

Foreword

The image on the front cover of this issue depicts what is probably one of the most notorious man-made structures of modern times: the Berlin Wall or, as it was officially known by the regime which constructed it, the *Antifaschistischer Schutzwall* [Anti-Fascist Protection Rampart]. During the thirty or so years of its existence, it marked a physical border, the one that separated East and West Berlin. It also came to be regarded as a symbol of the ideological divide between East and West Europe, the ‘iron curtain’ that ‘descended across the continent’ after WW2, as Churchill described it in his speech of 5 March 1946.

The Berlin Wall is no more; it is a memory in the minds of those who lived with its presence. Following the opening of the border on 9 November 1989, people set about demolishing it; official demolition began the following summer, and today only a few sections remain. They serve not only as a reminder of the Wall itself and the ideologies that divide peoples but also as a monument to the many people who died in their attempt to get out of one regime for whatever reason and live in another; the flowers in the image are tributes to their memory. The image thus represents the themes of this double issue of *Skepsi* which presents articles resulting from *Borders* and *Time to Remember: Anniversaries, Celebration and Commemoration*. the conferences of 2016 and 2017 respectively.

One definition of the term ‘border’ is the dividing line or frontier between political or geographical regions. Unsurprisingly, many of the papers that were delivered at the conference held on 27 May 2017 focussed on this concept of a border. However, as is illustrated by the Berlin Wall, a border can be the invisible line of demarcation that distinguishes intellectual concepts. The two articles selected for *Borders* and published in this issue, one of which began life as a paper delivered at the conference, reflect on the border’s physical and intellectual functions.

The first of these, Arianna Dagnino’s ‘Urban Caravanserais, Translational Practices and Transcultural Commons in the Age of Global Mobility’, takes as its starting point the phenomena that Arianna terms ‘neo-nomadism’ and the ‘neo-nomad’, terms that remind us nomadism as a way of life and the nomad have existed for millennia and still do, though with increasing difficulty. The focus of her article is how to alleviate both the ‘sense of displacement, disconnection or de-rootedness’ experienced by today’s migrants and the ‘anxiety [resulting from] a perception of fragmentation of community and of disruption of social cohesion’ experienced by the host societies into which they eventually settle. The solution is not, she argues, to try and enforce cultural

assimilation on migrants or even adopt a policy of multiculturalism both of which ‘hinge upon and sanction the stifling “us” and “them” dichotomy’ but to embrace transculturality, a perspective that ‘rejects the idea of cultures as discrete, self-contained units’. To do this, we can learn from the past, from the caravanserais of past centuries, the ‘open-ended, trans-social, trans-class and intercultural [...] “spaces”’ that used to be found along the trade routes of Asia, north Africa and south-east Europe and ‘promoted the crossing of ethnic, religious, and national identity boundaries’.

The ‘stifling “us” and “them” dichotomy’ is further explored by Nadja Stamselberg in ‘On the Right Side — Borders of Belonging’, in which she examines how the complex ontology of borders requires a rethinking of the philosophical concepts of identity and the concept of hospitality from a philosophical standpoint, in particular the Derridean aporia, the contradiction between two of Kant’s *dicta*: on the one hand, that the stranger in our midst has a right to expect unconditional hospitality, and, on the other, that residence in a foreign country can only be exercised by invitation and can therefore be hedged about by conditions.

The title of the 2017 conference reflects the fact that it was our tenth, so our intention was to invite an exploration of the phenomenon of marking anniversaries, particularly significant ones such as a centenary, with either celebration or commemoration, depending on the event being remembered. In the event, none of the articles submitted addressed this phenomenon, but, rather than abandon what would have been the tenth volume of *Skepsi*, the decision was taken to wait until articles, if any, had been selected for publication after peer review and then choose a title that reflected a common thread that ran through them. All of the three articles selected, one of which began as a paper presented at the conference, introduced aspects of remembering, hence Volume 10’s title, *Remembrance of Things Past*.

The first of these, Kimberley Bulgin’s ‘The Refugee Identity Crisis: How Athens is Trying to Bridge the Gap Between a Person and their Homeland through Heritage and Meaning Making’ discusses the relevance of heritage in the context of the refugees now living in Greece as a result of political events in early 2016. She argues that the steps which have so far been taken by Athens to settle refugees and encourage them to think of Greece as home by making use of heritage, both Greek heritage and that of the refugees, could be interpreted as steps towards creating a transcultural community, echoing Arianna’s modern caravanserai.

The way heritage can metamorphose into a parody of itself when the peoples of whose culture it is part are subjected to outside influences and become too distanced from their roots informs Joseph Cronin's 'Waldimir Kaminer and Jewish Identity in "Multikulti" Germany'. This explores the phenomenon of the *Kontingentflüchtlinge* [Quota Refugees], Russian-speaking Jews allowed into, first, the former German Democratic Republic and, after re-unification, the Federal Republic of Germany between 1990 and 2006 through the medium of Waldimir Kaminer's fiction, in particular *Russendisko* [Russian Disco], a collection of short stories. These are loosely based on Kaminer's own experiences as a *Kontingentflüchtling* and his observations of the problems and tensions that resulted as the *Kontingentflüchtlinge* joined communities of *Alteingesessenen* [Old-established] Jews, some of which stemmed from the way the immigrants' knowledge and understanding of Jewish traditions had been corrupted by decades of living in the highly antisemitic regime of the former Soviet Union.

The memories at the core of Nihad Laouar's article "It is at the ghosts within us that we shudder": Voicing the Anxieties of Liminality in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*' are those of the horrific experiences on the Western Front during WW1 that haunt the troubled Septimus Warren Smith in *Mrs. Dalloway* and ultimately bring about his suicide.

Serendipitously, all three of these articles directly or indirectly refer to borders. Migrants, whether voluntary, as were the *Kontingentflüchtlinge*, or enforced, as are the refugees currently in Greece, have, by definition, crossed at least one border; the focus of Nihad's article is the phenomenon of liminality, of being on the margins, in a 'no-man's land' between two conditions. Likewise, the first two articles introduce elements of remembering or, arguably, not remembering: the caravanserais of yesteryear show us how to resolve the problems that arise from today's global mobility: philosophical concepts that have become too inflexible to accommodate the conflicting expectations of the migrant and host societies need to be, if not forgotten, then certainly rethought. In a year which has seen the centenary of the Armistice and the eightieth anniversary of Kristallnacht, the themes of borders and remembering are particularly relevant. We commend this issue to you.