

National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity Among Scholars and Refugees

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Introduction

“To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul,” wrote Simone Weil (1987:41) in wartime England in 1942. In our day, new conjunctures of theoretical enquiry in anthropology and other fields are making it possible and necessary to rethink the question of roots in relation— if not to the soul—to identity, and to the forms of its territorialization. The metaphorical concept of having roots involves intimate linkages between people and place—linkages that are increasingly recognized in anthropology as areas to be denatured and explored afresh.

As Appadurai (1988, 1990), Said (1979, 1986), Clifford (1988:10–11, 275), Rosaldo (1989:196ff.), Hannerz (1987), Hebdige (1987), Robertson (1988), and others have recently suggested, notions of nativeness and native places become very complex as more and more people identify themselves, or are categorized, in reference to deterritorialized “homelands,” “cultures,” and “origins.” There has emerged a new awareness of the global social fact that, now more than perhaps ever before, people are chronically mobile and routinely displaced, and invent homes and homelands in the absence of territorial, national bases—not in situ, but through memories of, and claims on, places that they can or will no longer corporeally inhabit.

Exile and other forms of territorial displacement are not, of course, exclusively “postmodern” phenomena. People have always moved—whether through desire or through violence. Scholars have also written about these movements for a long time and from diverse perspectives (Arendt 1973; Fustel de Coulanges 1980:190–193; Heller and Feher 1988:90; Marrus 1985; Mauss 1969:573–639; Moore 1989; Zolberg 1983). What is interesting is that now particular theoretical shifts have arranged themselves into new conjunctures that give these phenomena greater analytic visibility than perhaps ever before. Thus, we (anthropologists) have old questions, but also something very new.

The recognition that people are increasingly “moving targets” (Breckenridge and Appadurai 1989:i) of anthropological enquiry is associated with the placing of boundaries and borderlands at the center of our analytical frameworks, as opposed to relegating them to invisible peripheries or anomalous danger zones (cf. Balibar 1991:10; Comaroff and Comaroff 1987; Gupta and Ferguson, this issue; van Binsbergen 1981). Often, the concern with boundaries and their transgression reflects not so much corporeal movements of specific groups of people, but, rather, a broad concern with the “cultural displacement” of people, things, and cultural products (e.g., Clifford 1988; Goytisolo 1987; Hannerz 1987; Torgovnick 1990). Thus, what Said, for example, calls a “generalized condition of homelessness” (1979:18) is seen to characterize contemporary life everywhere.¹

In this new theoretical crossroads, examining the place of refugees in the national order of things becomes a clarifying exercise. On the one hand, trying to understand the circumstances of particular groups of refugees illuminates the complexity of the ways in which people construct, remember, and lay claim to particular places as “homelands” or “nations.” On the other, examining how refugees become an object of knowledge and management suggests that the displacement of refugees is constituted differently from other kinds of deterritorialization by those states, organizations, and scholars who are concerned with refugees. Here, the contemporary category of refugees is a particularly informative one in the study of the sociopolitical construction of space and place.

The major part of this article is a schematic exploration of taken-for-granted ways of thinking about identity and territory that are reflected in ordinary language, in nationalist discourses, and in scholarly studies of nations, nationalism, and refugees. The purpose here is to draw attention to the analytical consequences of such deeply territorializing concepts of identity for those categories of people classified as “displaced” and “uprooted.” These scholarly views will then be juxtaposed very briefly with two other cases. The first of these derives from ethnographic research among Hutu refugees who have lived in a refugee camp in rural Western Tanzania since fleeing the massacres of 1972 in Burundi. It will be traced how the camp refugees’ narrative construction of homeland, refugee-ness, and exile challenges scholarly constructions and common sense. In the second case, the ethnography moves among those Hutu refugees in Tanzania who have lived (also since 1972) outside of a refugee camp, in and around the township of Kigoma on Lake Tanganyika. These “town refugees” present a third, different conceptual constellation of links between people, place, and displacement—one that stands in antagonistic opposition to views from the camp, and challenges from yet another direction scholarly maps of the national order of things.

Maps and Soils

To begin to understand the meanings commonly attached to displacement and “uprootedness” in the contemporary national order of things, it is necessary to lay down some groundwork. This means exploring widely shared common-

sense ideas about countries and roots, nations and national identities. It means asking, in other words, what it means to be rooted in a place (cf. Appadurai 1988:37). Such commonsense ideas of soils, roots, and territory are built into everyday language and often also into scholarly work, but their very obviousness makes them elusive as objects of study. Common sense, as Geertz has said (1983:92), “lies so artlessly before our eyes it is almost impossible to see.”

That the world should be composed of sovereign, spatially discontinuous units is a sometimes implicit, sometimes stated premise in much of the literature on nations and nationalism (e.g., Gellner 1983; Giddens 1987:116, 119; Hobsbawm 1990:9–10).² To take one example, Gellner sees nations as recent phenomena, functional for industrial capitalism,³ but he also conceptualizes them as discrete ethnological units unambiguously segmented on the ground, thereby naturalizing them along a spatial axis. He invites us to examine two kinds of world maps.

Consider the history of the national principle; or consider two ethnographic maps, one drawn up before the age of nationalism, and the other after the principle of nationalism has done much of its work. The first map resembles a painting by Kokoschka. The riot of diverse points of colour is such that no clear pattern can be discerned in any detail. . . . Look now instead at the ethnographic and political map of an area of the modern world. It resembles not Kokoschka, but, say, Modigliani. There is very little shading; neat flat surfaces are clearly separated from each other, it is generally plain where one begins and another ends, and there is little if any ambiguity or overlap. [1983:139–140]

The Modigliani described by Gellner (*pace* Modigliani) is much like any school atlas with yellow, green, pink, orange, and blue countries composing a truly global map with no vague or “fuzzy spaces” and no bleeding boundaries (Tambiah 1985:4; Trinh 1989:94). The national order of things, as presented by Gellner, usually also passes as the normal or natural order of things. For it is self-evident that “real”⁴ nations are fixed in space and “recognizable” on a map (Smith 1986:1). One country cannot at the same time be another country. The world of nations is thus conceived as a discrete spatial partitioning of territory; it is territorialized in the segmentary fashion of the multicolored school atlas.

The territorialization expressed in the conceptual, visual device of the map is also (and perhaps especially) evident on the level of ordinary language. The term “the nation” is commonly referred to in English (and many other languages) by such metaphoric synonyms as “the country,” “the land,” and “the soil.” For example, the phrase “the whole country” could denote all the citizens of the country or its entire territorial expanse. And “land” is a frequent suffix, not only in “homeland,” but also in the names of countries (Thailand, Switzerland, England) and in the old colonial designations of “peoples and cultures” (Nuerland, Basutoland, Nyasaland). One dictionary definition for “land” is “the people of a country,” as in, “the land rose in rebellion.”⁵ Similarly, soil is often “national soil.”⁶ Here, the territory itself is made more human (cf. Handler 1988:34).

This naturalized identity between people and place is also reflected and created in the course of other, nondiscursive practices. It is not uncommon for a

person going into exile to take along a handful of the soil (or a sapling, or seeds) from his or her country, just as it is not unheard of for a returning national hero or other politician to kiss the ground upon setting foot once again on the "national soil." Demonstrations of emotional ties to the soil act as evidence of loyalty to the nation. Likewise, the ashes or bodies of persons who have died on foreign soil are routinely transported back to their "homelands," to the land where the genealogical tree of their ancestors grows. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust: in death, too, native or national soils are important.

The powerful metaphoric practices that so commonly link people to place are also deployed to understand and act upon the categorically aberrant condition of people whose claims on, and ties to, national soils are regarded as tenuous, spurious, or nonexistent. It is in this context, perhaps, that the recent events in Carpentras, Southern France, should be placed (Dahlburg et al. 1990:H1; Plenel 1990:16; cf. Balibar 1990:286). On the night of 9 May 1990, 37 graves in an old Jewish cemetery were desecrated, and the body of a man newly buried was disinterred and impaled with an umbrella (Dahlburg et al. 1990:H1). One is compelled to see in this abhorrent act of violence a connection to "love of country" in the ugliest sense of the term. The old man's membership in the French nation was denied because he was of the category "Jew." He was a person in the "wrong" soil, and was therefore taken out of the soil (cf. Balibar 1990:285).

Roots and Arborescent Culture

The foregoing examples already suggest that the widely held commonsense assumptions linking people to place, nation to territory, are not simply territorializing, but deeply metaphysical. To begin to understand the meaning of displacement in this order of things, however, it is necessary to explore further aspects of the metaphysic. The intent in this section is to show that the naturalizing of the links between people and place is routinely conceived in specifically botanical metaphors.⁷ That is, people are often thought of, and think of themselves, as being rooted in place and as deriving their identity from that rootedness. The roots in question here are not just any kind of roots; very often they are specifically arborescent in form.

Even a brief excursion into nationalist discourses and imagery shows them to be a particularly rich field for the exploration of such arborescent root metaphors. Examples are easy to find: Keith Thomas has traced the history of the British oak as "an emblem of the British people" (1983:220, 223; cf. Daniels 1988:47ff.; Graves 1966). Edmund Burke combined "the great oaks that shade a country" with metaphors of "roots" and "stock" (cited in Thomas 1983:218). A Quebecois nationalist likened the consequences of tampering with the national heritage to the withering of a tree (Handler 1988:44–45). An old Basque nationalist document links nation, race, blood, and tree (Heiberg 1989:51).

But more broadly, metaphors of kinship (motherland, fatherland, *Vaterland*, *patria*, *isänmaa*) and of home (homeland, *Heimat*, *kotimaa*) are also territorializing in this same sense; for these metaphors are thought to "denote something to

which one is naturally tied” (Anderson 1983:131). Motherland and fatherland, aside from their other historical connotations, suggest that each nation is a grand genealogical tree, rooted in the soil that nourishes it. By implication, it is impossible to be a part of more than one tree. Such a tree evokes both temporal continuity of essence and territorial rootedness.

Thinking in terms of arborescent roots is, of course, in no way the exclusive province of nationalists. Scholars, too, often conceptualize identity and nationness in precisely such terms. Smith’s *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1986) provides one example of the centrality of root metaphors in this intellectual domain. In an effort to find constructive middle ground between “primordialist”⁸ and “modernist” versions of the emergence of nations, he sets out “to trace the ethnic foundations and roots of modern nations” (1986:15), and states: “No enduring world order can be created which ignores the ubiquitous yearnings of nations in search of roots in an ethnic past, and no study of nations and nationalism that completely ignores the past can bear fruit” (Smith 1986:5).⁹

Thinking about nations and national identities may take the form of roots, trees, origins, ancestries, racial lines, autochthonism, evolutions, developments, or any number of other familiar, essentializing images; what they share is a genealogical form of thought, which, as Deleuze and Guattari have pointed out, is peculiarly arborescent.

It is odd how the tree has dominated Western reality and all of Western thought, from botany to biology and anatomy, but also gnosiology, theology, ontology, all of philosophy . . . : the root-foundation, *Grund, racine, fondement*. The West has a special relation to the forest, and deforestation. . . . [1987:18]

The Need for Roots and the Spatial Incarceration of the Native

Two kinds of connection between the concept of the nation and the anthropological concept of culture are relevant here. First, the conceptual order of the “national geographic” map (elucidated above by Gellner) is comparable to the manner in which anthropologists have often conceptualized the spatial arrangement of “peoples and cultures.” This similarity has to do with the ways in which we tend to conceptualize space in general. As Gupta points out:

Our concepts of space have always fundamentally rested on . . . images of break, rupture, and disjunction. The recognition of cultures, societies, nations, all in the *plural*, is unproblematic exactly because there appears an unquestionable division, an intrinsic discontinuity, *between* cultures, *between* societies, etc. [Gupta 1988:1–2]

This spatial segmentation is also built into “the lens of cultural relativity that, as Johannes Fabian points out, made the world appear as culture gardens separated by boundary-maintaining values—as posited essences” (Prakash 1990:394). The conceptual practice of spatial segmentation is reflected not only in narratives of “cultural diversity,” but also in the internationalist celebration of diversity in the “family of nations.”

A second, related set of connections between nation and culture is more overtly metaphysical. It has to do with the fact that, like the nation, culture has for long been conceived as something existing in "soil." Terms like "native," "indigenous," and "autochthonous" have all served to root cultures in soils; and it is, of course, a well-worn observation that the term culture derives from the Latin for cultivation (see, e.g., Wagner 1981:21). "The idea of culture carries with it an expectation of roots, of a stable, territorialized existence" (Clifford 1988:338). Here, culture and nation are kindred concepts: they are not only spatializing but territorializing; they both depend on a cultural essentialism that readily takes on arborescent forms.¹⁰

A powerful means of understanding how "cultures" are territorialized can be found in Appadurai's (1988:37) account of the ways in which anthropologists have tended to tie people to places through ascriptions of native status: "natives are not only persons who are from certain places, and belong to those places, but they are also those who are somehow *incarcerated*, or confined, in those places." The spatial incarceration of the native operates, he argues, through the attribution not only of physical immobility, but also of a distinctly ecological immobility (1988:37). Natives are thought to be ideally adapted to their environments—admirable scientists of the concrete mutely and deftly unfolding the hidden innards of their particular ecosystems, PBS-style (1988:38). As Appadurai observes, these ways of confining people to places have deeply metaphysical and moral dimensions (1988:37).

The ecological immobility of the native, so convincingly argued by Appadurai, can be considered in the context of a broader conflation of culture and people, nation and nature—a conflation that is incarcerating but also heroizing and extremely romantic. Two ethnographic examples will perhaps suffice here.¹¹

On a certain North American university campus, anthropology faculty were requested by the Rainforest Action Movement (RAM) Committee on Indigenous Peoples to announce in their classes that "October 21st through the 28th is World Rainforest Week. The Rainforest Action Movement will be kicking the week off with a candlelight vigil for Indigenous Peoples." (The flyer also lists other activities: a march through downtown, a lecture "on Indigenous Peoples," and a film.) One is, of course, sympathetic with the project of defending the rainforests and the people who live in them, in the face of tremendous threats. The intent is not to belittle or to deny the necessity of supranational political organizing around these issues. However, these activities on behalf of "The Indigenous," in the *specific* cultural forms that they take, raise a number of questions: Why should the rights of "Indigenous People" be seen as an "environmental" issue? Are people "rooted" in their native soil somehow more natural, their rights somehow more sacred, than those of other exploited and oppressed people? And one wonders, if an "Indigenous Person" wanted to move away, to a city, would his or her candle be extinguished? The dictates of ecological immobility weigh heavily here.

But something more is going on with the "Indigenous Peoples' Day." That people would gather in a small town in North America to hold a vigil by candlelight

for other people known only by the name of “Indigenous” suggests that being indigenous, native, autochthonous, or otherwise rooted in place is, indeed, powerfully heroized.¹² At the same time, it is hard not to see that this very heroization—fusing the faraway people with their forest—may have the effect of subtly animalizing while it spiritualizes. Like “the wildlife,” the indigenous are an object of enquiry and imagination not only for the anthropologist but also for the naturalist, the environmentalist, and the tourist.¹³

The romantic vision of the rooting of peoples has recently been amplified in new strands of “green politics” that literally sacralize the fusion of people, culture, and soil on “Mother Earth.” A recent article in *The Nation*, “How Paradise Was Lost: What Columbus Discovered,” by Kirkpatrick Sale (1990), is a case in point. Starting from the worthwhile observation that the history of the “discovery” of the Americas needs to be rewritten, Sale proceeds to lay out a political program that might be described as magical naturalism. The discovery, he writes, “began the process by which the culture of Europe, aptly represented by this captain [Columbus], implanted its diseased and dangerous seeds in the soils of the continents. . . .” (1990:445). The captain, we are told, is best thought of as “a man *without place* . . . always rootless and restless” (1990:445). By contrast, “the cultures” discovered and destroyed are best thought of as originally “*rooted in place*” (1990:445). They had “an exquisite sense of . . . the bioregions” (1990:445). Sale is not content with mere nostalgia; he distills moral lessons and a new form of devotional politics from this history.

The only political vision that offers any hope of salvation is one based on an understanding of, a rootedness in, a deep commitment to, and a resacralization of, *place*. . . . It is the only way we can build a politics that can spread the message that Western civilization itself, *shot through with the denial of place* and a utilitarian concept of nature, must be transformed. . . .

Such a politics, based, as the original peoples of the Americas had it, upon love of place, also implies the place of love. For ultimately love is the true cradle of politics, the love of the earth and its systems, the love of the particular bioregion we inhabit, the love of those who share it with us in our communities, and the love of that unnameable essence that binds us together with the earth, and provides the water for the roots we sink. [Sale 1990:446, emphasis added]

The “natives” are indeed incarcerated in primordial bioregions and thereby retrospectively recolonized in Sale’s argument. But a moral lesson is drawn from this: the restless, rootless “civilization” of the colonizing “West,” too, urgently needs to root itself. In sum, the spatial incarceration of the native is conceived as a highly valued rooting of “peoples” and “cultures”—a rooting that is simultaneously moral and literally botanical, or ecological.

It is when the native is a national native that the metaphysical and moral valuation of roots in the soil becomes especially apparent. In the national order of things, the rooting of peoples is not only normal; it is also perceived as a moral and spiritual need.

Just as there are certain culture-beds for certain microscopic animals, certain types of soil for certain plants, so there is a certain part of the soul in every one and certain

ways of thought and action communicated from one person to another which can only exist in a national setting, and disappear when a country is destroyed. [Weil 1987:151–152]

A Sedentarist Metaphysics

The territorializing, often arborescent conceptions of nation and culture explored here are associated with a powerful sedentarism in our thinking. Were we to imagine an otherworldly ethnographer studying us, we might well hear that scholar observe, in Tuan's (1977:156) words: "Rootedness in the soil and the growth of pious feeling toward it seem natural to sedentary agricultural peoples." This is a sedentarism that is peculiarly enabling of the elaboration and consolidation of a national geography that reaffirms the segmentation of the world into prismatic, mutually exclusive units of "world order" (Smith 1986:5). This is also a sedentarism that is taken for granted to such an extent that it is nearly invisible. And, finally, this is a sedentarism that is deeply metaphysical and deeply moral, sinking "peoples" and "cultures" into "national soils," and the "family of nations" into Mother Earth. It is this transnational cultural context that makes intelligible the linkages between contemporary celebratory internationalisms and environmentalisms.

The *effects* of this sedentarism are the focus of the following section on refugees. Refugees are not nomads, but Deleuze and Guattari's comments on allegorical nomads are relevant to them:

History is always written from a sedentary point of view and in the name of a unitary State apparatus, at least a possible one, even when the topic is nomads. What is lacking is a Nomadology, the opposite of a history. [1987:23]

Uprootedness: Some Implications of Sedentarism for Conceptualizing Displacement

Conceiving the relationships that people have to places in the naturalizing and botanical terms described above leads, then, to a peculiar sedentarism that is reflected in language and in social practice. This sedentarism is not inert. It actively territorializes our identities, whether cultural or national. And as this section will attempt to show, it also directly enables a vision of territorial displacement as pathological. The broader intent here is to suggest that it is in confronting displacement that the sedentarist metaphysic embedded in the national order of things is at its most visible.

That displacement is subject to botanical thought is evident from the contrast between two everyday terms for it: transplantation and uprootedness. The notion of transplantation is less specific a term than the latter, but it may be agreed that it generally evokes live, viable roots. It strongly suggests, for example, the colonial and postcolonial, usually privileged, category of "expatriates" who pick up their roots in an orderly manner from the "mother country," the originative culture-bed, and set about their "acclimatization"¹⁴ in the "foreign environment" or on "foreign soil"—again, in an orderly manner. Uprootedness is an-

other matter. Even a brief overview of the literature on refugees as uprooted people shows that in uprooting, the orderliness of the transplantation disappears. Instead, broken and dangling roots predominate—roots that threaten to wither, along with the ordinary loyalties of citizenship in a homeland (Heller and Feher 1988:89; Malkki 1985:24–25).

The pathologization of uprootedness in the national order of things can take several different (but often conflated) forms, among them political, medical, and moral. After the Second World War, and also in the interwar period, the loss of national homeland embodied by refugees was often defined by policymakers and scholars of the time as a politico-moral problem. For example, a prominent 1939 historical survey of refugees states, “Politically uprooted, he [the refugee] may sink into the underworld of terrorism and political crime; and in any case he is suspected of political irresponsibility that endangers national security” (Simpson 1939:9).¹⁵

It is, however, the moral axis that has proven to command the greatest longevity in the problematization of refugees. A particularly clear, if extreme, statement of the perceived moral consequences of loss of homeland is to be found in the following passage from a postwar study of the mental and moral characteristics of the “typical refugee”:

Homelessness is a serious threat to moral behavior. . . . At the moment the refugee crosses the frontiers of his own world, his whole moral outlook, his attitude toward the divine order of life changes. . . . [The refugees’] conduct makes it obvious that we are dealing with individuals who are basically amoral, without any sense of personal or social responsibility. . . . They no longer feel themselves bound by ethical precepts which every honest citizen . . . respects. They become a menace, dangerous characters who will stop at nothing. [Cirtautas 1957:70, 73]

The particular historical circumstances under which the pathologization of the World War II refugees occurred has been discussed elsewhere (Malkki 1985). The point to be underscored here is that these refugees’ loss of bodily connection to their national homelands came to be treated as a *loss of moral bearings*. Rootless, they were no longer trustworthy as “honest citizens.”

The theme of moral breakdown has not disappeared from the study of exile and displacement (Kristeva 1991; Tabori 1972). Pellizzi (1988:170), for instance, speaks of the “inner destruction” visited upon the exile “by the full awareness of his condition.” Suggesting that most of us are today “in varying degrees of exile, removed from our roots,” he warns: “1984 is near” (1988:168). Another observer likens the therapeutic treatment of refugees to military surgery; in both cases, time is of the essence.

Unless treated quickly, the refugee almost inevitably develops either apathy or a reckless attitude that “the world owes me a living,” which later proves almost ineradicable. There is a slow, prostrating and agonizing death—of the hopes, the idealism and the feeling of solidarity with which the refugees began. [Aall 1967:26]¹⁶

The more contemporary field of “refugee studies” is quite different in spirit from the postwar literature. However, it shares with earlier texts the premise that refugees are necessarily “a problem.” They are not ordinary people, but represent, rather, an anomaly requiring specialized correctives and therapeutic interventions. It is striking how often the abundant literature claiming refugees as its object of study locates “the problem” not in the political conditions or processes that produce massive territorial displacements of people, but, rather, within the bodies and minds (and even souls) of people categorized as refugees.

The internalization of the problem within “the refugee” in the more contemporary study of refugees now occurs most often along a medicalizing, psychological axis. Harrell-Bond, for instance, cites evidence of the breakdown of families and the erosion of “normative social behaviour” (1986:150), of mental illness (1986:152, 283ff.), of “psychological stress” (1986:286), and of “clinical levels of depression and anxiety” (1986:287ff.).¹⁷

The point here is obviously not to deny that displacement can be a shattering experience. It is rather this: Our sedentarist assumptions about attachment to place lead us to define displacement not as a fact about sociopolitical context, but rather as an inner, pathological condition of the displaced.

The “Family of Nations” and the Externality of “the Refugee”

These different texts on the mental and moral characteristics of refugees first of all create the effect of a generalized, even generic, figure: “the refugee.” But the generalization and problematization of “the refugee” may be linked to a third process, that of the discursive externalization of the refugee from the national (read: natural) order of things. Three examples may clarify this process.

In a study of the post–World War II refugees, Stoessinger (1956:189) notes the importance of studying “the peculiar psychological effects arising from prolonged refugee status,” and stresses that “such psychological probings constitute an excursion into what is still largely *terra incognita*.” The title of a more recent article reflects a comparable perception of the strangeness and unfamiliarity of the world peopled by refugees: “A Tourist in the Refugee World” (Shawcross 1989:28–30). The article is a commentary in a photographic essay on refugees around the world entitled *Forced Out: The Agony of the Refugee in Our Time* (Kismaric 1989). Excursions into *terra incognita*, guided tours in “the refugee world,” and the last image of being “forced out”—all three point to the externality of “the refugee” in the national order of things.

Hannah Arendt outlined these relations of strangeness and externality very clearly when writing about the post–World War II refugees and other displaced peoples in Europe. The world map she saw was very different from the school atlas considered earlier.

Mankind, for so long a time considered under the image of a family of nations, had reached the stage where whoever was thrown out of one of these tightly organized closed communities found himself thrown out of the family of nations altogether . . . the abstract nakedness of being nothing but human was their greatest danger. [1973:294, 300]¹⁸

Refugees, liminal in the categorical order of nation-states, thus fit Turner's famous characterization of liminal personae as "naked unaccommodated man" or "undifferentiated raw material" (1967:98–99). The objectification to which Arendt's and Turner's observations refer is very evident in the scholarly and policy discourse on refugees. The term "refugees" denotes an objectified, undifferentiated mass that is meaningful primarily as an aberration of categories and an object of "therapeutic interventions" (cf. Foucault 1979). One of the social and analytical consequences of the school atlas, then, is the political sensitivity and symbolic danger of people who do not fit, who represent "matter out of place" (Douglas 1966).

These relations of order and aberration also raise questions for anthropological practice: If "the refugee" is "naked unaccommodated man," naked and not clothed in culture, why should the anthropologist study him? The heroizing concept of the "family of nations" is comparable to another naturalistic term: the "family of man" (cf. Haraway 1986:9, 11). Thus does the nakedness of the ideal-typical refugee suggest another link: that between nationlessness and culturelessness. That is, territorially "uprooted" people are easily seen as "torn loose from their culture" (Marrus 1985:8),¹⁹ because culture is itself a territorialized (and even a botanical and quasi-ecological) concept in so many contexts. As Clifford (1988:338) observes: "Common notions of culture" are biased "toward rooting rather than travel." Violated, broken roots signal an ailing cultural identity and a damaged nationality. The ideal-typical refugee is like a native gone amok (cf. Arendt 1973:302). It is not illogical in this cultural context that one of the first therapies routinely directed at refugees is a spatial one. The refugee camp is a technology of "care and control" (Malkki 1985:51; Proudfoot 1957)—a technology of power entailing the management of space and movement—for "peoples out of place."

In the foregoing, an attempt has been made to clarify the following points: (1) The world of nations tends to be conceived as discrete spatial partitionings of territory. (2) The relations of people to place tend to be naturalized in discursive and other practices. This naturalization is often specifically conceived in plant metaphors. (3) The concept of culture has many points of connection with that of the nation, and is likewise thought to be rooted in concrete localities. These botanical concepts reflect a metaphysical sedentarism in scholarly and other contexts. (4) The naturalization of the links between people and place leads to a vision of displacement as pathological, and this, too, is conceived in botanical terms, as uprootedness. Uprootedness comes to signal a loss of moral and, later, emotional bearings. Since both cultural and national identities are conceived in territorialized terms, uprootedness also threatens to denature and spoil these.

In the next section, these often taken-for-granted ways of thinking and two different conceptions of the links between people and place will be juxtaposed.

Nationals and Cosmopolitans in Exile

The two very condensed ethnographic examples to be given are drawn from detailed accounts presented elsewhere (Malkki 1989, 1990). Based on one year

of anthropological field research in rural western Tanzania among Hutu refugees who fled the genocidal massacres of 1972 in Burundi, this work explores how the lived experiences of exile shape the construction of national identity and historicity among two groups of Hutu refugees inhabiting two very different settings in Tanzania. One group was settled in a rigorously organized, isolated refugee camp, and the other lived in the more fluid setting of Kigoma Township on Lake Tanganyika. Living outside of any camp context, these "town refugees" were dispersed in non-refugee neighborhoods. Comparison of the camp and town settings revealed radical differences in the meanings ascribed to national identity and homeland, and exile and refugee-ness.

The most striking social fact about the camp was that its inhabitants were continually engaged in an impassioned construction and reconstruction of their history as "a people." Ranging from the "autochthonous" origins of Burundi as a "nation" to the coming of the pastoral Tutsi "foreigners from the North" to the Tutsi capture of power from the autochthons by ruse to, finally, the culminating massacres of Hutu by Tutsi in 1972, which have been termed a "selective genocide" (Lemarchand and Martin 1974), the Hutu refugees' narratives formed an overarching historical trajectory that was fundamentally also a national trajectory of the "rightful natives" of Burundi. The camp refugees saw themselves as a nation in exile, and defined exile, in turn, as a moral trajectory of trials and tribulations that would ultimately empower them to reclaim (or create anew) the "Homeland" in Burundi.

Refugee-ness had a central place in these narrative processes (cf. Malkki 1990:44ff.). Far from being a "spoiled identity," refugee status was valued and protected as a sign of the ultimate temporariness of exile and of the refusal to become naturalized, to put down roots in a place to which one did not belong. Insisting on one's liminality and displacement as a refugee was also to have a legitimate claim to the attention of "international opinion" and to international assistance. Displacement is usually defined by those who study refugees as a subversion of (national) categories, as an international problem (Malkki 1985, 1989). Here, in contrast, displacement had become a form of categorical purity. Being a refugee, a person was no longer a citizen of Burundi, and not yet an immigrant in Tanzania. One's purity as a refugee had become a way of becoming purer and more powerful as a Hutu.

The "true nation" was imagined as a "moral community" being formed centrally by the "natives" in exile (Malkki 1990:34; cf. Anderson 1983:15). The territorial expanse named Burundi was a mere state. The camp refugees' narratives agree with Renan: "A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle" (1990:19). Here, then, would seem to be a deterritorialized nation without roots sunk directly into the national soil. Indeed, the territory is not yet a national soil, because the nation has not yet been reclaimed by its "true members" and is instead governed by "impostors" (Malkki 1989:133). If "anything can serve as a reterritorialization, in other words, 'stand for' the lost territory," then the Hutu nation has reterritorialized itself precisely in displacement, in a refugee camp (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:508). The homeland here is not so much a territorial or topographic

entity as a moral destination. And the collective, idealized return to the homeland is not a mere matter of traveling. The real return can come only at the culmination of the trials and tribulations in exile.

These visions of nation, identity, and displacement challenge the common-sense and scholarly views discussed in the first section of this article, not by refuting the national order of things, but, rather, by constructing an alternative, competing nationalist metaphysic. It is being claimed that state and territory are not sufficient to make a nation, and that citizenship does not amount to a true nativeness. Thus, present-day Burundi is an “impostor” in the “family of nations.”

In contrast, the town refugees had not constructed such a categorically distinct, collective identity. Rather than defining themselves collectively as “the Hutu refugees,” they tended to seek ways of assimilating and of manipulating multiple identities—identities derived or “borrowed” from the social context of the township. The town refugees were not *essentially* “Hutu” or “refugees” or “Tanzanians” or “Burundians,” but rather just “broad persons” (Hebdige 1987:159). Theirs were creolized, rhizomatic identities—changing and situational rather than essential and moral (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:6ff., 21; Hanerz 1987). In the process of managing these “rootless” identities in township life, they were creating not a heroized national identity, but a lively cosmopolitanism—a worldliness that caused the camp refugees to see them as an “impure,” problematic element in the “total community” of the Hutu refugees as “a people” in exile.

For many in town, returning to the homeland meant traveling to Burundi, to a spatially demarcated place. Exile was not a moral trajectory, and homeland was not a moral destination, but simply a place. Indeed, it often seemed inappropriate to think of the town refugees as being in exile at all. Many among them were unsure about whether they would ever return to Burundi, even if political changes were to permit it in the future. But more important, they had created lives that were located in the present circumstances of Kigoma, not in the past in Burundi.

The town refugees’ constructions of their lived circumstances and their pasts were different from *both* the national metaphysic of the camp refugees and that of scholarly common sense. Indeed, they dismantled the national metaphysics by refusing a mapping and spurning origin queries altogether. They mounted instead a robust challenge to cultural and national essentialisms; they denaturalized those scholarly, touristic, and other quests for “authenticity” that imply a mass traffic in “fake” and “adulterated” identities; and, finally, they trivialized the necessity of living by radical nationalisms. They might well agree with Deleuze and Guattari.

To be rhizomorphic is to produce stems and filaments that seem to be roots, or better yet connect with them by penetrating the trunk, but put them to strange new uses. We’re tired of trees. We should stop believing in trees, roots, and radicles. They’ve made us suffer too much. All of arborescent culture is founded on them, from biology to linguistics. [1987:15]

Conclusion

Anderson (1983:19) proposes that “nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which—as well as against which—it came into being” (cf. Bhabha 1990:1ff.; Kapferer 1988; Orwell 1968:362). It is in this spirit that the phrase “the national order of things” has been used here (in preference to “nationalism”). Its intent has been to describe a class of phenomena that is deeply cultural and yet global in its significance. That is, the nation—having powerful associations with particular localities and territories—is simultaneously a supralocal, transnational cultural form (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1988:1ff.).

In this order of things, conceptualizations of the relations between people and place readily take on aspects of the metaphysical sedentarism described here. It is these naturalized relations that this article has tried to illuminate and decompose through the three-way comparison of sedentarist common sense, of the Hutu in the refugee camp, and of the cosmopolitan refugees in Kigoma. These ethnographic examples underscore what a troubled conceptual vehicle “identity” still is, even when the more obvious essentialisms have been leached out of it. Time and again, it reappears as a “root essence,” as that “pure product” (Clifford 1988:1ff.) of the cultural, and of the national, soil from which it is thought to draw its nature and its sustenance. That many people (scholars included) see identity through this lens of essentialism is a cultural and political fact to be recognized. But this does not mean that our analytical tools must take this form. The two main oppositions in this article—first, that between sedentarism and displacement in general, and, second, that between “the nationals” and “the cosmopolitans” in exile in Tanzania—suggest alternative conceptualizations.

They suggest that identity is always mobile and processual, partly self-construction, partly categorization by others, partly a condition, a status, a label, a weapon, a shield, a fund of memories, et cetera. It is a creolized aggregate composed through bricolage. The camp refugees celebrated a categorical “purity,” the town refugees a cosmopolitan “impurity.” But both kinds of identity were rhizomatic, as indeed is any identity, and it would not be ethnographically accurate to study these as mere approximations or distortions of some ideal “true roots.”²⁰

What Deleuze and Guattari (1987:3ff.) somewhat abstractly describe as rhizomatic is very succinctly stated by Hebdige in his study of Caribbean music and cultural identity. Defining the terms of his project, he says:

Rather than tracing back the roots . . . to their source, I've tried to show how the roots themselves are in a state of constant flux and change. *The roots don't stay in one place.* They change shape. They change colour. And they grow. There is *no such thing as a pure point of origin . . . but that doesn't mean there isn't history.* [1987:10, emphasis added]

Observing that more and more of the world lives in a “generalized condition of homelessness”—or that there is truly an intellectual need for a new “sociology

of displacement,” a new “nomadology”—is not to deny the importance of place in the construction of identities.²¹ On the contrary, as this article has attempted to show, and as Hebdige suggests above, deterritorialization and identity are intimately linked. “Diasporas always leave a trail of collective memory about another place and time and create new maps of desire and of attachment” (Breckenridge and Appadurai 1989:i).²² To plot only “places of birth” and degrees of nativeness is to blind oneself to the multiplicity of attachments that people form to places through living in, remembering, and imagining them.

Notes

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¹Kristeva (1991) arrives at similar observations along quite different theoretical trajectories.

²A more detailed discussion of the literature on nations and nationalism can be located in Malkki (1989:11ff.).

³A recent critique of Gellner’s position has been done by Moore (1989).

⁴The “real” nation is implied in such terms as Giddens’s “classical form” (1987:269) and Smith’s “standard or ‘classic’ European ‘nation’ ” (1986:8). See also Smith (1986:17) on “dubious” forms.

⁵*Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*, 9th ed., s.v. “land.”

⁶Extracted and translated from a 1950s South Tyrolean almanac by Doob, cited in Tuan (1977:156):

Heimat is first of all the mother earth who has given birth to our folk and race, who is the holy soil, and who gulps down God’s clouds, sun, and storms. . . . But more than all this, our Heimat is the land which has become fruitful through the sweat of our ancestors. For this Heimat our ancestors have fought and suffered, for this Heimat our fathers have died.

⁷Clearly, the other great metaphor for community is blood, or stock. But the tree more closely reveals the territorialization of identity, and is thus given primacy here. Frequently, these dominating metaphors are also combined, of course, as in the family tree. My understanding of the politico-symbolic significance of blood has been enriched by conversations with Ann Stoler.

⁸One variety of primordialism is to be found in Mazzini’s view that God “divided Humanity into distinct groups upon the face of our globe, and thus planted the seeds of nations” (cited in Emerson 1960:91).

⁹Cf. Kapferer (1988:1) on cultures as the “root essence” of nations and national identities in discourses of nationalism.

¹⁰Elsewhere (Malkki 1989:16) it has been examined how Durkheimian views of the nation seem to rest on metaphors of the organism and the body (the female body, in particular).

¹¹The first example raises the issue of rainforests and the people who live in them. Here it is necessary to emphasize that it is not being suggested that the political efforts converging on these forests are futile or trivial. Similarly, in the case of the second example of environmentalism and green politics, the intent is not to advocate a cynically agnostic stance toward environmental politics, or to echo the unfortunate relativism of a book like Douglas and Wildavsky’s *Risk and Culture* (1982). The purpose is to sharpen the focus on these phenomena so as to better study their place and effects in the contemporary transnational context.

¹²Verhelst’s study *No Life Without Roots* (1990) is an example of such heroization. Looking to Third World “grass-roots communities” (1990:4) for a “spiritual message” (1990:87) for the West, he states: “Indigenous cultures contain within them the seeds necessary to give birth to societies which differ from the standardized and devitalized model that has spread over the world” (1990:24).

¹³This postcolonial relationship was powerfully portrayed in the fine ethnographic film *Cannibal Tours* (O’Rourke 1987).

¹⁴Notably, not “acculturation.”

¹⁵A more detailed study of European refugees at the end of the Second World War has been done elsewhere (Malkki 1985).

¹⁶Cf. Vernant (1953:17) on the “refugee complex”; and also Robert Neumann on “emigré life” as a “highly contagious” “corrosive disease” (cited in Tabori 1972:398–399).

¹⁷See also Harrell-Bond (1989:63). Cf. further Godkin (1980:73–85), a study of “rootedness” and “uprootedness” among alcoholics, which finds that belonging to a place fosters psychological well-being.

¹⁸This is discussed in Malkki (1989:57–58).

¹⁹Shawcross (1989:29) echoes this sense of the loss of culture: “the poignant voices of refugees recall their lost homes, their precious rituals forcibly abandoned. . . .”

²⁰Deleuze and Guattari write:

Unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states. . . . It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always middle (*milieu*) from which it grows and which it overfills. . . . The tree is filiation but the rhizome is alliance. . . . the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, “and . . . and . . . and . . .” [1987:21, 25]

²¹On the question of a new sociology of displacement, see Breckenridge and Appadurai (1989:iv). On the concept of a new nomadology, see Deleuze and Guattari (1987:23).

²²It is also worth considering why “to some people the very ‘state of movement’ is being ‘at home’ ” (Marianne Forró, cited in Tabori 1972:399).

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