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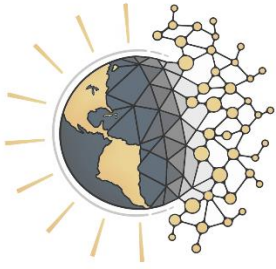
BOOK SYMPOSIUM ON *HOME RULE: NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY AND THE SEPARATION OF NATIVES AND MIGRANTS* BY NANDITA SHARMA

The Banality of Citizenship
From Workers to Migrants and Fantasy Citizens

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Nandita Sharma's ambitious and complex book *Home Rule: National Sovereignty and the Separation of Natives and Migrants* (2020) lies at the intersection of historical, legal, political, and sociological scholarship. It is also the work of an activist scholar seeking to make a political intervention. At the heart of contemporary concerns about human mobility lies a perceived and harnessed tension between embedded "natives" and out of place "aliens," or, as she calls them, *people of a place* and *people out of place*. The precise terminologies depend on context, and differentiation can be religiously, ethnically, or racially expressed; but the most widely accepted difference is between "national-natives" to whom states have obligations, and "migrants" who reside at best on sufferance. Sharma's book traces the emergence of the figure of the "migrant" and its separation from the "native" that produces the "migrant" as invader, leaving the majority

of the world's people, whether migrant or citizen, vulnerable to capitalist depredations. While the figure of the migrant has long and multiple genealogies—think of Simmel's stranger who is, "by nature, no 'owner of soil'" (Simmel 1908: 1), or Honig's exploration of the foreigner founder (Honig 2002)—Sharma argues that the shift from imperial states to nation states changed the native/migrant dichotomy from a category of colonial domination into the key to a global regime of differentiation and separation that perpetuates "global apartheid" (Sharma 2020: 28). After the Second World War, self-determination was promoted by the "international community" represented on the global stage by the United Nations and Bretton Woods institutions, and heavily shaped by U.S. interests and Cold War dynamics. The horrors of imperialism were characterized as related to the foreign-ness of rulers. National sovereignty was the goal of national liberation and struggles to foreground relations of rule and exploitation per se were largely lost. National self-determination saw mass expulsions, the multiplication of immigration restrictions and the expansion of globalized capital. Far from turning the world upside down, the global roll out national sovereignty produced what Sharma dubs the Postcolonial New World Order and the normalization of national forms of power.

The global nation state system affects to be one of sovereign equals and yet is deeply hierarchical. Disappointed with the reality of national liberation, many people living in politically and economically marginalized states have analysed the source of their problems as "neo-colonialism" or not enough sovereignty. In contrast, Sharma argues the problem is with sovereignty itself, which, imbricated with territoriality and racialization produces a world divided into separate nation states. Nationalism connects sovereignty, territoriality, and racialization and can be mobilized to set populations of different nation states against each other. However, it also sets people who live in the same nation state against one another, dividing people of the nation ("the people") from people out of place. This is the basis for perhaps the most provocative aspect of her argument, her critique of Indigenous National-Native claims that international migration is settler colonialism and that contemporary migrants are barriers to decolonisation. Sharma argues that not all mobilities are equivalent, and that the white-ness of the white settler colonial project has been occluded. She acknowledges that all autochthonous claims are also not equivalent, but, she argues, "all autochthonous discourses rely upon—and all are productive of—essentialist and ahistorical ideas of nation and race, both of which are then made the fundamental basis of legitimate political claims" (Sharma 2020: 208). They are an assertion of a relation of a "people" to a territory, with autochthony naturalized as pre-political at the same time as it is made the basis for political claims. Sharma eschews the hierarchy/binary of nativity and "natural emplacement," whoever they are made by. A world so divided cannot be a world transformed.

Immigration Controls and Labor

One of the key challenges for scholarly and political work on migration is that both contribute to the production of the category of "migrant." No-borders activists and undocumented people often petition, and thereby grant authority to, the state that they identify as the root cause of exclusion.

The work of "migration studies" has been criticized for taking legal and social categories as categories of analysis, and the desire to contribute to social change outside the academy puts intellectual efforts at risk of being disproportionately shaped by policy agendas. The identification of a population and its associated problems draws researchers into participation in politics and governance even if they strive for or claim "objectivity" (Bacchi 2012). When it comes to the classification of people, human action is tightly linked to human description and population-making changes behaviours, relationships and "the space for possibilities of personhood" (Hacking 1986: 165). For "migrants" these possibilities can be severely restricted and contributing to the making of this subordinated population raises ethical and epistemological challenges for researchers.

States make many different and varied kinds of populations, but generally what kinds of populations are made is contingent: nation states may or may not make autistic, obese, or red-haired populations. However, Sharma demonstrates, conceptually and empirically, that the populations of migrant/national-native/indigenous-native, are exceptional because they are fundamental to the logic of nation state making. John Torpey, following Weber, has that contemporary states' monopoly over the legitimate means of movement is an essential element of the "state-ness of states" (Torpey 1999). Sharma takes this a step further: *nation* states must make "migrants" and "natives" in order to be nation states. It is hardly surprising then that the problem of methodological nationalism, that naturalizes (and perpetuates) the nation state as a container of social processes, has been particularly explicated in the migration field even though it runs across the social sciences (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). Centralizing mobile subjects without essentializing them can alert us to the ways that social divisions are forged and exacerbated, but perhaps most crucially and literally, legitimized.

In popular usage "migrant" is a term usually used of the "worker," conceived of as low waged and negatively racialized: a white U.S. banker living in London is unlikely to be called a "migrant" even if they are subject to immigration controls. Their Black British cleaner, in contrast, may be designated "second generation migrant" even if they have never crossed a border in their life. Migration tends to be used, even if only accidentally, as an intersectional term illustrating the inextricability of race and class. In the contemporary world, the political category of "the migrant" can be mobilized to both neutralize the threat and exploit the opportunity that mobile labor poses to capital. Sharma connects this to the ways that the mobility of low waged and marginalized laborers was facilitated and managed under the British Empire's coolie system. This in turn drew on earlier experiences of and histories of mobility controls that date back to early vagrancy acts (Anderson 2013). Shedding anachronistic assumptions that nation states stretch back into the mists of time means we can connect immigration controls to earlier efforts to control the mobility and labor of the poor by kings and feudal lords.

The nation state form turns the control of the mobility of the laboring poor into the control of migrants. Its roll out helped halt the incipient "universalism" of the category of the (male) worker and equal treatment that some early International Labour Organisation (ILO) instruments sought to enshrine (Boris forthcoming). After the Second World War it was the ILO that claimed the

mandate to develop resettlement programs and new migration standards, and by 1951 it had developed plans to become a permanent international agency with responsibility for facilitating emigration, recruitment, and settlement (Fanning forthcoming). The ILO is a tripartite organisation representing states, organized workers, and employers' associations but it is firmly situated within the UN system, so it cannot be claimed that the ILO was promoting open borders. Nevertheless, its prominent role in governance of migration came to be regarded as a problem particularly by some U.S. lawmakers who disliked its active promotion of labor standards, universality, and non-discrimination. As a UN body it was considered open to Communist subversion and its tripartite nature meant it was considered not fully under state control. In 1951 the United States withdrew its funding for ILO migration work, and together with Australia, Canada, and New Zealand formed the Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants from Europe (PICMME)[1], an intergovernmental organization outside the UN system directly financed by and accountable to member governments (Fanning forthcoming). Thus, the post-war emergence of key global institutions, the globalization of the nation state form, and the lack of a global migration regulatory system is not contradictory but interconnected.

Fantasy Citizenship and the Politics of Separation

To reject the category of migrant necessitates the rejection of the category of native, but also the category of citizen which is a trickier category to reject than "native." Citizenship is invested with significant normative and symbolic content even by those who reject nativism. It is explicitly tied to the state and can be mobilized as a counter to the native-national because it is, in theory at least, possible to become a citizen through naturalization, even if one cannot become a native-national. While Sharma would argue that citizenship produces huge inequalities—between the rich and poor worlds, and between migrants and citizens—citizenship is more conventionally seen as a vehicle through which to achieve equality and rights. The legal status of citizen often offers very material advantages, guaranteeing entry to the state of citizenship and security of residence, which is why it can be highly prized by migrants. While in the past it was a status limited to property owning, white, able bodied males, its expansion to those previous excluded is regarded as progressive. Even if citizenship stops at borders, the hope of the international community is that we move to a world where everyone is a citizen of somewhere.

However, in the same way that the community of states is in practice highly unequal, so too are citizenships: to be a citizen of Sweden is to have quite different rights than to be a citizen of North Korea. Indeed, the principle shared right of all citizens is the right of entry to the state of citizenship. This is a "right" that is critical to the maintenance of international borders, and it underpins the deportation regime. It can be a right that some people on the move are eager to divest

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[1] Since 1989 PICMME has been known as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), and today it is playing a key role in the UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the latest effort at an international action plan to better manage economic migration.

themselves of and points to the importance of citizenship as facilitating inter-state relations as much as governing the relation between an individual and a state. Leaving aside the right of entry, other substantive citizenship rights are highly variable. Indeed, citizenship's material value means some states actively market their citizenship to wealthy investors. St Kitts earns approximately 25 percent of its GDP through investor citizenship programs (Sumption 2016). For wealthy people who come from countries which face onerous visa requirements such programs enable easy global mobility through facilitating multiple citizenships; while for poor people, their citizenship is a means of fixing them in place.

In many countries in Europe, citizenship is strongly associated with the welfare state, which in turn is imagined as a national achievement despite being financed from taxation and exploitation of imperial subjects (Drayton 2012; Bhambra 2020). The nation state form facilitates the flow of wealth from periphery to core, but it also facilitates redistribution at a national level. Sharma claims a propos of the national labor market: "There is nothing more effective than producing the self-identity of the national than the nationalization of the wage" (Sharma 2020: 276), but in European welfare states it is *national* redistributive mechanisms including health and education services that gives substance to national membership. Welfare states are an important factor in nationalizing subjectivities and are directly mobilized to nation build. Croatia, for example, has negotiated agreements with post-Yugoslav states to provide cross border social protection as part of its constitutional commitment to "efforts in preserving and empowering the position and identity of Croats abroad through…health and welfare policies" (Art. 7) (Winland 2020). While control over migration exposes nation state domination and oppression, eschewing citizenship requires engagement with the "left hand of the state" as well its right (Bourdieu 1992), and the nationalization of redistribution mechanisms which was key to the transition from imperial to nation states.

Sharma proposes one way of moving beyond nation state nurtured politics and subjectivities is to build the commons. In welfare states, building the commons must recognize the power of the welfare state as ideology and as practice. This is particularly so in the context where anxiety about demands on nationalized resources encourages support for state enforcement against migrants. A bottom-up critique could begin by attending to the multiple exclusions within citizenship, exclusions which the category "migrant" encourages us to overlook. Indeed, the political figure of the Migrant contributes to the promotion of an idealized version of citizenship, what might be called "fantasy citizenship" of access to rights and equality. Yet, despite these claims, citizenship does not make the citizenry equal but "In fact, it appears to institutionalize both difference and inequalities, albeit in sometimes unexpected ways" (Cohen 2014: 12), and many of the promised rights do not materialize. Even considered on its own terms and even in the rich world, citizenship is failing. As welfare services are hollowed out and battered by austerity citizenship is being evacuated of much of its social content, and the rights attached to citizenship are increasingly made dependent on being in employment and a taxpayer. COVID-19 has arguably further diminished citizenship, both reinforcing and upending assumptions of mobility and inequality. Previously taken for granted internal movements came under scrutiny and the racialization of the right to

mobility has been intensified. In the report "Policing the Pandemic," Amnesty International (2020) found that, across Europe, Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) people were disproportionately targeted by police with violence, discriminatory identity checks, fines, and forced quarantines. COVID has exposed how who is considered in and out of place is bound up with nationally and spatially specific ways of encoding and remaking race at the level of city and neighborhood as well as at national borders. Thus, the policing of the mobility of migrants and of BME people evidenced across the different scales of COVID restrictions and their differential implementation exemplifies the connections in practice between migrants and citizens, connections erased by fantasy citizenship.

Conclusion

Home Rule ends with a call to reconnect—not through citizenship but through the struggle for a decolonized commons. Migration and movement are a lens for analyzing social, political, and economic relations and upending them through the insistence that the commons is not exclusionary (contra e.g., Ciriacy-Wantrup and Bishop [1975] and Bollier [2002]). A response to the oppressions of current separations and population making must move beyond critique to propose new descriptors, relationalities, and associated politics; and commoning is a great place to start.

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