



Editorial / Editorial / Editorial

Knocking down the Wall

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The world is furrowed by several walls. The nature of those walls is a dual one: They are tangible because they are built on the ground with cement, iron, wire and cameras; they are intangible because they germinate and are projected in people's imagination with prejudices, amnesia and hatred. The present government of the United States is planning to raise one more wall. As a matter of fact, that wall already exists; now the government's purpose is to make it less vulnerable, that is to say, to enlarge it with cement and a particular kind of hatred: Racism. It is a one-sided invulnerability: No "undesirable" will be able to go through it from south to north, although it will be permeable from north to south to cultural goods, polluting chemicals, frivolous tourism, spying diplomacy, extracting branches of financial capital, and many other evils.

The wall which aims at humiliating every individual living south of Mexico is not alone. It is accompanied by neoliberal governments which curtail rights, widen the gap between the rich and the poor, empty the state's coffers, lie, deceive, and censor. Besides, as it was demonstrated during the presidential campaign in the United States, and in the declarations of the right-winged nationalist leaders gathered in Coblenza (Germany) early this year, walls are not only built with hatred but also with nationalistic, islamophobic, antisemitic, misogynistic, homophobic and bellicistic discourses. It is not easy to understand how these tirades can seduce and recruit so many people. However, we must accept that in some cases they do so by giving easy answers to complex problems ("immigrants take our jobs"), and in others by creating an atmosphere in which political and electoral decisions succumb to emotions. This decision making atmosphere, known during the last decade as "post-truth", has led some peoples to empower their own executioners.

Nothing or nobody will be unscathed by this physical and mental segmentation, by this perverse overclassification of individuals and their cultures, especially when "ceocracies" which arrogate to themselves the power over public things replicate infinite walls in various countries. Since 2016 we have seen an attempt to raise new walls in Argentina and Brazil. One of them wants, through unfounded disqualifications, to exclude the areas in which the collaborators and readers of this journal work: Social sciences and the humanities. These areas suffer a double exclusion: They bear the financing cuts which neoliberalism imposes to scientific research in



general and are the victims of a falsely rationalistic allegation which accuses them of being unproductive, loss-making and useless. The disqualification of social sciences and the humanities has a clear objective: To annihilate the discourses which welcome diversity, question the status quo, and knock down walls. Our disciplines are incompatible with walls. But day after day, walls are higher, longer and more convincing. Then, what shall we do against them?

The members of the Board and the Council of the Society for Ethnomusicology have had a quick and strong reaction through two communiqués, one issued after holding its 61st Annual Meeting, which began the day after the presidential elections in the USA were carried out¹, and a later one signed together with the members of the American Council of Learned Societies². In the first one, a strong rejection was expressed of the xenophobic manifestations which occurred during the electoral campaign and in the second one of the executive order by the American government limiting entrance to the country by citizens from seven counties with a Moslem majority. Also, other institutions have explicitly expressed their worries about the harmful effects that the neoliberal advance is having in several countries, such as the reduction of budget funds allotted to education and research, the cancellation of cultural and social plans, and the limitations on jobs in our fields. Among those institutions we can find the *Associação Brasileira de Etnomusicologia* and the *Asociación Argentina de Musicología*.

It would be naïve to believe that those denunciations can stop the onslaught of concentrated powers or the imperial and bellicistic delirium of a magnate whose power was legitimized thanks to a mass of voters captivated by a propaganda machine which stirred fear, transformed lies into truth, and reactivated chauvinism. However, in view of this impossibility, the worst option is the silence of institutions and of those who make them up. As it is confirmed in the articles which are included in this and other issues of *El oído pensante*, the research which we do under the healthily ambiguous labels of musicology and ethnomusicology, have something in common: Diversity is both their starting and finishing point. Diverse are our perspectives, diverse are the practices and the people we observe, diverse are the purposes which move us, diverse are the results we reach. The wall, as a symbol of segregation, inequity, alienation and racism, is the antithesis of diversity and, consequently, of our work as researchers and educators. Any discourse which questions it, unveils its purposes, and identifies who it benefits and who it injures, will be useful to undermine its structure. It is true that the structure is solid, but that does not prevent us from trying to destabilize it, crack it, knock it down as some of us still believe that all that is solid (sooner or later) melts into air.

¹ <http://www.ethnomusicology.org/news/325267/Position-Statement-in-Response-to-the-2016-U.S.-Presidential-Election.htm> (Accessed 01/02/2017).

² <http://www.ethnomusicology.org/news/328865/SEM-Board-Opposes-U.S.-Executive-Order-Banning-Immigrants.htm> (Accessed 01/02/2017).