

Introduction

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The theme of the present issue of *Hagar* is the interrelationship of two concepts that have become central in our contemporary world: bodies and borders. As Bryan Turner has noted, ours are “somatic societies,” as the “major political problems are both problematized in the body and expressed through it” (Turner, 1996:1). Moreover, the body is the locus where sovereign power and micropower intersect. Borders, as Etienne Balibar claims, “crystallize the stakes of politico-economic power and the symbolic stakes at work in the collective imagination: relations of force and material interest on one side, representations of identity on the other” (Balibar, 2004:8).

The discussion on borders has also become central in a world in which globalization processes undermine the classical conceptions of borders and state sovereignty. In an age where globalization weakens state sovereignty and, apparently, makes borders obsolete, state sovereignty still makes itself present at the borders, which (differently) condition bodies more than ever. Borders, quoting Balibar once again, can be understood as the point where “the status of citizen returns to the condition of a ‘subject,’ where political participation gives way to the rule of police” (Balibar, 2004:109). Borders are thus the place where the political status of the citizen gives way to the subjected body.

Thus, it is especially important to historically understand the development of the interrelationship between bodies and borders. This interrelationship signifies the occult side of universal globalization, as the free flow of capital (not really free, indeed, but conditioned by the profit motive) and the pseudo-free flux of information (since it is doubly conditioned: at the emission point by the growing concentration of information production, and at the receptor point by disparities in the level of technological development) are not accompanied by the free movement of bodies across borders. The world is not a global village for most bodies. They cannot go freely through borders. Their movement is determined both by the needs of the market—by which certain bodies belong to the cosmopolitan minority for which borders became obsolete indeed—and by the logic of state sovereignty and its dominion over territory and population. Control over bodies and borders were central characteristics of state sovereignty in the Westphalian world. In the current globalized world, states have significantly lost sovereign power. They have almost no control over the flow of capital and commodities and over macroeconomic control because of the growing power of transnational

corporations and institutional investors. They have also lost institutional power to supranational organisms and institutions and to regional or local ones. Thus, the differential control over bodies in relation to borders, i.e., the possibility to allow certain bodies to pass the borders and forbid certain others, is probably the main remaining attribute of state sovereignty.

However, the role of borders is not limited to the borders between national states. Borders are also between regions (such as those separating “Fortress Europe” and the poorer countries) or internal to the national state. Bodies carry with them the mark of the border which signifies them as “others.” They embody the borders that are the foundation for their discrimination and exclusion, as is the case of migrant workers. Bodies, thus, are not only marks on a map, or imaginary lines that delimit a territory, but they are simultaneously an institution by which bodies are acted upon and subjected to sovereign power; they are the mark on the body which marks it as “other”; and they are the internalization of the power of the border in such a way that they separate between groups even where no physical separation exists. Thus, while certain bodies go beyond the borders as a result of the unequal distribution of wealth, actual borders go beyond the traditional concept of national state borders.

In accord with the interdisciplinary character of the journal, the present issue of *Hagar* offers an analysis of the complex interrelationship between bodies and borders that draws from a variety of disciplines: sociology, political theory, history, public health and philosophy. Using diverse analytical tools, the articles provide us with a variegated (though obviously incomplete) understanding of the ways in which bodies and borders intersect.

Bryan Turner’s paper, “Borders, boundaries and bodies: The rise of overpopulation warriors,” discusses the new ways violence is imposed on bodies as a result of globalization processes. He analyzes the ways in which war and violence have not borders, but bodies as their goal. When borders are permeated by globalization processes, “liquid wars” represent the spread of conflict across borders and boundaries. The body replaces the border as the locus and symbol of sovereign power and violence becomes embodied in war.

In “Foreign bodies, alternative politics and the boundaries of Americanism,” Lauren Basson discusses another aspect of the way in which bodies become the carriers of borders, of the way in which borders are drawn not on the surface of maps and land, but on the surface of the bodies. She shows how the ideological “otherness” of anarchists and socialists was constructed in the U.S. as a physical “otherness” in order to draw a clear border between them and the “true” American people. As Basson argues, the bodies of anarchists were represented as “un-American and even inhuman, in efforts to translate the ideological differences between socialists and capitalists into a visible, ascriptive boundary separating ideological ‘foreigners’ from ‘true Americans.’”

“Hanging bodies, slashed ears and bottled heads,” by Fernando Purcell, is another example of the need to embody the boundaries. When geographical borders are

permeable (and, as we can learn from both papers, this process began before the current globalization), exclusion is embodied, and the spectacle of the lynching becomes the ultimate expression of the way sovereign power asserts itself. The immigrant who trespassed the border was submitted to corporal punishment (lynching, whipping or cutting off his ears), which was presented as a spectacle in order to reaffirm the existence of the border in the punished (or dead) body of the trespasser.

The essay by Davidovitch and colleagues, on the approach of the Israeli medical establishment to mass immigration in the 1950s, examines the relations between science, power, ideology and borders. While Zionist ideology made the Israeli border permeable for Jewish immigrants, ethnocentrism still represented the immigrant bodies as foreigners and dangerous. The combination of the Zionist idea of nation-building and the ethnocentrism of Jews of European origin produced an approach by which the immigrant bodies were “entities to be clean and acculturated,” while they were portrayed through images of physical disgust. The science and practices of public health represented the framework which organized this approach. “Contested bodies” does not limit itself, however, to disclosing the interactions between sovereign power, nation-building and science, but also examines the ways in which the power exercised over the bodies was at least partially resisted, bringing to our attention that bodies are not only the carriers of borders, the surface of borders or the place where power is applied, but also the locus of resistance.

My own article, “Bodies at the check post,” analyzes the check post as a border where the sovereign power asserts itself through control over the naked body. Following Giorgio Agamben’s idea of sovereignty as the inclusion of life as bare life, I show how the Israeli occupation draws more and more borders (the wall, the borders separating the Occupied Territories into different areas, the check post) that delimit a space where the state of exception becomes the rule.

Finally, Zelia Gregoriou’s discussion of the border dividing Cyprus builds on a Derridean perspective in order to deconstruct the role of the border and the way it constitutes bodies as differentiated subjects. “The Europeanization of ethnocentrism and the nationalization of multiculturalism in Cyprus” discusses the border as the territorialization of the divide between Cyprus’ two cultures. The paper traces the multiple genealogies of the divide and the state’s role in its regulation. By historicizing the border and its differential relation to bodies, Gregoriou de-essentializes both the border as an institution and the divide between Cypriot Greek and Turkish populations. I would like to thank Dr. Rebecca Kook, *Hagar*’s editor, for this opportunity and for her support and advice. I would also like to thank Hagit Nol and Adva Zamir for their invaluable, conscientious and efficient work.

References

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