

# Summary

## The Anthropology of Borders in Modern Societies

The issue opens with an editorial note by **Tatiana Vaizer**. It argues that boundaries — physical, symbolic, or institutional — shape the way we perceive identity, legitimacy, and social order. Drawing on border studies and related interdisciplinary fields, the issue explores how borders are constructed, maintained, and challenged across historical

and contemporary contexts. Rather than treating borders as static entities, contributors examine them as dynamic, context-dependent processes. The issue highlights the need for both critical and normative approaches to boundaries, emphasizing their historical continuity, symbolic power, and ethical implications.

## Theory of the Border: Borders, Boundaries, Limits, Thresholds

The article “‘Borderism’: Overcoming Discriminative B/Ordering and Othering” by **Henk van Houtum** revisits the origins of his influential paper “Bordering, Ordering, and Othering” and responds to the reflections on its ongoing relevance offered by Anssi Paasi, Bastian Vollmer, James Scott, and Chiara Brambilla. Van Houtum explains the inspiration behind the original essay and revisits the triadic geopolitical framework it introduced. He then engages with the commentators’ insights while offering a brief analysis of how the field of border studies has evolved. Finally, drawing on their reflections, he outlines a forward-looking research agenda to address current and emerging challenges related to b/ordering and othering.

**Edwars S. Casey**, in his paper “Borders and Boundaries: How This Plays Out in Critical Situations” demonstrates how different types of borders explored in his book “The World on Edge” can be traced in various historical and contemporary cases. He examines ways in which the Rio-Grande River that divides the USA and Mexico appears in current debates on migration in the United States. He also pays attention to an ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine that could be reviewed through the lens of two types of borders. Conflicts, so shockingly unlike in other dimensions, illustrate the real importance of differentiation between types of borders.

## Philosophical Reflection: Line, Littoral, Liminal Zone

In the critique of modernity, common themes include the rejection of foundations, the demand for the decentering of the subject, and the questioning of binary oppositions between center and periphery, depth and surface. These problems reflected in the essay “Unseen boundary of belonging. Border’s dynamic (in)determinancy: unfolding, completeness, beginning” by **Iliia Mavrinsky**.

The explication of these commonplace assumptions problematizes the border both in its various definitions and in terms of its conceptualization. In this article, by referring to classical methods of border thematization, both the heuristic potential and possibilities of modernity’s heritage and the ontological grounds of the processes of positing, marking, and unfolding the border are analyzed.

## Borders of the Empire, Borders of the Other

The article “The Horizons of Empire” by **Alexander F. Filippov** examines approaches to the concept “empire” in theoretical sociology. The specificity of any empire is the size of the space it occupies, but this space is not enclosed within firm, established boundaries, as is the territory of the neighboring states. Even if empires are included in systems of interstate relations, the ideologies of their ruling groups entail limitless expansion. This has occurred many times in history and can be described by applying the phenomenological category of the “horizon”. The concept of a “horizon” implies that there are limits to vision and action. At the same time, it represents an infinite “and so on” in planning actions and communication. This infinity remains a constant state, regardless of political successes and failures.

**Svetlana Bankovskaya** in her piece “The Stranger on the Frontier (or the Frontier as a production site and as a habitat for the Stranger)” discusses ‘frontier’ as a concept and as a social phenomenon. The definition of ‘frontier’ distinguishes it from ‘border’, highlights

its connection with social change (in its spatial dimension), and underlines its dynamic character and, consequently — its uncertainty. The stranger (pioneer, marginal man, frontiersman) is the driver of the frontier as a special social form. Emerging from classical studies of the frontier, it appears as a peculiar ‘cultural pattern/ invariant’, marked by the paradoxical consolidation of cultural conflict.

Alternative discourses of the Russian intelligentsia during the reign of Nicholas II (1894–1917) became an object of interest in the article “Reverse Colonialism. The Limits of Russian Imperial Ambitions in the Press Discourse of Nicholas II’s Russia” by **Stanislaw Edward Boridzenko**. It focuses on the interpretation of Russia’s policy of territorial expansionism in the era of its modernization. According to the scholar’s hypothesis, during the reign of the last Russian tsar, a tendency toward the desacralization of the empire emerged within Russian intellectual tradition, leading to a reconsideration of the necessity of maintaining direct control over numerous previously conquered territories.

## (Post-)Soviet: Borders of A Closed Society

The rhetoric of brotherhood and friendship of peoples played a key role in the Soviet imperial construction. Its heyday is associated with the curtailment of the declared Trotskyist Marxist project of world revolution in the late 1920s. The international rhetoric of “proletarian brotherhood” was inverted, i.e. turned onto the Soviet peoples themselves and ideologically repackaged for domestic political and ideological consumption. On the one hand, such a turn fully met the tasks of forming a new — truncated — identity of the Soviet peoples. On the other hand, this rhetoric played an important role in the formation of a pan-Soviet identity and formed the basis of Soviet patriotism, dividing the world into a nationless and homogeneous realm within the Soviet borders (later these borders began to cover “fraternal socialist countries” of the Soviet bloc), and a hostile and internally “torn apart by national enmity” world outside the Soviet empire. The article “‘The Friendship of Peoples

Knows No Borders’: The Pragmatics and Rhetoric of Brotherhood and the Soviet Imperial Imaginary in the Poetry of the Peoples of the USSR of the Stalinist Era” by **Evgeny Dobrenko** examines the metaphors of brotherhood, the family of peoples, friendship and other tropes. Key to this tropology is the concept of border.

The article “The Legend of Ranevskaya: The trickster and gender transgression” by **Mark Lipovetsky** examines the cultural legend surrounding actress Faina Ranevskaya, constituted through memories and anecdotes about her, aphorisms attributed to her, and her famous roles that she co-created. Together, these elements form a modification of the female trickster (“trickstar”) trope, embodying the subversion of patriarchal normativity. As the analysis shows, Ranevskaya’s specific humor most closely corresponds to the camp model as described by Susan Sontag and other scholars.

## Transgressive Experiences in The Russophone Cultural Sphere

*Guest editor: Larisa Muravieva*

Autofiction is increasingly described in contemporary criticism as a transgressive genre. Its transgressiveness is manifested in the free combination of fiction with real events, which breaks genre conventions and places the reader in an ambivalent position, requiring them to trust and distrust the text simultaneously. However, the transgression of autofiction goes beyond genre hybridity by foregrounding the problem of authenticity in experience and the search for ways to write about it. The article “Is Autofic-

tion a Transgressive Genre?” by **Larissa Muravieva** analyzes the main aspects of transgression in autofiction, which, in addition to crossing the boundaries between fiction and fact, includes the ethical issues surrounding the boundary between one’s own and another’s experience, as well as the role of corporeality and the liminality of experience in autofiction writing.

This article “Forbidden Manuscripts: An “Archaeology” of Family Memory

in Contemporary Russian Literature” by **Domenico Scagliusi** explores how contemporary Russian literature addresses the Soviet past through recent works by Sergey Lebedev and Maria Nyrkova. It focuses on the key role played by the literary topos of the “found manuscript” in thematizing the transmission of family memory amidst long-standing repression and silence. Through this motif, both authors address the relationship between personal and collective identities, highlight the fragility of memory transmission, and emphasize the role of literature in reinterpreting imposed narratives. This study positions these texts within the paradigm of the “archaeological narrative” and points out the transgressive dimension that this global tendency can assume in the Russian context.

**Ilya Kalinin** devoted his research “Soviet Oil and Russian Cosmism: The Political Economy of Transgression” to reflections

on oil, characteristic of late Soviet culture. The ever-increasing role of oil for the Soviet economy of the 1950s—1970s collided with the reluctance of the Soviet leadership to recognize the resource dependence of the socialist state, articulating its political identity in the language of modernization. The refusal to recognize this at the level of economic and socio-political rationality led to the mythologization and fetishization of oil at the level of cultural representation, reproducing the symptoms of this dependence repressed into the collective unconscious. One of the most striking examples of late Soviet petro-poetics was Andron Konchalovsky’s film epic *Siberiade* (1978). The description of the transgressive moves made in it, violating late Soviet cultural conventions, leads to the discovery of artistic and ideological layers, the presence of which could not be envisaged within the framework of official Soviet culture.

## Graphomania. Literature and Its Boundaries

The article “Naive Author as a (Non-)Graphomaniac: Toward the Problem of Correlation of Concepts” by **Danila Davydov** examines the history of the concept of “graphomania” and proposes an operational version of the typology of literary phenomena that have been designated by this concept, as well as a number of other partially synonymous concepts. Thus, it is proposed to call “graphomaniac 1” a “character writer”, “graphomaniac 2” the idea of a manic writer generated by psychiatric discourse, “graphomaniac 3” the common idea of an untalented but prolific poet, “graphomaniac 4” the phenomenon of a faceless standardized writer generated by the Soviet literary system and its analogue in the modern online environment. Further-

more, various aspects of the problem of naive writing are considered: the difference between primitive and primitivism, the question of the differences in the existence of naive and primitivist creativity in the visual and verbal arts, the connection of the problematics of the primitive with the postcolonial context. It shows both the fundamental differences in the modes of existence of the naive author and the graphomaniac, as well as the possible correlations between individual variations of the primitive and the graphomaniac.

The article “In Lieu of Foucault: Graphomania, Literature, and Power in Abram Tertz’s *Fantastic Tales*” by **Mark Lipovetsky** examines the significance of graphomania in the prose of Andrei

Sinyavsky / Abram Tertz created in the late 1950s — early 1960s. This concept assumes an almost central position in Sinyavsky's paradoxical aesthetics when his so-called "Fantastic tales" are viewed as an anticipation, or more precisely, an original and independent version of the system of ideas that was contemporaneously developing in the West as poststructuralist philosophy of culture. Abram Tertz's "fantastic tales" reveal profound correspondences with Michel Foucault's theories — which had not yet existed at the time of their creation — concerning the nature of authorship, delinquency, panopticism, and power networks. It is fundamentally significant that these "resonances" emerge precisely where Sinyavsky examines the system of power organized through the symbolic role of literature and the writer in Soviet culture, thus pointing at the mechanisms of Soviet (or Russian) "alternative modernity".

The article "How does the Phenomenology of Stupidity Explain Graphomania? Reflection with Examples from Viktor Bokov's Poems" by **Ksenia Kostomarova** and **Pavel Uspenskij** attempts to broaden the theoretical understanding of graphomania. The traditional approach defines it on the basis of two main criteria: the number of low-quality texts and the author's self-perception as a genius. These characteristics are insufficient for an accurate and profound analysis of the phenomenon. The article analyses the poetic texts of V. Bokov (1914 – 2009) and proposes an extended list of criteria concomitant with graphomania and also formulates the main receptive requirement that determines the perception of a "bad" text as graphomaniac. The article associates graphomania with the category of stupidity, which is considered in a phenomenological way.

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