

1. Staying Inside

It has been a particularly ugly start to the millennium. A bewildering groundswell of ethno-nationalisms, muscular forms of xenophobia and violent claims to territory have consigned planetary existence to a grid of highly regulated movement, enforcement of borders, expulsions, incarcerations and camps. The putative global order full of mobile freedoms is ordered by thickened borders, omnipresent surveillance and corpulent state administration of movement.

In late September 2019, then-U.S. President Donald Trump articulated this mood most starkly when he addressed the UN General Assembly, flexing the core themes of his presidency:

The future does not belong to globalists, the future belongs to patriots [...] If you want freedom, take pride in your country. If you want democracy, hold on to your sovereignty. And if you want peace, hold on to your nation.¹

Trump's bullying nationalism is a deformed extension of messianic fundamentalism that has its roots in the very formation of the state. The 1648 Treaties of Westphalia established a European (and now-international) political order based on the peaceful co-existence of sovereign nation states. While that juridical hegemon has been metronomically

1 'Trump at UN: 'The future does not belong to globalists. The future belongs to patriots.' American Military News, Sept. 24th, 2019.

punctured, it has held for almost four hundred years as a planetary order. Statism gives shape and substance to Us and Them and is the most potent available vehicle for belonging and expulsions.

This ordering labours to describe a managerial fabric of state sovereignties stitched together by international institutions, trading alliances, and globalization: a citizenry that knows its place, understands who is welcomed and who must be contained outside. Liberalism invokes a 'good nationalism' of beer ads, 'common-sense' immigration policy, the Olympics, World Cups and flag-waving nostalgia: a nationalism that doubles-down and reaffirms borders, defines 'the best of who we really are', and confirms our citizenship.

This citizenship is bound up with liberal cosmopolitan ideals of hospitality that assume an asymmetrical power relation where any migrant, anyone not 'from here' has to prove their worthiness for entry. It is a charitable idea, rather than one of justice. Hospitality, by its premise, has the capacity to be condescending, leaving the rights of others in the realm of arbitrary kindness – always contingent.

As twenty-first century borders are gored open by gushing flows of goods, capital, viruses and populations, this argument groans under intense internal and external pressures, desperate to bend, not break. Aggressive racial and religious-inflected nationalisms, opportunistic leaders and populist movements repeat old arguments: without strong borders there can be no nations. Incited by the viciousness of these new formations, liberalism can only yearn for borders that are a little less racist, cities that are a little more welcoming, governments that are a little more charitable.

This current crop of authoritarian xenophobes and military coups might well pass, but their point remains. Nation-states *have* to be built on identitarian exclusivity, an 'Us' keeping a 'Them' out. Without strong borders, nations dissolve. Contemporary forms of aggressive nationalism are not aberrations: they are new articulations of an extant form. Fascism is just nationalism taken seriously.

Borders never end. They are specific exercises of power that follow us everywhere. We might imagine that as we cross those cartographic lines, as we pass through, then the border is over. We breathe sighs of relief

when the border guard finally lowers their gaze and waves us through, when our papers get stamped, when our applications are approved. But none of us are ever over or past the border – the inside is always subject to doubt and scrutiny. No one's legitimacy is ever safe, certainly never for migrants. We are all subject to constant management and zones of permanent administration that are now planetary in scale and reach.

These zones are functions and apparatuses of power that have a relationship to biopolitics and the management of populations, but are something new in their pervasive reach, suited for an era of ethno-nationalisms and ecological crises. They are accelerated by surveillance technologies and their ultimate resolution is carcerality, imprisonment, the camp – but these zones of permanent administration reach far beyond the human and are specifically deployed to adjudicate planetary movement.

These administrative zones are sometimes highly bureaucratic in the form of customs lines, visa forms, applications, and are sometimes violent and immediate like immigration raids, detention centers, Coast Guard patrols and camps. Often these zones are administered by dense webs of formal, official and state-sanctioned agencies, sometimes by quasi-official, semi-sanctioned and/or semi-legal government bodies. Far more pervasively, these organized efforts rest on the enforcement work of everyday people who administer belonging, citizenship and nationalisms.

The daily administration of movement operates ostensibly in relationship to borders but in reality saturates the entire life of a nation. The regulation and enforcement of citizenship demands constant vigilance against foreigners, overriding and re-coding everyday human relationships. The moral panics around foreign investors or anchor babies or hi-jabs are matched by vigilante border guards and everyday acts of violence towards migrants.

The nation-state is an inadequate rendition of community. All nationalist claims – and scaled-down localist renditions – demand borders and passports for entry. As soon as any 'inside' is marked off, there has to be an outside. Those definitions have to be rigorously maintained and policed, or else the distinctions between 'Us' and 'Them' dissolves.

But what are the alternatives? What other ways are there to be together? How can individuals and communities resist nationalisms with something other than entreaties for nations to be a little more just and inclusive? Can being-together exist without demanding constant rounds of expulsions? Can sociality be borderless?

The current globalized ubiquity of revitalized ethno-nationalism is a confluence of an imagined halcyon past of togetherness and the assertion of Westphalian national identity: blood, belonging and soil. To varying degrees, nationalisms are always cover for arguments about race and ethnicity – sometimes coded, sometimes overt, but easily surfaced. As the Wilsonian doctrine argued citizenship is always contingent on deeper fidelities, and every nation should be a state.

Consider this one example from our part of the world, a place steeped in its own mythologies of peaceful state multiculturalism. In February 1942, Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King's cabinet, reeling from the Pearl Harbor attacks, issued an order targeting Japanese-Canadians. It was in the midst of WWII, and Canada saw an enemy lurking within. All through the country, and especially along the Pacific Coast, hidden in plain sight, in cities and lumber mills and fishing communities – were Japanese. Many of these people had been born in Canada and were citizens, some had been in the country for generations, many were children. Any person of Japanese ancestry was understood as a threat: they were captured, held in detainment, then sent to internment camps and work farms, their property and possessions confiscated and sold. Resistance meant confinement in camps hundreds of miles away. Every nation-state has stories of communities that have been persecuted in a form of collective punishment on the basis of religion or ethnicity.

Nationalist identity and belonging can be revoked under the most vague of threats to ethnic and/or religious paranoia and is repeated constantly on micro and macro scales. Repetitive events like Japanese internment camps, residential schools, Black land theft, Guantanamo Bay, Muslim homes burned, Rohingyans driven out of their villages, African students taken off the train leaving the Ukraine, migrant boats pushed

back into the Mediterranean and a thousand other examples repeat what we all know in our bodies.

Take the example of our friend Nero, originally from the former Yugoslavia in the Balkans. He started in primary school, before the war, saying, 'Good morning, comrade' to his instructor until one day she came in and told them that they would no longer be doing that – instead, they would use the term *teacher*, one more suitable for their new political reality. When the civil war broke out in the early 90's and Yugoslavia broke apart, ethnic affiliation became paramount. As the conflict evolved, and new states formed in the region, Nero and his family became identified as Muslim in Croatia due to their last name and heritage, regardless of the fact the family didn't practice the religion. At every step, their identity was shaped by others without their consent. This made it impossible for them to claim an identity outside the one designated for them in the new geopolitical reality.

Every nation is founded on racial and/or religious identities, and here in the Anglospheric north, citizenship is always contingent on a proximity to whiteness. The 'We' that so many citizens fulsomely celebrate is inextricably bound to that identity. These are not malfunctions of identity. This is nationalism functioning on its very foundation. Every state on earth was borne out of some form of originary violence.

As nationalism continues to expose itself as profoundly inept at the task of being-together – of forging community – how else might we conceive of a 'we' and who is 'the people'? These are not questions of scale, or jurisdiction, or sovereignty, although those ideas thread through it.

We are after something far more pedestrian here. We want to know how to resist the claim that if you want freedom you have to have strong borders, and what that might mean in an era of ecological collapse. The logics of nationalism and accelerating ecological crises have the same root foundation: an inability to be together with others, human as much as the more-than-human. Thinking about ecology binds us to thinking about nationalisms and community. And how to think of the right to move and a right to breathe at a planetary scale that can think beyond the border?

This question of being-together haunts environmental as much as political thinking. The inability to imagine new renditions of being-together is how revived far-right movements, white nationalists and ecologists very often find common cause. Belonging is all good until you don't belong. Just because a community exists in common right now, does that mean that it needs to be so tomorrow? Community has never been immutable – it is constantly shifting, unstable and contingent.

It is impossible to escape the desire for being-together. What new ways can we be with humans and more-than-humans? How can we think past the state as the mediator of this question? We are asking here after a sociality that surpasses the limitations of the state, but it's more than that. How can we be-together where there are no entry fees, passports, borders or citizenship?

Our thinking on these questions keeps returning to friendship, an idea that has always appeared capable of surpassing nationalism, patriotism and the virulent claims of borders, always ready to permit passage. But friendship also tends to the trite and facile, a sickly call to individual cleansing and depoliticization. If thinking past borders demands a porosity and a freedom of movement that friendship gestures towards, is that enough to work with to imagine a non-statist sociality? Can friendship be the basis for being-together, for community?