



BOOK REVIEW

Borders in Globalization Review
Volume 1, Issue 2 (Spring/Summer 2020): 125-126
<https://doi.org/10.18357/bigr12202019798>

Border Aesthetics: Concepts and Intersections

Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly

Johan Schimanski and Stephen Wolfe
(editors)

*Border Aesthetics:
Concepts and Intersections*

New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books

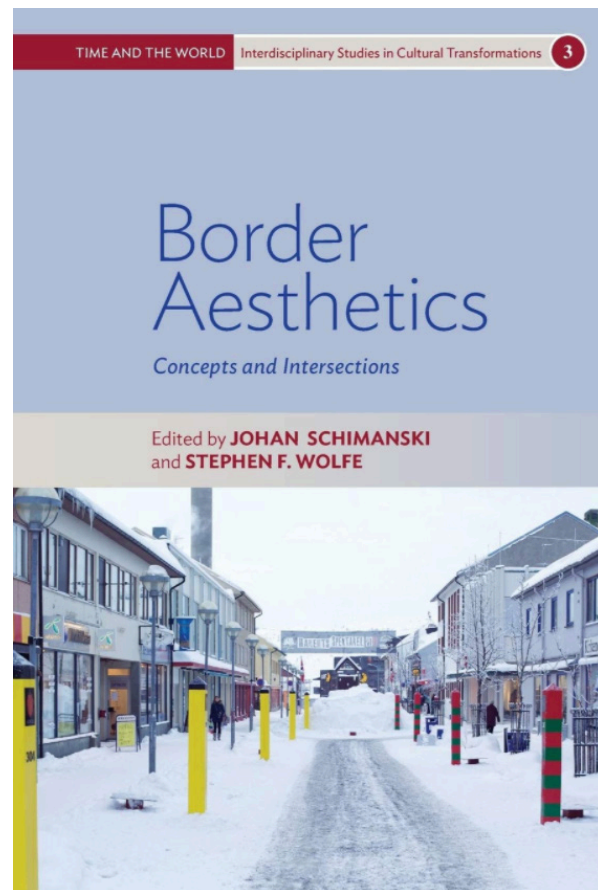
188 pages, 5 illus., bibliog., index

Hardcover (2017)

eBook (2017)

Paperback (2018)

Johan Schimanski and Stephen Wolfe have undertaken a study of the aesthetics of borders in *Border Aesthetics: Concepts and Intersections*. The philosophical tradition of aestheticism involves complex analyses of “the beautiful and the ugly, the grotesque and the sublime” (p. 4). This dense theoretical text contains six chapters masterfully co-edited and co-written so as to echo themes in both the introduction (Mireille Rosello and Wolfe) and in the conclusion (Schimanski and Wolfe). Despite their wide-ranging organizing principles, the chapters, “Ecology” (Rosello and Timothy Saunders), “Imaginary” (Lene M. Johannessen and Ruben Moi), “In/Visibility” (Chiara Brambilla and Holger Pötzsch), “Palimpsests” (Nadir Kinossian and Urban Wråkberg), “Sovereignty” (Reinhold Görling and Schimanski) and “Waiting” (Henk van Houtum and Wolfe) interconnect and speak with each other. In the form of a glossary, the conclusion comes back to each of the six themes and also maps out the linguistic terrain of border studies by categorizing



and defining dozens of terms of with as well as a work where language is the terrain of aesthetic inquiry for border scholars. In all, the book is primarily concerned with the aesthetics of borders in the area of cultural production, identifying borders as primary sites of such aesthetic productions. The

* **Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly**, PhD, is Chief Editor of *Borders in Globalization Review* and Professor of Public Administration at the University of Victoria, Canada. Contact: ebrunetj@uvic.ca

<https://journals.uvic.ca/index.php/bigreview>
<https://biglobalization.org/>



Creative Commons
CC-BY-NC 4.0



result is an interdisciplinary theoretical analysis of border aesthetics in literature, audio-visual, ecology, political culture, and migration.

Thus, the authors collectively offer a ‘philosophers’ walk’ across discussions of border aestheticism, looking at language, politics, and representations—ugly or beautiful—but also, discussions of cultural and postcolonial studies that question wider issues of identity, sovereignty, and law. It is a ‘philosophers’ talk’ that questions the ethics of enquiry into otherness in a postcolonial era, underscoring tensions across times and spaces. The ecological lens explores a world where the territoriality of ecology is a challenge to nascent forms of ecological community. The imaginary lens engages with some of the ugly aesthetics of borders, with their monsters on the other side, through explorations poetry and other literary genres. The in/visibility of the border is a more disturbing aesthetic of the

seen and unseen, of the policing of politics, and of troubling hegemonic and dystopian forms. The palimpsests further explore the visibility regimes to call into question their aesthetic borderscapes; the chapter looks back at the Soviet era in particular. The sovereignty lens questions the border directly. Sovereignty and its facets both of fierce defence of the border and of self-determination ignore what sovereignty means for borderlanders. Its case study is a parable found in the inimitable Kafka’s Odradek’s figure. The chapter on waiting is possibly my favorite, in part because it uses another famous Kafkaesque text “Waiting for the Law” as a metaphor for Foucauldian internal subjectification.

The intent of this brief review has only been to pique the reader’s interest. *Border Aesthetics* may not be an easy read for the breadth of its reach across many literatures, but it is an elegant and important contribution to the literature on borders.