Expulsion, power, mobilisation

William Walters

Questions of sovereign power, socioeconomic precarity, racialisation, citizenship and exclusion converge and clash around deportation.[1] In this short intervention I propose to reflect on certain aspects of the power of deportation in three areas. The first is citizenship and belonging, and more specifically what we can learn about the instability of citizenship under liberal democracy by looking at deportation. Second, I make a point about what we could call the infrastructure of deportation. Finally, I reflect on how deportation, citizenship and infrastructure are, in turn, related to a particular politics of visibility.

Clara Lecadet is right to insist in her contribution to this issue of *Radical Philosophy* that the various categories that differentiate hierarchically between citizens and non-citizens would be rather meaningless were there no weapon of deportation that stands available to carry out the ultimate division between these statuses. By way of extending her point, I think we should not overlook the frequent situations in which this line gets blurred. For example, Jacqueline Stevens has identified numerous cases in recent years where US authorities have detained or deported US citizens, sometimes because the latter could not prove their citizenship.[2] With the Windrush scandal we are currently witnessing a not dissimilar violence in Britain. Many people who migrated to Britain from the Caribbean in the post-WWII years – typically within a framework combining Commonwealth citizenship and labour recruitment – have found themselves threatened with (and in some cases subjected to) deportation procedures. This has happened when they fail to meet the ever more complex and exacting requirements that immigration authorities have in recent years established for proving long-term residence and legal citizenship.[3] Turning hospitals, landlords and universities into immigration authorities, 'weaponising paperwork',[4] and channeling as well as

fostering racialised antagonisms and hierarchies, the hostile environment policy that Theresa May initiated as Home Secretary turned these citizens into 'illegal immigrants'.[5] It showed that far from being a mere instrument dedicated to border control, deportation operates as a system that draws and redraws boundaries and identities of us and them, citizenship and belonging, and much else.

This unsettling of the citizen/non-citizen line through deportation happens from other directions as well. In an age when combatting Islamicised terrorism has become one of the most privileged justifications for muscular state action, we are witnessing a version of the deportation machine that is at once old and new. Here I am thinking of recent moves in countries like Britain and Canada to denationalise and deport certain people in the name of national security, a move that has sparked scholarly debate about the return of banishment. As Audrey Macklin has put it:

> From antiquity to the late 20th century, denationalisation was a tool used by states to rid themselves of political dissidents, convicted criminals and ethnic, religious or racial minorities. The latest target of denationalisation is the convicted terrorist, or the suspected terrorist, or the potential terrorist, or maybe the associate of a terrorist. He is virtually always Muslim and male.[6]

In these and perhaps other contexts it is tempting to speak of a *deportation creep* whereby this practice, while formally reserved for (and indeed legitimated as a power restricted to the governance of) the *non-citizen*, in fact exceeds those boundaries and sometimes gathers citizens in its net as well. But from a more historical perspective it is not so much a deportation creep that is at issue. For such a notion implies that deportation is meant for non-citizens, so that when it touches upon – or more aptly, *seizes* – the citizen, this is the exception rather than the

norm. We should not forget that in other times and places, as Macklin's remark suggests, deportation was routinely and lawfully used on citizens and domestic populations as well. As Kanstroom has argued, 'the direct link between citizenship status and the "right to remain" is a modern one'.[7] In other words, we have seen a long-term shift from practices of banishment, ostracism and transportation which could target elites as well as masses, foreigners but also subjects and citizens, to today's policies which legitimate deportation by associating it almost exclusively with non-citizens.[8] Yet the shift is not total or absolute. Citizenship is by no means an iron-clad guarantee against one's deportation.

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If deportation has gradually become formalised and legitimated as a measure confined to the non-citizen, and if conversely citizenship has become associated with the right to remain, this shift has much to do with the inter-nationalisation of the world; it correlates with the historical-political process that has seen the world's population divided, distributed and governed according to a logic of nation states, of national territories and populations, rather than formal empires and colonies.[9] With the globalisation of the nation-state form there are, in principle, no 'outside' or 'empty' places, no colonies, penal or otherwise, where you can banish your citizens or unwanted subjects. (Deeply inscribed in colonial history, the

US Naval base at Guantanamo Bay is a notable exception here.) Modern deportation could be considered postcolonial in this precise and quite limited sense.

Today there exist virtually no colonies to which you can transport your unwanted people. But what does exist is development aid, trade agreements and various other sticks and carrots by which you can cajole other states to play the game of 'readmission'.[10] This is, I think, what Lecadet alludes to in recognising that deportation today enacts power relations not just on the scale of citizens and others, but between states, and operates as a significant way in which a hierarchy of states is staged at the world level. Perhaps one could talk about deportation creep on two levels then: a practice that rubs up against the norm that it is only non-citizens who can be expelled, and a practice that calls into question what we understand by sovereignty; that is, which political authority controls what borders and decides what persons can cross those borders.

This theme of sovereignty brings me to a second theme that Clara Lecadet has highlighted. It has to do with the external dimension of deportation, namely the relations between states. Kanstroom has also fore-grounded this theme, suggesting that we should shift from seeing deportation in purely state-centric terms toward recognising that an international deportation system exists which now has its own consistency, its own irreducibility.[11] Within this system it is not just people who are moved around. Practices move as well, as is the case when immigration authorities adopt control techniques from agencies and experts in other countries. Sometimes this is done within formal regulatory frameworks, such as the EU's return policy; at other times through *ad hoc* expert panels that investigate 'best practices' of 'assisted' as well as 'forced' removals. Put differently, one can say there are in fact many mobilities at play within this international system of deportation – not only deportees, but escorts, goods, buses and planes, diplomats, identity papers, medical inspectors, development funds, and so on.

To this discussion concerning deportation as an international system I want to add a point about infrastructure. After all, the possibility of forcibly moving people great distances, this power on which deportation depends, is at some level a matter of material

capability. In addition to the international relations between states, and between states and international agencies, we need to reckon with the material geographies of deportation. We need to think about deportation in terms of its routes, corridors and networks, a system of passages which not only crosses political borders, but which negotiates land, sea and air. Why do we only seem to talk about routes when they are associated with smugglers, or with migrants seeking to circumvent border controls? What about the routes of deportation which states have crafted? We know historically how banishments and transportations involved terrible ship voyages that turned distant (and not so distant) islands and even whole continents into places of punishment, exile and confinement. Similarly, we learn from the work of Ethan Blue how America's railway network was repurposed and appropriated, how it became a quasi-carceral geography in the deportations that began in the 1920s.[12] What interests me especially is global aviation and the channels and corridors of deportation it has made possible in the last 30 or 40 years.[13] If deportation has become truly internationalised – meaning a practice that can in principle obtain between any two countries irrespective of their geographical relationship – then the power of global aviation is a significant yet largely unacknowledged factor in such a development.

Finally, I would like to make a point here about how we understand the normalisation of deportation, and the question of what an analytics of visibility might offer. Certainly, we can speak of the modes of legitimation that frame deportation. In this dossier, we have considered binaries of citizen versus non-citizen, and we have talked about racialisation and foreignness as elements that have historically served to make deportation seem not at all extraordinary, despite the violence it entails, but on the contrary quite acceptable to significant sections of the public. And we have also highlighted important transformations in the post-WWII years wherein deportation undergoes a kind of softening – which is not a softening at all – whereby the operational procedures acquire new terms like 'reasonable force', 'dignity' and 'return', and new practices like psychological counselling.[14] I agree that many of these elements, practices and

terms are connected to a paradigm of legitimation.

That said, I think it is possible to supplement what we understand by legitimation by thinking also of visibility. Power is legitimate when it is embedded in normative frameworks and enjoys a certain degree of consent from the governed. When we say that deportation is legitimated by specific measures, we mean: it is rendered acceptable, normal, moral even, by being embedded in particular discourses, and associated with particular kinds of justification. What I would add to this is that we should also think about deportation in terms of regimes of visibility; of what Rancière, in a well-known formulation, might call its 'distribution of the sensible'.[15] The forms of resistance which have been mobilised against deportation practices and programmes in recent years are a good place to start such an analysis.[16] And here I have in mind Foucault's point that forms of resistance can offer a promising entry point for the analysis of different forms of power.[17] Let us start with practices that campaigns to stall or prevent particular deportations employ.

When the UK government moved to deport Yashika Bagheerathi to Mauritius in 2014, a very visible and in many ways influential campaign was mobilised. It brought to the public's attention various facts: she was a schoolgirl, she was taking A levels, she had a promising career ahead of her. Now, this move might reinforce the problematic logic Clara Lecadet has identified with anti-deportation mobilisations, namely that it entrenches the dichotomy of the deserving and non-deserving, and directs public debate to the merits and demerits of particular cases and perhaps away from the discussion of the very principles of deportation. At the same time, and more positively, does it not also entail the production of a kind of counter-visibility? In the absence of such campaigns there would only be numbers, targets, cases, statistics. But in the public space generated by petitions, demonstrations, tweets, etc., the deportee becomes a person, a face, a human life. Or take the practice of last resort that many people, along with their supporters, facing situations of deportation have employed. Surrounded by security escorts, waiting in the departure lounge, or while being shepherded onto the plane, they refuse to depart in silence. They alert fellow pas-

sengers that they are being deported against their will, or they protest to the captain and crew that this is not right. In that act of appeal is there not a making visible? And not just making themselves visible as deportees. After all, despite the policies and practices designed to neutralise their presence, they may be in key respects quite visible already. They are also making visible the relations of complicity, the regime of silence which can otherwise allow deportations to proceed in full view of a public. It is as though they are saying: are you fellow passengers comfortable to sit there while this happens? Infrastructure brings deportees into contact with passengers who can always be transformed into witnessing publics. Moreover, those publics can be multiplied when, as recently was the case with Elin Ersson's refusal to take her seat on a plane until a man being sent to Afghanistan was removed, the smartphone-YouTube nexus relays such practices to a much wider audience. As I noted at the outset, infrastructure, citizenship and visibility are entangled in new power relations of deportation.

Consider the practice of disrupting charter flights. One reason governments have made charter flights a tool of expulsion is precisely because they channel the activity of deportation away from crowded airport lounges and away from other passengers. Charters often fly from small airports, or the least conspicuous areas and times of the large terminals. They board people in secrecy. When activists disrupt these flights – as was the case with the Stansted 15 in March 2017 – they don't just frustrate a particular operation.[18] They challenge these lines of visibility and invisibility: they publicise the charter flight as a *secret* flight, mobilising around it the negative connotations that otherwise attach to the clandestine movement of people.

So, visibility and invisibility are really important features of the government of deportation. And yet, we cannot buy into what I would call the logic of exposure here. By a logic of exposure I mean the idea that injustices exist and that by exposing and publicising them a public will become outraged and demand a stop to the practice. Of course, there is some truth to this logic. At the same time, we know enough about the logics of what Nicolas De Genova has called 'border spectacles' to recognise that, far from negating particular policies, their publicisation can often

reinforce the practice, becoming an integral element in the process.[19] You only have to read the comments in any online news story about a particular deportation to see this. Campaigners expose the horrors of a particular detention centre, or the mistreatment of a particular case, and the comments that append the story will say: Why are we so concerned about these people? Let's deport more not less!

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Ultimately, we have to recognise that deportation entails multiple forms of visibility and invisibility, sometimes very contradictorily. Here I concur with Nicholas Fischer's argument that we do not get far if we approach the study of the politics of migration control in terms of fixed notions of secrecy and publicity. Instead, we need to understand that the field of migration politics is structured by a specific 'dialectics' of secrecy and publicity, hiding and detection.[20]

Governments publicise some aspects while making others, such as the operational side, as secret as possible. Migrants and their allies employ visibility strategically. Without wanting to diminish or underestimate how difficult it is to publicise a wrong, making particular practices or policies visible will not be enough. Given the power of the spectacle to absorb such counter-measures, to redeploy them, as it were, there has to be also the question of the forms and the mediators of visibility: the question of how, by what means, in what form deportation is made – or not made – public.

Images: Collectif La Chapelle Debout / Brigade Anti Deportation (photos: Michelle Weitzel, 2018; Williams Walters, 2018).

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Notes

1. See such key works as Nicholas De Genova and Nathalie Peutz, eds., *The Deportation Regime: Sovereignty, Space, and the Freedom of Movement* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Daniel Kanstroom, *Deportation Nation: Outsiders in American History* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Liz Fekete, 'The Deportation Machine: Europe, Asylum, and Human Rights', *Race and Class* 47:1 (2005), 64–91.

2. Peralta, Eyder, 'You Say You Are American, but What if You Had to Prove It or Be Deported', *National Public Radio*, 22 December 2016, https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/12/22/504031635/you-say-you-re-an-american-but-what-if-you-had-to-prove-it-or-be-deported

3. Luke De Noronha, 'The "Windrush Generation" and "Illegal Immigrants" are Both our Kin', *OpenDemocracy*, 1 May 2018, https://www.opendemocracy.net/uk/luke-de-noronha/windrush-generation-and-illegal-immigrants-are-both-our-kin

4. William Davies, 'Weaponising Paperwork: The Windrush Scandal', *London Review of Books* 40:9, 10 May 2018, https://www.lrb.co.uk/v40/n09/william-davies/weaponising-paperwork

5. Imogen Tyler argues convincingly that the hostile environment policy centred upon the drive to increase 'voluntary returns' within the overall composition of the deported; an end it sought through coercive administrative measures coupled with a widespread propaganda campaign whose brand was 'Go Home'! That the latter was a dog whistle bringing the hate speech of the far right into official governmental discourse was, she avers, no accident. See Tyler, 'Deportation Nation: Theresa May's Hostile Environment', *Journal for the Study of British Cultures* (2018) (forthcoming).

6. Audrey Macklin, 'Kick Off Contribution', in *The Return of Banishment: Do the New Denationalisation Policies Weaken Citizenship?*, eds. Audrey Macklin and Rainer Bauböck, EUI Working Paper RSCAS 2015/14, 1–6.

7. Kanstroom, *Deportation Nation*, 26.

8. See William Walters, 'Deportation, Expulsion, and the International Police of Aliens', *Citizenship Studies* 6:3 (2002), 265–292.

9. Barry Hindess, 'Citizenship in the International Management of Population', *American Behavioral Scientist* 43:9 (2000), 1486–97.

10. See Jean-Pierre Cassarino, ed., *Unbalanced Reciprocities: Cooperation on Readmission in the Euro-Mediterranean Area* (Washington: Middle East Institute, 2011).

11. Daniel Kanstroom, 'The "Right to Remain Here" as an Evolving Component of Global Refugee Protection: Current Initiatives and Critical Questions', *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 5:3 (2017), 614–44.

12. Ethan Blue, 'Strange Passages: Carceral Mobility and the Liminal in the Catastrophic History of American Deportation', *National Identities* 17:2 (2015), 175–94.

13. William Walters, 'Aviation as Deportation Infrastructure: Airports, Planes, and Expulsion', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (2017), DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2017.1401517; see also Biao Xiang and Johan Lindquist, 'Migration Infrastructure', *International Migration Review* 48:S1 (2014), S122–S148.

14. On 'soft deportation', see Barak Kalir, 'Between "Voluntary" Return Programs and Soft Deportation: Sending Vulnerable Migrants in Spain Back "Home"', in *Return Migration and Psychosocial Wellbeing: Discourses, Policy– Making and Outcomes for Migrants and Their Families*, eds. Zana Vathi and Russell King (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 56–71.

15. Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

16. For an important work showing the relevance of Rancière's thinking on the perceptible to the politics of anti-deportation, see Peter Nyers, 'Abject Cosmopolitanism: The Politics of Protection in the Anti-Deportation Movement', *Third World Quarterly* 24:6 (2003), 1069–93. For a more recent examination of struggles over deportation that is exemplary in examining the role of TV news, public relations and other aesthetic practices in mediating the production of deportable people, see Imogen Tyler, 'Deportation Nation'.

17. Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', in *Michel Foucault: Power. Essential Works of Foucault 1954-84*, ed. James Faubion (New York: Free Press, 2000).

18. Graeme Hayes, Steven Cammiss and Brian Doherty, 'Deportation and Direct Action in Britain: The "Terrorist Trial" of the Stansted 15', OpenDemocracy, 16 March 2018, https://www.opendemocracy.net/graeme-hayes-steven-cammiss-brian-doherty/deportation-and-direct-action-in-britain-terrorist-trial-o

19. Nicolas De Genova, 'Spectacles of Migrant "Illegality": The Scene of Exclusion, The Obscene of Inclusion', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36:7 (2013), 1180–98.

20. See Nicholas Fischer, 'Clandestins au secret: Contrôle et circulation de l'information dans les centres de rétention administrative français', *Cultures & Conflits* 57 (2005), 91–118.