

they looked like hunting posts,

you know, and they kind of looked at us with binoculars,

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00:02:31,610 --> 00:02:38,380

as children playing.

And then when I moved

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00:02:38,380 --> 00:02:45,090

to close to Vienna, of course,

here we are very close to the Hungarian border, so

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00:02:45,090 --> 00:02:48,320

if you grow up in this heikel [??tricky] part of Austria around Vienna

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00:02:48,320 --> 00:02:51,170

then of course you're faced with multiple borders.

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00:02:51,170 --> 00:02:53,230

Now there's even more borders than that.

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00:02:53,230 --> 00:02:56,830

So I think that is something that has  
influenced me.

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00:02:56,830 --> 00:03:02,820

And although then I didn't myself, literally speaking, grow up directly there.

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00:03:02,820 --> 00:03:06,970

I grew up there, about 30 kilometres away from that border,  
which is not that far.

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00:03:06,970 --> 00:03:10,310

because my grandparents, you know, lived right on the border

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00:03:10,310 --> 00:03:13,430

That kind of has stayed with me.

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00:03:13,430 --> 00:03:19,880

And then I got interested in borders.  
I got interested in other border areas.

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00:03:19,880 --> 00:03:24,700

Soon when I was a student here at the University of Vienna,

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00:03:24,700 --> 00:03:28,730

I decided to study border literature.

I'm a literature person.

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00:03:28,730 --> 00:03:34,920

And I got interested in the US-Mexican border.

So that's my field of expertise.

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00:03:34,920 --> 00:03:41,880

And as a, as a student,

I went to study at the University of Texas at Austin.

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00:03:41,880 --> 00:03:42,970

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00:03:42,970 --> 00:03:49,640

And I was, you know, still, still young then. And this was the early 1990s.

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00:03:53,200 --> 00:03:55,600

And This was right after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

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00:03:55,830 --> 00:03:59,700

I was not, at that point, interested, strangely enough,

48

00:03:59,700 --> 00:04:03,030

in the fall of the Iron Curtain. Now I think, no, I should have been.

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00:04:03,030 --> 00:04:07,010

And now I kind of like, why didn't I go to Berlin in 89,  
you know?

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00:04:07,010 --> 00:04:12,650

But I was, at that point,

I was, you know, only interested in the US -Mexican border.

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00:04:12,650 --> 00:04:16,580

And I think that's kind of what happens,  
that you want to go away.

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00:04:16,580 --> 00:04:20,830

And when I was asked in South Texas why I was interested in

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00:04:20,830 --> 00:04:25,010

in the border, in the border areas, in the borderlands, so to speak. I said, you know,

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00:04:25,010 --> 00:04:31,150

I said, you know,

it's because I also come from a border area, and I'm also interested in,

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00:04:31,150 --> 00:04:36,880

you know, and I said, this is, I think,

why I'm interested in borderlands issues.

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00:04:36,880 --> 00:04:41,700

And then in Texas, I studied the work of Gloria Anzaldua,

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00:04:41,700 --> 00:04:45,540

her famous book Borderlands, La Frontera.

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00:04:45,540 --> 00:04:51,540

And there, you know, I started to

understand that, of course, the term borders,

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00:04:51,540 --> 00:04:56,060

and borders mean, mean more than just territorial borders,

you know,

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00:04:56,060 --> 00:04:59,550

language borders and borders,  
as you said, racial borders,

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00:04:59,550 --> 00:05:02,940

borders and religion, psychological borders and so on.

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00:05:02,940 --> 00:05:07,160

And then a whole new kind of other field  
opened up, and I got interested in

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00:05:07,160 --> 00:05:11,040

all sorts of different borders.

Now, the borders of languages,

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00:05:11,040 --> 00:05:15,300

that's something that's always interested me,  
and the mixing of language, you know,

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00:05:15,300 --> 00:05:18,410

when you work on the US-Mexican border.

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00:05:18,410 --> 00:05:22,100

I'm a literature person, as I said,  
I got interested in what is called Chicano,

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00:05:22,100 --> 00:05:26,010

Chicano literature,  
I don't know, Chicanos are those, you know,

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00:05:26,010 --> 00:05:33,940

in the place where I was,  
in South Texas, those Mexicans who, you know,

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00:05:33,940 --> 00:05:39,370

some of whom have been born and  
could trace their parents, their ancestors

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00:05:39,370 --> 00:05:44,280

back to the early Spanish settlers,  
so they had been there long before

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00:05:44,280 --> 00:05:49,800

the English -speaking Anglos arrived, and it's very much interested in that

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00:05:49,800 --> 00:05:55,500

whole issue, also very much  
interested in the history of Texas and

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00:05:55,500 --> 00:06:00,670

the history of the Southwest in Mexican history  
and in US American history

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00:06:00,670 --> 00:06:03,320

and how it came together  
and then how it plays out literature.

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00:06:03,320 --> 00:06:09,730

There's, and this is something that  
stayed with me forever, I think.

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00:06:09,730 --> 00:06:16,730

And then years later now,  
also a couple of years ago, nine years ago to be precise,

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00:06:16,750 --> 00:06:22,530

I moved from Vienna to Saarland, Saarland University,

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00:06:22,530 --> 00:06:29,530

where I live now.

Saarland is an other border area.

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00:06:29,530 --> 00:06:34,420

And now, you know, that we have a center for borders there,

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00:06:34,420 --> 00:06:38,090

I wonder,

I'm like, well, you know, borders must mean something to me,

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00:06:38,090 --> 00:06:42,270

I get drawn to them. The town where I live is called Staabruecken.

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00:06:42,270 --> 00:06:45,470

and it's right on the border with France.

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00:06:45,470 --> 00:06:51,420

And it's very close to Schengen. Schengen is a Schengen is a small, small village, really.

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00:06:51,420 --> 00:06:54,910

It's close to us. So I'm right in that area where

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00:06:54,910 --> 00:07:02,250

where basically Germany, France, Luxembourg, Belgium meet in that area.

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00:07:02,250 --> 00:07:06,490

It's a very nice area.

And it's, it's, it's, the area has a name:

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00:07:06,490 --> 00:07:13,770

the Euro region., it's called the, the greater region, or la Grande Region, in French.

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00:07:13,770 --> 00:07:21,400

And we have a university network there,

the University of the Greater Region.

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00:07:21,400 --> 00:07:27,180

And now we're doing border studies.

I was very happy to meet other like-minded people.

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00:07:27,180 --> 00:07:32,080

And of course, most of my colleagues there work on that borderlands area,

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00:07:32,080 --> 00:07:36,950

because that too, the Saarland, is a very interesting state in Germany.

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00:07:36,950 --> 00:07:40,680

Because it all lived, well, it was part of Germany and

93

00:07:40,680 --> 00:07:43,020

it was part of France. It was an independent state.

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00:07:43,020 --> 00:07:46,970

And now it's been part of Germany since 1957.

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00:07:46,970 --> 00:07:51,970

So it's, you know, it has a very strong regional identity.

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00:07:51,970 --> 00:07:57,340

It doesn't, a lot of people do not consider themselves, you know, really German Germans,

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00:07:57,340 --> 00:08:03,580

but they're Saarlanders. You know, so it's kind of a very distinct regional identity

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00:08:03,580 --> 00:08:06,170

which I like very much.

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00:08:06,170 --> 00:08:11,410

And which I find fascinating,

because it also allows me now to draw

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00:08:11,410 --> 00:08:16,710

a kind of comparison.

So what I do now is I call comparative Border studies,

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00:08:16,710 --> 00:08:21,900

And I look at, you know,

and I found kind of like like -minded scholars

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00:08:21,900 --> 00:08:25,470

are also interested in language issues. Now, of course, it's French,

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00:08:25,470 --> 00:08:28,010

which is a little more complicated for me than Spanish.

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00:08:28,010 --> 00:08:34,960



But so that's kind of my personal take on it.

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00:08:34,960 --> 00:08:38,240

And, you know, and research -wise, I try to,

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00:08:38,240 --> 00:08:41,130

I mean, you're a historian.

I'm a literature person.

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00:08:41,130 --> 00:08:46,210

So what we both have in common is we work  
with stories, right? We work with texts.

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00:08:46,210 --> 00:08:52,600

We look into, of course,

I always also look into the historical context,

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00:08:52,600 --> 00:08:57,270

which is very, very important.

So recently, I have become interested in

110

00:08:57,270 --> 00:09:03,000

the US -Canada border, because the US-Canada border has also been, and become more

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00:09:03,000 --> 00:09:11,000

and become more secured in a lot of ways,  
more a bone of a contention.

112

00:09:11,000 --> 00:09:14,920

For years, I think everyone who also did border studies, you know,

113

00:09:14,920 --> 00:09:18,380

was primarily interested in issues of the US -Mexican border.

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00:09:18,380 --> 00:09:23,170

And now we've discovered so many other border areas and other.

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00:09:23,170 --> 00:09:27,760

And I've become interested in indigenous literatures.

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00:09:27,760 --> 00:09:35,800

I am currently working on literature, the arts also,

117

00:09:35,800 --> 00:09:43,000

cultural productions by indigenous people  
whose basically lands straddle the border

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00:09:43,000 --> 00:09:46,370

that is, you know who live north and south of the border.

119

00:09:46,370 --> 00:09:50,140

So I guess I'm interested in places.

And this is, I think, with borders,

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00:09:50,140 --> 00:09:55,530

the first thing that comes to my mind,  
that borders kind of cut through places.

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00:09:55,530 --> 00:10:03,640

And then I'm interested in sort of like the kind of new thing that emerges.

122

00:10:03,640 --> 00:10:06,130

That's my Gloria Anzaldua schooling you know,

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00:10:06,130 --> 00:10:10,550

the hybrid elements,

the border cultural aspects, you know, that

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00:10:10,550 --> 00:10:17,280

that different ways also of being and also different ways of living,

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00:10:17,280 --> 00:10:21,860

different ways of thinking that emerge border areas.

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00:10:21,860 --> 00:10:28,190

Recently, I've really become interested in what some scholars call border thinking,

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00:10:28,190 --> 00:10:35,180

you know, specific types of specific forms of knowledges that emerge in border areas.

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00:10:35,180 --> 00:10:38,780

And in terms of language, you know, you have language mixing,

129

00:10:38,780 --> 00:10:43,510

trans-languaging, all sorts of interesting things going on.

130

00:10:43,510 --> 00:10:46,840

So what I find interesting here is,

you know, that you see that

131

00:10:46,840 --> 00:10:49,490

there are so many people, [who] are interested in  
borders.

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00:10:49,490 --> 00:10:55,160

And I think most people, when you talk about borders, think of territorial borders first.

133

00:10:55,160 --> 00:11:01,000

But of course you can also think of borders and you can say, well, there's,

134

00:11:01,000 --> 00:11:06,010

I don't know, word boundaries-object verb but there's also a border there, right?

135

00:11:06,010 --> 00:11:07,870

So there's metaphorical borders.

136

00:11:07,870 --> 00:11:11,910

And I think I primarily, although I do also look into other, you know

137

00:11:11,910 --> 00:11:17,210

psychological borderlands and, you know, racial, as you said, language, but that still

138

00:11:17,210 --> 00:11:21,020

I think, always means that there is kind of a

139

00:11:21,020 --> 00:11:25,000

a distinction between one thing and another or something like that.

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00:11:25,000 --> 00:11:29,750

And then, as I've said, what I try to...

141

00:11:29,750 --> 00:11:34,470

What I try to focus on,  
and my view on this, is that I don't kind like to see

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00:11:34,470 --> 00:11:40,390

the one thing and the other and  
the border as an entity or a line separating it,

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00:11:40,390 --> 00:11:43,990

but rather, and this is,  
I think, the general shift in border studies

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00:11:43,990 --> 00:11:50,990

that move from the view of the border as a kind of static thing to bordering processes,

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00:11:50,990 --> 00:11:58,330

to all sorts of bordering practices, that exclusion, inclusion,

146

00:11:58,330 --> 00:12:04,670

but also the changing of borders, the moving of borders, the fluidity of borders,

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00:12:04,670 --> 00:12:08,130

and that kind of thing.

148

00:12:08,280 --> 00:12:08,280

So, how many minutes do I have?

20 minutes.

149

00:12:09,980 --> 00:12:10,980

Anyway.