

'The South is Mine': The Limits of Patriotic and Ideological Borders in E.L. Doctorow's *The March*

Laura Gimeno Pahissa
laura.gimeno@uab.cat

"The South is mine" claims Doctorow's Sherman almost by the end of *The March*, the author's celebrated novel on the American Civil War. Satisfied and assured that his strategy and campaign over the South is leading him to victory, the General expresses with such words his profound faith and conviction in the imminent defeat of the Confederate Army. However, what this paper will prove is that, beyond ideological and patriotic confrontations, Doctorow's novel challenges such discourses by narrating the story of one of the last episodes of the war from a variety of perspectives that question the limits and metaphorical 'borders' of official historiography. The author reinterprets and rewrites the war between North and South and focuses on its human dimension by documenting the often traumatic history of the common people from both sides of the conflict. Thus, the novel both deals with physical borders (i.e. the literal march through several states during Sherman's southern campaign) and the limits of history writing and memory, especially focusing on the interaction between people from different backgrounds, ethnicities, nationalities and beliefs, and how they engage in a dialogue that breaks the established ideological borders that set the conflict in motion in the first place. In so doing, Doctorow engages in a key discussion in the field of contemporary fiction, namely the debate as to *which* events and *whose* facts will make it into textbooks (Hutcheon 2000: 68). Therefore, this paper aims at discussing the idea of 'border' as a physical and an ideological concept at the same time.