



Bringing Transitional Spaces back to Life

Review of *Borderlines: Personal stories and experiences from the border counties*.
Borderlines Project, 2006.

by Brandon Hamber¹

Borderlines: Personal stories and experiences from the border counties is a poignant, relevant and enlightening book. It cautiously charts, through first-hand accounts, the stories of the lives of those living on the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The stories expose what life was like for people living on the border through the dismal days of the political conflict.

The life histories taken from 100 people from all walks of life and political persuasion are rich, humorous and colourful, but also sad and heartbreaking. The grief experienced by so many through the conflict is driven home by the personal nature of each interview.

The book is beautifully presented and the photographs that accompany the collection, which visually capture representations of the border such as roads, rivers, security outpost, memorials and gates, complement the narratives. By the end of the book one is left with the evocative feeling the photographs convey, that the border was and remains an in-between place. As one contributor put it, a place filled with ghosts and contaminated spirits.

Put another way the border is physically real but the spaces around it could be thought of as a transitional space – they are neither here nor there, neither real nor imagined; a space that exists somewhere between the remarkable interpersonal experiences of those living around the border and political world that created it.

The book brings back to life and consciousness, through the emotive words of people living in this forgotten space, what the border was all about. That is, not only a physical manifestation

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of a divided society, but a psychological border which many of those contributing to the book still feel exists in the mindsets of the people on the island of Ireland.

Yet, at the same time, transitional spaces, in the psychological sense, are not only about loss. The space between the internal or personal and the external or political can also be place of creativity and regeneration. In the final instance this is how I see this book, it is a lament for all that was lost, yet a reminder of all that must change and be reborn. It is haunting and beautiful at the same time; this comes through the stories and the physical presentation of the book.

Borderlines is a significant contribution to understanding the past and is timely considering that the political process is moving forward and in transition itself. At the same time, the stories it uncovers are a reminder of why peace and transcending borders, physical and psychological, is the only way forward.

List Price: €50.00 / £35.00

Shipping. €7.50 within Ireland and UK Overseas ???

Availability: In Stock. Ships from and sold by **Gallery of Photography**.

Other stockists include: Harbour Museum, Derry; Louth County Museum, Dundalk, County Louth; Fermanagh County Museum, Enniskillen Castle,; Newry & Mourne Museum, Bagnels Castle, Newry, County Down,; Donegal County Archives and Museum; Monaghan County Museum and Library Services; Hughes & Hughes bookstore in Dundalk, Co. Louth.