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

Be Careful What You Fight For

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It is a real privilege to participate in a forum where such wonderful interlocutors engage seriously with the ideas in my book, *Home Rule*. The dialogue on the relationship between racism and nationalism, between "national self-determination" and the expansion of capitalist social relations, between immigration controls and the containment of emancipatory movements, and between thought and practice is enriched by each of their commentaries. These interlocutors raise some serious and long-standing questions; including, how to understand ruling relations that encompass the entire planet while not ignoring their many variations or dismissing the many breaks in them. Their contributions also strengthen efforts to counter hegemonic institutions and challenge structures of feeling that lead us further away from freedom.

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For me, the heart of this book is its challenge to the growing chorus of opinion that conflates human migration with the violent practices of colonization. That such an equivalency is becoming more prevalent is made evident by assertions that all people who are not "native" to the places they live in are "migrants" and, further, that all "migrants," today and well into the past (indeed, well before the state category of migrant was formulated), are "settler colonists" or worse: "invaders," "occupiers," even "vipers" who should be sent "back to their native land."[1] Such views criss-cross the Left-Right political spectrum and resound with ever increasing stridency across our world: in the former colonies, the former metropoles, and in today's national sovereignty movements.

The making and reproduction of the binary code of Native and Migrant—both in the imagination and in the law—is the central ideological practice that *Home Rule* tries to unpack. Starting as "colonial categories of management," as Rinaldo Walcott puts it, today's binary of Native/Migrant is, I argue, key to how the violence of the institution—and fantasy—of national sovereignty is reproduced. In uncovering the social relations that the Native/Migrant binary attempts to conceal, I address the following questions: what is the genealogy of the Native/Migrant binary? What kind of social relations did/does the deployment of this binary organize? What does its acceptance reveal about the structures and cultures of ruling relations today?

As Bridget Anderson well knows, *Home Rule* was written as a "political intervention" meant to dislodge the comfortable familiarity of nationalist politics. Further, as Victoria Hattam puts it, "opening up new political possibilities is the central ambition of the book." Thus, perhaps the most important question I try to get some answers to is, what are the ways we can successfully counter the hegemony of the Native/Migrant binary with a politics that rejects nationalism, racism, and capitalism.

The binary of Native/Migrant is, like all binary codes, an ideological practice carrying great material force. As Bridget Anderson notes, the power of this binary was evident when "the native/migrant dichotomy [was] a category of colonial domination" and it remains evident as this binary operates today in "a global regime of differentiation and separation that perpetuates 'global apartheid.'" I call this global regime of apartheid the Postcolonial New World Order. Following historians of European empires such as Frederick Cooper (2005), who studies the French Empire, I understand postcolonialism not as marking the end of practices associated with colonialism but as ending the political legitimacy of imperial-state sovereignty and instituting the hegemony of the national form of sovereign power.

After the end of World War Two, as empires rapidly diminished in scope and power and new nation-states were formed, the practices anti-colonial struggles fought to end—expropriation,

[1] In 1948, the new nation-state of Burma declared its independence from British imperial rule. From that time to today, there has been a more-or-less continuous effort to define the "true" members of this new political community (which, like all "nations," simultaneously imagines itself as ancient). By the 1980s, the idea that Rohingya people in Burma were not members of the "nation" because they were "migrants" to it took hold amongst the Buddhist majority in Burma and was also institutionalized in the law. The head of an association of young monks in Sittwe, Myanmar (formerly Burma), U Nyarna, was quoted as saying that Rohingya were "invaders, unwanted guests and 'vipers in our laps'" (in Fuller 2012). Another Buddhist monk leader in Myanmar, Ashin Htawara, encouraged the government to send Rohingya people "back to their native land" (in Hindstrom 2012).

exploitation, and denigration—did not stop, as leaders of "national liberation" projects promised (and continue to do). Instead, the Postcolonial New World Order provided the institutional structures and force of coercive action for capitalist social relations and state control to expand. The postcolonialism rule of nation-states, claiming to have liberated people, liberated capital instead. Hence, the Postcolonial New World Order is not only a particular historical period or the body of scholarship trying to understand it. Rather, I understand postcolonialism to be the governmentality of today's world system of capitalist social relations.

Key post-WWII global institutions, including those created at the 1944 Bretton Woods Conference (the IMF, World Bank, and later the GATT, reorganized as the WTO from 1995) and the organization of a global immigration control system, together organized postcolonial ruling relations. Significantly, these were not "imperial" or even "neo-imperial" institutions. Each was created through, not against, the nationalization of states, sovereignty, territory, and subjectivities. The gross unevenness of nation-states' power to influence these institutions mirrored the inherently hierarchical character of the new inter-national order (and reflected the hierarches of the previous imperial order).

Home Rule pays special attention to the formation of the (intensely undemocratic) United Nations in 1948 (a term initially coined by U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt to denote the "United Nations" of the Allied forces). The UN's 1945 founding Charter, with its declaration that all people who could organize themselves into a "nation" had the right to "self-determination," institutionalized national sovereignty as the normative form of political power. This gave new life to social movements and social bodies reliant on nationalism. Hostility to migrants was bred in the bone of this 1945 UN Declaration and the Postcolonial New World order it authorized. It would not—nor could it—account for either the rights of all those people who could not—or would not—organize themselves into a "nation" or the age-old reality of human migration.

Vicky Hattam takes exception to my use of the term "order" (as in the Postcolonial New World Order) to analyze postcolonial ruling relations. I wholeheartedly agree with her point that that there are "always fissures within" any order so that "claims to authority are rarely complete; structures, hierarchies, and rules never fully delimiting." I also agree with Hattam's point that inadequately addressing the existence of multiple possibilities at play in any set of ruling relations (e.g., colonialism, anti-colonial struggles, postcolonialism) may foreclose possibilities for change. Radhika Mongia raises similar concerns. She asks whether nationalism is as hegemonic a political force as I maintain, arguing that, "there are a multiplicity of life-worlds and formations of human association that are not, and cannot, be contained by national thinking."

Undoubtedly the arguments presented in *Home Rule* would benefit from a discussion of those anti-colonial movements that did not—and, today, do not—deploy the ideological and regulatory framework of nationalism. Indeed, a small but growing body of literature documenting liberatory movements actively rejecting nationalism provides the animating core of my argument.[2] While I

[2] *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Linebaugh and Rediker 2000) has been especially influential for my thinking on the subject.

reference a good amount of this (mostly historical) literature, further discussion of it and the movements it reveals would certainly strengthen my argument that nationalism was not—is not—the only means of achieving freedom from practices of expropriation, exploitation, and denigration.

At the same time, although I am very sympathetic to critiques of totalizing narratives, I continue to believe in the importance of understanding the ways in which many different ways of life, sociability, and even resistance pivot around a shared set of ideas that cohere to maintain extant ruling relations. The social relations of class and those organized by ideas of "race," "nation," and "gender/sex" certainly do not manifest the same way everywhere. Paying attention to these differences is crucial to better understanding people's lived worlds. Yet it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find a social setting untouched by class, racism, nationalism, and patriarchy.

For example, some (perhaps most) anti-racist efforts accept the idea that there are indeed separate "races" of people, each imbued with a particular set of qualities setting them apart from other "races." The dominant paradigm in anti-racism efforts remains "race relations," with its the goal to have the different "races" get along better—or separate from one another. Those of us who insist that racism cannot be eliminated if we hang on to the idea of "race," are, sadly, in the minority.[3] Thus, while it is crucial that we not elide the immense variability in how ideas of "race" or "nation" or "gender/sex" are understood and deployed, it is equally critical to pay attention to the common philosophical basis of such ideas and how they organize our world.

In this regard, I accept Michel Foucault's proposal in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* ([1966] 2005), that every historical period has underlying epistemic assumptions that significantly (but never totally) shape what we can know. These assumptions inform (but do not determine) what can be said about our world, ourselves, others, and even what we can imagine as alternatives to ruling regimes of truth. Foucault, of course, follows on Karl Marx and Freidrich Engels' ([1846] 1972) own analysis of the knowledge/power nexus. Talking about the Postcolonial New World Order, is, therefore, not to deny the possibility of radical change but to reveal ways to make it possible.

The overarching order of thought shaping ruling relations today is "postcolonialism," one that equates national sovereignty with decolonization. Such an equation works to contain demands to end practices most closely associated with colonialism—expropriation, exploitation, and denigration—and re-channel them towards the support of more national sovereigns and greater national sovereignty for the both the more- and less-powerful nation-states in the system. What my conceptualization of today's world as a Postcolonial New World Order thus reveals is that the political form of power can change (from imperialism to national sovereignty after WWII) but the fundamentally exploitative and oppressive practices of state and class rule continue—indeed,

[3] Robert Miles' 1993 book, *Racism After Race Relations*, is especially important in challenging the idea of "race" and the "race relations" paradigm. So too is Paul Gilroy's 2000 book, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line*.

expand—precisely because these are analyzed and acted upon as separate from the "sphere" of politics.

Understanding the power of postcolonial thought, I argue, requires us to pay attention to the idea of autochthony (or indigeneity). Derived from the Greek *autos* (self) and *khthon* (earth), the term refers to "an original or indigenous inhabitant of a place," one (in the plural) said to have literally "sprung from the earth" (OED, "autochthony [n.]"). The term indigenous is also from classical Greece. To be indigenous is to be "born inside, with the class connotation of being born 'inside the house'" (Ceuppens and Geschiere 2005: 385). Like autochthon, indigenous denotes someone (or something) "born or produced naturally in a land or region; native or belonging naturally to (the soil, region, etc.)" (OED, "indigenous [adj.]").

While presented as a metaphysical truth, autochthony is profoundly relational. The binary opposite of autochthony (or indigeneity) is allochthony. Predicated on the Greek *allo*, referring to that which is other or different, and the Indo-European *allo*, referring to someone (or something) "else," discourses of allochthony refer to something (and, later, someone) from someplace other than where currently found (OED, "allochthonous [adj.]"). The binary code of autochthon/allochthon is productive of a world view in which autochthons are regarded as the only legitimate rulers of a political territory and community. This philosophical grounding sets up an hierarchical relationship between autochthons and allochthons.

In *Home Rule*, I argue that all "nations" are autochthonous formations. Metaphysics, geography, and ruling relations meet in the idea of national sovereignty. Even as both may live in the same territory, the notion that "true" Nationals are those who are its Natives serves to make autochthons the "people of a place" while making allochthons the "people out of place." Adherence to an autochthonous world view is why even colonizers come to see themselves as Natives. In the Postcolonial New World Order, being Native, once the denigrated Other to the European colonizer, has increasingly become a necessary criterion for being a member of various "nations." Whether it is in the "national liberation states," the former European metropoles of empires, or in the political demands of contemporary national sovereignty movements, Native-ness has become a critical part of the lexicon of nation-ness. Zachary Levenson points out that "this sense of belonging is not forced onto the broader population at gunpoint but articulated in terms of national pride, which is continuously reinscribed as the proper site of national liberation."

Immigration controls are crucial technologies for both organizing and normalizing the structure and culture of national autochthony. Everywhere, the regulation and restriction of immigration is undertaken in the name of protecting the "nation." Seen in ontological terms, as "being from somewhere else" (even if they have not moved across any state boundaries), the existence of people regarded as Migrants in the places they actually live is portrayed as a "problem." Migrants are said to threaten everything critical to the maintenance of a national life—jobs for Nationals, the National social wage, National public health, and so on.

Limiting immigration, as well as access to citizenship, is critical to limiting national membership, and thus to the production and reproduction of the "nation" itself (Anderson 1991). For this reason, in the Postcolonial New World Order Migrants are the quintessential other against

whom the "nation" exists. Yet, even as the greater number of people moving across international borders are categorized as "illegal" or as "temporary foreigner workers," even the most stringent immigration controls allow some people to lawfully enter nation-states. Some smaller number are granted permanent residency status and some (much smaller) number are even granted citizenship status. The existence of citizens who are rejected by the "nation," perhaps more so than the presence of people without national status, animates anti-immigrant diatribes and underlines the utility of autochthonous discourses. As I document in *Home Rule*, depicting oneself as a "true" National because one is "Native" to the national territory is part of how nationalisms are hardening the world over.

Yet, even if all immigration were to end (itself a violent fantasy), all "nations" would contain within them people who could be represented as Migrants. As Bridget Anderson points to in her commentary (and in her broader body of work), the category of Migrant is as much a social one as it is legal. "Second generation immigrant," "person with an immigrant background," or even "person with insufficient Native blood quantum," are some of the more commonly used social designations connoting a person's "foreign-ness"—and thus expellable—status. As Radhika Mongia notes, "at the heart of the immiseration and violence that plagues our world is the deadly compact between nationalism and capitalism, a compact that is constantly being remade as new, more genuine, more authentic Natives (or nationals) emerge, often on the backs of forced displacements and literal genocidal violence."

The politics of autochthony leads any with claims to national territorial sovereignty to also claim Native status. The two indeed appear to go hand-in-hand. Even people who identify as "Europeans" now claim to be the "Natives of Europe." Likewise, people racialized as "European" and, now, as "White," in the nation-states created out of the former British White Settler colonies, have come to identify as Natives. Not on the basis that they are the first inhabitants of these places but because they claim to be the first "improvers" and sovereigns of the territories claimed by various "White nations." At the same time, and in the same places, people categorized as the Natives of the British White Settler colonies have embraced their National-Native status in order to claim the territorial sovereignty that such a status affords in the Postcolonial New World Order.

That both categories of people—Whites and colonized Natives—can see themselves as National Natives, that both can see themselves as the people with the exclusive and legitimate power to be sovereigns of a nationalized territory, is testimony to the power of the epistemic order of postcolonial autochthonous discourses. Some of my critics have said that such an argument is tantamount to dismissing the very real and obvious differences in power and wealth between people in these two groups. Indeed, when many of the commentators in this symposium note the "provocative" character of my arguments, it is because I include people categorized as the colonized Natives in my analysis of the dangers of the politics of autochthony. While some—particularly Walcott, Anderson, and Mongia—are sympathetic to my arguments, Zach Levenson questions whether it is a "fair characterization" to say that "even North American Indigenous self-determination struggles…reinforce the migrant/native distinction, promoting yet another form of nationalism."

As Radhika Mongia well notes, not all people identified—or who identify themselves—as indigenous are nationalists. Nonetheless, it is also true that the most prominent movements that mobilize - and center - indigeneity are those that see indigenous people as members of a "nation" and argue for that nation's territorial sovereignty. This must be addressed. Is indigenous nationalism in North America really any different than the nationalisms of others who fought for national self-determination in Asia or Africa? Is it not revealing that many (even most?) of today's "national liberation" movements present themselves as indigenous people fighting colonialism, even when the state they seek "independence" from is itself a "national liberation state"? If these movements are successful, will the well-known and devastating results of postcolonial rule really be much different?

We must also address the growing chorus of opinion in the former British White Settler Colonies, especially amongst the Left, that anyone not categorized by the British imperial-state as Native is a "settler colonist." When imperial-states moved people through the Atlantic slave trade or through various systems of indentured labour, for example convict labor or "coolie" labor, were the people so moved really no different than the imperialists moving them? Is their movement not also part of the colonial experience? In other words, was imperialism not a world system? And, when people move across today's world system of nation-states in search of peace, love, a means of life or more, are their movements really to be understood as "colonization"?

Such inquiries lead me to address one of the more powerful questions raised by a number of contributors. How do we counter the hegemony of nationalist autochthonies, be they in Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas, the Caribbean, or the Pacific? My answer is premised on my argument that the Postcolonial New World Order, far from bringing about anything worthy of the name "decolonization," has, instead, only brought us more intensively into the social relations of capitalism. I thus choose to join the existing movement for a planetary commons. Rinaldo Walcott too takes this route to freedom. This is because, he argues, the commons allows us to "take planetary life as the totality of our collective inheritance" and "imagine anew our mutuality of relations across populations, species and other modes of life on the planet." Joining the struggle for a planetary commons, he recognizes, does entail taking some serious risks, however, including the "development [of] new modes of political identification."

Levenson, on the other hand, argues that rejecting nationalisms and demanding a planetary commons represents "an abstract, universalist solution to a set of concrete, particular problems," one that refuses "to engage the conceptual worlds in which people actually think." He thus asks "can liberation ever be national?" He believes it can. Levenson is no uncritical supporter of nationalism(s), however. Instead, he believes that, "it is the task of radical intellectuals to foster national consciousness as it already exists into a revolutionary consciousness going beyond the national form." Using Fanon, he adds that, "national consciousness contains important elements of critical common sense forged in the struggle against colonialism—and that is why it cannot be bypassed in any effort to constitute collective forces capable of superseding post-colonial passive revolution."

Hattam, in contrast to Levenson's reading of my arguments for the planetary commons as "abstract," understands that, for me, "decolonizing the commons is not an otherworldly project…it is very much located in the here and now." She cites Eating in Public (EIP), a collaborative project reinvigorating our desire and ability to live in the commons, which I have worked on with my partner, artist Gaye Chan, and many others since 2003. She sees EIP as an example of how "politics…are not just a matter of mobilization, resistance, and opposition. They are in some vital way about the always present capacity to reimagine."

In other ways, however, Hattam's comments on nationalism share some affinity with Levenson's. Her question of whether or not it is "possible to distinguish more carefully between somatic relations to place and nationalist expressions of such attachments" reflect her concern that, "if we dispense with sovereignty, what happens to affective attachments to topography?" More succinctly, she asks "how do attachments to place, to topography, figure in the decolonized commons?"

I think distinguishing between land and territory may help address Hattam's concerns. "Land" evokes the significance of the material basis for life (including culture). All people have a relationship to land. Territoriality, on the other hand, as Robert Sack usefully defines it, is a "strategy for influence or controls" (Sack 1983: 55). Territories are never simply the land (and air and water) the state controls. They are, instead, the land (and air and water) that states successfully abstract as state space. Additionally, national forms of territoriality forge an ideological link between a limited group of people and a certain state space. Autochthonous discourses stem from such ideological linkages. This is how National-Natives come to see themselves as the "people of a place" and how Migrants are portrayed as being "out of place." As Hattam suspects, I believe that in most "land acknowledgements" today, often starting and ending by acknowledging that "we are on the land of nation X, Y, or Z," it is not land as means of life but territory as the object of national sovereignty that is actually being evoked.

My critique of nationalism(s) does not mean that we need to "relinquish collective identifications," as Hattam fears. It does mean, however, that we need to be very careful about which collectives we identify ourselves with. Relatedly, we must also be attentive to the processes by which people gain access to the material basis of life. Just as nationalism produces National-Natives, the commons produces commoners. One of the things that distinguishes the commons and either nationalism or capitalism is the absence of proprietary claims. Unlike citizenship rights, which inculcate in citizens the belief that they can legitimately exclude non-citizens (and in some important ways, even exclude citizens who are negatively racialized, gendered, and sexualized) or private property rights which grants title holders the right to exclude all others, the fundamental premise of the commons is that no one can be excluded. This changes everything. Starting from the premise of radical inclusion, broad social relations as well as interpersonal ones, are transformed. As Walcott puts it, the movement for a planetary commons allows us to "invent a new ethics of care or a new way of being in common and difference with each other."

Thus, given the evident failures of the "national liberation" project, I am quite certain that to realize decolonization, nationalist identities must be relinquished. Levenon's argument that

revolutionaries ought to support the national sovereignty movements of the "masses" only to later direct them away from nationalism, aside from being vanguardist, serves to dismiss the devastating horrors of the postcolonial era. Such a view also ignores the many freedom struggles—past and present—that are not nationalist or are even explicitly anti-nationalist.

As we have long known, "the masses" is a term that purposefully obfuscates the specific class relations of capitalism and the struggles of working people (and not only those who get paid). It does so by re-conceptualizing working people as part of a cross-class "nation" that supposedly shares a "national interest" with the ruling class. Accepting the transformation of classes into masses that Arendt (1973) warned us about, is an odd strategy for revolutionary socialists. It seems to me that counter-hegemonic projects need to be precisely that: countering the dominant order of things. It is by seeing our planet (and all life on it) from the perspective not of the "masses" but from all of those who are expropriated, exploited, and denigrated, that the world changes.

This is not to say, as Martina Tazzioli well understands, that we can never use the categories we currently find ourselves in to make significant change in people's lives. We certainly cannot wait until the world is changed to offer critical solidarity to people struggling against ruling relations. For example, ensuring that people receive refugee status and are provided with asylum is a necessary act. But this is not enough. We must remain "alert to the subtle ways in which apparently radical subjectivities can attach to pernicious forms of nationalism," as Hattam notes. Rinaldo Walcott warns that "the nation-state is not a site of freedom"; while Anderson adds that a critique of autochthony necessary leads to a critique of citizenship, which she sees as perhaps an even "trickier category to reject than 'native.'" It is for these reasons that *Home Rule* is written "against and significantly clarifies the limits of some political claims in our present moment," in Walcott's words.

In a world of glaring inequalities organized by national sovereigns and their regimes of national membership (see Milanovic 2012), distinctions of nationality (or citizenship) upon which the binary of Native/Migrant rest are powerful technologies for emplacing some and displacing others, both in the law and in our social imaginaries. These distinctions are designed to keep us away from one another so that we are unable to end the "organized abandonment" characterizing all ruling orders, including the Postcolonial New World Order (Gilmore 2008). As such, these categorical distinctions must be rejected. Better worlds are actively being made by many people across our shared planet. It would serve us—all of us—well to join in.

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