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# On The Borderlines: Introductory Annotations

## 1 Experiencing Borderlines in Nature and Culture

The last days of August 2015 are unusually warm. Sitting at ease on the back porch of our tiny cottage in the White Mountains of New Hampshire on a late afternoon, I observe absentmindedly the restrained dance of the towering trees that mark the borders of our backyard. I am contemplating writing this introduction to *Borderlines*, an unfinished protocol of an amazing intellectual journey that I shared for the past three years with a remarkable group of young colleagues, students and visiting faculty at the Hebrew University. This collection of essays has occupied me throughout the summer. On this magical afternoon, writing an introductory article to such a textured and adventurous collection of essays, well beyond my field of expertise, appears a daunting task.

A miniscule detail appearing in the woods at the borders of the backyard sparks my somnolent inspiration. A yellowing leaf on the verge of turning into vivid red, the first one among the still sea of green leaves that my eye has captured this season, silently announces the beginning of the end of summer. This is a distinct sign of nature that one hardly experiences in Israel, where autumn is just a late, second summer waiting for the short winter to erupt. In the rapture of the intoxicating early evening of late summer, I experienced borderlines as a tangible embodiment, in lower case, of the otherwise abstract concept of *Borderlines* with a capital that constitutes the name of this volume. That fleeting moment of nature shifting its colors in front of my eyes provided me with a start. I had to write about an *unwritable* idea, to reflect on a word crucial to the mapping of our existence in the world, yet as illusive to grasp as the borderlines between the unbounded shades of the North Country autumn leaves.

From humankind's origins or, more specifically, from the beginnings of consciousness, monitoring nature's cycle of changing seasons was a crucial mechanism for survival. Cyclical and therefore predictable, even if sometimes surprising in its appearances and disappearances, the transition of the seasons marked the rhythms of social life and conditioned the emotional life of the individual psyche through the changes: from the plentiful light and heat of summer to the gloominess of autumn, the darkness and chill of winter, and the joy of spring's renewal. The borderlines between seasons however, are hard to determine. Humans first learned about the forthcoming changes intuitively, from the shifting patterns in nature's behavior. Later, astronomers learned to measure the seasons scientifically based on the cyclic movement of the earth around the sun: 21 September, 21 December, 21 March, and 21 June always re-turn on the "same" date to mark precisely the end of a season and the beginning of the next one. From time immemorial, humans have marked these dates with special rituals.

Scientists cannot, however, delineate the phenomenological borderlines of seasons because they vary in each latitude of the globe. This is a moment when the concepts of place and borderlines coalesce. Borderlines also vary, as we have noticed, in the deep latitudes of our consciousness. As the leaf in my backyard turned red this year on 30 August, in my innermost subjectivity, I experienced on this date – not on 21 September – the borderline between this summer and the ensuing fall, *pace* astronomers.

Ever since that late summer afternoon of initial inspiration and while editing the essays in this publication, I saw, heard, and felt borderlines at every step on my way, and they all shared one quality: they were all either blurred or blurring. Let me flesh this out with specific examples. Just a few weeks ago, I experienced shifting borderlines among passing, casual voices and bodies at the Frankfurt Airport, that gargantuan modern crossroads leading from and to every imaginable borderline. My impressions truly resonate with Zali Gurevitch's essay in this volume, aptly titled "On the Border: Barriers, Passages, Journeys."

For example, a young woman next to me was talking on her cellphone with earphones, oblivious, as is normative now, to her surroundings. (I was trying quite unsuccessfully to compose a section of the text you are reading at this moment.) What struck me was her language, a fluid, effortless, integral and obviously unconscious hybrid of (acquired) American English and (native) Russian. This was not the speech of a newcomer inserting a word here and there from her native language into the acquired one. It was rather a solid, unified language performed by a *virtuosa*, her intonation moving naturally from one language to the other, challenging the obvious syntactic, semantic and sonic borderlines that separate them.

In a second scene, a few minutes later (flights were, of course, delayed), I bumped into an extremely heterogeneous, from the point of view of bodily features, group of teenagers. They were interacting, as teenagers usually do, with close physical contact while chitchatting very fast, as teenagers usually do, in an unfamiliar language. As a cluster, they resembled a United Nations assembly (or an ad for United Colors of Benetton), so diverse were their colors, eyes, and complexion. Their language of communication however, was flawless, energetic, in short, very natural, in contrast to their stark physical dissimilarity. Trying desperately to identify this language (is it Finnish? Icelandic?), I felt abashed trying to solve this dissonance between voices and bodies, mortified by the underlying racial prejudice of my curiosity that kept me listening to these diverse bodies sharing the same language so naturally. Borderlines came back to my preoccupied mind, again, this time in the disguise of the embedded, axiomatic intuition that different bodies must speak different languages. Finally, I yielded to my nosiness and asked them. They were not surprised, for they obviously noticed my listening to them over several minutes.

These two incidents (clearly, I could find many others in every nook of the Frankfurt Airport) show that we live in an era of, as I articulated above, blurred and blurring borderlines. Languages, those discrete components of communication

carved out by humans from raw sound material since ancient times and turned into key markers of what was called “culture,” appear now as endangered species, wiped away by a hybrid American English inculcated through mass media and technological gadgets. Moreover, bodies are not homologous with languages any more. Bodies and technological devices have become one. Do not read for nostalgia here (a fleeting sensation that itself challenges borderlines of time and space) for a past of clear borderlines between cultures, languages, bodies and instruments, the human and the nonhuman. Read these scenes just as triggers, collected in spontaneous fieldwork, for deeper thinking about *Borderlines*.

By the way, it was Norwegian....

## 2 Genesis of a Project and its Borderlines

Technically a collection of essays, *Borderlines*, as hinted above, is also a form of protocol. Six years ago, while serving as head of the newly established School of the Arts at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, I invited a group of young scholars who had approached me for diverse reasons to an informal reception at our home on French Hill. This varied group of scholars (involved in theater, performing arts, visual arts, digital arts, music, sound studies, folklore, etc.) were, for the most part, concerned in some way with the impact of new technologies on the arts. “Diverse reasons” is a euphemism for seeking a future in academia near the end of the doctoral phase or in the early post-doctoral one. I had nothing concrete to offer these remarkable young people except my genuine attention, which is (still) not budgeted by the university. The dialogue was lively and engaging, the agenda an open one.

To make a short story shorter, we decided on taking two steps. The first was to establish a collaborative seminar at the Hebrew University at which the group would meet regularly but also would be open to a new generation of students interested in the intersections between the arts and new technologies. The second step depended on the first; if after the first experimental and highly interdisciplinary seminar, we felt we were accomplishing something, we would narrow our focus to more specific issues and try to recruit the necessary means of support. It thus happened that, in May 2013, the Israel Science Foundation announced the awarding of a most generous grant to a group of professors from several Israeli universities of which I was a part. Da’at Hamakom, The Center for the Study of Cultures of Place in the Modern Jewish World (I-CORE in the Study of Modern Jewish Culture, grant no. 1798/12), an academic think tank, thus came into being. With the backing of Da’at Hamakom, we dedicated the second seminar (2013) to Maps, and a third one (2014) to Soundscapes. We also benefited from support by the Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel School for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the Hebrew University.

In light of Da'at Hamakom's goals, the seminars then turned their focus on the concept of place as constituted in the arts through acts of mapping and sonic representations, while continuing to examine the role of new technologies in these creative processes. The budget enabled us to invite two guest scholars from abroad who are renowned for their scholarship on the relations between new technologies and the arts in relation to place, Irit Rogoff from the Department of Visual Cultures at the University of London (Maps) and Brandon Labelle from the Bergen Academy of Art and Design in Norway (Soundscapes).

The seminars were experimental, challenging the borderlines of established academic disciplines and hierarchies. Furthermore, they contested the separation between the academy and the "outside world" itself. Senior professors worked together with outstanding graduate students at the start of their careers; scholars interacted with performing artists in the fields of sound and visuals and with social activists; and the public at large participated, actively or passively, in several events generated or produced by the seminars.

Some of these events took place off the campus, on the streets of Jerusalem (such as on the Jerusalem light rail discussed below) or at the Hansen House (formerly Leprosarium Jesus Hilfe), an innovative center for art, design, and technology, which became a second home for our seminars. Hansen House hosts the Mamuta Art and Media Center run by the Sala-Manca Artists Collective, and these associations became deeply involved with and committed to the academic endeavors of the seminars. The Maps seminar, in fact, opened with an artistic happening called *Borderline*, which, in the long run, inspired the title of this collection. The event was part of *Traces 5 – The 5th Biennale for Drawing in Israel* produced by Sala-Manca and curated by Tal Yahas with the participation of Josef Sprinzak, Hadas Ophrat, Lezli Rubin-Kunda, Adi Kaplan, and Shachar Carmel with Dudu Carmel, and Shira Legman with the ensemble Musica Nova. The liminal nature of the Hansen House and its history became the subject of artistic and theoretical reflection at this happening as manifested in the studies by Diego Rotman, "The Fragile Boundaries of Paradise: The Paradise Inn Resort at the Former Jerusalem Leprosarium," and by Josef Sprinzak, "Map Song – Poetic Intersections between Sound, Maps, and Performance," included in this volume.

In addition, the Hebrew University campus on Mount Scopus itself became an object of critical inquiry in both the Maps and Soundscapes seminars, leading to a reflexive examination of the very place where students and faculty were meeting. Artistic interventions into the nature of this place are the subject of the essay "Three Trees: Environmental Projects on Mt. Scopus, 2003-2015" by Ran Morin, the artist who reshaped symbolically-loaded sites on Mount Scopus and its slopes. These performances, exhibitions, and interventions thus became an integral part of an ongoing learning process rather than a regular university "course."

The Maps and Soundscapes seminars generated discussions focusing on concepts of borders and their markings as expressed in the arts. The distance from

those seminars to the present book shortened, as it became clear that a protocol of these discussions could be shared with the public at large in an ongoing conversation. We therefore expanded the borders of *Borderlines* through a public call for papers to colleagues from around the globe who share similar concerns.

The present, multifaceted volume thus includes analyses of works of art generated by or related to our seminars, theoretical reflections by some of its participants on place, boundaries, and the arts, and original contributions from peers who responded to our call to meditate on borderlines. As expected, this protocol is by nature fragmentary. It is a modest posting on the side of an endless road running from the very origins of human communication— one based on difference (and therefore on the institution of borderlines, such as those separating discrete phonemes to generate language)—to the unpredictable frontiers of the “fourth revolution,” where humanity appears to dissolve within the technologies it designed.

### 3 Borderlines of Language

Borderlines as a plural form of the noun “borderline” is not a *bona fide* term in English, according to “normative” dictionaries, which define “borderline” as either an adjective or an adverb (and even as such it is, not surprisingly, a very modern one, first documented in 1907). Until recently, “borderlines” as a noun existed only as an unhyphenated two-word concept, “border lines,” used to denote ultimately unambiguous partitions, as in Daniel Boyarin’s *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006). In Boyarin’s argument, border lines emerge at a critical moment for Western civilization, when Judaism and Christianity split. Border-makers imposed from the top down the ultimate distinctions between Judaism and Christianity, defining some beliefs and practices as Christian and others as Jewish or heretical. Boyarin contends that these border-makers mobilized ideas, behaviors, and people to one side or another of the artificial, yet definitive border lines of no return – at least for the moment. As we shall attempt to show, this semantic irreversibility embedded in the compound word “border lines” contrasts with the plasticity of the combined single word “borderlines.” Clearly, in this case, written language actually visualizes meaning with iconicity.

Language, however, is “normative” as much as conventions permit. The semantic field of “borderline” thus acquired a life of its own as any symbol does. As an adjective, “borderline” belongs mainly to the language of psychologists, and it is not an auspicious term. Borderline personality disorder addresses precisely the perimeters of the existential condition we routinely understand as “normality.” Notably, by joining border *and* line into a “borderline” mental condition, language actually comes to denote the removal of the barriers that define the normal Self as it was constructed by society. A “borderline personality” experiences the world as fluid,

confusing reality with fiction, real with imagined voices, and so forth. This usage of *borderline* already points to its problematic, highly subjective nature. Moreover, we feel its treacherous overtones that problematize social order and the embedded possibility of abusing the ostensibly consensual power relations between community and individual.

Indeed, Madonna's 1984 hit "Borderline" (from her debut album that transformed her into an icon) was one of the earliest and widespread English texts to transmute this term from an adjective or adverb into a noun. "Borderline" in Madonna's voice (of course, the performing voice that we believe is speaking, not the actual author of the lyrics) is a zone, an undetermined, treacherous place at the edges of the most intimate and delicate (and cultural historians would claim, constructed) intersubjective relationship, love. In the ambiguous phrasing of the song, *borderline* seems to acquire a certain corporeality. The betrayed person appears to address it as a subject: "Borderline, feels like I'm going to lose my mind / You just keep on pushing my love over the borderline." We have all experienced too well this shifting zone in our existence, as did even the dispassionate compilers of the dictionary, who understood *borderline* as an "intermediate position or state, not fully classifiable as one thing or its opposite, [such as] a borderline state between waking and sleeping" (Webster).

## 4 Mapping Borderlines

"Between waking and sleeping" – I could not have thought of a more poetic counterpart to the shifting zone between the seasons of nature with which I opened these remarks. By pushing the noun "*borderline*" into its plural in the present project, we have attempted to emphasize its multidimensionality. *Borderlines* as a concept and image evolved, of course, from our delving deeply into mapping. First and foremost, *borderlines* are associated with strokes drawn on a two-dimensional paper map that symbolically trace the partitions between real territories we call "countries." The term "country," of course, denotes both an amorphous plot of land (as in countryside) and the territory acquired by a political entity through force in the course of history, whether recently or in a more remote past. From this perspective, *borderlines* are a violent irruption upon the once unbordered land of the planet.

*Borderlines*, however, are generally not marked on the territory itself; they exist only for those who have access to the map and were trained to decode it. *Borderlines* materialize in real life only when passing through a frontier marker, in fact a point within the continuum of the *borderline*, when moving from one territorial unit to another through officially determined routes, such as airports or highways. *Borderlines* thus often invite subversion, because the authorities try to prevent those who feel trapped within an undesirable territory from crossing from one side to

another (see the essay “Can we talk about Cartography without Borders?” by Eylat Van-Essen in this volume).

Today more than ever, borderlines are vividly haunting us from the media screens and political platforms. They confront us, for example, in the form of the corpse of a Syrian child who drowned in the Mediterranean in a failed attempt to transgress borderlines. The beloved sea that supposedly signifies the blurring of borderlines has become a graveyard for those aspiring to reach the other side of borderlines. Moreover, this tragedy paradoxically engendered the transgression of another tenuous borderline, that between reality and art. The image of the Syrian toddler, which has become iconic of the brutality inherent in geopolitical borderlines, has undergone several artistic recreations that challenge the borderlines between original and copy, between the realistic and fabricated image.

From this perspective, the long wall now separating the territory of the State of Israel from the West Bank is a unique, gigantic and perturbing on the ground translation of the stroke that marks the borderline on the map, which, in this case, was drawn unilaterally by agents of the Israeli state. During the 2016 American election campaign, this concrete borderline (in all senses) has become a model for emulation for those proposing to concretize (in all senses) the historically porous Mexican-American borderline. Not by mere coincidence, *Borderlands*, the natural cognomen of *Borderlines*, is the title of one of the most memorable albums celebrating the wildly borderless music stemming from that contested frontier.<sup>1</sup>

These concrete borderlines, however, can also become the largest canvases, once the artistic imagination challenges the impenetrability of the material borderlines via intensive and extensive graffiti that erase the gray immutability of the separation wall. One can even go a step further and transform the ground itself into a canvas on which borderlines are drawn. Performing artist Francis Alÿs did this in his work *The Green Line*, in which he walks the Green Line, a temporary cease-fire borderline whose temporality is, for the time being, fixed. Here the borderlines between the temporal and the ex-temporal appear to collapse.

A unique part of our Maps seminar was, on one of our fieldtrips to the edge of our Mt. Scopus campus, the opportunity to perceive the colossal wound of concrete separating Israelis from Palestinians, carved deep on the ground of a land that many experience as holy, as a tangible object rather than as an image. This trip entailed

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<sup>1</sup> *Borderlands: From Conjunto to Chicken Scratch* (Smithsonian Folkways 40418, released in 1993). The album exemplifies the musical culture of the Rio Grande Valley of Texas and southern Arizona. It is a mix of musical styles and genres that defies any clear categorization, including “Yaqui Pascola dance, Tohono O’odham fiddle band music, and Native American Chicken Scratch sound with traditional conjunto polkas and corridos, Latino-influenced big bands, northern Mexican and German-rooted norteño, modern conjunto and orquesta Tejana” (from the album’s jacket notes).



transgressing palpable borderlines, a project whose images one can view on the webpage that will accompany this book.<sup>2</sup>

## 5 Sonic Borderlines

If the Maps seminar triggered *Borderlines*, the Soundscape one elicited even more abstract conceptualizations of the term. Unlike most courses on Soundscapes, our seminar on this subject focused on mapping through sound. Our guest, Brandon Labelle, a scholar and artist, invited us to a journey along the path of Jerusalem's relatively new light rail, an iron wound in an already wounded city that crosses its urban landscape from north to south. Olga Levitan's contribution to this volume succinctly summarizes the complex bundle of "big" geopolitical issues and "small" everyday practices evoked by the light rail partially through the format of a diary, which Labelle asked the participants to write as a graphic testimony of their journey[s].

The Soundscape seminar reminded me of two sonic borderlines that have been perennially at the back of my mind, the one between speech and song and, more significantly, the one between silence and sound in nature and culture. The significance of the relationship between speech and song is an ongoing issue in ethnomusicology and linguistics. While writing these lines, I received an announcement that the 23rd International Council of Traditional Music Colloquium, which took place on 20-22 May 2015 in Nanterre, France, was titled "Between Speech and Song: Liminal Utterances," additional proof that the topic is far from exhausted. The symposium was convened to address "liminal utterances, at the border between speech and song ... utterances such as laments, nursery rhymes, Qur'anic chanting, recitative or the use of the monotone voice in liturgy, iconicity of language, scat, glossolalias, melodized narrations, sung tales, vocal intonation in poetical performances and in political discourses, among others."

Soundscapes of traditional synagogues, one of my main areas of research and a specific focus in the projects of Da'at Hamakom, certainly challenge the borderlines between sonic categories such as noise, glossolalia, speech, recitation, cantillation, and melody. This inexhaustible palette of sound configurations of synagogues is rooted in other sets of borderlands that mark and reflect the foundations of Jewish life – between studying and praying, petitioning and thanksgiving, experiencing the daily and cleaving to the supernal, the responsibilities of the individual and the demands of community, purity and impurity. Each Jewish prayer assembly is fixed and open, repeated and unique, cyclical and distinctive. It evolves between the borderlands of individual silent devotion, dialogue between leader and congregation, thick clouds of

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<sup>2</sup> The *Borderlines* webpage will be embedded in the website [www.daat-hamakom.com](http://www.daat-hamakom.com).



sound with diverse degrees of heterophony, concerted singing, and any combination of them.

Confronting the sounds of nature with human-generated ones, a second concern of my inquiry, opens a new line of thinking about borderlines. I do not need to detail here the alarming proportions that human intervention in nature has reached in our age. One ethereal aspect worth mentioning (the issue arose in our seminar, too) is the idea of human-generated sound as pollution and the struggle to curb it through legislation. For example, the U. S. National Park Service's draft of management policies on soundscapes<sup>3</sup> is illuminating precisely because it derives from the public sphere rather than from an academic initiative. It delves into the borderlines of language signification in its legislative attempt to cope with the borderlines between the sounds of nature and humanly generated sounds:

Natural sound cannot be protected if the soundscape of which it is part is not protected. While the words "protect," "preserve," and "conserve" can have different connotations for different readers, the proposed policies state at the outset that these three words have "interchangeable" (by which we meant "synonymous" or "identical") meanings for the purposes of policies. Therefore, in respect to the natural sound and the soundscape, the proposed policy calls for preventing or minimizing unacceptable impacts to this natural resource. Although the words "undesirable" and "unacceptable" have different levels of intensity, in both case in respect to soundscapes, the policy direction is to prevent the intrusion of those noises caused by humans that either would disrupt the natural processes mediated by the natural soundscape or reduce the level of enjoyment experienced by park visitors. The soundscape policy has been modified to reflect better the diversity of the NPS, which in addition to many natural parks includes sites such as the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park and the George Washington Memorial Parkway, and numerous urban sites for which it would be virtually impossible to minimize or eliminate human-caused sounds.<sup>4</sup>

Sonic borderlines are complicated here by a discourse of intrusion into a primordial, pre-human natural order and the enjoyment that primordialism can offer to humans. A romantic return to the sonic natural order is the kernel of a paradox embedded in this impersonal senatorial dialogue. Only the hearing apparatus of the human listener (from ear to brain) can "materialize" the sounds of nature. The issue is thus not a nature/culture clash, "culture" meaning the very loud symphony of progress orchestrated by noisy machines, and less noisy but nevertheless equally annoying smartphones, but rather a public attempt to monitor the borderlines between different human practices of hearing.

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<sup>3</sup> The draft came up for discussion in 2005 at a hearing before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on National Parks.

<sup>4</sup> This subcommittee belongs to the Committee on Energy and National Resources, United States Senate, One Hundredth Nine Congress, First Session, November 1, 2005, U.S. Government Printing Office (2008), 66–7.

The text quoted above reflects modern anxieties about the extinction of the natural order. Individuals such as acoustic ecologist George Hempton trace these borderlines of sonic tolerability. Hempton, “who has traveled the globe recording the vanishing sounds of nature, reported that the average daytime noise-free interval in the USA wilderness areas and national parks has shrunk to less than five minutes.”<sup>5</sup> Nature’s sounds become a resource to protect because, as Hempton claims, “the extent to which the natural sound space is marred by the din of generators, cell phone ring tones, and tinny noise leaking out of loose iPod earphones reflects the extent to which its intrinsic character is compromised.”<sup>6</sup> The political clout that such an argument has accrued led the U.S. National Park Service to declare sound as a natural resource to preserve, leading to the establishment of the Natural Sounds Program to “protect, maintain, or restore acoustical environments throughout the National Park System.”<sup>7</sup> The NSP argument in the above statement is telling: “Our ability to see is a powerful tool for experiencing our world, but sound adds a richness that sight alone cannot provide. In many cases, hearing is the only option for experiencing certain aspects of our environment.” Put differently, our existence in the world is marked, according to this document, by two senses, seeing and hearing, and both need consensual public monitoring of their borderlands.

Basing our experience of living exclusively on images and sounds ignores another clear borderline that is taken for granted. Many, especially the seeing- and hearing-impaired, would argue in favor of taking into account the tactile and olfactory senses. Prioritizing the eye and the ear unjustifiably separates our sensorial experience into two exclusive areas. Our seminars, however, did favor the visual and the sonic as the defining means to address the concept of place. This *a posteriori* reflexive critique benefits, as one can see, from thinking about borderlines.

## 6 Writing Borderlands

The essays in this volume “write” borderlines from a wide variety of perspectives, as one may expect from scholars and artist-scholars representing diverse disciplines, educational backgrounds, countries, and generations. The pervasiveness of borderlines as an intellectual, and no less important, as an artistic and political preoccupation in the contemplations of these authors, however, is noteworthy.

The diverse nature of the borderlines featured in this compilation shows the plasticity of the concept. Rivers, at times, are clear, majestic, natural borderlines that

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5 Leslee Goodman, “Gordon Hempton: On The Search For Silence In A Noisy World,” *The Sun* no. 417, September 2010, [http://thesunmagazine.org/issues/417/quiet\\_please](http://thesunmagazine.org/issues/417/quiet_please), accessed August 5, 2016.

6 *Ibid.*

7 <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1050/index.htm>, accessed 5 August 2016.

determine human geographies. Creative artists, however, can map them in depth, excavate them as it were, as Selina Springett demonstrates. In her essay, “Deep Mapping the River: a Palimpsest,” she renders the most varied interpretations and understandings that, in turn, have the potential to nurture social responsibility. She calls for the abolition of established mapping practices in favor of what she calls deep mapping, “a language for describing alternative frameworks that can be used to confront processes of inclusion and exclusion, while also striving towards a more democratic, socially engaging, and environmentally present storytelling.” In contrast, in Ayala Amir’s “Crossing Literary Borderlines,” borderlines appear in the context of fictional texts, as creations of language, marking boundaries of subjectivity and the personality of fictional figures. Amir is thrilled to push the concept of borderlines beyond mapping, transforming it into a tool of literary criticism. These two examples alone, so distant from each other, are nonetheless linked by the principle of separation between realms that nurture each other in the process of interpretation.

Modern sophisticated technologies appear in some essays as a major factor in the blurring of experiential borderlines that, until relatively recently, were taken for granted. Interestingly, the visual and the aural come to the forefront again as the senses through which one experiences borderlines and their fading. Yaron Jean discusses the sharp shift in the sonic experience of war, i.e., the gradual detachment of the visual from the sonic, a process that started with the adoption of new techniques of aircraft combat in World War I. This process culminated in the most sophisticated modern weaponry that distances combatants almost completely from their objectives via technologies of total surveillance (satellites, drones), precise targeting (powerful computing), and devastating firepower. Referring to this “mute warfare” as a “borderline experience that detaches the virtual from the real,” Jean provides another compelling case study that fleshes out the new alignment of the senses characterizing the era of the “fourth revolution.” In another instance, Hava Aldouby illustrates how the experience of place becomes dynamic and fluid through the artist’s use of modern techniques that extend the borderlines between canvas and celluloid. In these borderlines between visual arts media, memory paradoxically asserts itself precisely at the moment in which images disappear from view. Clearly, these are borderlines between potential representations of “the world out there” that collapse in their encounter with new technologies.

Theater, the ultimate illusion blurring the gap between the real and the imagined in terms of space and time, offers a unique stage (so to speak) for meditating on mapping and borderlines. In “Un/Mapping Mindscapes in David Greig’s Theater,” Dilek Inan examines Greig’s “portrayal of the contemporary human condition as transnational and moving beyond borders.” By moving between cartography and the theater stage, this Scottish playwright champions a sensual dimension of space marking that blurs the borderline between the real and the imagined. The protagonist of Greig’s play, as analyzed by Inan, fails in his attempt to write the cartography of

his real Berlin walks because he is possessed by his own memories of the city. The mappable Berlin and the Berlin of his imagination are thus in dissonance.

Similarities and divergences between the experience of visual and sonic borderlines pairs Inan's essay with Ruthie Abeliovich's "Vocal Borderlines: A Study of a Lamentation Recording from Habima's Performance of *The Eternal Jew*." Her essay attempts to deconstruct the unique sound of lament. Building upon Gershom Scholem's argument that lament "is neither speech nor silence" and that "it negates content and thus reveals nothing, yet at the same time, it conceals nothing," Abeliovich addresses the borderlines implicit in the unique performance of a lament by the actress Hanna Rovina. The actress simultaneously gives voice to modern Hebrew speech and a traditional synagogue intonation. Rovina emits the quintessential sound of secular Zionism alongside the diasporic Eastern European chant that indexes the "cultural and mental Jewish world that the Zionist enterprise sought to supersede." By performing on the borderline between what at the time was perceived as conflicting conceptions of Jewish culture, Rovina's voice "posited the sonic memory as representative of an introverted recognition of belonging to a place and thus presented the borderline as a fluid place."

Brandon Labelle's contribution, "Invisibilities," based on his keynote address at our Soundscapes seminar, considers borderlines as implied in the concept of invisibility in relation to the visual practices that dominate the experience of modern subjectivity. We were initially surprised that Brandon addressed the negation of visualization as a topic for a seminar dealing with sound. He appealed to us to "understand the oppositions between visibility and invisibility as a complex borderline around which issues of belonging, empowerment, expulsion, and disappearance play out." Furthermore, he declared, being invisible "means operating beyond accountability" and visibility "operates as a powerful borderline defining the limits of the permissible and shaping how we may imagine and enact our own agency." Eventually, sound does appear in Labelle's text – as an invisibility. Sound, he claims, "continually supplements, disrupts, and animates what we see. ... Sounds move invisibly within and through the spatial volumes of rooms and buildings." Sound is elusive but also intensively present because we hear more than we can see; it thus "offers a compelling medium for invisible practices, for negotiating the powers of visualization, and for producing another form of public potential." New forms of political action ("public engagement" in LaBelle's vocabulary) can surface from the new borderlines emerging from the invisible, borderlines that are "often hidden or obfuscated by the power plays of the visible."

LaBelle's theoretical platform finds a local and intense application in Nili Belkind's detailed ethnography of System Ali's cultural interventions across the very concrete borderline between the cities of Bat Yam and Jaffa, south of Tel Aviv. Through everyday expressive practices and sociality, this project, or "platform" as Belkind defines it, opens a public space for voices and visibilities that narrate a sense of alterity and displacement rendered invisible by political authority. By intervening

in the sanctioned social order, these actors create a place where their visibility is expressed in unprecedented dialogues. In this case study, the movable place that materialized ex nihilo is the borderline where alienated subjectivities find each other to become visible at least for the window of time in which the event takes place.

LaBelle's final comment that "invisibility demonstrates that borderlines are sites of disputed processes that at times solidify but at other times disappear to reappear elsewhere" succinctly summarizes one of the main themes that occupy this volume. Our project departed from clear borderlines drawn on traditional maps whose stability was shattered by their illusiveness. Emphasizing the diverse powers and interests embedded in the ostensible solidity of borderlines and their potential cruelty, as we have seen above, we moved into a critique of the modern concept of place as a space defined by borderlines. Borderlines emerged as porous, uncertain, negotiable, ephemeral, and erasable. The line's ambiguity camouflages the instability of the concept of borderlines, which, indeed, represents a wide zone of contention rather than a thin area of certainty. The arts, the focus of our project, constitute the sphere that effectively and dramatically stimulate public awareness and a critique of the centrality of borderlines to human experience.

## 7 Bottomlines

This ongoing project, for we have learned that *Borderlines* can never be final or static, benefited from many students and colleagues who participated in the seminars and the various related conferences and informal gatherings. Naming all will produce a long list. They all know how thankful we are for their inspired contributions. Many of the pillars of this scholarly and artistic adventure are the writers whose essays are included in this volume; you can enjoy their scholarship and artistry first hand. The remaining names appear in the testimonies of the seminars uploaded onto the webpage of *Borderlines* (see note 2 above).

One exception, however, is due. This project would never see the light of the press were it not for the diligence, authority, and patience (particularly with me) of my co-editor of this volume, Dr. Ruthie Abeliovich.

Finally, we owe special thanks to our language editor, Dr. Stefani Hoffman, for her professionalism and erudite comprehension of the heterogeneity of this compilation.

Edwin Seroussi  
Bethlehem, New Hampshire, between August 2015 and August 2016