

Inside, outside, or in between -- identity creation between shifting borders

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It has been said more than once lately that there is no longer an outside. We are told that everywhere barriers are breaking down, boundaries are becoming more fluid, and at any moment they might just wash away. But perhaps the kinship system of the "global village" is in a state of disarray and the agents of these kinship communications have failed miserably in their promise to keep us connected. This paper takes the idea that the outside has been eradicated -- a thesis that has been posited in many different contexts, from marketing to social activism to social theory¹ -- as a point of departure for considering the implications of the antithesis of that statement, that is, how would relations be mapped if it were not that there is no longer an outside but that instead there is no inside? The exploration of the above question takes part in ongoing dialogues about the problems of essentialism and recognition in the context of emergent political and cultural identity, while considering the role of the 'the other' who is not entirely other (the stranger who is not foreign) in the context of multicultural Canada.

Zygmunt Bauman (2001) argues that we lack certainty of position and instead grasp at measures of security as an ill-conceived remedy for that lack. It is imaginable that the current preoccupation with security — elucidated by others also (e.g. Foucault's governmentality (2000), Deleuze's control society (1995)) — demands the assumption of an outside. But I would like to consider the significance of Deleuze's remark, "One might say the majority is nobody" ([1990] 1995: 173). This statement refers to the possibility of revolutionary becoming, the necessary distinction between history and revolution, and putting aside the question of outcomes in favour of the question of becoming. The majority and the minority, Deleuze insists, have not to do with

the comparative size of their membership lists; rather, what is at stake with the notion of majority is conformity to a model.

This paper takes Deleuze's assertion as a point of departure and attempts to articulate a revision of our situatedness in relation to the boundaries of our own making — the boundaries that we have posited that now hover over us unmapped and unmappable, maybe because the lines keep changing or maybe because our maps are fictions. I want to think about what kind of map we project if we envision ourselves on the outside struggling to get in (if there is such a place). In this spirit, I will use a spatial metaphor of no inside to explore border lines of exclusion. In the context of the contingent spatial mapping that this paper takes as a starting point, I will argue that the most threatening figure to a social movement that aspires to centre itself is the other who is not completely other. This argument involves a necessary destabilisation of the metaphorical map because it takes for granted (and even depends upon) the inside-outside distinction. Nevertheless, this re-articulation of space allows different points of emphasis in the consideration of social death, citizenship, and political/cultural identity.

Border One: Citizenship

One concrete example that provides a vantage point for considering this question is the Maher Arar case. Arar holds dual citizenship between Canada and Syria. He was born in Syria but has lived in Canada for his entire adult life; his life — both family and work — is fully situated in Canada. Nevertheless, while on route back to Canada after a holiday visit, United States officials detained Arar because they suspected him of terrorist associations. Eventually, Arar was deported not to Canada but to Syria, where he claims he was tortured in a Syrian prison for 10 months. It increasingly appears that officials in Canada may have fed information to the U.S. that influenced the decision to deport Arar to Syria rather than to his obvious home Canada. Canada's role in the

Arar deportation is under investigation but the reports that have been released to the public thus far have been subject to considerable censorship, supporting growing suspicions that Canadian officials effectively choose not to fully acknowledge Arar's citizenship.

The significance of this supposed failure to acknowledge Arar's citizenship is magnified when considered over the backdrop of Canada's post-colonial, nation-building policy of multiculturalism (implemented in the 1970s under Liberal Prime Minister Trudeau), which privileged an imaginary mosaic that emphasised 'new Canadians' over (conflictual) historical constitutional claims asserted by Francophones and First Nations peoples. Multiculturalism, especially as it is represented in official ceremonies and cultural products,² is an instrument of meaning making that facilitates legitimation of political leadership, programmes, and policy in Canada. It is perhaps not unreasonable, however, to suggest that the symbolisation of the immigrant or 'new Canadian' as the essential Canadian tends to mask the deep failures of multiculturalism in Canada, the enormous gap between its promise and its practice.³ Yet, even as the idea of Canada as a cultural mosaic offers the immigrant figure as a stand-in — or as what John B. Thompson (1990) might refer to as a “symbol of unification” — this representation is paradoxical. On the one hand, the “new Canadian” always remains “new” even while represented as symbolically subsuming a centre position. On the other hand, the “new Canadian” is eradicated as other — in different words, the problem of discrimination or tiered citizenship is rendered invisible. In this context, the Arar case illustrates the fragility of citizenship that highlights the problematic of borders at issue here.

Bauman's (1998) view that we are in a perpetual state of insecurity in terms of our position, our sense of belonging, perhaps offers a partial explanation for Arar's fragile citizenship. Bauman uses two figures to illustrate the predicament of insecurity that is ours in the postmodern

society: the tourist and the vagabond. Both of Bauman's figures are mobile but their patterns of migration differ in striking and significant ways. For Bauman, the tourist is able to move as he or she pleases, the vagabond, however, is mobile but restrictively so. In the case of Bauman's tourist, migration can be virtual, and the chronotopic characteristics of migration are altered in various ways. Internet banking, shopping, socialising, etc. heightens the chronotope of the tourist's lifestyle. Bauman's understanding of late-modern consumer society casts stratification in terms of choice. He argues that we are condemned to choose but we do not all have the same means to make choices. This differential access to choice is another kind of boundary but it is a boundary in the sand that marks a departure from — or an erasure of — the boundaries we once knew (or thought that we knew).

What does this use of Bauman's two worlds, or two figures — the tourist and the vagabond — do to an experiment that consists of the visualisation that there is no inside? It is important that the image of no inside is not taken as a revision of social relations cleansed of prohibitive power or domination; rather the image reflects Bauman's conception of contemporary insecurity, and in addition to that, it reflects a (related) sense that there is a shifting or ephemeral character to power, or to one's ability to exercise it. I still want to reject contingently the idea of the inside, and here, Bauman's two worlds actually help rather than hinder because he describes a perpetual potential for slippage between those worlds.⁴

Bauman's worlds of the tourist and vagabond (or, as he sometimes refers to them, first and second worlds, respectively) are not spatially specific. The worlds of the tourist and vagabond can be situated side by side. The tourist is everywhere and the vagabond is everywhere. This diffusion of worlds provides a more accurate mapping than do the distinctions presented by the 'three worlds', once taken for granted by the so-called "First World". Similarly, the world systems

perspective (of core, semi-periphery, and periphery) casts these relations in a more static form, even though there is an understanding that the so-called periphery can climb to semi-periphery status and, likewise, the so-called core can fall. With these other models, there is the implicit expectation that relations stay relatively the same and, even then, we are hard pressed to see what happens within them. There are some concepts that point us to internal relations (the notion of the hinterland, for example) but Bauman's tourist and vagabond cover more effectively the fragility of inside-outside distinctions (without diminishing the role of domination or exploitation).

Border Two: Identities

For Marx, the State, like a god, is a false intermediary between human powers and our relations in everyday life. For him, the invention of the State introduced an artificial split within ourselves, a double life of the citizen and the subject, the heavenly and the earthly. The failures of civil society — that is, all of its divisions — were to be eliminated by the State but the State cannot be rid of them. Rather, it can only mask them. The political citizen is to be 'one of us', despite all of those characteristics that constitute the "factory of exclusion" (to borrow out of context one of Bauman's phrases [2000: 113]). The machines in this metaphorical factory include lines of social separation that fall outside of the political definition of the citizen. The marking characteristics that facilitate the drawing of border lines keep the factory of exclusion working in such a way that it gives the appearance of a logic of default, not discrimination.

In this category are the refugees, the homeless from within and without. Or, even more complex and threatening are the second order foreigners, those who, like Maher Arar, are estranged from their homes/nations at the whim of officials. Still, the world of everyday life exceeds the State, in fact, threatens the State.

The presence of the outside — the space that we are asked to discount these days but cannot — calls into question the presence of the inside. Deleuze says that the majority is no one. Deleuze refers to minorities rather than classes, this is motivated in part by the recognition of the inadequacy of the concept of proletarian as a marker today. As mentioned earlier, for Deleuze, a minority is not designated as such by its size but rather by its unconstitutedness. That is, the minority is in a state of becoming. Unlike the majority, it does not approximate a model. What will be useful to this discussion of the State and civil society is that Deleuze argues that minority becomings often create models for themselves in order to survive, to establish rights, or to gain recognition. This model creation turns out to be a difficult negotiation, however, as the minority must not come to depend upon the model it has created or else it risks its becoming. But Deleuze kind of leaves us to think about this, giving little else to assist in interpretation. He also leaves a contradiction to consider because he says that a minority becoming adopts models in order to become a majority. For Deleuze, these models are both creative and potentially constraining in that they have the potential for a sort of completion or closure of possibility. We cannot be without our models but we must not let them rule over us, they must remain ours. In this way, a people can be both a minority and a majority at the same time and still, as Deleuze says, the majority is no one.

The models to which Deleuze refers assist in identity formation, the productive character of power ensures our ability to create ourselves as different from others and to gain recognition as such. When models are successful, it is the State that grants this recognition through legal means but there is always that which is not covered, that which is excluded from the space of the everyday. The State, then, offers an approximation of a universal subjectivity but this both embraces and smothers the models that the minority becomings have created in their effort to

gain recognition. Models both reject and create subjectivities but, for Deleuze, as long as they remain open, they are creative. Creative, perhaps, but incommensurate. In the face of incommensurable models that attempt to make noticeable the ways in which they exceed what Campbell and Shapiro (1999) refer to as the "geographical imaginary" that threatens their disappearance, division and competition sets in by making foreign all that cannot be enclosed within State definitions. It is at the level of civil society, the realm of the everyday, within which the state's chimerical character is revealed through increasing separation between people.

This points to the artificial character of the separation of the State and the world of the everyday. Hardt (1995) posits the emergence of the 'postcivil' society, which is a withering away of civil society as it was conceptualised by Hegel (institutions responsible for the education of citizens to universal desires that correspond with those of the State) through to the mutually divergent conceptions of civil society held by Gramsci (as potentially democratic) and Foucault (as subtle dictatorship). The postcivil society, characterised by the real subsumption of labour that decentres (and makes invisible) labour within capitalist society, constitutes a remapping of social space so that a "hypersegmentation of society" can be configured on a separate place that Hardt describes as a simulacrum of society defined by control and separation.

I am not convinced by some aspects of Hardt's analysis: first, to posit a postcivil society is to hold implicitly the assumption that there once was a civil society free of the control and separation that Hardt attributes to this new configuration of everyday life that he refers to as postcivil society; second, it involves an acceptance of the assumption that institutional mechanisms of power are external to the State. It is not that civil society has withered away so much as its conditions expose the State in its inefficacy. It is at the cultural level that the inequalities that the power of the State promises to eliminate are actualised.

Returning again to the models that Deleuze proposes, perhaps the model that constitutes the liberal democratic Canadian that affirms equality at the level of political status and denies that anything needs to be affected at the level of culture is a majority. It cannot, however, remain as such because to conform too closely to the model is to lose the creative dimension of the movement and it becomes a tie between the subject and his or her identity. In this way, Deleuze's suggestion that the majority is no one can elucidate that the model of liberal democracy attempts to complete or finalise subjects and, therefore, the creative power of subjects, as expressed in model creation is threatened. The threat, however, tends to be misrecognised as that which does not conform, when, in fact, *it is conformity as such that is the danger*.

Consider the person who has been singled out as having speech problems, despite an ability to make her- or his-self understood through speech nonetheless. This characteristic (that could just as well be described as a unique intonation rather than a speech problem) is still viewed as a flaw, even though, and in part because, its difference does not make impossible its function. While this is counterintuitive, the othering of the person who speaks as 'one of us but not in the same way as us', makes the wholly other less other. In other words, a case of oikophobia. Therefore, the so-called speech problem threatens to make familiar all accents rather than the one that is to represent the fictive nation that would subsume all others.

Bauman addresses the implications of this kind of relation to others well with: "the main battles are fought on the domestic front rather than on the ramparts of the fortress" (97). These instances and others support the suggestion that it is the difference that is near that is the most frightening to those who would want to inhabit the inside space — if there is such a place at all.

Identity formation occurs in intense and ongoing negotiation between those who want to impose subjectivity and those who will reject it. Part of rejecting an imposed subjectivity is the

creation of one's own. Self-definitions and self-celebrations are both necessary and dangerous. It appears as though we cannot easily escape the language of inside and outside. Deleuze's conception of minority becomings insists on contingency. Maybe there is some hope in this even if hope is bound only in the idea of contingency.

We are on a journey. Along the way we try to possess or finalise through some imposed knowledge that which we find around us. We attempt to occupy an inside space even though such a space may be a fiction, just like there are fictional elements to the identities we form to get there.

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Notes

¹ Examples include, respectively: the marketing that accompanies the growth in technological convergence of media forms; cosmopolitan social movements that have organized for global forms of governance such as the International Criminal Court; and, in terms of social theory, I am thinking of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (this is most explicitly stressed in *Empire*, 2000).

² Early National Film Board projects illustrate this most vividly.

³ See, for instance, Bannerji 2000.

⁴ "And so the vagabond is the tourist's nightmare; the tourist's 'inner demon' which needs to be exorcised, and daily. The sight of the vagabond makes the tourist tremble - not because of *what the vagabond is but because of what the tourist may become* (Bauman, 1998: 97).

Former Yugoslav president, Slobodan Milosevic, might be an example of tourist turned vagabond, and in the most striking way. From president of a country -- a most vivid representation of tourist cosmopolitanism -- to not only a homeless, friendless vagabond, but a man being tried by an international ad hoc tribunal as a criminal against humanity. Even if Milosevic is not convicted (but it is almost certain that he will be), he has no home to return to. Milosevic is now someone else. He has fallen from international figure to international criminal. Yugoslavia is no longer Yugoslavia. Everything has changed.