

THE ROUTLEDGE COMPANION TO GENDER AND BORDERLANDS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

The Case for Globalizing Gender and Borderlands

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In the short documentary *Trans*it*, produced by lawyer and legal studies scholar Mariza Avgeri (2020), viewers listen as Cristina (not her real name), a transgender woman from Iraq, and Ilios (also not their real name), a gender-nonconforming person from Syria, interview each other about their experiences of being asylum-seekers in Greece, a place described as being Europe’s “frontline” for contemporary migration (Kuschminder and Waidler 2020). The military rhetoric of Greece’s borders (and Turkey’s, in the Kuschminder and Waidler essay) as needing to adopt a defensive posture against human mobility and migration notwithstanding, the documentary co-interview represents Avgeri’s

effort to centre the voices of trans and gender nonconforming migrants and refugees in a context where their invisibility both in their communities and in the asylum process hinders their access to justice, education, work, social life and personal expression.

(Avgeri 2023: 126)

In the documentary, Cristina explains that while life in Iraq was difficult and dangerous for her as a transgender woman, life in Greece was differently challenging: “The difference between Iraq and Greece, is that in Iraq they will kill you, [whereas] here in Greece you live but you die slowly.” In Greece, discrimination cuts across “Other” identities: according to Cristina, “There is racism against Muslims and on LGBT issues.” Ilios, on the other hand, agrees with Cristina that there is intersectional racism, but feels less fear of experiencing everyday violence because of identifying as queer. Where Cristina experiences discrimination as a trans woman in Greece, Ilios describes feeling free: “I feel free because I’m queer so it feels more comfortable” but explains that “Integration is difficult” and “this division of society [...] creates many difficulties.”

Cristina’s and Ilios’ asylum-seeking experiences in Greece as an Iraqi transgender woman and a Syrian gender-nonconforming person offer insight into the multiple ways that gender identity and cross-border mobilities, or indeed the immobility and stagnation of excruciatingly slow asylum-seeking processes, overlap and intersect. In *Trans*it* Cristina and Ilios reveal the ways in which gender, borders, and borderlands are not isolated concepts, sites, experiences, or frames. In fact, these concepts not only intersect but, as Cristina and Ilios’ narratives demonstrate, gender and borderlands are mutually constitutive and historically, spatially, and temporally contingent.

As Ilios laments, in Greece “there is no complete understanding of our subject” (qtd in Avgeri 2020), and it is noteworthy that Ilios does not specify this “subject” – which could encompass experiences of civil war, being Muslim in Greece, occupying a non-normative gender identity, and more – as a singular experience. It is from this figurative position of incompleteness – and parallel comparable positions across the globe – that this volume begins. We take up the challenge of gaining a fuller, *global* understanding of the interplay of gender and borderlands and of making visible the practices and processes by which gender and – and in – the borderlands function and how they are deployed.

Sometimes these practices and processes work in concert, and sometimes they are in tension with each other. The narratives shared in *Trans*it* and in the chapters of this volume reflect and engage with the complexity of the relationship between gender and borderlands, as well as highlighting their shared concerns. Conceptually, borders evoke a literal sense of place alongside contradictory and complementary images of ebbs and flows; migration, mobility, and movement; diasporic processes and identities; transience and permanence; security and precarity, and more. Likewise, the concept of gender spotlights the shaded artifice (and material realities) of binaries of public and private identities and presentations; the tension between vulnerability and agency; and its constructedness and situatedness. By analyzing the multivalent complexities of gender and borderlands in tandem, this volume develops a global and dynamic understanding of how they exist relationally, mutually constituting each other.

This book, therefore, places a “complexly intersectional” (Lorber 2006: 452) understanding of gender at the forefront of this increasingly global study of borderlands. By bringing together scholars who have been working at the intersections of gender studies and border studies from multiple disciplinary perspectives, we examine the “highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination” (Pratt 2008: 7) of borderlands as they play out in, influence, and reflect gender dynamics at a global scale. We understand both “borderlands” and “gender” as multivalent categories that are always at risk of coercive control or containment and we have developed this volume premised on the conviction that research on both gender and borderlands must not be similarly policed by the constraints of what can sometimes feel like narrow disciplinary epistemological positions and research methodologies. To that end, this book includes essays from – and many of which blend – an exceptionally wide range of fields and disciplines to develop a rigorous approach to the composite study of gender and borderlands. The essays span history, literature, and cultural studies – the three areas with which we as co-editors perhaps identify the most – as well as anthropology, criminology, development studies, film, geography, international relations, media studies, performing arts, political science, public administration, religious studies, sociology, and the visual arts. The book also draws on a wide range of critical methods and interdisciplinary fields and positions, including area studies, border studies, decolonial theory, feminist, gender, and queer theories, Indigenous studies and theories, mobility and migration studies, postcolonial theory, and transnational studies.

In this introductory chapter, we first outline our approach to globalizing the study of gender and borderlands and how that has informed the book’s structure. This is the most expansive analysis of the twin terms gender and borderlands to date, drawing on case studies from North, Central, and South America; western, eastern, and southern Africa; western, north, and eastern Europe; South Asia and eastern Asia; Australia; and the South Pacific. We combine a comparative framework, through which chapters concerned with analyzing comparable gendered experiences in different geographical regions are placed in dialogue with each other, alongside more synergetic frameworks in which conceptual, theoretical, and/or methodological insights from multiple geographies

and disciplines are combined. Next, we explain our approach to selecting and supporting contributors through the publication process, and how that changed during the project, both because of global circumstances and because of our own reflections on our scholarly ethos and critical and personal positionalities. Finally, we draw together some of the main themes of the book, emphasizing the comparative and interdisciplinary insights that have emerged, and spotlight areas of future research we hope the work will stimulate. These include the interaction of gender positions, identities, experiences, and frames with the religious, political, and civic institutions of borderlands to produce creative forms of liminality; the asymmetrical and intersectional distribution of economic opportunities and risks in gendered experiences of cross-border mobilities; the mutual constitution of borders and bodies as simultaneous sites of gendered oppression and resistance; the complexly intersectional and sometimes mutually informative relationships between interpersonal and gender-based violence and different forms of structural violence; and the generative forms of resistance emerging from ideas, experiences, and practices of radical relationality. As the book demonstrates, the composite field of gender and borderlands offers fertile ground for further work, and we gesture toward these in this introductory chapter and in our introductory comments throughout the *Companion*.

Globalizing Gender and Borderlands

When we began developing this volume, we found that interdisciplinary, intersectional understandings of gender had largely been missing from the global study of borderlands. As we finalize the manuscript in late 2023, we are heartened to see a number of recently funded projects focusing on gender and borderlands, such as “Gender, Borders, Memory” based at FU Berlin, the European University Institute’s “Intimate borders: race, gender and family on the move” and “The Borders of Gender: Law, Securitization, and Trans and Non-Binary Subjectivities” at the University of Melbourne, as well as publications that develop the global approach to borders advanced in this *Companion*, such as Jane Freedman, Alice Latouche, Adelina Miranda, Nina Sahraoui, Glenda Santana de Andrade, and Elsa Tyszler’s edited collection *The Gender of Borders: Embodied Narratives of Migration, Violence and Agency* (2023). We see our volume as actively shaping the direction of these major critical conversations, which we argue are crucial to the future of this composite field. Indeed, in assessing the state of historical scholarship in 2011, Merry Wiesner-Hanks noted “relatively little intersection between transnational history – and global history more broadly – and the history of gender and sexuality,” despite both sub-fields being preoccupied with movements across, interconnections between, and challenges to borders of multiple kinds (361). Where such intersections had taken place, they had proven extremely fruitful for understanding issues of citizenship and civil rights, the diversity of sexual and gender identities, colonialism, national identity, migration, and intermarriage in a variety of historical contexts but were relatively rare in the field as a whole (Wiesner-Hanks 2011: 364).

It has been more than three decades since Chicana feminist and activist Gloria Anzaldúa published her influential hybrid text *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), theorizing

the psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands, and spiritual borderlands [...] physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy.

(Anzaldúa 1987: vi)

Anzaldúa's famous statement – which underpins and links much of the scholarship in this book – ignited what would become the contemporary field of border studies. Border studies is a flourishing inter- and multidisciplinary field that has now expanded to consider multiple geographies beyond its “birthplace” at the United States-Mexico border (Michaelson and Johnson 1997: 1). Diverse sexualities, marriage and family life, the racialized and gendered violence of colonialism, sexual violence, and women's political activism and feminism have similarly been major themes in the Chicana/o studies scholarship focused on the Mexico-United States borderlands that Anzaldúa's work helped to inspire, alongside exploitative systems of transnational labor and trade (Saldívar-Hull 2000; Castañeda 2003; Castañeda et al 2007; Perales 2011). Scholars from a range of disciplines have taken up the challenge to globalize gender and borderlands by examining specific issues from a wider range of geographical perspectives beyond the Mexico-United States border, such as gendered experiences of migration (Sirriyeh 2013; Shekhawat and Aurobinda 2017; Hiralal and Jinnah 2018; Uhde and Ezzeddine 2019), cross-border marriages (Constable 2004; Williams 2010), women's resistance to borders (Román-Odio and Sierra 2011), sexuality and border control (Holzberg, Madörin, and Pfeifer 2021), and the impact of coloniality on gender discourses (Tlostanova 2010).

In an important volume that examined migration, border crossing, and gender's intersection with race and sexuality in a range of geographies, including North America, South Africa, and the United Kingdom, Jane Aaron, Henrice Altink, and Chris Weedon called for further research that would more systematically and expansively gender border studies. They highlighted the tendency in existing scholarship to “equate gender with women” and to overlook how gender interacts with “other markers of difference, including religion, class, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity” (Aaron, Altink, and Weedon 2010: 12). By embedding this more systematic and expansive examination of gender within borderlands studies, we not only work to set the agenda for the future of border studies but also ensure that the agenda takes into account the multiple lived experiences of people at borderlands across the globe. Given that both borders and gender are heavily policed *on the ground*, we seek to ensure that such policing is exposed, critiqued, and avoided here, not least because both gender and borders are inevitably experienced differently in different cultural and national contexts, and are not always – and should not always be – easily legible or translatable between locations, experiences, or groups.

Our core aim in this *Companion*, therefore, is to showcase the multifaceted ways in which gender and the borderlands intersect, highlighting common ground and acknowledging that a “seamless” imposition of a methodology for understanding gender and borderlands would lead to inevitable elisions and lacunae. Indeed, we inquire after a sense of the global even while, as Walter Mignolo and Madina V. Tlostanova put it in their influential essay on border thinking, “the distinction global/local is based on a territorial, not a border epistemology that assumes the global emanating from Western Europe and the USA to the rest of the world, where the local dwells” (2006: 217). In critically acknowledging and engaging with this epistemological challenge, we begin this book with an introductory section that explores the range of methodological and theoretical approaches to border studies and gender studies. These chapters ground the volume in different iterations of “border thinking” – decolonial thinking that is enacted from the outside, beyond the canonized frameworks that produce and maintain epistemic differences – first theorized by Anzaldúa (our own starting point), and subsequently refined and developed by diverse scholars including Chandra Mohanty (1992), Mignolo (2000), Mignolo and Tlostanova (2006), María Lugones (2007), and Anssi Paasi (2021). Following this introduction, Elliot Evans' chapter on approaches to gender studies critiques universalist accounts of gender which have tended to overlook differences, especially in terms of race, sexuality, and dis/ability. They highlight the

important contributions of Black feminism, disability studies, queer thinking about the material body, and transgender perspectives in transforming our understandings of gender, particularly demonstrating the constructed nature of gender systems that intersect in borderlands. Building on Evans' overview, Caleb Bailey explores the historical development of ideas about, and material manifestations of, bordering in relation to political ideas of sovereignty, geological and hydrological features of the natural world, and ideological systems for ordering human difference, including gender. He then explains how the field of border studies has developed conceptual frameworks and metaphors to destabilize the supposed fixity of borders and bordering practices and has applied these insights beyond the geopolitical realm to analyze borders at personal, interpersonal, societal, and cultural levels.

The book proceeds from this theoretical foundation with a thematic organization that reflects the different scales and relations at stake when examining the connections between gender and borderlands. Beginning at the level of the individual and including interpersonal relationships, the chapters in "Part Two: Intimate Borders," inquire after the role of borders and borderland spaces in destabilizing, unsettling, or reinforcing narratives and practices of intimacy. We then broaden our focus on gender and borders in increasingly expansive ways in the subsequent four sections. "Part Three: Cultural and Civic Borders" and "Part Four: Embodied and Violent Borders" consider how borders reveal gender as profoundly embodied and culturally signified, as well as having the capacity to problematize gender's intersection with social and civic institutions and analyze gendered forms of structural violence. "Part Five: Economic Borders" explores the gendered economics of borderlands, considering labor migration, cross-border trade, and precarious livelihoods, and the concluding section, "Part Six: Changing, Challenging, Resisting," examines challenges and resistance to totalizing understandings of both borders and gender, particularly through modes of cultural expression that unsettle, resist, and protest state-defined border discourse and practice. To develop our agenda of globalizing the study of gender and borderlands, each of these thematic sections is comprised of essays exploring the theme from at least four continents to enable comparative insights into commonalities and differences in the experiences and intersections of gender and borderlands around the world.

Selection and Support of Contributors

We began the work of conceiving the book in the middle of 2019. To make possible the wide-ranging global, intersectional, and interdisciplinary examination of gender and borderlands we had envisioned, we committed to designing each section to include chapters on multiple geographies, represent a diverse range of perspectives on gender, and cover a broad array of different disciplinary approaches. Immersing ourselves in the rich fields of gender and border studies, we drew inspiration from leading journals such as the *Journal of Borderlands Studies* and *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies*. But we were conscious that scholarly publishing models and the realities of academic precarity can sometimes – inadvertently or otherwise – uphold the very bordering practices we were attempting to expose, understand, and probe. To account for this, we sought to ensure a balance across the volume of authors' career stages, gender, geographical location, area of expertise, and geographical focus and created a book proposal with 43 potential authors and indicative chapter titles, which would be refined further in consultation with contributors once the book was under contract. This included three introductory essays and a total of 40 thematic essays, eight in each of the five subsequent sections of the book.

Of the original 40 thematic essays we commissioned in late 2019, ten were focused on North America, nine on Asia, eight on Europe, seven on Africa, three on Oceania, two on the Middle

East, and one on the Caribbean. Within this overall global framework, we sought to prioritize research on predominantly non-Anglophone parts of the world, with three-quarters of the thematic essays examining such areas. We were careful to invite scholars based at academic institutions around the world, early career researchers, and authors outside academia, though the boundaries between these categories are blurred, porous, mobile, and themselves uphold exclusionary practices, so we will avoid counting people into such categories. The majority of our contributors concentrate their analyses on the twentieth and/or twenty-first century; this is partly because the field of border studies, which the *Companion* seeks to both gender and globalize, predominantly took scholarly form in the 1990s, and partly because a number of the states whose borderlands are discussed here did not exist prior to the twentieth century. Nevertheless, most chapters necessarily historicize their examination of the more contemporary borderlands, and we worked with contributors to ensure that key terms and debates were appropriately glossed and developed in their discussion to ensure readers could properly engage with the topics. We also commissioned several essays from historians to focus explicitly on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and hope this will encourage further research to reflect on how scholarship on earlier time periods can generatively draw on and ethically adopt the epistemological frames of border thinking as well. Contributing authors were asked to include a short list of further reading on their subject (these lists are provided at the end of each chapter), designed to guide readers toward the most important works that will serve to deepen understanding and enhance the potential pedagogical value of the book for educators in a broad range of fields.

Eagle-eyed readers will have noticed that the table of contents in this book does not have 43 chapters. It is, of course, extremely rare for a large, complex, multiauthored book such as this to proceed exactly as planned; changes in personnel, content, and scope are to be expected. Global pandemics are generally not, however. This project, like so many others, was severely affected by the impact of COVID-19, which brought dramatic changes to our personal and professional lives from early 2020, just a few months or in some cases weeks after the majority of the book's chapters had been commissioned. In the period that followed some of our contributors suffered bereavements, prolonged ill health, geographical displacement, and job insecurity; indeed, some experienced several of these situations contiguously. The majority, if not all – and we include ourselves in this group – dealt with significantly increased demands on their time in both their home and work-based lives, which made research and writing a low priority or even impossible throughout 2020 and 2021, and in some cases for much longer. Our response as editors was to delay the planned submission of the manuscript to the publisher by a year in the first instance, to December 2022 instead of the originally planned December 2021. This was so that we could provide substantial extensions to authors who needed additional time with their chapters. During this time, we continued with our review and revision of chapters that had been completed to the original timeline, or with only relatively short delays. As two editors based in Leicester, the city that was in COVID-related lockdown for much longer than anywhere else in the UK (Rashid 2021), and working in a higher education sector that continues to experience challenges at a global level, including extended periods of industrial action in the UK since 2018 (Ivancheva, Lynch, and Keating 2019; Green et al 2020; Mason and Megoran 2021; Toner and Hooley 2021; Gibney 2022), we recognized the importance of and tried to consider our own self-care during this period, even while we prioritized offering our contributors as much flexibility as possible to enable their continued participation in a project for which they had demonstrated such enthusiasm, intellectual engagement, and commitment. Difficulties in accessing libraries and archives, or in completing fieldwork, led to changing the subject and focus of some chapters, and we worked with authors on these changes. Throughout, we read and

provided guidance on incomplete drafts of chapters to support authors make the most of what little time they had for writing and discussed evolving ideas on Zoom.

Unfortunately, the complex and enduring impacts of the pandemic and other factors meant that several contributors made the decision to withdraw. Their generosity in recommending other authors who worked on similar research areas to their own greatly aided in the process of commissioning new chapters and allowed us to maintain our global scope and the balance of geographical, disciplinary, and gender subjectivities within each of the book's sections. However, the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic in economic, health, and geopolitical terms on scholars from, and working on, the Global South (Levine, Park, Adhikari et al. 2023; Papamichail 2023), on women researchers in general (Deryugina, Shurchkov, and Stearns 2021; Shalaby, Allam, and Buttorff 2021), and on minoritized researchers in terms of race, sexuality, and disability (Arday and Jones 2022; Douglas, Settles et al 2022) made it challenging to maintain the planned breadth and depth of all parts of the book. We also had to strike a balance between affording newly commissioned authors an appropriate amount of time to complete their research and bringing the book to completion in as timely a manner as possible.

These factors ultimately led to our decision to reconfigure the book so that it was composed of fewer chapters, each of greater length, reducing the number in each section to six. This structure enabled us to maintain the comparative geographical scope of the book, examining the intersections of gender and borderlands in at least four continents within each thematic section. The flux in contributors and reduced number of chapters has meant that while we have diversified our coverage of the Americas, with several pieces on Central and South America, some borderlands regions on which we originally commissioned work – the Middle East, northern Africa, and Southeast Asia – are not included. These are significant absences given, among other developments, the increased contestation and porousness of borders in northern Africa and the Middle East since the Arab Spring of 2011 (Del Sarto 2017), the intensification of violence and multiplication of gendered border regimes in Palestine-Israel (Rexer 2021); and the gendered ramifications of military coups in Thailand (2014) and Myanmar (2021), including women's prominent roles in pro-democracy activism against these military regimes (Matthews 2022; Olivius, Hedström, and Phyo 2022). Notwithstanding these gaps, the book has continued to foreground research on non-Anglophone regions in similar proportions to the original design of the book and with a diverse range of global perspectives. Of the 30 thematic chapters in the collection, there are eight on North America, three on Central and South America, five on Europe, five on Africa, four on Asia, and four that combine cross-continental geographies by considering the movement of people, goods, and ideas across multiple and diverse borders. It is to the kaleidoscope of comparative insights and themes in the experiences and intersections of gender and borderlands that such a global framework enables that we now turn.

Themes, Insights, and Areas of Future Research

What does it mean to make a case for a globalized study of gender and borderlands? We write this introduction at a critical moment, in late 2023, when in popular discourse, both gender and borderlands are reduced to ideologically loaded dog whistles in ongoing culture wars. These culture wars are not new, but they are now being played out on multiple fronts: online, in educational settings like schools and universities, in policy contexts, sustained in everyday interactions, and more. Ironically, these culture wars are themselves global, reaching across the same borders that some lament should be strengthened (Pinheiro 2021; del Campo 2022; Crews 2023; Salles, Muniz de Medeiros, Santini et al. 2023). As Marina Gržinić explains, in the context of “global neoliberal

capitalism, borders seem to have disappeared, yet they are nonetheless present through deportations, segregations, marginalization, and criminalization” (2018: 13). The paradox of borders being ceremoniously removed only to be reinforced is reflected in a parallel paradox of the borderlands themselves as spaces of marginality, liminality, potential, and risk.

These themes of marginality, liminality, potential, and risk are particularly important to the comparative insights provided by parts three and five of the book, on “Cultural and Civic Borders” and “Economic Borders” respectively. Gendered in-between spaces – what Anzaldúa terms “nepantla” – are a central focus for the analyses presented in “Cultural and Civic Borders,” examining religious, political, and civic institutions and cultural responses to them. The interaction of gender and liminality in such in-between spaces recurrently creates productive potentiality for the reclamation, reformulation, and articulation of various forms of agency in contexts as different as Buddhist mountain worship rituals, Indigenous film-making in North America, and European visual art responses to migration. Meanwhile, the asymmetrical distribution of economic opportunities and risks in gendered experiences of cross-border mobility features prominently in the analyses of labor migration and cross-border trade in “Economic Borders,” though the gendered asymmetries map out differently in relation to race, ethnicity, age, religion, marital status, social class, and dis/ability, across case studies examining West Africa, South Asia, South America, North America, Eastern Europe, and the South Pacific.

The idea that “borders are reproduced and inscribed on the body in daily life where the state influences the body in the most intimate and far-reaching of ways” (Mountz and Hyndman 2006: 452) speaks eloquently to the comparative connections between parts two and four of the book, “Intimate Borders” and “Embodied and Violent Borders.” Chapters in both sections examine – in different multilevel, multiscale, and multispatial formulations across the Americas, Africa, Asia, Europe, and Australia – familial relationships, sexual relationships, reproductive healthcare, and gender-based violence to reveal how borders and bodies are mutually constituted, can be porous and fluid, and operate as both sites of oppression and sites of resistance. Together, these parts of the book show how gender and borderlands are individually experienced and structurally constituted while simultaneously being structurally experienced and individually constituted. Several chapters in these sections advance and model different ways of border thinking, highlighting new ways of seeing, being, and acting, with an emphasis on radical relationality at epistemological, ontological, and activist levels.

From the discussion so far, we hope it is clear that the “Changing, Challenging, Resisting” focus of the concluding part of the volume is an ethos that underpins the *Companion* as a whole. In that final section, contributing authors render more actively explicit the agentic capacities of individuals, groups, and communities to harness the productive potentialities of the relationship between gender and borderlands to counter and transform totalizing conceptions and practices of both. In their analyses of multimodal art, literary activism, performance art, transnational Black resistance, the experiences of vulnerable migrants, and by offering free educational resources grounded in interdisciplinary critical pedagogical practice, the chapters in this section revisit and further illuminate questions raised in earlier sections of the book, offering insights into varied visions for a generative politics of everyday resistance across the Americas, Africa, Europe, and Asia. As noted earlier, we hope the rich insights offered by such geographically, historically, conceptually, and methodologically diverse studies of the intersections of gender and borderlands will stimulate further research in earlier chronologies and in parts of the world where borders and the borders of gender are in heightened states of flux.

In a famous essay, Joan Wallach Scott (1986) rightly understood gender as “a useful category of historical analysis,” and that categorical assertion is true as well of borders and borderlands,

where we argue gender must be understood as a major analytical frame as well as its own category of analysis. Where borders both reveal and uphold social cleavages – the United States-Mexico borderlands, for example, is described by Mexican-American writer Luis Alberto Urrea as “fluid, mutating, stubbornly troubling, enthusiastically lethal. [...] An idea nobody can agree on” (2014: 223) – intersecting them with a capacious view of gender opens up new possibilities for a rich and engaging body of critical scholarship and, in turn, pedagogy and teaching practice. In this introduction we have positioned studies of borders and borderland practices (or border studies) as necessarily – if sometimes implicitly – gendered even while we acknowledge the ways in which gender studies, like all fields of scholarship, has participated in its own bordering efforts. This important simultaneity finds an echo in how these terms are similarly both conceptually and materially rendered, and the chapters in this book negotiate the ways in which “gender” and “borderlands” are both historically contingent at the same time as they are thrillingly and frustratingly categorically fluid, unpredictable, and simultaneously known and unknowable. As the chapters in this *Companion* reveal, such work exposes the tensions and boundaries between and across people, scholarly disciplines, popular ideas, and structures and processes. But likewise, as those same chapters attest, work on gender and borderlands has the potential to produce generative frameworks that illuminate the complex interplay between gendered experiences of borderlands, the reach (and limits) of gendered analysis across borders, and the value and labor of creative strategies – relational, embodied, intimate, private, public, economic, cultural, civic, and more – deployed by people all over the world as they negotiate and navigate lived experiences of both gender and borderland identities, realities, challenges, opportunities, and practices, in the present moment.

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