



Walls: Enclosure and Ethics in the Modern Landscape

Thomas Oles

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Stone walls, concrete walls, chain-link walls, border walls: we live in a world of walls. Walls mark sacred space and embody earthly power. They maintain peace and cause war. They enforce separation and create unity. They express identity and build community. Yard to nation, city to self, walls define and dissect our lives. And, for Thomas Oles, it is time to broaden our ideas of what they can—and must—do.

In *Walls*, Oles shows how our minds and our politics are shaped by—and shape—our divisions in the landscape. He traces the rich array of practices and meanings connected to the making and marking of boundaries across history and prehistory, and he describes how these practices have declined in recent centuries. The consequence, he argues, is all around us in the contemporary landscape, riven by walls shoddy in material and mean in spirit. Yet even today, Oles demonstrates, every wall remains potentially an opening, a stage, that critical place in the landscape where people present themselves and define their obligations to one another. In an evocative epilogue, Oles brings to life a society of productive, intentional, and ethical enclosure—one that will leave readers more hopeful about the divided landscapes of the future.



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