

Walls, Borders, Boundaries. Spatial and Cultural Practices in Europe

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This aptly titled volume is comprised of intriguing and diverse scholarly essays. Each by a different writer, they all illuminate specific European case studies that also shed light on general aspects of walls, borders, and boundaries in cultural and historical contexts. Represented are various territories and time periods, as well as differing academic, disciplinary, and artistic approaches. According to the Acknowledgments, support was provided by the German Studies Association, and the project emerged from a series of GSA panels marking the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Berlin and the wall are addressed in about half of the essays included. In the Introduction the editors associate the book with the "now burgeoning" "transdisciplinary" "field of border studies" and the "'spatial turn' in the social sciences and humanities" (16-17). Brief definitions and comments on the emergence and significance of these developments would have been appreciated here, even though readers can seek further information by referring to the extensive bibliographies following the Introduction and the book as a whole.

In the volume's first essay Yair Mintzker notes that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, European definitions of cities typically stated that they were surrounded by walls and moats. For thousands of European cities, fortified walls, and sometimes an outside empty zone or glacis, provided legal, economic and security advantages. Nevertheless, by the nineteenth century, most city walls were gone. In this article, Mintzker traces the "dialectics" of strategic policies on city walls in absolutist France. Depending on threats from religious wars and internal forces, rulers at times ordered defortification, at others fortification. King Louis XIV even developed a Glacis Theory whereby the state would mirror the three-part model of the fortified city.

In his contribution, Olaf Briese describes Berlin under Nazi rule as a city of camps. Among their classifications were work-education, child welfare, forced labor, and police detention camps, and camps for foreign civilian workers. Thousands of labor camps permeated the city, some contracted but mostly forced, with varying types of housing and degrees of confinement. Laborers included prisoners of war, concentration camp inmates and Jewish prisoners. In 1945, 1.5 million people were in camps in Berlin. After the war, the four occupying powers erected additional political and refugee camps. Evoking the theme of the book, Briese states that "all camps exhibit at least one essential similarity: a fortified boundary. This boundary is the decisive hinge between the

camp and society" (43).

Bringing in the realm of art, Eric Jarosinski describes a 2002 installation in Berlin, "Grundgesetz 49" (Basic Law 1949), located outside the Parliament building. It consists of a small sculpture garden enclosed by a transparent glass wall engraved with the text of the constitutional Basic Law. Created by the Israeli Dani Karavan, it figures as "a conciliatory or redemptive post-Holocaust link to the Jewish world" (68). Jarosinski notes that transparency can represent "accessibility, accountability, and democracy" or even "ritual cleansing" of a grim past. (61-62) To some, however, the installation may evoke the fraught notion of "state art," the consumerist display windows of Berlin's numerous shopping districts, or the fact that walls are "central to a technology of exclusion, fortification and security" (67). Jarosinski concludes that the artwork represents "a threshold, a meeting between the multilayered, ambivalent experience of transparency and its one-dimensional entry into contemporary political discourse" (73).

Daniela Vicherat Mattar's article discusses the Schengen Agreement, which greatly eased travel restrictions and flows of goods, capital, and information. In 1985 five European countries signed it, and now 27 belong to the Schengen group. However, Mattar notes that some borders have been "hardened" against nonmember states; in fact, border situations are quite variable, "not a monolith but a mosaic." She states that "in Schengenized Europe, social antagonisms continue to order populations according to a dualistic logic" (78). The chapter highlights three situations: the "Wall of Fear" in Padua, Italy where a protective steel wall sectioned off a neighborhood of poor African immigrants, walls bordering Ceuta, a Spanish enclave in northern Morocco, and strategic walls called "Peace Lines" in Belfast, Northern Ireland erected to prevent violence between Nationalist (Catholic) and Unionist (Protestant) forces. Mattar concludes, "it seems that walls are still in vogue. [...] Europe continues to build its walls to control populations as well as their expression, circulation, and mobility" (87).

In the article, "Border Guarding as Social Practice: A Case Study," Muriel Blaive and Thomas Lindenberger focus on a small town, Česká Velenice, on the Czech-Austrian Border. After its years under Nazi rule, the town was dominated by Soviet armed force and propaganda campaigns. The Soviets instrumentalized local ethnic and national issues, enflaming anti-German feelings directed at residents of the neighboring Austrian town of Gmünd, and any other German speakers, labeled "Sudeten" (implying pro-Nazi) Germans, whatever their political or family history. The people became accustomed to police surveillance and permanently deployed border guards, whom they were forced or agreed to assist with information and denouncing of possible dissidents. The U.S.S.R. was presented, and widely perceived, as the guardian angel of Czechoslovakia. From 1945 until 1989 the town "appears to have been the ideal of a communist border community" (97).

In "A 'Complicated Contrivance:' West Berlin behind the Wall, 1971-1989," David E. Barclay asserts that at the time of the 1972 Quadripartite Agreement the walled-in city of West Berlin served as a "heroic" representation of Western democracy and defiance against Communism. However, this role faded over the years as the reality of "two Germanies" became normalized. The city's isolation caused psychological, economic, and financial problems and its situation increasingly seemed out of date. In the 1960s and 1970s new movements developed,

such as feminism, anti-police demonstrations, house squatters, concern with local corruption, and tensions with immigrants.

An essay by Steffi Marung on "Germany, Poland, and Ukraine in the Context of the EU's Eastern Enlargement" highlights Poland's pivotal position between Germany and Ukraine. Poland has long claimed a role in East/West bridging and transferring modern Western values to Eastern neighbors, but the country is still sometimes regarded as backward by governments, media, and EU officials. Poland was refused EU membership when Communism collapsed, but finally granted it in 2004. According to Marung, since 1989 Poland has actively pursued the goals of "promoting the stabilization of democratic and sovereign states east of its national boundaries [...] and acting as an advocate for the European ambitions of its neighbors, especially Ukraine." Yet, after Poland joined the EU, "Western politicians were taken by surprise when they realized Poland's willingness to be treated as an equal" (143). Marung remarks that Ukraine also aspires to a stronger position in the EU; she predicts that in the future various European hierarchies will continue to shift.

The first sentence of Patricia Ehrkamp's article, "Migrants, Mosques, and Minarets" is provocative: "On 29 November 2009, Switzerland's citizens shocked many of their European neighbors by voting in a referendum to ban the construction of minarets on Swiss mosques" (153). The referendum, along with a controversial new mosque in Cologne, brought to a head simmering tensions and debates over Moslem immigration in Europe. Minarets became a symbol of fundamentalist, anti-assimilation Islamist expression, associations of Islam with headscarves, forced marriages and honor killings, even the fear that Switzerland was threatened with the specter of "Sharia law." In Germany, resistance to Moslem immigration has been justified by the controversial concept of a national "Leitkultur" – or "guiding culture" – rooted in patriotism, Judeo-Christian culture and liberal democracy. Ehrkamp comments on these ongoing controversies, "democracy is far from stable" (168).

Isa Blum highlights years of inaccurate categorizing of immigrants in West Germany by "country of origin," resulting in problems for researchers, neighborhood tension, and discrimination in social benefits and zoning laws. For example, refugees called "Yugoslavs" may come from half a dozen present-day countries, and Albanian speakers, to their dismay, may be called Greeks, Yugoslavs, or Turks. In part because of well-known Yugoslav sport heroes and Nobel Prize winners, young Albanians have tried to assimilate in Germany by adopting a Yugoslav identity, which their parents regard as "treasonous." Blum discusses state forced eviction of hundreds of thousands of Albanian speakers from their homes, but adds that interviews showed that they typically placed more blame on hostile individuals they encountered than state bureaucracies. She concludes, "This suggests the need for a much more integrated study of how immigrant groups interact with local host populations" (187).

In "Invisible Migrants," Jeffrey Jurgens tells the tragic story of a 5-year-old boy from a Turkish guest worker family who drowned in 1975 in a river that belonged to East Germany, while the bank was in West Berlin. West Germans were not allowed to search for him, and thousands of demonstrators protested that East German officers did not do enough to try to save him. Jurgens calls for a reexamination of "public memories of the Berlin Wall" including press coverage and archives, that often exclude certain populations. He concludes, "In the end

the master narrative of 'two states and one nation' may itself be a limiting rubric, one that a more fully transnational perspective can fruitfully scrutinize and complicate" (206).

The final article, "Crossing Boundaries in Cyprus" takes both personal and artistic points of view toward history. After identifying the many occupiers of Cyprus over the centuries, and the violent conflicts there, the author, Gülgün Kayim, a Turkish Cypriot born in 1963, states, "I am an artist whose work navigates the pathways of such geopolitical conflict and related movements of people fleeing violence" (211). Her family fled the island and she has lived in London and Minnesota. Kayim tells that her theatrical trilogy "Self Portrait" is a series of biographical performances exploring the themes of conflict, memory, and migration on the island of Cyprus. These theatrical pieces weave together her experiences, family stories and memories, and borrowed texts, many on war and violence. She asserts, "I feel no allegiance to any identity or any location" (225). Yet, her performance has a positive mission. It is "a strategy of survival in the search for belonging" (229).

In conclusion, the diverse contributions to this book are all thoughtful, well-researched, and significant. The editors have organized them into appropriate sections, "City Walls," "Border Zones," and "Migrating Boundaries," and provided them with bibliographies, a useful Index, and a cogent and informative contextual Introduction. The collection is both diverse and unified, and the essays are both specific and general, and of contemporary, historical, and timeless import. As the editors say in the Introduction, "The contradictory yet simultaneous functions walls, borders, and boundaries have—to divide and connect, to exclude and include, to shield and constrain—are fundamental to all cultures" (1).

Citation:

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