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What Chabon Remembers: Terrorism, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, and Nations without Borders

Michael Chabon's *Yiddish Policemen's Union* (2007) is a major example of what might still seem like a minor genre. It is a counterfactual novel, one that received mainly positive reviews and several prizes, including the Hugo Award for best science fiction. A year after its publication it was purchased by Columbia Pictures and, at last report, the Coen brothers are scheduled to write the screenplay and direct the film. The hard-boiled detective story in an ice-cold setting would certainly appeal to the directors of *Fargo*. Chabon's story revolves around a murder mystery in the Yiddish-speaking metropolis of Sitka where large numbers of Eastern European Jews were allowed to settle in 1941, narrowly escaping the Nazi onslaught that went on claiming the lives of two million of their co-religionists until the atomic bomb was dropped on Berlin in 1946. The Alaskan territory also became a refuge for the Jews who escaped massacre in 1948 after a coalition of Arab forces succeeded in driving them out of Palestine. These atrocities were shocking enough to inspire Congress to turn part of Alaska into an enormous refugee camp for "the frozen chosen," as they are referred to in the novel, set to revert to normal status after sixty years, the 2008 of the novel's conclusion. The novel begins with vast numbers of Jews once again facing homelessness. A murder that the authorities want to sweep under the rug has begun to obsess Meyer Landsman, a washed-out detective who drinks himself to sleep in the same hotel where the body was found. The unraveling of the mystery reveals a conspiracy between the leaders of Sitka's orthodox Verbover community and the Christian Conservatives around the American president. Both groups, for divergent reasons, want to make Jerusalem the Jewish homeland, and the exodus commences with a terrorist attack on the Temple Mount or "Haram Ash-Sharif." The language describing the televised explosion recalls 9/11, with the ironic twist that in this parallel world the West attacks the Middle East.¹

¹ The major reviews did not make much of the 9/11 parallels, but some minor reviews did point them out. The following positive reviews do not mention 9/11: Michiko Kakutani's "Looking for Home in the Limbo of Alaska" (*New York Times*, May 1, 2007), Jenny Diski's "Raymond Chandler on Ice" (*The Guardian*, June 9, 2007), Elizabeth McCracken's "The Promised Land" (*The Washington Post*, May 13, 2007), Ruth Franklin's "God's Frozen People" (*Slate*, May 8, 2007). For mentions of 9/11, see Abigail Nussbaum's review on the science fiction website *Strange Horizons* (July 30, 2007) and Mark Oppenheimer's review in *The Jewish Daily Forward* (April 20, 2007).

Chabon's counterfactual tale denies any easy analogy with contemporary events, but its denial is deliberately suspect. The detective plotline encourages readers to find clues linking the counterfactual world to our own. Like Philip Roth and a number of artists and intellectuals, Chabon commemorates 9/11 – or at least a world in which an event like 9/11 can occur – by invoking a parallel with the Holocaust and simultaneously denying it (Sielke; Gross 409-12).

What does the Holocaust have to do with contemporary history? Any comparison seems unwarranted on purely historical grounds. This, however, is the point. The juxtaposition of genocide and terrorism is fueled by the power of disanalogy. While the events are not supposed to be similar, the symptoms of the traumatized victims are. The psychoanalytic description of these symptoms, codified as trauma theory, has become the basis of a post-historical poetics of memory. It is impossible to compare the Holocaust to other events because it “seems to defy all attempts at comprehension,” as the editors of *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings* would have it (Levi and Rothberg 1-2). The numerous books and films devoted to the Holocaust would seem to belie this claim, but they are understood to resemble testimonies rather than historical descriptions. Like victims of atrocity, these testimonies act out events too horrible to describe (Felman and Laub 5). Their relation to the past is assumed to be nonrepresentational, which is to say symptomatic rather than symbolic. Ruth Leys calls this nonrepresentational theory of transmission “the pathos of the literal” (Leys 271-73).

The literal has become a literary trope, and much contemporary fiction patterns itself after traumatic symptoms in order to claim a nonrepresentational relation to the Holocaust (Gross and Rohr 65-98). Chabon provides a textbook version of the nonrepresentational transmission of memory in the novella he wrote prior to *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, the provocatively titled *The Final Solution: A Story of Detection* (2004). The murder mystery, set at the end of World War II, revolves around a kidnapped parrot which recites long strings of numbers. A criminal named Kalb steals the bird because he believes these are the Swiss bank accounts of deported German Jews. The child survivor of one deported family – the bird is his pet – knows the solution to the crime. But he has been so traumatized by his experience of the *Kindertransport* that he speaks German – his native language – backwards, through a kind of symptomatic anagrammatization. He keeps repeating “blak” and “leg ov red” for “Kalb” and “der Vogel.” When an aging English detective resembling Sherlock Holmes finally solves the case, he comments on the fact that he will probably never learn the real significance of the numbers:

The application of creative intelligence to a problem, the finding of a solution at once dogged, elegant, and wild, this had always seemed to him to be the essential business of human beings – the discovery of sense and causality amid the false leads, the noise, the trackless brambles of life. And yet he had always been

haunted – had he not? – by the knowledge that there were men, lunatic cryptographers, mad detectives, who squandered their brilliance and sanity in decoding and interpreting the messages in cloud formations, in the letters of the Bible recombined, in the spots on butterflies' wings. One might, perhaps, conclude from the existence of such men that meaning dwelled solely in the mind of the analyst. That it was the insoluble problems – the false leads and the cold cases – that reflected the true nature of things. That all the apparent significance and pattern had no more intrinsic sense than the chatter of an African grey parrot. One might so conclude; really, he thought, one might. (130-31)

The anaphora “one might” recalls the concluding lines of Wallace Stevens’s “The Man Whose Pharynx Was Bad,” which despairs of finding a language capable of penetrating what the poem calls “the malady of the quotidian” (96). In Chabon’s novella it is precisely the quotidian that transmits the truth, and it does so because it is sick. The novella reveals the real significance of the numbers in a way that the detective, in his commitment to rationalism, can only consider lunacy. A brief glimpse of the past from the bird’s-eye view shows them inscribed in chalk on the cattle cars deporting Jews to the concentration camps (116-17). These are the numbers of victims as recorded by the perpetrators. The bird cannot read them but he recites them, and his mute but lucid registry of the Holocaust is central to the story’s pathos. The final solution, in the double sense signaled by the title, is beyond the conventions of detective fiction because it is beyond the limits of representation. The novella acts out these limits by breaking the most basic rule of detection since “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” (1841), in effect transforming what Poe called the “tale of ratiocination” into a modern beast fable (Silverman 171).

Charles Rzepka and Lee Horsley point out that the “puzzle element” in detective fiction is linked to empiricist and historicist strands of what they call the retrospective imagination (3). Traditional mysteries conclude with a detective explaining the chain of events that made his appearance necessary in the first place. This narrative circle is the formal approximation of truth, conceived as a correspondence between signs and their objects. The detective personifies the synthetic intelligence capable of forging symbolic correspondence. In this sense he is a role model for historians who investigate the past but also for realist writers who mimic empiricism through the rational application of fictional devices. But Chabon’s novella is different. It leaves the detective in the dark in order to provide the readers with a fabulous clue. This element of dramatic irony challenges the realistic, historical perspective by unbundling the rational from the empirical. The parrot positions truth beyond ratiocination. His mere ‘parroting’ of the facts is one literary version of the literal, a fairy-tale rendition of the non-representational relation to the real.

Chabon’s literalist fable should be understood as a response to postmodernism’s fictional assault on history in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. Many of Thomas

Pynchon's protagonists engage in detective work, but the connections they find are expressions of paranoia, not rationalism. As Heinz Ickstadt already argued in 1975, postmodern paranoia is a barrier to discovering the truth but also an expression of the anxiety we feel about living in a meaningless universe (139-40).

Postmodern historiography also describes narrative coherence as a fiction – a necessary fiction, to be sure, but one having more to do with the vagaries of literary fashion than with any deep-seated order in the events themselves. Hayden White famously argued that historical narratives are by and large literary conventions. This argument is appealing to literary critics; the problem is its relativism. How to answer somebody who narrates the “final solution” as comedy (or detective fiction) rather than tragedy? (White 39). This is precisely the question White sets out to explore in his contribution to Saul Friedlander's edited volume, *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the “Final Solution.”* His proposal, in keeping with those made by other contributors such as Dominick LaCapra and Eric Santner, is to look to style as a register or symptom of atrocity. “This is not to suggest that we will give up the effort to represent the Holocaust realistically,” says White, “but rather that our notion of what constitutes realistic representation must be revised to take account of experiences that are unique to our century and for which older modes of representation have proven inadequate” (52). White names this post-realist, historically-sensitive style “modernism,” and in fact it can be linked to the project of poets like Stevens, who used form and metaphor to dramatize the complexities that common language (the pharynx) cannot articulate. More recent critics such as Michael Rothberg call the post-realist style “traumatic realism,” which he defines performatively as an “*indirect* reference through the self-conscious staging of the conundrum of representing historical extremity” (*Traumatic Realism* 103). Postmodernism has been described as a cultural response to the traumas of modernity; while this may hold true for postmodern literature, postmodern theories of memory adhere to a recognizably modernist – which is to say performative – aesthetic (Lyotard).

Chabon's *The Final Solution* deals with the conundrum of representing atrocity figuratively – through the parrot – rather than dramatically or indirectly. In this it is typical of a recent literary trend. The post- to postmodernism has followed the path of a new realism rather than the old modernism advocated by White. Aging detectives and young aphasiacs are the protagonists of this new realism, and they seem to be popping up everywhere. Besides Chabon, Jonathan Safran Foer, Nicole Krauss (*The History of Love*), and Siri Hustvedt (*What I Loved*) have all employed them, usually in paired combinations. The characters split the detective's claim to unite narrative and empirical truth. The old detective personifies the past as memory, and the young aphasiac exemplifies the difficulty of translating memory into language. These characters approach one another in a ritual of remembering that remains non-representable to the precise

degree that they – the characters – remain distinct. Even when the roles are reversed, as in Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, which is a good example of the way World War II and the Holocaust continue to play a role in fictional representations of 9/11, the paired characters act out a past that is supposed to be beyond the limits of imagination for the same reason that it is beyond the conventions of detection.

The Yiddish Policemen's Union is Chabon's second attempt to make detective fiction remember a mystery that eludes conventional resolution, and like Foer's novel it brings contemporary terrorism in relation to World War II and the Holocaust. Chabon builds on his earlier novella in two ways: he radicalizes the puzzle element associated with English detective fiction through hard-boiled violence, and he transforms the fabulous into the counterfactual. The novel uses violence to push the boundaries of believability. Thus the detective and the aphasiac are combined in the figure of Alter Litvak, an old secret agent who cannot talk – because his pharynx was damaged in a car accident – but who directs the invasion of Jerusalem with pencil and notepad. He turns out to be a key figure in the mystery.

Violence also impacts the novel's cynical humor. The fable of the talking parrot, for instance, is replaced by the legend of a chicken that predicts the coming of the Messiah, right before being slaughtered for a kosher dinner. This is a standing joke among the detectives investigating the murder of a man many Orthodox Jews believed might actually have been the Messiah. The hard-boiled style reflected in their cynicism suggests that brute violence has replaced the talking brute as a figure for memory. Richard Slotkin has influentially argued that the hard-boiled detective is a "recrudescence of the frontier hero" who breaks the law in order to preserve it and, when he succeeds, effects regeneration through violence (228). Chabon's detective Meyer Landsman breaks the law to remember. *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* is about regeneration but also remembering through violence.

I will return to the way violence figures memory in a moment. First I want to explore how Chabon uses counterfactual techniques in the same way he uses detection: to establish a nonrepresentational relation between past and present. Like detective novels, counterfactuals are traditionally linked to ratiocination and historical investigation. In fact, historians sometimes use counterfactuals as test cases to determine the necessary and sufficient conditions for establishing historical chains of events (Lebow). The method is captured by the proverb *For Want of a Nail*, which is also the title of a 1973 novel by Robert Sobel depicting the consequences of a failed American Revolution. What if Washington's troops had lost a decisive battle? What if the South had won the Civil War? What if Lindbergh had been elected president? What if Nazi Germany had been victorious in 1945? The premise of Chabon's novel is a traffic accident that killed a non-voting Alaskan representative to Congress named Anthony Dimond who

actually blocked a proposal (the 1940 King-Havenner bill or Alaska Development Plan) that would have allowed Jewish refugees to immigrate to Alaska. Chabon's question, asked half-ironically, is: what if the motion had been passed? The result of his thought experiment is a Yiddish Alaskan community, but also a series of violent events that deliberately evoke the Bush era, with terrorism on the rise, the Middle East sunk in conflict, and a strange bedfellow alliance between Christian Conservatives and Zionists. The implication seems to be that even a different outcome to World War II might have led to an equally violent present. At first blush, the counterfactual conventions seem to remember the here and now.

So how did we get here? Violence is one of the novel's key figures for describing the way the past leads to the present in a series of determined reactions. Landsman's immediate superior in the police force is his ex-wife Bina. The narrator describes her retrospective imagination as "her detective's appetite for people's stories [...] puzzling her way back through them from the final burst of violence to the first mistake" (168). What the narrative arc inscribes forward, as the solution to a mystery, is the reverse inscription of a chain of events ending in violence. Violence, in other words, is the opposite of narrative, and narrative counters violence by solving mysteries in a way that fits the punishment to the crime.

But the hard-boiled detectives also commit violence to stop it. They are caught in another causal chain – that of violence begetting violence – that gives the novels of Hammett, Chandler, and company such an impressive body count. Chabon's novel provides a spatial figure for this kind of communal violence: a chess problem or *Zugzwang* that proves to be the most important clue in Landsman's solving of the crime. The victim whom some thought was the Messiah and Alter Litvak wanted to use as a sacred cow to lure the Jews to Jerusalem was a chess player. Landsman is able to piece together the puzzle of his murder because of a chessboard left at the scene of the crime. His father, a survivor of the Holocaust, was a chess genius, and the son grew up playing but hating the game. The *Zugzwang* on the victim's chessboard leads Landsman to a coterie of chess players, many of whom knew his father; some of these players are involved in the conspiracy to invade Jerusalem. Landsman does not solve the mystery; he merely stumbles upon the solution because the conspirators are linked to his own past. In the same way that the old detective in *The Final Solution* never learns the meaning of the parrot's numbers, Landsman never figures out if the arrangement of the chess pieces has any special significance.

But like *The Final Solution*, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* provides a supplementary clue that breaks with the conventions of detective fiction by going beyond the detective's ken. This time clue is not delivered through a beast fable but in an authorial note revealing that the *Zugzwang* "was devised by Reb Vladimir Nabokov and is presented in his *Speak, Memory*" (414). Nabokov de-

scribes the problem of his devising at that moment in his autobiography when he and his wife and son are finally granted the exit visas that allow them to flee Paris to the United States on the eve of World War II (292-93). The solution indicated by the supplementary clue is exile – but exile as salvation. This is reaffirmed by the moves that constitute Nabokov's *Zugzwang*. Nabokov designed the chess problem as a trap for the ambitious; only those who avoid the easy temptation of promoting a pawn can avoid what is otherwise an inevitable sequence of moves. Landsman and Bina also refuse the promotion – and citizenship – offered to them by the FBI in return for keeping the story of the conspiracy hushed up. They want to end the chain of violence. The novel concludes with Landsman calling a reporter to tell all.

The phone call is preceded by Landsman's realization that his true fate is not citizenship, but common exile with his estranged wife Bina:

But there is no Messiah of Sitka. Landsman has no home, no future, no fate but Bina. The land that he and she were promised was bounded only by the fringes of their wedding canopy, by the dog-eared corners of their cards of membership in an international fraternity whose members carry their patrimony in a tote bag, their world on the tip of their tongue. (411)

The solution to *The Final Solution* was an impossible act of memory, and in this novel it turns out to be an impossibly idealized diaspora, here described as adherence to the codes of a defunct policemen's union with no headquarters and no jurisdiction beyond a wedding *chuppa*. The members of this diasporic community, like all hard-boiled detectives, break the law – including most of the Ten Commandments – in order to uphold it. This makes them at once post-national and secular. The Yiddish police have neither a homeland nor a doctrine, which is why they can become the guardians of a tradition defined in terms of friendship, marriage, and community. Being a member of this community also has its therapeutic effects: Landsman is relieved from the guilt he feels for past mistakes and once again desires Bina.²

This diaspora utopia – literally a 'no place' – has everything to do with therapy because it is linked to the idealized models of memory that became prominent around 9/11. I have already described the nonrepresentational accounts of memory that have their origins in Holocaust commemoration and were brought

² The mistakes that drove Landsman to drink and life in a flophouse are: urging Bina to have an abortion when they discovered their unborn son might suffer from birth defects, and sending an angry letter to his father right before the latter's suicide. He also mourns the death of his sister, who died in a plane crash under unexplained circumstances. Bina tells Landsman she would have decided for the abortion without him, and he discovers that his father never read the letter. Also, clearing up the murder mystery helps explain his sister's death, which turns out to have been a murder. By the end of the novel Landsman can finally look at a chessboard and feel good. He no longer has to act out his sorrow as violence against himself and others.

to bear on 9/11 through the power of disanalogy. The counterfactual, in Chabon's hands, becomes a way of letting 'memory speak' by bracketing history; it simultaneously evokes and denies comparison to the Holocaust in order to establish a nonrepresentational (i.e., counterfactual) connection to the real. But if the novel remembers the present as symptom of the past it also remembers a better future. The 'solution' to the *Zugzwang* of memory is a concept of mourning that is supposed to free victims from the repetition compulsion of acting out (Haviland 447). Chabon's hard-boiled detective novel concerns itself with a mystery deeper than murder. The question it can barely articulate, and only indirectly answer, is: at what point does the violence stop? When, in other words, is memory no longer compulsive but communal? What is the solution to the *Zugzwang* of violence begetting violence, extremism begetting extremism? The novel's answer is the one proposed in the standard texts of trauma theory: mourning (see, for instance, Felman and Laub 57-59, 70-74). After the terrorist attacks, some trauma theorists aired the utopian hope that public rituals of mourning would lead to a better America, less riven by domestic strife and less prone to foreign violence (Rothberg, "There Is No Poetry" 155-56). The dream proved transitory, but Chabon revives it in connection with the nostalgia for *Yiddishkeit* that spurred him on to write.

If we understand Chabon's counterfactual experiment as an attempt to break the chain of violence, then the territorialization of a Yiddish-speaking community turns out to be insufficient. Even if large numbers of Jews had escaped genocide and Berlin had been flattened by an atomic blast, a world resembling ours (global warming, terrorism, war in the Middle East) would still exist. That is because the solution to the mystery is not a Jewish state but *Yiddishkeit* without a state: exile or "galut." Some theorists of diaspora do in fact suggest that memory is a less violent basis for identity than are the linked concepts of nation and race (Boyarin and Boyarin 106-11). What they have in mind is not memory as compulsion but memory as community: "Diaspora can teach us that it is possible for a people to maintain its distinctive culture, its difference, without controlling land" (Boyarin and Boyarin 110). *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* tries to improve on *The Final Solution* by progressing from one model of memory to the other, from the repetition compulsion of violence begetting violence to the shared sympathy of mourning. The hard-boiled conventions can be understood as a kind of exposure therapy; the novel has to work through violence in order to propose an alternative to it. That alternative is diaspora. The true culprit turns out to be the nationalism involved in the attack – or more precisely the counter-attack – of West against East.

The Yiddish Policemen's Union will not become the book that defines the age, even if it is adapted as a film, but it does indicate what I see as two complementary trends in literature and literary studies. These trends preceded 9/11, but they have dominated literary discourse in the decade following the attacks. First,

Chabon's novel should be considered in relation to that body of fiction loosely described as neo-realism. I would not go so far as to claim that counterfactual fiction is a realist-genre, although it is remarkable that recent examples like Chabon's novel and Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America* go to such lengths to integrate their fantastic plots back into the narrative of commonly accepted history. They do so, I would argue, in order to mark off a fictional topos – the topos of the literal – beyond the limits of historical representation. Neo-realism is also interested in this topos, which it approaches through remembering. Traditional realism is fiction criticizing fiction in order to authorize itself as history. Neo-realism is fiction criticizing history in order to authorize itself as memory.

I base this distinction on Winfried Fluck's definition in "Fiction and Fictionality in American Realism." Fluck argues that realism distinguishes itself from romance in order to bolster the accuracy of its own moral or psychological judgment (186). Realism is not any less fictional than romance, but it does valorize a moment of individual moral decision, as when Huck decides to "go to hell" or Silas Lapham decides not to participate in a shady deal that could save his business. The moral import of these decisions suggests in embryo form a core narrative of nineteenth-century history. We know that Huck actually does the right thing when he saves Jim, just as Howells's title tells us that Lapham's failure in business inaugurates his moral "rise." These individuals, in the self-sufficiency of their personal judgment, are fictional examples of what Emerson called "representative men": they illustrate "the central identity of all the individuals," which is why "[t]he genius of humanity is the right point of view of history" (35). If today we narrate the history of the nineteenth century as a story of national and corporate consolidation, it is clear that the story the century told about itself made individuals representative to the extent that they were independent.

The newer realism is less about making representative decisions than it is about forging representational communities. Contemporary protagonists do not light out for the territories, they make their way back into the bosom of family and friends, or – in the most melancholic cases – into their memories of vanished togetherness. This is what the novels by Jonathan Franzen, Jeffrey Eugenides, Foer, Hustvedt, and Krauss have in common with those of Chabon and the latest books by Roth. They are fictions of group cohesion. This suggests that they have more to do with romance than the old realism liked to admit. The new fiction tends to align itself with the sympathy that Edmund Burke, among others, regarded as the source of the terror – but also the fascination – of other people's suffering (41-42). In the age of individualism it was fashionable to dismiss sympathy as an artifact of romance, which could then be disparaged as feminine. Today we see sympathy as indispensable for forming coalitions with disadvantaged groups.

This has been the project of what might be called the activist branch of American Studies, which as Gene Wise pointed out, practices criticism as a kind of therapy (185-86). Since the 1960s scholars have been reading literature to debunk the myth of individualism and support those groups denied individual rights on the basis of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and creed. They do so by demanding political representation via literary representation, as in the canon debates, or by showing how literature functions as an ideological construct. Since 1989 the nation – which had been partially obscured behind the geopolitical blocs of the Cold War – has begun to seem like the main purveyor of ideology. Donald Pease was one of the first to call on fellow Americanists to reject literary nationalism for a transnationalism based on diaspora studies. He advised scholars to engage in “imaginative projects that would enable [...] groups to renegotiate their links to diasporic networks and [...] replace patriotic loyalties – no matter whether to a nation or to a constitution – with loyalty to a nonterritorial transnation.” This call for transnationalism was published a few months before the attacks, but it has defined a major branch of criticism, and has in fact inspired several new anthologies and journals since then.

Chabon’s counterfactual detective story materializes the space of the nonterritorial transnation as a space of memory. This memory bears traces of its generative matrix. Just as Landsman’s name evokes the shadowy presence of homeland, the Yiddish detective is the exilic version of a recognizable American type. Transnational American studies is also recognizably American. It is the newest version of the old utopian dream that America will live up to its promises. This dream might accurately be called pre-national rather than post-national. As Cotton Mather put it three hundred years ago: “But whether New England may live anywhere else or no, it must live in our history!” (66). Mather wrote history because he thought the Puritan project had failed, and transnationalism embraces communities of memory because it believes the nation *per se* has failed.

Is post-nationalism the solution to what historian Eric D. Weitz has called the “century of genocide”? The words of a European exile should give us pause. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt describes the problem of international human rights on the eve of World War II: “From the beginning the paradox involved in the declaration of inalienable human rights was that it reckoned with an ‘abstract’ human being who seemed to exist nowhere” (291). Chabon materializes this nowhere in Yiddish speaking Alaska, and transnational American studies in a diasporic ideal. The nowhere makes for wonderful fiction, but its multiple links to the conventions of realism and neo-realism should not be mistaken for reality. If the diasporic ideal exists anywhere it is in the community of scholars whose boundaries are institutional and whose membership is defined by common language. That language is English. When Landsman “cracks wise,” the solecism suggests a Yiddish idiom, but readers can recognize the wisecrack

behind it. When transnationalism promises the world, it does so in a familiar jargon. That jargon gained adherents after 9/11, but it dates back to the aftermath of World War II, when populations of displaced persons showed the alienability of national citizenship, and Cold War intellectuals began talking about “a world where the nation is plainly an anachronism” (“After the Apocalypse” 1).

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