

Barbed Wire: An Ecology of Modernity

Reviel Netz



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In this original and controversial book, historian and philosopher Reviel Netz explores the development of a controlling and pain-inducing technology—barbed wire. Surveying its development from 1874 to 1954, Netz describes its use to control cattle during the colonization of the American West and to control people in Nazi concentration camps and the Russian Gulag. Physical control over space was no longer symbolic after 1874.

This is a history told from the perspective of its victims. With vivid examples of the interconnectedness of humans, animals, and the environment, this dramatic account of barbed wire presents modern history through the lens of motion being prevented. Drawing together the history of humans and animals, Netz delivers a compelling new perspective on the issues of colonialism, capitalism, warfare, globalization, violence, and suffering. Theoretically sophisticated but written with a broad readership in mind, Barbed Wire calls for nothing less than a reconsideration of modernity.

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