

Boonies became a clipped form of the word. The term is often used pejoratively; to be labeled as coming from the boondocks is synonymous with being called backward, clumsy, ignorant. To boondock means to make love in a car: whether amid summer sounds of crickets, the rustlings of night creatures and restless grasses or a small creek, or in the cold silence of empty trees and blue shadows on snow at midnight, some people believe a secluded backroad in the boondocks provides the perfect place for this activity. PATTIANN ROGERS

*Borders are scratched across the
hearts of men,
by strangers with a calm,
judicial pen,
and when the borders bleed we
watch with dread
the lines of ink along the map
turn red.*

MARYA MANNES, "Gaza Strip"

borderland

A land or district on or near the border between two countries or districts is borderland, conveying the idea of a fringe or intermediary state or region. In the Southwest, the borderland is the stretch between Mexico and the United States, and the term carries with it the idea of a mixing and confluence of cultures. It also includes the idea of disparate economic systems that produce poverty, along with cultural interactions rich in ambiguities and tensions. Chicana poet and activist Gloria Anzaldúa describes the U.S.-Mexico borderland as "*una herida abierta*"—an open wound. Borderland is thus no longer a geographical term but a geopolitical one. ARTHUR SZE

boreal forest

South of the treeless Arctic tundra, a forest shawl wraps eleven percent of the Earth's northern terrestrial surface. This circumpolar boreal forest is white spruce-dominated, carpeted with lichens, moss, orchids, heaths, quilted with peat bogs, and cut by cold, silty rivers. In *Crossing Open Ground*, Barry Lopez describes one view of this landscape: "a backdrop of hills: open country recovering from an old fire, dark islands of spruce in an ocean of Labrador tea, lowbush cranberry, fireweed . . . each species of leaf the invention of a different green: lime, moss, forest, jade." Boreal forces shape this forest: hot summers of endless daylight; frigid, dark winters; spring floods; permafrost; cycles of insect infestation and fire that decimate vast acreages. Yet fauna thrive: red squirrel, mink, moose, bear, wolf, lynx, marten, red fox, vole, muskrat, beaver, grouse, ptarmigan, porcupine, caribou, snowshoe hare, salmon, sheefish, whitefish, northern pike. And flora: spruce, tamarack, paper birch, quaking aspen, balsam poplar, blueberry, crowberry, Labrador tea, willow, cranberry, saxifrage, prickly rose. Indigenous people, to this day, rely on an intimate knowledge of geography to subsist on these animals and plants.