Introduction

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Borders demarcate the territory over which a state exercises its sovereignty. In addition, the policing and maintenance of borders perform several vital state-making functions, including the legitimation of political authority (Barker, 2017), the fashioning of particular social relations (Anderson, 2010) and even the formation of certain kinds of subject (Auchter, 2012, p 294).

Our three chapters in Part 2 look at this from quite different disciplinary and temporal perspectives, enabling us to discern interesting patterns, similarities and differences. The sovereign has always regulated movement and used a variety of tools to do so. The methods relied on change with prevailing conditions and ideas, but there are common themes that echo over time. For example, easing labour supply at a time of labour shortage, tightening it when it is hard to find work and, in both contexts, dampening labour unrest are important factors in understanding government responses to and efforts to control mobility. In Chapter 5, Brendan Smith, a historian of the Middle Ages, describes how Edward III's government rushed through the emergency legislation in 1349 in response to the massive changes in the labour market being wrought by the Black Death, and then revised and extended its approach in the Statute of Labourers of 1351. In Chapter 6, Manoj Dias-Abey, a lawyer, describes the emergence of the Aliens Order 1920 and the demarcating of the 'national' labour market in the context of unemployment and growing labour internationalism. While both chapters might be deemed historical, they use quite different methods. Dias-Abey uses a particular regulatory instrument to uncover how the state has thought about and regulated migration over the course of the 20th century. Smith is less interested in the instruments per se and more on their sociopolitical consequences.

In Chapter 7, Angelo Martins Junior, a sociologist, explores the varied experiences of Brazilians who have made it through the UK border. He finds that they carry with them to London a range of differences relating to social class, gender, 'race' and regional background, which originate in Brazil's colonial past and are reconstituted in an environment that is suspicious of,

and unsympathetic towards, 'migrant communities'. Legal status is critical to this reconstitution and to the creation and magnification of differences among Brazilian migrants in London. Legal categories are imagined as imposing order on the world, but both Martins Junior and Dias-Abey demonstrate that they both interact with social differences and call those social differences into being. The controversies that arose in the late 14th century about whether subjects of the English king who had been born outside of the kingdom were entitled to be regarded as English before the law when they moved to England speak to this same blurring and confusion. That is, questions of legal status reveal that the law and social relationships are entangled in complex ways. Martins Junior powerfully shows us how officially generated categorizations both reproduce and overlook significant social divisions, and Dias-Abey shows us that these categorizations can be mobilized to the advantage of capital.

Smith's chapter considers mobility and marches (migration and borders) in England and its neighbours from the 11th to the 15th century, taking as his starting point that the fact throughout this period English kings ruled, and claimed to rule, territories beyond England itself. Subjecthood in its medieval sense, in other words, was less directly associated with territoriality than was to be the case in later centuries. Suspicion of the outsider/stranger, however, was always strong in medieval communities, and the word 'foreigner' was synonymous with these terms until the late Middle Ages, when the concept of 'alien' (that is, foreign born) grew in prominence. Both Dias-Abey and Martins Junior's chapters also problematize a simple mapping of subjecthood onto territory. The former examines the introduction of the regulatory instrument of the 'work permit' in the Aliens Order 1920, which required any alien seeking to work in the British Isles to produce to their employer a work permit issued by the Ministry of Labour. Colonial subjects were not aliens and therefore not covered by this Order, and anyway they were not present in significant numbers on the British Isles themselves. However, seafarers were a notable exception, and the Coloured Seamen Order 1925 made it difficult for racialized subjects to find a home or even temporary residence in the heart of Empire.

While immigration policy is, as Anderson argues in the introduction to this volume, bound up with ideas of nation, it is ostensibly race neutral. Dias-Abey and Martins Junior suggest this is otherwise in practice. The latter notes how 'good' and 'bad' become 'legal' and 'illegal' and that legal status is both racialized and classed. While these chapters focus on England and London, respectively, Martins Junior's contribution helps us see that processes of racialization are not confined to the former British imperial power. Brazilians who come to London bring with them their own colonially inflected ideas of race and hierarchies that adapt to the British sociolegal context. What borders produce in this context is newer forms of disunity,

and fear of deportation deepens old divisions and generates new ones among Brazilian migrants, some of whom internalize the rhetoric of 'good citizens' on the one hand and 'non-citizens' or 'dodgy citizens' on the other in order to distance themselves from the stigmatized figure of 'the migrant'.

Taken together, the chapters demand that we take a critical view of not only traditional narratives and officially sponsored terminologies and rhetoric, but also accepted chronological and geographical frameworks. Centuries before the appearance of modern states, powerful political entities like the medieval English kingdom were deeply concerned with issues of mobility and sought to direct their course. This is not to claim that 'there is nothing new under the sun'. Good history takes nothing for granted and eschews teleology. It is also sensitive to changing vocabularies and to the changing meaning of words that appear in both the past and the present. Rather, it claims that understanding contemporary mobility is enriched by an appreciation of how important it has been in the past and how histories of movement and efforts to control it, not only in England but elsewhere, shape our contemporary landscape. Dias-Abey shows that attending to histories of mobility control helps us understand how the 'national labour market' was made, Martins Junior reminds us that ideas of race and class stretch across and are changed by borders. We consider in different settings how the choices made by those who hold power over borders affect the lives of those who cross those borders. The crossing may be a moment in time, but the consequences of those choices may stretch over generations. Taking the configuration of the social world as a continuum, made of connections, ambivalences and paradoxes, these three chapters illuminate how the global mobile present is connected to the legacies of the colonial past, both national and global. 'Here' and 'there', 'present' and 'past' are always entwined – creating and recreating racialized inequalities and difference, including unequal access to the privilege of mobility.

References

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