



Travelling and Cycling: Borders and Borderscapes in Thomas Stevens's *Around the World on a Bicycle*

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the representation of borders and the role of the borderscape in the travelogue *Around the World on a Bicycle* (1887) written by Thomas Stevens. As the text is examined as a narrative of bordering and debordering practices in the context of recent theoretical approaches to border lines and borderscapes, such practices invite a comprehensive analysis as regards their function and role in the life and identity of the traveller. Travel writing is mostly embedded with tendencies and burdens to meet requirements emanating from colonial and oriental discourses, whereas Stevens adopts a challenging outlook on his journey with the precise mission of moving forward, and inevitably crosses borders to circumnavigate the world. Instead of visiting a particular landscape, country, or people, he transcends great distances to accomplish this mission, which dissociates him from many travellers in the travelling world. His settings enable readers to observe the interaction between others on each side of a border. Through repetitive encounters between Thomas Stevens and the borders on his path, social, cultural, ethnographic, and individual dimensions of these incidents initially create and, then, call for the discussion of borderscapes as they expose various forms of identity resulting from the dichotomy between such notions as home and away. Therefore, this study illustrates the diversity of interactions and identities formed by means of border crossings and borderscapes in the context of Stevens's travelogue about his journey on a bicycle around the world.

Keywords: Border, bordering, borderscapes, travel, Thomas Stevens



Introduction

The traveller has always been imagined as a person on the move and the traveller's identity imagined as an example of an ever-changing entity. Since the traveller finds himself in a constantly changing environment due to his movements, the other that encounters him in trips exists continuously in opposition to the markers of his identity. Many differences of social, cultural, religious, geopolitical, linguistic, and ethnic sources can be accounted for the representation of the other on the unknown side of the border line that separates the traveller and the other from each other. In the case of border analysis, the other is an outcome of meeting unknown people in unknown landscapes. In a phenomenological sense, the lack of prior knowledge about the other refers to the experience of being different from the social reality of a person, which constitutes the core of the traveller's interpretation and definition of the other in comparison to himself. Travel writing has been traditionally unable to escape the difficulties of having to represent the other in juxtaposition to the traveller, encountered as the narrator. In travel accounts, the narrative of the traveller inevitably deals with borders of all sorts, beginning with actual borders most obviously separating states and nations, and involving many aspects of difference resulting from cultural variations. This study aims to discuss Thomas Stevens's narrative, the longest journey on a bicycle in human history, focusing on borders and borderscapes in relation to transnational and intercontinental movements to conclude that he creates an individualistic and peculiar interpretation of borderscapes challenging the primary definition of the border and its imminent theoretical impact of reciprocity as well as hostility.

In that regard, this cycling narrative, an example of nonfiction, is approached from the perspective of borders as symbols of social, cultural, religious, and essentially discursive differences in addition to geographical and topographical alterations. While the border turns into a zone of mutual interaction based on similarities and differences in relation to the representation of identity, several new identifications seem to appear in line with the narrator's point of view towards these concepts. Hence, dominant discourses on borders, cultural affairs and representation of the other are vigorously altered to maintain the focus of the journey, which is indeed as simple as riding a bicycle around the world. Since this travelogue is not mainly interested in borders, let alone travel writing, the narrative offers wonderfully knitted opportunities to see how an Englishman can possibly track the changes resulting from crossing borders one after the other in a very long sequence. The scope of the textual analysis is limited to the first volume of Stevens's narrative, starting with his journey in San Francisco until

his arrival in modern-day Türkiye. This scope enables a restricted examination of borders and borderscapes in a purely Western background.

This analysis rests on the discovery of borderscapes since they emerge as means of individual interaction beyond the scope of the border lines that separate people from each other. The text particularly reflects the author's/traveller's/cyclist's attitude in the changing role of borders. Stevens's travel writing has remained almost obscure outside the cycling community until the discovery of its existence by the author of this study when it was translated into Turkish. As Stevens rides his bicycle for thousands of miles and visits many countries on the way, he interacts with many border lines both within the US and along national states in Europe, creating a Western frame of reference. Due to his main purpose of cycling around the world, which is indeed the prominent matter on his mind all along, it is possible to track changes in his identity because of his social and cultural environment. Stevens's borderscapes transcend the traditional understanding of borders, associating them with the fundamental discursive artefacts of becoming and belonging for the traveller moving around.

The Framework Posed by Borderscapes

In the light of contemporary border studies, the border is no longer a single line that detaches a state or a landscape from another. Its conceptualization has moved beyond its association with geopolitical terminology. It is not a fundamental symbol of distinguishing "us from them, civilization from barbarity, and knowledge from non-knowledge" (Nyman, 2024, p. 95). These contrasting images usually call for othering process that is embedded in the meaning-making process with a huge historical context. The representation of social and cultural background is highly influential in such notions because the identity of the other turns into the subject matter in such cases. While the traditional understanding of the border approaches it as a barrier and a form of difference, contemporary theory, as explained below, sees it as a means of surpassing limits and crossing over distinctions. Due to the process of deconstructing the border, its rigidity decreases, and it adopts a flexible character. As Brambilla argues, "research interests increasingly shifted from an initial focus on border as territorial dividing lines and political institutions to border regarded as social-cultural and discursive processes and practices" (2015, p. 15). The outcome of this recent shift is the treatment of borders as an interdisciplinary concept that invites the contribution of many fields beginning with literary studies. Brambilla delineates the theoretical scope as follows:

This new interdisciplinary interest in borders is a result of the major changes in world politics in the last twenty years. Among these, the most notable is the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the order imposed by the Cold War, [...] the process of change due to globalisation, [...] greater integration and global consciousness and [...] a renewed demand for certainty, identity and security followed by the spread of protectionist policies on the economic level and feelings of anti-immigration. (2015, p. 15)

Due to the limitations posed by their adjusted and stabilized imagination in the past, the borders can nowadays be analysed in line with a contemporary approach to mark their significance in the representation of identity marking.

The emphasis placed on borders as symbols of a differentiating past and the disintegration of social and cultural variations requires the embodiment of a new term for their critical analysis. In that regard, the term "borderscape" stands for the representation of national, continental, social, cultural, and geographical borders in Stevens's travelogue, which involves a global and transnational discourse quite earlier than the exact use of these terms. Thus, the introduction of borderscapes is useful at this point. As Brambilla states, "the concept of borderscape offers us to highlight the constitutive role that borders in modernity have played in the production of political subjectivity, thereby showing the potential of the borderscape as a space for liberating political imagination from the burden of territorialist imperative" (2015, p. 18). This act of liberation offers great opportunities for the interpretation of borders from new perspectives. Bordering and debordering as acts of practice, performance and performativity constantly change the thinking of border's role and duty: "The transition from the concept of border to that of bordering, at the centre of the processual shift in border studies, allowed borders to be viewed as dynamic social processes and practices of spatial differentiation" (Brambilla, 2015, p. 15). Such dynamism and spatiality enable the treatment of borders in constant transition from one form to another and a new interpretation appears on their function as well as location once they are displaced from their imminent role.

Furthermore, the appeal of the term borderscape can be explained as follows: "The concept of borderscape seems to owe its appeal to its vagueness" (Krichker, 2021, p. 1224). In addition to the border being a controversial term regarding its connotations,

the borderscape contributes to the open-ended discussion through the involvement of physical and cultural elements as precursors of interaction. In their comprehensive argument on bordering and borderscapes, Dell'Agnese and Szary comment on difficulties as well as prospects presented by this term:

Nowadays, speaking about borderscapes is almost a fashion, even if there is no unequivocal definition of the term. Quite the contrary, the word, a portmanteau that combines aspects of landscape and border, brings with it all the unresolved ambiguities of the two separate notions and multiplies them. (2015, p. 5)

The borderscape can be outlined as a combination of physical, geopolitical and sociocultural elements. According to Dell'Agnese and Szary, the borderscape can be delineated in three main definitions as either "an area, shaped and reshaped by transnational flows, that goes beyond the modernist idea of clear-cut national territories" or "simply as a crasis [a blend or contraction] of the words 'border' and 'landscape' [...] on the role of boundaries transforming the territorial configuration of adjacent lands" (2015, p. 6). Clearly, boundaries set by national order to regulate and control affairs between states come forward as the meaning of the term in the first place. In that regard, borderscapes are determined by states and the geographical areas around them are also involved in their perception. Differences that can be tracked down by material conditions as signs of political authority belong to this definition.

Similarly, the borderscape appears as a piece of land that is shaped by geopolitical boundaries separating international lines of sovereignty. Landscapes, regions and divisive lines of border can be considered as constitutive parts of this complicated notion. The third definition, however, clarifies the relevance of the term even better for a critical approach: "A borderscape is just a way of representing/perceiving the area around the border" (Dell'Agnese and Szary, 2015, p. 7). Representations, descriptions and aesthetics of borders dealing with bordering processes form a unity at the core of this discussion to account for the distinction stemming from the perception of the landscape as a geographical and cultural entity rendering it objective beyond interference as opposed to individual interpretation defining it anew in a subjective perspective in every encounter. As a result of the traveller's attitude that can be considered within the context of a meaning-making system, "meanings are made and remade by the perceiver-observer" who is the rider or cyclist in this case (Dell'Agnese and Szary, 2015,

p. 7). Beyond the visual dimensions of the border and landscape, the borderscape enables a highly interactive relationship in the trio between the border, the landscape and the one who crosses. Hence, a three-dimensional critique of border lines as forms of mutual action along crossings will be useful to express the outcome of this interaction. Constant movements depicted in the travelogue accompany recurrent changes in borders that can be treated as forms of cultural production due to the productivity triggered by mutual interest. Despite being symbols of uncertainty and the uncanny in a sense, borders and borderscapes can thus be treated as areas of sharing, participation and the coming into existence of new identities. At every instance of border crossing, the traveller exposes himself to a routine transformation deeply affecting himself and his consciousness.

Thomas Stevens's Travelogue and Borderscapes

This analysis of Stevens's reflection of borders should start with a theoretical framework. First, a border can be defined as "boundary," "edge," "fringe" or more relatively "a line separating two countries or other areas" in the Oxford English Dictionary. As one like Stevens traverses over a long distance such as the globe, one passes through many border lines in their physical form, which is only a minor part of the distinction made by the concept. In the last three decades, contemporary border studies have revealed that borders are not simply physical entities. In addition to their physical form, borders are accompanied by political, social and cultural dynamics. According to Kolossov and Scott,

the study of borders in society has progressed remarkably since its geographically bounded beginnings in the nineteenth century. Border studies today reflect continuity and change in scientific thought and are also a result of innumerable contributions to the conceptualization of social space and its workings. (2013, p. 1)

The shift regarding the definition of border studies shows us that there is much more to the borders than their physical form. Thus, borders have turned into an arena to observe the clash between local and global since studies about them have "removed from a dominant concern with formal state frontiers and ethno-cultural areas to the study of borders at diverse socio-spatial and geographical scales, ranging from the local and the municipal, to the global, regional and supra-state level" (Kolossov and Scott, 2013, p. 1). Similarly, Hedetoft believes that "a major facet of border studies

considers borders not as impenetrable barriers designed to keep things in or out, but rather permeable membranes" (2003, p. 153). The constant process of inward and outward movement of people and goods across borders has turned them into a matter to be discussed "in the study of identity, mobility and subjectivity" (Cooper and Perkins, 2012, p. 56). In particular, identity and subjectivity require a deeper analysis into cultural issues that include subjects such as nationality, ethnicity, religion and gender in addition to geographical features. Different from traditional border studies on state territories and spaces of distinction, a much more comprehensive attitude covering political, social and cultural matters is necessary and applicable to put forward a thorough analysis of borders and borderscapes.

The meaning of borderscapes can be discovered in their impact on human beings who are separated from each other in short distances indicated by territorial divisions. The relationship between the lines of borders on a map and people living on either side is highly complicated due to the changing lifestyles, traditions and habits determined by these borders; indeed, a conflict of cultural affairs must be addressed at this point. Accordingly, as Zartman states, "borders run across land but through people. On maps, they appear as fine one-dimensional lines, whereas on the ground they have many dimensions. Borderlands are boundaries in depth, space around a line, the space where state meets society" (2010, p. 1). In this respect, human communities living along the borderlines and the territory adjacent to the border itself render a specific identity in addition to major communal traits that we observe in a larger community. As regards the problem of belonging and becoming in relation to the static and flexible traits of being, Simon argues that borders are the places "where no one ever feels at home" (1997, p. 12). Obviously, the continually changing lines of borders play a definite role in such feelings since they are all fabricated and prone to changes at any time. As for the social conditions around borders, Zartman further claims:

Borders [are] areas where the sharpness of ethnic and other cultural limits and differentiations clashed with the groups' need to interact with other groups on the other side of the dividing lines. Walls and moats tend to dissolve into hills and marshes, with their own syncretic characteristics. (2010, p. 4)

Different cultures and ways of life either come together or are divided into sections because of the borders. The ultimate inquiry needs to ask about the conditions of such

people who feel the effect of power relationships out of their control. Hence, questions on identity, socio-political and economic matters, power-knowledge, international relations and cultural affairs arise when we attempt to move across borders. This point shows that borders are more than simply lines drawn on a map and have their sense of reality in everyday life to determine cultural values and social norms.

Accordingly, representation of borders and borderscapes reveals contradictory forms of separation and unity based on meanings observed across and around them, indicated by Stevens's travelogues written in a three-year journey around the world. The interaction with borders starts within American territory as he rides his penny-farthing¹, from San Francisco to Boston. In these early chapters of adventures, borders have a meaning no more than changing landscape and names of settlement along the road. As he moves across the Sierra Nevada, the changing borders impress him as follows:

Nothing but the limited power of men's eyes prevents him from standing on the top of the mountains and surveying, at a glance, the whole glorious panorama that stretches away for more than two hundred miles to the west, terminating in the gleaming waters of the Pacific Ocean. (Stevens, 1887, p. 1)

The scenic beauty of the famous mountain range in western America separates the Valley of California and the Great Basin. This border set by nature and geographical elements symbolizes farewell to home and the beginning of a journey around the world. The contradictory mixture of excitement and melancholy stemming from the emotional tone of leaving one's home behind creates a personal border for the narrator.

Later, passing through San Pablo, Elmira, Davisville, and Omaha, the cyclist arrives at Sacramento, "the beautiful capital of the Golden State" (Stevens, 1887, p. 4). For him, the American River in Sacramento is another natural border. He says, "[a]fter crossing the American River the character of the country changes and I enjoy a ten-mile ride over a fair road, through one of those splendid sheep-ranches that are only found in California and which have long challenged the admiration of the world" (Stevens, 1887,

1 An early prototype for the modern bicycle, the penny-farthing, also called a high wheel and famous in the 1870s and 1880s during Stevens's journey, has an exceptionally large front wheel and a rather small rear wheel designed with solid rubber tyres. In addition to being extremely difficult to mount on due to its enormous height, it was quite uncomfortable to ride on, as various complaints and descriptions in the text indicate.

p. 4). He is impressed by ranches that extend over dozens of acres in the region and comments that “I remember the pleasant ten-mile ride through this park-like pasture as one of the brightest spots of the whole journey across America” (Stevens, 1887, p. 4). Since such natural borders do not imply any cultural changes, they simply symbolise unity and harmony in nature. The river and the mountain range form a natural borderline for the cyclist:

Standing on this ledge, the rocks tower skyward on one side of the track so close as almost to touch the standing train; and on the other is a sheer precipice of two thousand five hundred feet, where one stands on the edge and see, far below, the north fork of the American River, which looks like a thread of silver laid along the narrow valley. (Stevens, 1887, p. 17)

Geographical borders draw attention in the area closer to the starting point of the journey. The landscape, thus, becomes a memorable image for the narrator since he perceives the line of territorial division from a personal point of view. Borders emerge in the role of interstate movement in America, which shows that borderscapes reach over to spaces within the boundaries of national imagination. Moreover, they symbolize a process of becoming apart from being for the traveller as he moves across them. Thus, natural, national, and personal meanings of borderscapes integrate into a greater meaning as these borderscapes transform into individual constructs. The movement of the cyclist paradoxically forms a unity between these markers of division.

Similarly, the traveller’s path over the deserts of Nevada plays a similar role in viewing geographical or natural borders. The first impression of the desert on the traveller appears as follows: “Gradually I leave the pine-clad slopes of the Sierras behind, and every revolution of my wheel reveals scenes that constantly remind me that I am in the great ‘Sage-brush State.’ How appropriate indeed is the name” (Stevens, 1887, p. 21). This representation of natural borders is aligned with a socio-cultural line of division from the traveller’s perspective since this episode contains an encounter with a native Indian with whom the cyclist tries to speak. After a few attempts to address the Indian, he comments on his short ignorant reply, “given with the characteristic brevity of the savage” (Stevens, 1887, p. 21). He sees that “now that the ice of his aboriginal reserve is broken, he manages to find words enough to ask me for tobacco” (Stevens, 1887, p. 21). Upon this brief conversation, he makes fun of this native Indian who is suffering from a sick foot as follows:

The ride through the crisp morning air has been productive of a surplus amount of animal spirits, and I feel like doing something funny. I volunteer to cure his sick foot by sundry dark and mysterious manoeuvres that I unblushingly intimate are heap good medicine. (Stevens, 1887, p. 21)

This socio-cultural encounter on state borders just at the beginning of the journey shows that cultural boundaries matter more than geographical borders when it comes to social interaction. The traveller's social values at home influence his relationship with the native Indian, which clearly creates a borderscape through his way of perceiving this mutual space around the border. The lines of socio-cultural separation seem to disappear, as he is involved in a unifying encounter. Furthermore, until this point, the traveller has adopted an affirmative tone in introducing his vehicle in many towns whenever he has met Americans, who saw a bike for the first time in many episodes:

There seems to be quite a sprinkling of Spanish or Mexican rancheros through here, and after partaking of the welcome noon-tide hospitality of one of the ranches, I find myself, before I realise it, illustrating the bicycle and its uses, to a group of sombrero-decked rancheros and dark-eyed señoritas, by riding the machine round and round on their own ranch-lawn. (Stevens, 1887, p. 5)

All through here the only riding to be done is along occasional short stretches of difficult path beside the track, where it happens to be a hard surface; and on the plank platforms of the stations, where I generally take a turn or two to satisfy the consuming curiosity of the miners, who can't imagine how anybody can ride a thing that won't stand alone. (Stevens, 1887, p. 8)

These encounters, among many other examples of the same attitude (Stevens, 1887, pp. 12–16), signify his attempts to overcome differences on personal grounds that can be extended to social and cultural aspects by means of his bicycle, which enables him to constitute a common ground with others. His reaction to a person that we can define as the other in terms of cultural borders marks the status function of borders and alters the perception of their restrictive and facilitative qualities. Hence, Stevens starts forming these borderscapes on American territory and landscape regardless of border splits.

The striking point in all this commentary lies in the fact that he refrains from adopting a judgmental attitude towards these people whose lives are across cultural borders, and from condemning them because of their lifestyle despite himself being a young Englishman raised within Western social norms. Now, in this episode, the traveller crosses cultural borders like his experience with the Mormons. Yet, his attitude is quite the same in both cases since he is only interested in the journey. Political borders of states, geographical/natural borders between landscapes as well as cultural borders between people cease to exist so far in his adventures. These acts of border crossing expose the existence of borderscapes exemplified in such social interactions. Regardless of their various sorts, borders transform into spaces of unity and coming together through the traveller's individual perception. Moreover, after visiting these regions inhabited by the Mormons and the Communist Germans of Iowa, his next stops are Boston and New York where Stevens sets sail across the Atlantic to go to Liverpool in the UK (Stevens, 1887, p. 70). On 4 August 1884, he "rolls into Boston and whispers to the wild waves of the sounding Atlantic what the sad waves of the Pacific were saying when he left there, just one hundred and three and a half days ago, having wheeled about 3700 miles to deliver the message" (Stevens, 1887, p. 90). The geographical borders of North America come together with the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, while Stevens finds himself in a rather gloomy mood instead of a cheerful one. Although one supposes his spirits to be raised by his achievement, the memories of his journey until this point haunt his mind recklessly. The borders along the west and east coasts of north America in their greatness creating the feeling of sublime and geographical terms of separation are brought together in his imagination and narrative. Thus, borders and landscapes transcend the territorial configuration of adjacent lands due to their separation from each other in almost four thousand miles, which creates a notion of borderscape exceeding definitions and theoretical expectations.

The traveller's arrival in Britain, indeed his home, is highly astounding in terms of his reaction to crossing borders over the Atlantic. Contrary to traditional representation of borders as symbols of difference, he again creates a thoroughly personal conception. Since he is an Englishman living in the US, he could have complained about differences in ways of life and emphasized the separating impact of border lines. The social and cultural disparities that led to political and historical clashes between the US and the UK could have been sources of commentary on borders. He could have even reflected his uneasiness resulting from his bordering experience on both sides of the equation. Nonetheless, his depiction clearly illustrates that he does not feel any kind of boundary

between these two countries and societies, although there are geographical, historical, political, social and cultural borders between them. Right after getting on the steamer that takes him back to his homeland, he only dwells upon scenes such as an iceberg he observes in the ocean or the misty landscape in Liverpool. His following commentary proves that there is no border between the US and the UK from his point of view.

All the way from San Francisco to Newhaven, there is a consciousness of being practically in one country and among one people—people who, though acknowledging separate governments, are bound so firmly together by the ties of common instincts and interests, and the mystic brotherhood of a common language and a common civilisation, that nothing of a serious nature can ever come between them. (Stevens, 1887, p. 97)

We can defer from the excerpt that borders exist only in our minds. Although Stevens must pass through customs as a sign of division between the two states, he simply does not agree with their existence. The same traveller, who travels across American states and tells us stories of boundaries separating people from each other, claims that there is no border and separation between the US and the UK. Depending on the attitude of this traveller and in line with the theoretical framework, borders are obviously proven too difficult and complicated to define.

Evidently, borders can also be seen within dynamic processes and spatial separation in terms of their practice. As the above explanation illustrates, the concept of the border has evolved into “the notion of bordering practice” (Brambilla, 2015, p. 17). Following the imaginary border line, the notion is reduced to a performance as an alternative. Therefore, it can also be considered within the meaning-making system and conferred a temporal status instead of a fixed meaning. Regarding Stevens's status as a migrant on American soil, Rajaram and Grundy-Warr's comment must be reviewed:

The border is conceived as a tool of exclusion, one that can be strengthened and fostered to protect a community and a society against a phantasmic threat of otherness that tends to become flesh in the demonized and abject figure of a migrant or refugee. (2007, p. x)

Hence, it can be argued that borderscapes are created in the traveller's multidimensional mobility so that his perspective is offered in relation to the borders. From an individualistic

point of view, the traveller perceives these borders, which have no striking impact on him, and landscapes, repeatedly depicted in amazement, differently, and makes his meanings of them as an observer.

Afterwards, Stevens continues to cycle across borders on Continental Europe. Once he gets off the boat on the French coast, however, his attitude towards borderscapes is drastically transformed as follows: "Although upon a foreign shore, I am not yet, it seems, to be left entirely alone to the tender mercies of my own lamentable inability to speak French" (Stevens, 1887, p. 97). Since he is aware of the changing linguistics in France, the traveller realizes that this is a foreign landscape after crossing borders at the Channel. This is obviously challenging in terms of borders, due to difficulties in communication and social relationships. His perception of French territories shows signs of restraint and caution: "But now I am verily among strangers, and the first thing talked of is to make me pay duty on bicycle" (Stevens, 1887, p. 97). The journey across France starts with his protest of having to pay tariffs for his bicycle and resumes with the officer's change of mind not to charge him upon half-an-hour's idle walk at the customs house, which seems like a cultural shock for him: "It is a fairly prompt initiation into the impulsiveness of the French character" (Stevens, 1887, p. 97). For this reason, the traveller's attempt to start friendships and overcome linguistic burdens in addition to socio-cultural borders culminates in his meeting an English man, also a cyclist, who helps other cyclists continue their paths across Europe. The narrator explains the comfort of finding an acquaintance in crossing borders as follows: "Fortunately, there lives at Dieppe a gentleman named Mr. Parkinson, who, [...] is quite an enthusiastic wheelman, and, among other things, considers it his solemn duty to take charge of visiting cyclers from England and America" (Stevens, 1887, p. 97). In addition to all other descriptions of borders, we see a personal variation in the form of individual social relations. Personal borders determine one's intimacy with others and transcend those symbolized in socio-cultural values and the landscape. Therefore, the traveller begins to reflect calm and cheerful manners, ignoring his anxiety caused by being a stranger upon crossing borders in the company of an acquaintance whose existence is a source of relief. The rest of this journey across French territory is dominated by detailed descriptions on landscape and people's manners as well as daily tasks that are easily observable outdoors. The traveller strives for a truthful and accurate narrative about these strangers and their lifestyle against all odds. Since he is a cyclist, his primary concern is again about the quality of roads that determine whether he can ride his bicycle for long distances or must carry it along with him from a sensible perspective. As far as personal interest

matters, he is extremely comfortable in France and joyfully depicts the changing environment, both natural and socio-cultural.

As the journey expands across Europe, multiple meanings are attributed to socio-cultural, geographical, and especially linguistic differences. Usually, these references create implications on a personal level. In this respect, one event after Stevens leaves France is noteworthy in that he narrates his feelings of trouble and unrest about cultural differences between French and German manners, which can be interpreted in terms of borders. This event about the attitude of a German citizen is the cause of his complaint: "An insolent teamster who, having his horses strung across a narrow road – way in the suburbs of Saarburg, refuses to turn his leaders' heads to enable me to ride past, thus compelling me to dismount" (Stevens, 1887, p. 121). It is difficult to speculate on his motive to mention such an event, but we know that he does not speak French and German at all and has been overly cautious since leaving the American and English territories. Obviously, Stevens creates a personal border to stay away from the other based on linguistic and cultural differences out of caution. It must be noted that this attitude is rare in his entire journey and limited to special incidents involving single characters. The description of his dissidence from intrusive behaviour reveals a site of distinction for the cyclist since his conception of a personal border based on socio-cultural differences generates a borderscape that puts emphasis on his personal difference in terms of manners, gentility, and refinement resulting from these values.

Likewise, the traveller occasionally refers to differences resulting from items that he deems to be artefacts of civilization after he starts riding his bicycle in Europe. One such incident takes place in Saverne, close to the German border, where he is trying to purchase a tool for his bicycle. He comments as follows: "Taking my nickelled monkey-wrench into a hardware store, I ask the proprietor if he has anything similar. He examines it with lively interest, for, in comparison with the clumsy tools, the wrench is watch-spring to an old horseshoe" (Stevens, 1887, p. 122). The shift between border lines and landscapes is linked to a sense of realization when the cyclist interacts with German people across borders. The wrench he is trying to purchase is the marker of a borderscape between the traveller and the visited lands from the perspective of progress symbolized by industrial tools in this episode. Although he does not seem to act in a harshly judgmental manner, Stevens still compares the progressive notion of his homeland to the backward condition of this country. Although there is no physical border near him, the cyclist is aware of the borderscape that is embedded in his perception throughout Germany.

Right after Saarburg, the traveller rides his bicycle into Germany through Alsace, which was French territory until very recently. What is striking in this transition is the military practices on both sides of the border lines between France and Germany. The national border is protected by the military on political grounds and the traveller happens to pass through this territory at such a moment. The soldiers on both sides of this border exemplify cultural differences as well. Stevens depicts the scene as follows:

These German troops appear to march briskly and in a business-like manner in comparison with the French, who always seem to carry themselves with a tired and dejected deportment; but the over-ample and rather slouchy looking pantaloons of the French are probably answerable, in part, for this impression. (Stevens, 1887, p. 121)

In this instance, the border is a symbol of political, military, national as well as cultural distinction. The traveller can quite easily claim that he has crossed over the border between France and Germany just by looking at soldiers practicing for combat. Political and national borders are supplemented by social and cultural borders, which results in an act of transnational bordering for the cyclist. As Okolie claims, “transnational border crossing inevitably underscores a form of epistemological border crossing; a crossing-over to new knowledge, to encounter the strange” (2024, p. 63). Meeting the strange, or even the uncanny, for the traveller is part of the epistemological journey that readers come across in his narrative. Stevens learns more about the other and rejoices that this learning process is enhanced by border crossings. As Okolie further asserts, “before transnational border crossing, the migrant lives in some level of ignorance of the other, having little or no knowledge of the operations within the space s/he is about to enter” (2024, p. 63). Indicated by these latest episodes in Germany, a process of awakening in addition to self-identity and self-awareness can be discovered from the perspective of a traveller who gradually begins to act like a migrant, taking on the responsibility of adapting himself to the way of life on the other side of the border. From this point onwards, Stevens experiences a process of learning, along with cycling. This observation of the border comprises a basis for social and cultural separation creating a divided landscape, which results in a conflict and repression to turn Stevens into the other, putting him on a different subject position.

Nevertheless, Stevens’s journey in Austria-Hungary comes forward with the resemblance in the mountainous areas like the Sierra Nevada and the Austrian mountains

(Stevens, 1887, p. 127). Once he finds himself along the Danube, he feels as if he were suddenly back home: "My route along the Danube Valley leads through broad, level, wheat fields that recall memories of the Sacramento Valley, California. Geese appear as the most plentiful objects around the villages: there are geese and goslings everywhere" (Stevens, 1887, p. 135). Similarly, the route between Budapest and Paks is compared to previous roads and natural elements:

From Budapest to Paks, about one hundred and twenty kilometres, the roads are superior to anything I expected to find east of Germany. [...] Instead of the poplars of France and the apples and pears of Germany, the roads are now fringed with mulberry trees, both raw and manufactures silk being the product of this party of Hungary. (1887, p. 137)

The natural border dominates the tone in the narrative in these parts of Europe since he cannot observe an immediate juxtaposition between people and their lifestyles disregarding social, cultural, and political borders. The forms and functions of borders are multiplied to create a personal interpretation for the traveller's perspective. Thus, borders' marginality is transformed into a central and immanent position. The traveller's innateness coming from the transcendence of the borders changes his status as migrant and other.

This journey across the borders of Slovenia and Serbia is distinguished in terms of his reaction to these encounters because, in both countries, the traveller is accompanied by members of the bicycle clubs who are indeed very keen on acting like tour guides for a cyclist who has been pedalling for a long time. Hence, at the Budapest Bicycle Club, Stevens meets Mr. Kosztovitz (Stevens, 1887, p. 135) who befriends him quickly and introduces people and the environment in the rest of the journey. Likewise, the traveller is taken to the Bicycle Club, named *La Societe Velocipedique Serbe* in French, in Serbia, and another friend, Igali, joins his campaign to support the mission as a cyclist (Stevens, 1887, p. 152). Until arriving at modern-day Türkiye, except for a brief passage through Bulgaria, Stevens maintains his journey in the company of these cyclists. Since he makes use of acquaintances along with these men in social and cultural spheres, he mostly focuses on personal endeavours to follow social relationships around him, including descriptions of the natural environment and behaviours as well as the clothing of native people peculiar to their local customs. Somewhere near Belgrade, the traveller comments on the changing environment, drawing attention to briefly the notion of the Orient:

Unmistakable evidence that one is approaching the Orient appears in the semi-Oriental costumes of the peasantry and roving gypsy bands, as we gradually near the Servian capital. An oriental costume in Eszek is sufficiently exceptional to be a novelty, and so it is until one gets south of Peterwardein, when the national costumes of Slovenia and Croatia are gradually merged into the tasselled fez, the many-folded waistband, and the loose flowing pantaloons of Eastern lands. (Stevens, 1887, p. 141)

Although he has been crossing some border lines until this point and continues this process into Turkish territory, physical borders as static territorial lines seem to have already vanished in the eyes of the traveller. In addition to the guidance provided by fellow cyclists, the traveller focuses on the socio-cultural dimension of the changing environment. This dynamic and adapted spatial relationship erodes the boundaries created by the physical existence of border divisions. Conceptual transformation in Stevens's approach highlights the importance of multiple layers of borders by means of his personal interpretation of them through borderscapes that reflect a combination of landscape, territories, and political and socio-cultural levels of bordering processes. Therefore, Stevens first dislocates and later relocates borders based on the unities they form through borderscapes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, encounters at borders construct borderscapes beyond the physical entity of these lines of separation. While the traveller involves himself in agreement and mutual consent in some bordering acts, he discovers diversion and multiplicity in others. The interpretation of the other tends to change in accordance with the bordering experience of the traveller. The introduction of the borderscape reveals that borders are and have been, for a very long time, subjects of discursive practices in their ambiguity and dependence on the perspective of interpretation rather than being solid and permanent symbols of division. This revelation leads to the acknowledgement of transnational and intercontinental identities of unity based on socio-cultural alliances and common backgrounds as well as territorial resemblances. Stevens's travelogue clearly illustrates that the border lines between San Francisco and Türkiye consist of many border crossings that can both separate and unite communities by means of geographical, political, socio-cultural, and territorial elements. While borders in this comprehensive travel account seem to indicate acts of crossing characterized by

differences, Stevens offers a great number of connections through cultural affairs, turning the concept of border to a bordering and then, debordering practice. In response to the recent questions and problems faced by border studies, an interdisciplinary approach to borders is useful in the light of their conveyance in the past.

Furthermore, physical and sensual transitions influence the traveller in the sense that he crosses borders through not only geopolitical lines of territory, but also spatial lines of unity around socio-cultural similarities and contact. The second aspect creates an epistemological awareness regarding the traveller's identity. Hence, the traveller's confrontation with social and cultural encoding practices rises to instances of deference and consent. The cycling traveller as a marginal subject of this process of mutual observation across borders reveals an intrinsic desire to get to know the other as an opportunity to overcome anxiety and worry resulting from deference. Accordingly, the narrative of travelling is an illustration of the traveller's exposure of his identity to the detriment of the unknown. Therefore, Stevens's representation of the borders between San Francisco and Türkiye can be connected to a new and challenging conceptualization through borderscapes that play a unitary and consolidating role between the traditionally and historically dividing border lines on the maps. While the border may refer to separation and division between people, it may simply be ignored in accordance with the traveller's point of view depicted in this work of nonfiction including various aspects of the bordering process. Meanwhile, as the observer, perceiver, rider, and traveller, Stevens experiences an intrinsic process of self-discovery and undergoes a transformative phase that discloses markers of his identity, hence enabling a multidimensional approach in the light of his adventures. It can also be argued that this new interpretation of identity is given shape along with the writing process, which is undeniably an essential part of the travelling experience. As Stevens alludes at many points in his entire travelogue, these adventures are regularly recorded in his writings and occasionally sent back to the US for publication. Stevens, the author of these accounts, must have been greatly influenced by his reckoning on nights dominated by solitude far away from his home. The impact of this emotional and psychological borderscape is much greater than the physical borders he crosses during his journey.

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