

HYDRA RISING

The Enduring Struggle for Freedom, Mobility, and the Commons

Bridget Anderson, Nandita Sharma, and Cynthia Wright, editors


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The Enduring Struggle for Freedom, Mobility, and the Commons

EDITED BY BRIDGET ANDERSON, NANDITA SHARMA, AND CYNTHIA WRIGHT

With an Afterword by Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker

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For all those becoming commoners.

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Preface

In everyday defiant acts, people are building the world they want to see. By escaping life-taking circumstances, bucking citizenship and immigration laws, scaling walls, and crossing seas, deserts, rivers, mountains, and whatever else stands in the way of their future, people are claiming their freedom to move and therefore to live. In subversion of the nationalism that is everywhere actively fomented, people have taken their lives into their own hands and moved, attempting to cross national borders, with and without state permission. "Carrying the struggle with [them] across borders" (Daoud with Heller, this volume), they are speaking fearlessly and, through their actions, making history. What makes their freedom dreams possible are the manifold solidarities forged along the way. As people refuse the differences that citizenship and immigration statuses make, a great undivision is underway.

The act of movement is a living demand for equality and justice, a refusal of the world as it is, and a radical insistence on hope. These dreams and acts of freedom are leading to the growing realization that national borders are not only dividing lines between territories claimed by one sovereign over another but also major sources of the political, economic, and social divisions intended to leave us too weakened to realize our collective freedom from rulers. Contributors to this collection offer snapshots of the possibilities of strengthening our struggles for justice by highlighting some of the multifaceted ways people are working together to enable people's mobility. Carried out by those on the move and by those acting in "abolitionist solidarity" (Jeffries and Ridgley 2021), they embrace organizing, accompaniment, offers of mutual aid, provisioning, sheltering, defense, and insurgent social reproduction.

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Contributors and editors alike were and continue to be inspired by the struggles of the mobile and self-active planetary motley crews described and analyzed in Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker's brilliant book *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (2000). Peter and Marcus insisted on looking at the world from below, showing us how many came together and refused to be divided in an earlier period. In conversations with them, we came to understand that the many people refusing borders belong to long histories of struggle—and to the revolutionary abolitionist tradition (Rediker 2020). As we elaborate in the introduction to this volume, the Hydra has multiple heads, which can look very different, but they nurture and express the same body.

This is not an exhaustive collection. The contributions between its covers have been those carried to the three of us on "the common wind"—the web of communication that links mobile people and circulates emancipatory ideas (J. S. Scott 2018). Had we started at another time, others would have arrived. The process of writing and editing has been a long and intensively collaborative one, a series of collective and one-on-one conversations, both among ourselves and with the wider movements of which we are a part.

We hope that this collection offers ideas and strength in testing times and look forward to the time when our world is transformed by the possibilities for exchange, connection, and freedom that those demanding free mobility show us—the freedom to escape from life-taking situations, the freedom to move to contexts where we can flourish, and, collectively, the freedom to build a new world for all of us, one free from rulers of all sorts. In short, the freedom to stay and to move as we want.

Bridget Anderson, Nandita Sharma, and Cynthia Wright

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Introduction

Hydra Rising: The Freedom Struggle on the Move

BRIDGET ANDERSON, NANDITA SHARMA,
AND CYNTHIA WRIGHT

We're overtrained in discourses of crisis but undertrained in discourses of subversion.

RODERICK A. FERGUSON, *ABERRATIONS IN BLACK: TOWARD A QUEER OF COLOR CRITIQUE* (2004)

In February 2018, Gambian people who had been required to stay at Donauwörth reception center in Germany went on strike, and hundreds headed for the train station planning to go to Italy. "It was snowing, but we were shouting for joy. Everyone was dancing and jumping because we were going away from the trouble. You know how exuberant youths can be. We were so happy. But before we reached the station, we saw a lot of security and police wearing various uniforms and with dogs who prevented us from leaving. They stopped the trains" (David Jassey, quoted in Korvensyrjä 2024, 164). For several months, the detainees had been holding regular gatherings. They

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formulated a series of demands, including access to work, healthcare, study, and cash instead of in-kind benefits. Later, they disrupted deportations from the camp by setting off fire alarms, swapping beds with one another, and engaging in on-site protests. Camp management did not respond to petitions and protests, but when the detainees got to the station, they got their reply: "Arriving we saw that the police were already waiting for us. A lot, a lot of police" (Korvensyrjä 2024, 166). With the police was the camp's manager.

Aino Korvensyrjä's description of the disturbances in three German camps between 2018 and 2021 details how the authorities drew on a long history of colonial counterinsurgency tactics to define the camps as spaces of lawlessness, thereby making them governable through racist policing and violence. Crucially, the context was the solidarities emerging from the detainees' efforts to build livable lives and the efforts to break their solidarity with one another ("Not one of our brothers go!").

Those who cross borders exemplify how we are woven into shared histories and live together on a shared planet. They also directly and often violently experience how the powerful endlessly work to refute and distort our connections to one another. Many of those categorized by nation-states as "migrants" know firsthand that life for those who rely on their labor to survive is ever more precarious. Climate catastrophe, vast inequalities, crises of social reproduction, and highly militarized instabilities put human and more-than-human life in grave jeopardy. "Migrants" are a key target of violent nationalist and racist politics and are at the sharp end of global attacks against gender, sexual, and reproductive freedoms.

This book starts—and stands—with those who create alternative futures through their lines of flight, often leaving situations of expropriation, war, violence, and destitution. It focuses on the acts and processes of solidarity they engender by asking about people's self-activated forms of cooperation and life-making, the circulation of their creative insurgent practices, and the extended networks and movements built for their support. It is a story of struggle, of living alternatives, and the people who are bringing them into being. An act of resistance, this collection learns and takes inspiration from the combined struggles of those seeking to cross borders and those working in solidarity with them to end the worldwide regime of national borders. We call this work *abolitionist solidarity*, a solidarity that challenges both the everyday conditions faced by those on the move and the very existence of nation-states and capital that implement and rely on border controls.

Abolitionist solidarity encompasses diverse struggles, including struggles against prisons and against racial capitalism (Aiken and Silverman 2021;

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Montange 2022). While these are all interconnected, our focus in this volume is on moving (see also Jeffries and Ridgley 2021; Tazzioli and De Genova 2023; Riva et al. 2024; Bradley and de Noronha 2022; Walia 2021). We understand moving to be a collective effort that draws on and builds sociopolitical relationships. Finding the material and emotional means to leave and to keep going; sharing knowledge about routes, shelter, and networks of support; carrying provisions, water, the sick and injured; tending to children; steering boats; scaling walls; reaching into the past for fortitude and inspiration; circulating new repertoires of resistance; and demanding a life during and at the end of one's journey are all social acts. Each involves people who move and those engaged in solidarity. It is through these life-making, social reproductive practices that a new world comes into being. *Hydra Rising* explores people's struggles for the freedom to move and the forging of multiple and many-layered solidarities with them.

We take as our starting point Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker's influential book *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (*MHH*), which inspires us by the "lively presence of the dead" and its telling of age-old histories of struggles (Linebaugh and Rediker 2000, 222). Linebaugh and Rediker draw on the ancient Greek myth describing the Labors of Hercules, the twelve tasks imposed as punishment and atonement for Hercules's murder of his wife and children. One of those tasks was to kill the Hydra, a monstrous sea serpent with multiple heads and poisonous breath and blood. Hercules's task was made all the more difficult because, for every head he decapitated, another two would grow. Following the *MHH*, we take the battle of Hydra against Hercules's murderous efforts as a metaphor for the struggle of the many-headed working body (Hydra) against the violent manifestations of the power of states and capital (Hercules).

In this introduction, we explain how we, like Linebaugh and Rediker, use the Hydra not only as a metaphor but also as a method of investigation. We examine how the *MHH* conceptualizes and discerns the Hydra, understood as the convergence of insurgent motley crews working together for their collective freedom. We then consider one of the key distinctions between the period covered in the *MHH* and our contemporary world: the emergence of the nation-state form and the resultant divisions wrought by citizenship, borders, and immigration controls in the much-expanded capitalist world system. We argue that borders produce "migrants" and that nationality is racialized. We make these social processes visible by using the term *migrantized people* rather than *migrants* (Anderson 2019). We locate the "motley crew"

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in the repudiation of national/racialized and gendered divisions and discuss citizenship as a Herculean tool, one wielded not only against those of us made into migrants but also against those of us made into citizens.

As the book's contributors show, the politics of moving, in all their complexity, are central to struggles for justice (Sheller 2018). To ignore people classified as migrants is to ignore—and accept—the devastating consequences of the politics of divide and rule. We reject such politics, choosing instead to learn and take inspiration from those whose acts of abolitionist solidarity cut across and against the lines drawn between citizens and migrants to prefigure a world in common. But as with historical Hydras, the contemporary Hydra of people on the move faces the terror of Hercules working to end the freedom dreams carried by the Hydra's many heads. As Hercules well knows, however, the Hydra is not easily destroyed. This book recognizes and foregrounds the Hydra's fearsome contemporary struggle.

Hydra as Metaphor and as Method

Drawing on an intellectual and political tradition charted by C. L. R. James, *The Many-Headed Hydra* tells the story of the making of the Atlantic world from the seventeenth to the late eighteenth centuries. In tracing the genealogy of the deep structural violence that orders our contemporary world, Linebaugh and Rediker explore how people challenged this violence as well as the freedom practices they innovated in shared efforts to create polytopian futures. What Rediker has elsewhere called the "four violences of Atlantic history" (2012) were central to the terror of that period: the expropriation of the commons in Europe, Africa, and the Americas; transatlantic slavery and its deadly Middle Passage; exploitation and the institution of wage labor; and the repression organized through prisons, hanging, and the criminal justice system. These forms of violence—expropriation, exploitation, discipline, and punishment—swept the world as capitalist empires expanded. The continuing importance of the *MHH* lies in its depiction of how, amid the many forms of Herculean terror, new heads of the Hydra kept forming.

Attention to the conditions of possibility for merchant capitalism (e.g., the production of historically specific infrastructures such as ports, fields and plantations, laborers and households) and the forms of labor that made them possible is a striking feature of the *MHH*. These labors are often ignored, naturalized, or, as in the case of child-rearing, household maintenance, and the drawing of water, "assumed to be the transhistorical function of the family," that is, of those gendered as women (Linebaugh and Rediker 2000, 42). In

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the *MHH*, singular identities of sex/gender, race, or national membership are recognized as instruments of Hercules: violent mechanisms of thought and practice deployed to decapitate the Hydra by destroying the solidarity and recognition of their shared body among its many heads.

The accumulation of capital was, as Silvia Federici well notes, accompanied by "an accumulation of differences and divisions within the working class" (Federici 2004, 63–64). Following her influential work (see Federici 1975), Linebaugh and Rediker show how early capitalism rested on a containment of the body, especially the feminized body, and the devaluation of women's production and reproductive labor. Atlantic slavery built on, but also racialized, historically European patriarchal practices through the intense surveillance and management of enslaved women's birth and child-rearing practices, as well as through the exploitation of women's reproductive labor in Africa (Paton 2022, 754).

The *MHH* foregrounds the "motley crews" who, assembled through the capitalist imperative to expropriate the wealth of the world's working people, worked together along shared circuits of exploitation, encountering one another in proletarian sites of cultural and social reproduction such as the tavern, the ship, and the chapel. Their ideas about and practices of freedom and equality served as the basis for revolutionary change. In the process of their coming and acting together, they made history. Regarded by others as "the outcasts of the nations of the earth" (the title of chapter 6 of the *MHH*), the historical Hydra forged an oppositional culture from different configurations arising from the material of their Atlantic experience, shared labor, and sites of sociality, as well as from languages and traditions from diverse continents. In their coming together, working people in the revolutionary or Red Atlantic created new alliances and solidarities against terror. Their revolutionary knowledge was circulated on the "common wind" (J. S. Scott 2018). Motley crews—heterogeneous working bodies—were thus a fundamental constituent of class organization for themselves, "a new kind of mobile collectivity," one that sought "something different, something better" (Rediker 2020). They chose to be the Hydra prepared to take on Hercules.

Those who saw themselves as Hercules certainly viewed the motley crews as the Hydra and attempted to lop off its many heads to extinguish the crews' revolutionary promise. In the *MHH*, then, the Hydra/Hercules metaphor is used to analyze the revolutionary struggle and counterrevolutionary efforts to destroy it. In the process, the metaphor becomes a method for examining heterogeneity in unity, the formation of new ideas and forms of organization from insurgent practices from below, class consciousness, and demands for communism/common-ism.

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Hydra as a metaphor allows us to see the self-activity of people who, together, oppose the Herculean ruling apparatus of discourses, structures, and divisive social relations. Hydra as a method starts with the assumption that we are not separated and no one acts alone. Employing Hydra as a method makes us attentive to heterogeneity, to self-activity, to the forming and re-forming of various collective acts. It begins with asking about connections, looking for the social moments and forging of undivision through self-activity. These connections occur both in and across time and space, allowing us to see acts of undivision across artificial lines and histories. Using Hydra as method has allowed us to follow the struggles where they lead—across identities, across borders, and across the limits of our current imaginations.

In this book, contributors have employed Hydra as a method to illuminate the geopolitical, spatial, social, and economic transformations enacted by people demanding free movement—both those who move across borders and those acting with them in solidarity. They have largely done so through ethnographies, participatory research and writing, and testimonials, building on Linebaugh and Rediker's "history from below" by documenting and analyzing the making of history from below in the present. By paying close attention to the creation of subversive formations "on the move" that may be fleeting (Stierl and Tazzioli), or may continue (Daoud), or continue in different forms (Dan Yaye), Hydra becomes a way to determine heterogeneity in unity and to make visible insurgent practices from below.

People's mobility, their insistence on staying, and their acts of connecting their lives to those carrying citizenship status highlight the cycles of struggle through which people work to undivide themselves from one another. Using Hydra as both metaphor and method brings to the surface the connections among contemporary struggles, historical accounts, and conceptual and theoretical work. In this volume, Hydra as both metaphor and method shows the importance of people opposing the global regime of national citizenship, migration controls, and the "relations of ruling" that produce them (D. Smith 1990). Further, it reveals the deep connections between contemporary struggles to move and histories of resistance to capital and states, a relationship that always already exists but is obscured today through the national mythologizing of Hercules.

By enlivening the specific set of revolutionary politics of the Hydra for our time, *Hydra Rising* sails the waters navigated by Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker. We highlight struggles for collective freedoms that emerge from people working across and against ideas of race, nation, and sex/gender so we can become undivided and, in the process, strengthen ourselves

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for epic fights against Herculean rule. We, too, animate everyday solidarities leading to collective struggles for a world and a worldly view that recognizes the earth as a "common treasury for all" (Winstanley [1649] 2011).

Hercules Today

While the *MHH* revealed a world witnessing the rise of capital and its spread by imperial states, our world is one where the national form of state power is hegemonic, where capital has expanded enormously in both its geographic reach and its infiltration into more and more of our lives, and where national borders are now fundamental to Herculean efforts to divide us from one another. Changes in both the form of state power and the way capitalism is done after the end of World War II, which is the crucial historical background of our book, facilitated changes in practices of dispossession, displacement, and division. In the process, since the end of the period that concludes the *MHH* (late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries), divisions forged by conjoined ideas of race, nation, and hetero-patriarchy, now deeply embedded in citizenship, immigration, and border controls, have become even sharper and more widely accepted, including by many anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist actors.

New Herculean tools have been met with the risings of new Hydra heads. The heads of the Hydra composed of people working together across and against the citizen/migrant divide has been especially helpful in showing the importance of not naturalizing the nation-state form and being able to discern and make visible the ruling strategies used by national forms of state power. Doing so denaturalizes the category of "migrant" and exposes how what Hercules calls "migration" is people's rejection of the containment of their freedom by national citizenship and immigration restrictions. Relatedly, moving is their response to the undermining of everyday processes of social reproduction and the glaring and growing worldwide disparities in wealth, power, and peace.

While modern border controls against people moving into a state's territory have their beginnings in colonial rule (Mongia 2018), they were also further embedded—and obscured—by anticolonial nationalisms (Sharma 2020). In formerly colonized states, nationalism came to dominate ideas of what freedom from colonial rule looked like. As states obtained so-called national independence, they also embraced border regimes, making nationality/citizenship a powerful Herculean tool by which to divide the working people of the world. Across the capitalist world of nation-states, racialized ideas of

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national belonging and nationalist ideas of popular sovereignty worked together to allow some working people to imagine that the nation-state and the things needed to live there—for example, the capitalist wage, housing, education, and political enfranchisement—were theirs. Other people, the claim went, must be kept out to realize the promise of "national liberation."

As new nation-states were formed, each enacted racialized, classed, and gendered criteria for gaining citizenship and/or lawful entry (i.e., immigration). Those who could not meet these nationalist restrictions were deemed unwanted and illegal, even as investors and employers in key industries used migrant labor as a key basis for their accumulation of capital and power (Sharma 2006). After World War II, nation-state control over movement into and within its territories thus became fundamental to politics, and it remains central to how people are governed today. People made into migrants, especially those deemed unlawful entrants, are paid less and made to work harder, all the while being scapegoated as the reason nation-states cannot deliver on their promises of prosperity and freedom for citizens. Yet people are not innately migrants or citizens any more than they are Black or White. They are *made* so (Anderson 2019; Dahinden 2016).

Blackness was, in many parts of the world, a legal category, and everywhere it continues to be a social category. Today, the making of migrants continues to be both a legal and a social process. In the same way that people are racialized, they are also "migrantized" (Anderson 2019). For this reason, and to avoid the essentialization and reproduction of what is fundamentally a state category, we talk about "migrantized people" rather than "migrants." Migrantization is both parallel to racialization and intertwined with it. In the decades after World War II, laws stipulating differential rights and entitlements based on one's "race" were largely overturned, including those affecting states' migration selection criteria. Partly in response to the horrors of fascist holocausts, ideas of race were scientifically debunked, and practices of racism were challenged. However, this was also the same period when the national form of state sovereignty came to dominate. Even as imperial states dissolved, their practices of sorting populations into insiders and outsiders and hierarchizing desirable and undesirable people were continued by nation-states, this time on the basis of their (state-imposed) nationality. So, while it was for the most part no longer politically legitimate to enact state policies discriminating against people on the grounds of their so-called race, doing so on the grounds of nationality came to be seen as unproblematic and indeed as necessary, simply the everyday operation of the global system of nation-states (Sharma 2020).

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However, the ideological foundation of ideas of nation are the same as those of race. Each nation is imagined as a different type of people, differentiated from one another by arbitrary lines drawn around descent, language, and custom (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991). Nationality didn't so much replace racism as add to its repertoire, providing a *spatial and territorial* dimension to racist ideas and to Herculean practices of division. Like racial categories of the past, the status of nationality is noticeably fluid, referring both to citizenship (the legal relation between an individual and a state) and to societal membership in a nation (a particular type of people). To belong to a nation is usually to lay claim to a shared history with conationals. The mechanism to make such claims is strongly imagined as natural and based to a large extent on ancestry and cultural/linguistic characteristics, which are also imagined as constituents of one's "race." The process of racialization is depicted, however, as quite separate from migration, and both are presented as if they are siloed off from the capitalist world system.

Yet fixing human social groups in terms of naturalized properties of belonging to particular nationalized territories—tethered to the legal status of citizenship—cannot simply be deemed a race-free technicality. People are not only migrantized; they are also citizenized. The two processes, migrantization and citizenization, are interconnected. As a result of the racialized criteria for nationality, border controls preventing free movement for those who are not nationals bring racism directly into people's everyday lives (De Noronha 2020). The work of the Hydra to defeat the Herculean regime of national citizenship repudiates the divisions such controls organize—between refugee and migrant, between migrant and citizen, between a nation and its Others.

Citizenship as Herculean Tool

The global citizenship regime is embedded in the control of people's movement and in the unjust distribution of the right to move. It is manifest in visa and asylum regimes. For example, to have the citizenship of Japan offers quite different rights than citizenship of Syria, including differential rights to cross borders. According to the 2025 Henley Passport Index, citizens of Japan have the second most powerful passport (after citizens of Singapore), allowing visa-free entry to 194 nation-states out of 227. Syrian nationals, by contrast, have the second least powerful passport (after the citizens of Afghanistan), with visa-free entry to only twenty-nine nation-states (Henley and Partners 2025). A key reason that passports are either powerful or weak is the fact that citizenship justifies the nonuniversality of access to the

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nationalized means of subsistence: nationalized labor markets, housing, healthcare, and educational systems. Increasingly, the work of policing the boundaries between citizens and their Others is done by non–immigration officials, including employers, landlords, and public servants (Griffiths and Yeo 2021; Walsh 2014). This is how Hercules diffuses his power. The general population is increasingly drawn into Herculean immigration enforcement. Deputized actors who, because they are either poorly trained or anxious to err on the side of the law, often "directly reinforce symbolic and moral distinctions of otherness and illegality" (Walsh 2014, 247). Those charged with assessing legal status and imposing immigration checks typically rely on ideas of race and/or ethnicity as markers of national difference. This is precisely what happened in the United Kingdom's Windrush scandal: The fact that people were racialized as Black was read by many as meaning they were not British but migrants and potentially "illegal" ones at that. The law created a risk of illegality not only for Black migrants but also for Black citizens, thus compounding everyday racism. People were illegally evicted, sacked, and, in some cases, even deported as a result (Wardle and Obermuller 2019).

Hydra thus recognizes citizenship as a powerful Herculean tool. This is not to deny that for migrantized people, obtaining citizenship status, particularly of wealthier nation-states, can be a key objective. Both the denial of citizenship and its stripping leave people vulnerable to state (and other) abuses (Brinham 2024; Nyers 2009). Crucially, citizenship is a key mechanism for deporting people (De Genova 2002). A state normally cannot deny its citizens entry to its territory and must also accept its deported citizens, even if those citizens make it clear they do not want to return. This requirement to permit citizens to enter is one of the few rights of citizenship shared across the global citizenship regime. This is also a source of structural injustice, since nation-states' citizenships are very far from equal despite the pretense of a so-called international community. Differences in the value of one's citizenship mirror the inequalities that nation-states claimed to be able to remedy—namely, the global inequalities created by colonizing empires and the making of a capitalist world system. Restrictions on citizenship work in tandem with restrictions on migration to produce a world of highly uneven mobility rights. While citizens are granted the right to enter the state in which they hold citizenship, they have no right to enter, live, or work in any other nation-state without official permission.

At the same time, even though citizenship is widely regarded as opening a political space for some to counter the sovereign's exercise of arbitrary and abusive authority, in no nation-state is there anything resembling equality or

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justice for all. Not only does each nation-state actively discriminate between citizens and migrants, but the citizenry is also divided and hierarchically ranked. When Hercules encourages citizens to disregard migrants, the fact that citizens have no guaranteed right to survival, subsistence, or protection from state violence is ignored. The sharp sword of anti-immigrant politics, wielded with the greatest force against those seen as outsiders, is always double-edged: It can easily be deployed against fellow citizens, often negatively racialized and low-waged or unemployed (Anderson 2013).

While seen as benefiting citizen-workers, the preponderance of the benefits of anti-immigration politics go to capital, which takes advantage of the political weakening of the collective class of working people. One example is the assumption that immigration controls protect low-waged citizens. This is what allows the so-called low-skilled to face severe postentry restrictions, including the setting and limiting of wages, limiting union membership, requirements to live on the job, and lack of access to a subsistence safety net, among others. Immigration controls also effectively enforce temporary contracts through renewal restrictions, and they make explicit demands of prospective migrant workers that could not be made of prospective citizen workers: For example, they limit mobility within nationalized labor markets and thereby restrict collective bargaining power (Sharma 2006). In short, immigration controls play a critical role in making migrantized people more desirable workers. They give employers additional controls they do not have over citizens and directly and indirectly tie workers to poor work and to poverty (Iskander 2021).

Migrantized people are made cheaper than citizens by these controls while also being made into scapegoats. A key part of the power of the Herculean divide between citizens and migrantized people, then, is that it allows the former to believe that the promises of nation-states are possible and are denied to them only because of the presence of foreigners within. Citizenship creates and naturalizes classed, racialized, and hetero-patriarchal borders, shutting out those who want to move, dominating and exploiting those who do make it across borders, and dividing the supposedly deserving from the undeserving citizenry (Ratzmann 2021). Challenging and overcoming these borders is critical to seeking justice. Thinking against nationality rejects the normalization of national divisions in struggles against racial capitalism. It doesn't simply centralize migration but also helps to undo the separation between citizens and migrants and thereby supports us in grappling with the worldly nature of struggles around class, racism, and hetero-patriarchy. Antinationalism challenges the citizenship model that is at the core of the capitalist world system of nation-states (Van Isacker 2020; Danewid 2023).

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Mobility as Hydra Politics

The failure of national immigration and border controls to stop people's movements is testimony to the fact that people will not abide by the legal orders of nation-states. We keep moving despite the ever-more-draconian efforts to restrict mobility. And across the world, diverse networks of working people aid migrantized people, thereby connecting people across the divisions arranged both by legal boundaries of citizenship and the social divisions of labor (productive and reproductive, paid and unpaid). Along the way, people shed imposed identities designed to divide and develop new forms of self-understanding that strengthen their resistance to further division while creating new forms of sociability and self-understanding.

For those who move without the official permission of nation-states, moving is, at minimum, a refusal of the global regime of immigration controls. This does not mean that all those crossing borders are border abolitionists, but their movement across state borders is itself a profound challenge to nationalist ideas of a natural and abiding relationship between people and place and between nation and sovereign territory as well as the inequities produced by a capitalist world system (Mezzadra 2004). For these reasons, the emergence of No Borders movements, with their demand for the freedom to move and the power to stay, return, or move on, is a hugely important site of struggle against Hercules. The deep exchanges between people categorized as citizens or migrants in contemporary struggles over mobility have led to the formulation of radical ideas and demands. These demands include the call for the abolition of borders and national citizenship and a planetary commons built on the principle of nonexclusion.

Building on past movements to abolish slavery, end enclosures, and reclaim the commons for all, today's No Borders movements are a head of the Hydra rising against Herculean efforts of nation-states and globalized capital. The No Borders call is a "practical political project" (Anderson et al. 2009) that responds directly to the everyday actions of migrantized people. It is also part of the utopian politics of anticapitalism and antistatism. From its inception, "movement" or, more precisely, "borderlessness" has been central to various utopian traditions. Indeed, the very concept of utopia refers to that which has no borders, beginning with the imagination itself (Mbembe 2018). The power to define what is possible, like the power to define what is real, is always a site of political contestation.

Migrantized people today are situated—politically and imaginatively—in the productive space between the potential and the very real possibility

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of creating new ways of being (Bartholomew and Wainwright 2023). No Borders is a conviction that more peaceful, egalitarian, and just ways of living in this world and with each other are possible and that these can be lived now. It is a conviction shared by people across and against the Herculean divide between citizens and migrants. Emancipation movements have long understood the power of leaving violent, untenable situations and moving toward a place where the possibilities of life and liberty are greater (N. Roberts 2015; Gross-Wyrtzen and Moulton 2023; Walcott 2018). Equally, many freedom struggles have sought the power to prevent displacement and to stay where one wants. The No Borders call for freedom of mobility (including not being forcibly moved) recognizes the importance of enforced stasis for class, hetero-patriarchal, and state rule. The struggle for No Borders is thus a workers' struggle, a feminist struggle, and a struggle against sovereigns of any sort. By rejecting placement in imposed state categories, as well as the existing (and often violent) terms of the hetero-patriarchal social reproduction of the household, kinship, care work, and capitalist social relations, No Borders is queer and revolutionary (O'Brien 2023; Jaffe 2020; S. Ferguson 2020; De Genova 2010; Wright 2018; Chávez 2013).

No Borders movements demand an account of migrantized people that is not nation-state-centric, that recognizes state categories of migrant and citizen as new forms of enclosure, and that acknowledges migrantized people as the makers of history. Through these movements, we come to know that we are not passive participants in a world designed to either prohibit or force our movement. By seizing the freedom to move and stay, we bring forth new ways of thinking and doing that ultimately go beyond the abolition of the distinction between citizen and migrant, enabling us to imagine and organize for the end of Herculean structures that make divisions of many kinds to maintain state and class rule.

Hydra Rising

Hydra Rising is a snapshot of these struggles. Contributors develop Linebaugh and Rediker's Hydra as both metaphor and method. Each understands national regimes of citizenship and immigration control as concerted efforts by the capitalist world system of nation-states to destroy the Hydra. They uncover the deep relationship between the depiction of migrantized people as monstrous threats to "national society" and the ways that Hercules sows division among the Hydra's many heads. Each contribution also shows us

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the other side of the struggle. As people take their freedom into their own hands and move, we hear the Hydra hissing!

Mahamat Daoud, with Charles Heller as a *passeur*, recounts his multiple movements across two continents, starting with his flight to Kenya from a war raging in Sudan, his movement into and work across the Maghrebi nation-states, and his harrowing journey across the Mediterranean to land in Italy, where he currently lives. Along the way, Daoud encounters not only the Herculean force of national border controls and the racisms that give these controls their political legitimacy but also one of the heads of the Hydra in the form of Refugees in Libya (RIL). RIL, an organization Daoud helped to start, arose in Libya, where Daoud, along with thousands of others, was abused, abandoned, and denied respect for his humanity. Together, they demanded their liberty, including their freedom to move. Daoud's journey continued as he joined with others living in the mountains outside Nador, Morocco, and they all worked toward crossing the border between Morocco and Melilla, an enclave of Spain. There, on Friday, June 24, 2022, at least twenty-seven people were massacred, and another seventy people remain unaccounted for. Daoud survived. Through his journeys, Daoud has come to fully understand the murderous consequences of states trying to secure their national borders. He continues to work with many others to take care of one another and stand up to the Herculean power of nation-states; the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which refuses any relief; and rapacious employers out to exploit their labor. Together, people cast off as "migrants" organize themselves into a powerful force capable of being heard across the world, and Daoud's own political analysis sharpens, allowing him to be a powerful speaker against power.

Amelia Frank-Vitale, Geoff Boyce, and Joseph Nevins highlight the solidarities enacted within migrant caravans that, since 2018, have moved from Honduras through Guatemala and Mexico to reach the US border. By traveling in large groups, *caravaneros* seek safety both in numbers and through their hypervisibility, reject the invisibility associated with clandestinity. *Caravaneros* embrace and popularize freedom of movement, often through theological assertions like "*Dios no hizo*" or "*Dios no reconoce*" (God did not create / God does not recognize) borders. By situating the caravans as the most visible expression of a larger exodus from Honduras, Frank-Vitale, Boyce, and Nevins analyze the relationship between the circulation of people and the spread of knowledge and political struggle to understand the origins and development of the caravans over space and time. Using Hydra as method, the authors show how the *caravaneros*' embrace of the freedom

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of all people to move has been picked up from a "common wind" blowing across the Americas, a wind carrying shared ideas of mobility justice (J. S. Scott 2018). They locate caravans within a cycle of struggles in Mexico that includes the Zapatistas and the 2011 caravan against the drug war and cartels. By showing that caravans have a history within larger liberation struggles, including sanctuary movements of the 1980s, they reveal how the processes manifest in the caravans are not unique but are apparent in many of the solidarity efforts by migrantized people. In a constant battle with the Herculean effort to contain *caravaneros* within the individualizing syntax of asylum law, caravans cross borders and, along the way, elicit provisional and temporary acts of cooperation and mutual aid while mobilizing broad claims about a collective right to move that transcends nation-state sovereignty.

Edgar Córdova Morales shows the global terrain on which Hercules and Hydra battle. Drawing on his transatlantic ethnography in Medenine, Tunisia, and Tapachula, Mexico, conducted between 2018 and 2022, he explores how the reinforcement of Europe's externalized borders in Tunisia and across the central Mediterranean is linked to the increased mobility, particularly since 2019, of people leaving West Africa for the Americas. Their movements have spatially reconfigured Mexico's southern border with Guatemala into a global epicenter of new struggles for freedom of mobility under a global genealogy of colonial violence and anti-Black policing and dispossession. Córdova Morales analyzes the intense protests, antiracist demonstrations, and hunger strikes, and the relentless quest for new migratory routes to cross Mexico by West African migrants facing forced immobility and precariousness. He shows the making of a Hydra political formation on the move and a corresponding politics that circulates. By looking for connections among people and their ideas, Córdova Morales shows the development of motley crews reaching across borders and seas, whose circulation of news and rumors allows people to bridge the divide between Mexico and Tunisia and to form one of the heads of the Hydra against a global border regime.

Following the lead of Linebaugh and Rediker, Brian Whitener looks at the importance of infrastructures of social reproduction in the struggles of the Hydra. This work, he argues, is the means of individual and community survival and flourishing in Tijuana, Mexico, where Whitener worked with a major migrant caravan that arrived at the border in the fall of 2018. He shows how social reproduction became a site of both struggle and potential new solidarities to contest Herculean strategies of criminalization and separation. Arguing that "capitalism cannot abide autonomous forms of reproduction," Whitener analyzes how the insurgent forms of social reproduction by

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migrantized people and those acting in solidarity with them are intertwined with the emergent Hydra's demands for self-defense, border abolition, antiracism, and freedom of movement for all.

Moctar Dan Yaye, in an interview with Bridget Anderson, describes the work of Alarme Phone Sahara, a transnational initiative set up to support people on the move. It provides practical support, promoting and defending the rights of migrantized people, and, importantly, also works to provide a new narrative on migration, an alternative to the one told by the European Union. For decades, Europe has pressured nation-states in the global South—each with their own immigration regimes—to accept the expansion of Europe's borders and police and control migration across their territory. This expansion of border enforcement has undermined livelihoods and destroyed the lives of people on the move, along with those wishing to remain and make a life where they are. Dan Yaye describes the work of migrantized people and Nigerien activists who, in the past ten years, have organized to resist and provide practical responses to these pressures. They raise awareness of the importance of promoting freedom of movement, document abuses and violations of people's rights, and rescue those at risk of losing their lives crossing the Sahara Desert. The interview speaks to topics that have been the subject of academic study (e.g., Lecadet 2013 and 2017; Triulzi and McKenzie 2013), including by Heller and Pezzani (various years) and Stierl (2015 and 2016), all of whom have been active with Watch the Med Alarm Phone. These refusals of academic/activist binaries also constitute Hydra as method.

Stierl and Tazzioli show how the motley crews of the Mediterranean work across the citizen/migrant divide and explore what might be learned from them. They consider the sometimes temporary social formations that challenge the border regime and its technologies of migration governance, situating calls for border abolition in the development of migrantized people's collective subjectivities. By using Hydra as method, Stierl and Tazzioli argue that collective subjectivities are being fashioned in the process of moving in a world striated by nation-states. These subjectivities, they argue, emerge in the formation of Linebaugh and Rediker's "motley crews," moving across the revolutionary Atlantic. The motley crews of migrantized people are working together to construct themselves and the world against Herculean efforts to homogenize them as a singular monstrous entity. Framed by Hercules as "migrant mobs" in Libya, "migrant pirates" in the Mediterranean, and "migrant squatters" of Europe, this contemporary motley crew are commoners who confront and challenge bordering mechanisms. The

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commons they are bringing forth produce what Mimi Sheller (2018) has called "mobility justice."

Simon Campbell and Sara Riva explore the everyday practices of "solidarians" (humanitarian workers. volunteers, nongovernmental organization [NGO] workers, and activists) in and around the camps that warehouse the mobile Hydra in Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Germany. Through their analysis of Herculean humanitarianism as a force that exercises both blunt state violence and subtle forms of co-option to turn transformative energies into repression, they show us how the battle between Hercules and Hydra rages within these camps. Their focus is on how solidarians grapple with working inside or outside the camp and whether and how to engage in horizontal commoning activities. By examining people's novel use of unsettled solidarity tactics and commoning practices, they show how a Hydra comes into being and challenge the enclosures of the camps. In doing so, they speak to an urgent concern about potential co-optation and complicity by many citizens of Rich World nation-states who work against borders with migrantized people.

These efforts, Campbell and Riva argue, can be seen as an aspect of the mobile commons, one also discussed by Stierl and Tazzioli, in which practices of commoning sustain solidarians and those detained in camps, enabling people to move, settle, connect, and resist forms of border violence, including deportation. The building of this commons is carried out through an ongoing battle to exorcise liberal reformism and foreground mutual aid. Using Hydra as method allows Campbell and Riva to move away from the more usual focus on Herculean force in the camps (although this is also discussed) toward an examination of whether and how people working together become a subversive Hydra formation, one that not only builds and sustains resource sharing between migrantized people in camps and solidarians but also facilitates the emergence of a collective understanding of themselves as resisters of border violence.

Employing Hydra as method, Tom Kemp and Joel White analyze efforts by people in the United Kingdom to challenge both the Herculean representation of migrantized people as threatening monsters and the accompanying acute efforts to atomize asylum seekers. Acts of what Kemp and White call revolutionary friendship, including the collective decision to platform detainee activists so they can be recognized as important knowledge producers, counter Hercules's efforts to repress both communications and resistance inside and outside the walls of a migrant detention center. They focus on how this platforming of detainee activists draws on histories

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from below and points to strategies for the future. In particular, they draw on historically linked narratives of the prison/detention center as a slave ship developed by detained activists, of resistance to the transatlantic slave trade, and of pirates' resistance to the maritime rule of imperial states. They attend to the ways contemporary detention abolitionists, whether inside or outside migrant jails, are engaged in forms of resistance through the building of connections and through acts of "pirate care."

Conclusion: Translation from Monstrosity

Hydra Rising demonstrates that people's everyday resistance to today's worldwide citizenship and immigration regimes constitutes one of the greatest challenges to the power of contemporary Hercules. People crossing national borders not only contravene formal restrictions when denied official permission; they also upset the normative order of rule in this capitalist world system of nation-states, which claims that every person has their own (national) home in the world—and should stay there. As a woman fleeing Cambodia and moving to Paris to live succinctly commented, "We are a disturbance . . . because we show you in a terrible way how fragile the world we live in is" (in Morley 2000, 152). As nation-states and capital create migrantized people, particularly those whose movements are illegalized, to exploit their labor and naturalize a divisive and disciplinary politics, *Hydra Rising* examines the terror that produces the subordinate political, economic, and social status of migrants—and, even more importantly, shows the enormous resistance put up against it by people undividing themselves from one another.

As they conclude *The Many-Headed Hydra*, Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker claim that to "remember the proletarian body" requires us to "translate it out of the idiom of monstrosity" (330). Across the left–right political spectrum, the figure of the migrant is today's monster, conjured as a demonic specter causing all manner of horrors. Turning migrantized people into monsters has a strong affective element that is indeed a powerful Herculean weapon. It can turn migrants into objects of hatred and fear and, at the same time, position the hater and perpetrator of violence as a victim, or as having legitimate grievances. The monsterization of migrantized people entrenches divisions between Us and Them by feeding off the powerful emotions generated. Participants in No Borders movements, including our contributors and those they work with, rise to the *MHH* challenge. Reading these essays together, we not only observe the power of Hercules to represent migrantized people as monsters, whether violent and terrifying or pestilent

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and invasive; we are also further struck by how well the rising Hydra understands and responds to this.

Nationalism and racism are by no means the only ways Hercules draws on emotions. The imbrication of outrage and politics that drives action has many manifestations that work well for him. Pity, for example, can give rise to a depoliticized humanitarianism that prioritizes the emotions of the citizen and pushes migrants toward becoming their object rather than actors in themselves (Ticktin 2011). Then there is despair. It is easy to understand how efforts to divide and disconnect us from one another, which are entangled with the destruction of the very foundations for life on this planet, lead to despair. Migrantized people exemplify the dangers of being plunged into despair through prolonged exposure to and struggles with bureaucratic procedures designed to induce precisely this feeling. Political activists, whether migrant or citizen, can find themselves paralyzed by hopelessness in the face of cruelty and oppression. This is compounded by the recognition that the multiple connections we have to one another can become exploitative, and that our ways of knowing are limited and built on injustice. This, too, leads to hopelessness, rooted in difficulties of imagining the otherwise.

For these reasons, too, we collectively turn to the rebellious hope of the Hydra and recognize that emotions matter (Proctor 2024; Borges and Bjerg 2022; Seymour 2024). Some Herculean methods can be retooled to strengthen the Hydra: Humanitarian tasks, for example, can be a powerful way to learn about, and from, struggles for justice. While Campbell and Riva reflect concerns about humanitarian co-option, Dan Yaye's description of the work of Alarme Phone Sahara shows how humanitarian and political activation can work together. It is possible to start from a humanitarian framing and move beyond it to demand and enact egalitarian presents and futures. Humor, which can be demeaning and a weapon of domination, can also be used for resilience and insight (J. C. Scott 1985). Hope is in itself an act of resistance—an insistence that the world not only can be, but will be, a "common treasury for all."

We cannot end without acknowledging that the contributors to *Hydra Rising* are part of the contemporary Hydra. Using Hydra as a method for realizing our shared freedom, we connect today's No Borders movements with other freedom struggles, past and present. In our struggle for freedom of movement, we recover insights and lessons from prior struggles and retool them to bring down Hercules as he manifests himself today. No Borders is not simply an add-on to other projects. It is, we claim, a central line of struggle, one very much embedded in and indebted to other contemporary

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anticapitalist freedom struggles, including prison and police abolitionist politics and antiracist movements, along with movements that challenge the normative ways social reproductive labor is understood and allocated.

In evacuating migrantized people from monstrosity, we take seriously people's highly differential embodiment in contemporary ruling relations without either resorting to liberal humanism or naturalizing and reifying ideas of race, nation, or sex/gender. We join the call to be on the move for justice on a planet that respects no divisions among us. We recognize a different human and more-than-human collectivity created through endless encounters and shared histories and call for the dismantling of boundaries of identity and barriers to movement erected by those who lord their power over us. In response to new and terrifying borders designed to fatally weaken our solidarity, the contributors show how No Borders movements are re-creating a sense of ourselves as many heads of a planetary body that is a part of the world and world-making force for freedom. *Hydra Rising* puts migrantized people back into our histories of freedom struggles as its makers. This world we are making together is grounded in commonality, not separation, and relationships, not atomization.

We recognize the limitations of our project. Most of the contributors are not writing about migrantized people's direct and particular experiences of moving. Rather, this collection contributes to knowledge about what struggles to move tell us about our world and our revolutionary potential. We also recognize that these freedom struggles are related to struggles against being forced to move and for the right of return, but we do not write about these here in any depth. We acknowledge that we are producing written words that will be hard to access for many people for multiple reasons, but we are writing for what Julius Scott (2018) beautifully named the "common wind"—in the hope that the ideas in this collection will be taken, developed, and shared. Like Linebaugh and Rediker, we recognize that today's dreams of liberation come from many places. The Hydra has many heads, and together we struggle for beautiful, sustainable worlds, as well as for everyone's access to everything required for a life well lived.

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