

Book 4, Episode 2 | The Nation State

Marcelle Kosman, Hannah McGregor

(Witch, Please Theme Music plays) (Dance of the Priestesses by Victor Herbert Orchestra)

Hannah McGregor 00:07

Hello and welcome to Witch please, a fortnightly podcast about the Harry Potter world. I'm Hannah McGregor.

Marcelle Kosman 00:14

And I'm Marcelle Kosman. Hannah, to get us ready for today's topic, I want you to tell me about the weirdest community you've ever been part of in the sorting chat.

Hannah McGregor 00:27

We're talking about imagined communities today, and it got me thinking about some of the weird communities I've been part of. For example, Marcelle, did you know that I was briefly a horse girl?

Marcelle Kosman 00:39

Oh. *(laughs)* This is incredible. Do you mean like you collected toy horses? Or do you mean like-

Hannah McGregor 00:47

No, I rode horses!

Marcelle Kosman 00:48

You rode horses? Oh, my god!

Hannah McGregor 00:49

I competed!

Marcelle Kosman 00:50

You competed???

Hannah McGregor 00:51

I was a member of the Ottawa Valley hunt and pony club. (**Soundbite of horse neighing**) When you competed, you had to have a special second collar to cover your other collar. Because you would be docked points if buttons were showing. It was very weird.

Marcelle Kosman 01:10

That's incredible.

Hannah McGregor 01:11

I really do feel like Pony Club in many ways, with its inexplicable customs and strange costumes and esoteric insider information really prepared me for academia. (**Soundbite of high hat**) Anyway, Marcelle, have you been part of any weird communities?

Marcelle Kosman 01:32

Probably, but not that I can think of off the top of my head. But you know what this is making me think of, my mom was also a horse and pony girl. And she won a competition at the Picton fair and shook Pierre Elliot Trudeau's hand while he was doing a campaign tour or something, it was before he ever became prime minister. But nobody in my family was at the fair to see it. And nobody believes her. (**laughs**)

Hannah McGregor 01:59

Pierre Elliot Trudeau for those of you who don't know, being a former Canadian Prime Minister.

Marcelle Kosman 02:04

Indeed, the father of the current Canadian Prime Minister.

Hannah McGregor 02:08

Ack, and they say the aristocracy is dead.

Marcelle Kosman 02:11

Not here.

(Witch, Please Theme Music plays)

We're heading into strange new territory today, people, namely, a theoretical text that Hannah has never read, and that I have only just read for the first time. But before we start learning new things, let's go over some stuff that we're already familiar with, in revision.

Hannah McGregor 02:47

So in our first episode on Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, we really hurt our brains thinking about Structuralism. But it was a good thing we did, because today's episode is all about nationalism. So just like the elements of story that we take for granted, the very idea of the nation state is so *deeply* entrenched in our contemporary understanding of the world, that we need to really step back and understand the building blocks of what a nation is, and why it's so darn important to people. In other words, *how* does the nation mean?

Marcelle Kosman 03:25

So nationalism, it turns out has a lot more to do with the naturalization of the reproduction of power than it does say poutine, or maple syrup, or Trudeau and naturalization is also very interestingly, the word that we use to describe somebody who becomes a citizen, they become a naturalized American. So it's definitely a loaded term, for sure, that in some cases, means normalized, and in others means to make it appear natural. But the tropes we use to represent the nation, the stories we tell about what makes a Canadian, for example, are exactly how the nation is reproduced. So this episode is pretty much going to continue our ongoing discussions of class, of ideology and even of how print culture connects to those structures. So to refresh your memories, ideology is the imaginary relationship we have to the real conditions of our existence. The imagined relationships

inherent in ideology, help to explain things like why the proletariat hasn't risen up and seized the means of production...Yet.

Hannah McGregor 04:47

We've also talked about how ideologies and capitalism are supported by the state, sometimes quite violently, as in the example of the prison system, which we passingly mentioned is a repressive state apparatus. That's basically like a thing that the state does to violently stop people. So you know, in this case, the repressive violence of the state pairs with ideology to keep people under the boot heel of the ruling class, so to speak. And the same repressive violence gets covered up or justified through popular discourses around issues of what we might call national interest. So terms like criminality, justice, culture, identity, these are just metaphors that rationalize oppression and state violence.

Marcelle Kosman 05:39

Basically, every episode we've done so far is required-listening for the discussion we're about to have. But before we dive any deeper into the quagmire of *the nation*, let's take a quick look at how nations are represented in Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire. Hannah, I see that you made a chart. **(Soundbite of crowd cheering)**

Hannah McGregor 06:04

I did. I mean, it's not a very good chart, because I'm new at it. It's no Marcelle chart. But you know, I've done my best. And the reason I made this chart is because I think it's really helpful for us when we are talking about nationalism and the nation to start just noticing them a little bit more. We have already linked nation to ideology. And one of the things about ideology is it's really hard to notice, because it is by definition, naturalized. And so just starting to pay a little bit more attention to what this book has to say about the idea of the nation is a helpful starting point for us. So Goblet of Fire is the first book in the series where we really get a sense of the magical world outside of Harry's bubble, for example, Little

Whinging, London, Hogsmeade, Hogwarts, you know, that sort of small geographical range that Harry usually has. We've had a few allusions to other countries. In some of the previous books, we've heard briefly about Egypt and Albania. But this is where we really start to get a sense that there are witches and wizards that come from other places.

So I'm gonna run us through the countries that we hear about; country, the first, Albania makes another appearance and continues to signify almost exclusively as a place people go to disappear. *(Marcelle laughs)* I don't know why Albania gets such a bad rap in these books, but it really does. And we talked about Albania in our Orientalism episode and the way that sort of, it signifies as an Orientalizing space in Europe. So you know, there's something going on with the way that going to Albania means that you're gonna die. So Albania, we get just a passing reference to because it's where Bertha Jerkins disappeared. The other nations we encounter primarily at the Quidditch World Cup, which being a worldwide sports competition, gives us this opportunity to see people from all over the world, camping? I don't know if you actually camp at major sports events. I don't think you do. But cool. It's like Coachella meets the Olympics.

Marcelle Kosman 08:29
(laughs) Burning Man.

Hannah McGregor 08:31
So the first other place we get a reference to is Africa?

Marcelle Kosman 08:36
Ah, yes, yes. Famously, one country.

Hannah McGregor 08:40
Definitely not a country, but almost never divided in the imagination of these books. The only African nation ever gets mentioned specifically, as far as I'm aware in the whole series is Uganda, which is specified as having a Quidditch team, and

where when Rowling later goes on, and ret cons in a bunch of other magical schools, that's also where she puts the African wizarding school. So what do we know about people from Africa? They wear long white robes and roast rabbits on the fire. End of information, ask no follow up questions. What do we know about witches from America? They're literally sitting under a Star Spangled Banner. Cool. That's all we've got. **(Marcelle laughs)** The nationalism starts to get a lot more specific when it gets into European nations. So for example, the Irish, they love green and shamrocks and leprechauns. And when Harry walks through the Irish region of the Quidditch World Cup, he just sees their grinning faces coming from out of their tents, but also there's a constant insidious threat of violence while he's there. When they're asked who they're supporting Ron says Ireland and then is like, Well, I wouldn't dare say something else among this lot. They're very friendly, but they could turn on you at any moment.

Then we've got Bulgaria and things we know about Bulgarians is that they are sullen, speak heavily accented English, their team mascot is the veela, which has for me sort of thematically unclear relationship to the Eastern European tropes. But we can return to that question. We know that they're also associated with Durmstrang. Because Krum goes to Durmstrang. That's his school. And so the Durmstrang students also sort of play into our understanding of Bulgaria. So they're dressed in shaggy, matted fur and unused to luxury. **(Marcelle laughs)** We also get a taste of France, what we know about France is that everybody says z instead of v. We know that they have their own magic school, and that they dress impractically in fancy silk clothes and love luxury and decorum. And then finally we find out some stuff about England.

You know, we know a little bit more about England, we know that they have a ministry that runs the magical government. We know that the children there go to Hogwarts, even though it's located in

Scotland, and we know that they have a national newspaper, The Daily Profit,

Marcelle Kosman 11:21

What more could we need?

Hannah McGregor 11:23

That's all I've got for how we understand nations to operate. But it's kind of wild if we take a step back, beyond the deep heavy handedness of this avocation of national identity. Like this is the kind of level of representation where if there was a Canadian there, they would be a Mountie in a canoe hugging a beaver drinking maple syrup, like that is the level of nationalist discourse happening in the scene. But if we take a step back, we do need to ask, why would the wizarding world be organized around nation states?

Marcelle Kosman 12:08

I was thinking about this in relation to the conversation that Harry has with Charlie Weasley, when they're still at the burrow. And we know that the Weasleys are all going to cheer for Ireland. And I think that this does largely have to do with the idea of nationalism, because Ireland does have a complicated colonial relationship to England. So we have Charlie explaining to Harry that he really wished that England had got through, and then he moves on to saying that Wales lost to Uganda, and that Scotland was slaughtered by Luxembourg. So this, to me, at least as a reader, suggests that the hierarchy of who it is logical for a British subject to support in the World Cup goes England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland.

Hannah McGregor 13:13

This makes perfect sense to me in terms of the colonial history of the UK, and violent separatist nationalism, that has characterized those different places, the degree to which that nationalism has been expressed and has been violent, like we know that Ireland

has the most recent, the most violent history of trying to separate from the UK, leading ultimately to, you know, the Republic of Ireland existing as a separate entity from Northern Ireland. And then sort of the next worst is Scotland, which it like, gets along pretty well with England, but has its own parliament now and has had a referendum about independence. And there are rumblings of nationalism and a desire for independence. And then my understanding is that Wales has sort of the least active nationalist independence movement of those different places. And so it is interesting to see that how much these English characters want to root for these different teams has to do with their relative proximity to English nationalism. England would be best. But then here are these like three others that will do.

Marcelle Kosman 14:30

They'll do just fine.

Hannah McGregor 14:31

They'll do just fine. At least they're all native English speakers. But that hierarchy is like the nation itself, naturalized in the text. In fact, the whole idea that people would spontaneously divide themselves along national lines, is treated as almost an organic organization of humanity, particularly because it couldn't make less sense in the wizarding world. And so, I think the interesting question to ask isn't so much, what might our fan theories be for why the wizarding world is organized like this? As it is, Why is the nation the unit of human organization that we so readily turn to, to try to understand things about groups of people?

(Witch, Please Theme Music plays)

I'm ready, Marcelle, I'm ready to be transformed from somebody who cannot pretend to have read a foundational text in our discipline to somebody who can absolutely pretend to have read this foundational text in our discipline, in transfiguration class.

Marcelle Kosman 15:56

Like so many of our episodes, this theory portion is going to draw very heavily on a key figure, not because his analysis is flawless, but because his work on the topic has been made foundational.

Hannah McGregor 16:12

You know, I can already tell he's gonna be a white man. Because you're basically starting with an apology.

Marcelle Kosman 16:19

You would be correct. *(laughs)* I am talking about none other than Benedict Anderson, *(Soundbite of man saying bla bla bla bla bla bla bla bla)* author of the book, *Imagined Communities*, Anderson and his infamous book are touchstones, when it comes to scholarly conversations about nationalism and nations, and not without reason. Anderson is a darn cheeky writer, often adding quips and sarcastic asides to the quotations he includes. So *Imagined Communities* was first published in 1983. And so that's before the fall of the Soviet Union. So imagine writing an entire book about nationalism and discussing the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as an exception that proves the rule. And then a few years after your book is published, this very exception itself dissolves into a bunch of nation states. *(Hannah laughs)* Anyway, in the preface to the 1991 edition, the second edition, where Anderson both addresses the scholarly uptake of nationalism since *Imagined Communities* was first published and also reckons with his own incapacity to predict the future and thereby predict the dissolution of the USSR. *(Hannah laughs)* He responds to his peer Eric Hobsbawm-

Hannah McGregor 17:44

-Who is not famous. Suck it, Eric.

Marcelle Kosman 17:49

Who had dared to claim that the age of nationalism in 1990 was near its end. Anderson writes, quote, "Hobsbawm has had the

courage to conclude from the scholarly explosion that the age of nationalism is near its end: Minerva's owl flies at dusk."

(Soundbite of owl hooting) So basically, Benedict Anderson is saying, yes, Eric, hindsight is 2020.

Hannah McGregor 18:18

(laughs) I'm glad you can interpret the pithy aside, Minerva's owl flies at dusk. Because I, as a reader, encountering that phrase would be like, That's cool.

Marcelle Kosman 18:29

One of the reasons it took me so long to do the prep reading for this episode is because the book is full of this stuff. And I had to look them all up because I was like, I don't know what this means. So the owl thing is from Hegel. I'm not going to go into the details.

Hannah McGregor 18:49

But surely, Anderson's *Imagined Communities* has become a foundational text to the study of nationalism for reasons other than the author's cheeky Hegelian and asides.

Marcelle Kosman 19:00

Yes, that's true. I'm not sure that I'd call the book an easy read, but it is an engaging read. And Anderson approaches the historical development of nationalism with rather impressive breadth. So where a lot of political theory written in English tends towards Eurocentrism, for example, Anderson is actually interested in nationalism's relationship to imperialism and colonization. And he also draws on representations of the nation and nationalism in fiction and poetry to illustrate his arguments.

Hannah McGregor 19:35

So walk me through his argument, what is an imagined community?

Marcelle Kosman 19:41

So nation states are imagined communities in that they are big groups of people connected by their shared belonging to a place that isn't real.

Hannah McGregor 19:52

What!

Marcelle Kosman 19:53

I know. It's an imagined community because I have nothing in common with the random people that I pass on the street, people who I will probably never actually meet, except for the fact that we are both citizens, or we're each citizens of this made up place called Canada.

Hannah McGregor 20:12

Okay, so it's not that the actual place isn't real. It's that the way we identify the place, the boundaries we attach to it, the significance we attach to it. That's not real. There's no inherent relationship between Canada and this physical place I am.

Marcelle Kosman 20:32

Yeah, yeah.

Hannah McGregor 20:33

Thank goodness. We talked about signifieds and signifiers in the last episode.

Marcelle Kosman 20:37

Exactly, right? Like Canada's no more real than the word "tree" is inherently representative of trees. So from Anderson, it's not so much the idea of the nation that I think is hard to wrap your head around. Just like how it's not that hard to wrap your head around the plot of the novel. The hard part, the part that makes your head hurt is figuring out how we got to this understanding of nation in the first place. Like if Canada is made up, how come I have a passport with a Canadian flag on it? What is the Canadian flag? Why do I feel affronted when I have to pay extra for quote,

unquote, “real maple syrup” at a breakfast spot? And if I don't have anything in common with these randos that I pass on the street how come so many of us have similar expectations and life experiences? So clearly, the nation is real?

Hannah McGregor 21:35

I mean, could we say that there's a sort of similar relationship to reality, to say, how we talk about race, which is it's not a biological fact. But it is a real construct that has real lived consequences in the world. So you can distinguish between saying something that is like real, as in natural versus real, as in has force in the world.

Marcelle Kosman 22:04

Yes, I think that makes a lot of sense. Especially when we think about the way that constructions of race have changed over time. Likewise, constructions and meanings of the nation, and what it means to be a national citizen, have changed over time.

Hannah McGregor 22:23

So what does Anderson tell us about the imagination of the nation?

Marcelle Kosman 22:27

So, Anderson makes three basic claims about nations; one, the nation is imagined as limited, because no matter how big it gets, no matter how many people live in it, it has to have finite if elastic as in if changeable boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. So he reminds us that no nation ever imagines itself as coterminous with all of humankind. So like no nation out there has the goal of global domination.

Hannah McGregor 23:02

Like the nation needs an other. A non citizen.

Marcelle Kosman 23:05

Yes, England always needs a France. Okay. Number two, the nation is imagined as sovereign, because the concept of the

nation was actually invented in an age in which both enlightenment and revolution were just straight up destroying the legitimacy of divinely ordained, hierarchical dynastic rulership. So nations as constructs arose at a time when religions were suddenly undeniably plural. And the idea of freedom under God itself became a key motivation for state sovereignty.

Hannah McGregor 23:46

Marcelle, what does sovereignty mean?

Marcelle Kosman 23:48

So you know, how sometimes people refer to the king or the queen as “the sovereign?”

Hannah McGregor 23:58

Yeah.

Marcelle Kosman 23:59

Okay. So they are “the sovereign” because they have the autonomy and the right to make decisions. So a sovereign country is a country that makes its own decisions.

Hannah McGregor 24:13

So the church can't tell it what to do.

Marcelle Kosman 24:16

The church can't tell it what to do. And the bigger country next door, in theory, can't tell it what to do. And the Metropole can't tell it what to do. So like Canada and the United States, for example, both sought out sovereignty from the British crown because they wanted to make their own decisions.

Hannah McGregor 24:36

Gotcha. Okay, thank you.

Marcelle Kosman 24:38

You're very welcome. Okay. And then number three, the nation is imagined as a community, because regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may and indeed does prevail within each, the nation is imagined in terms of fraternity, kinship, horizontal comradeship, very rose colored glasses.

Hannah McGregor 25:05

Such rose colored glasses, and it's why otherwise intelligent people will surprise you by wearing a flag shirt on a national nationalist holiday. When you're like, No, you know, we hate nationalism, right? No? I thought we're on board with that. But you've got a flag painted on your face. So I guess not.

Marcelle Kosman 25:29

No, precisely. Nationalism is so deeply ingrained. The love of one's country is so deeply ingrained. Part of the reason why is because we teach children from the beginning of public education to love the country by singing the national anthem every day.

Hannah McGregor 25:48

And if you walk in the hall, while the national anthem is playing, you go to detention. Hence, in schools, we immediately begin to introduce ideological and repressive state apparatuses to enforce nationalism.

Marcelle Kosman 26:02

Precisely, precisely.

Hannah McGregor 26:04

These all seem kind of to harken back to the word you use in the last segment, naturalized ideas that actually have a super complex prehistory that might actually de-naturalize how the nation works. Am I on the right track here?

Marcelle Kosman 26:21

You are absolutely on the right track. Let's do some history!
(Soundbite of slightly out of tune trumpet playing a fanfare)

I'm going to try to explain Anderson's overall historical argument somewhat chronologically, because what we take for granted as the nation state today in 2021, and our contemporary experiences as national citizens is really a function of the post war capitalist economy, whereas the idea of "the nation" is itself a function of late modernity. So like what we think of as being Canadian, and the idea of "the nation" are sort of different historical constructs. The idea of what a nation is, and the idea of what a nation state is changing fluctuate over time, because of things like capitalism.

Hannah McGregor 27:18

Okay. All right. Well, that's confusing, but you know what's not confusing? Feudalism. Tell me about it.

Marcelle Kosman 27:26

(laughs) All right, a lot of moving parts contribute to the rise of nationalism and to nation states. But let's first remember that for a very long time, power was concentrated in the hands of aristocracies and dynasties. And, moreover, that power was supposedly divine, God given. So prior to the enlightenment, it was God who gave the king his right to own and rule over the land. And the fact of this divine right was communicated to the common people plowing the fields via a very select few who could read and thus interpret the sacred texts. In other words, the religious literati had exclusive access to the sacred texts that gave them and the dynasties and the aristocracies their power. These texts were inaccessible to the common folk, for two reasons. One, they were written, and two, they were written in sacred languages like Latin, not the vernacular.

Hannah McGregor 28:39

The vernacular being the language that people actually speak in their day to day in particular regions.

Marcelle Kosman 28:44

Exactly. So during this period, religion in general, and particularly religion, as it is interpreted by a very small group of people is what gave meaning to the otherwise unexplainable. So the divine right of kings, the value and purpose of suffering and death, and even the nature of time. So also, during this period, the people ruled by the king would not have thought of themselves as citizens of the king's land, but simply as members of their local communities. For most of them, their lives began and ended in those very communities. And so they didn't really need to think about anyone beyond their neighbors, and they certainly wouldn't have had reason to identify with strangers unless they met.

Hannah McGregor 29:34

Okay, that makes a lot of sense. So society in this period, pre enlightenment, pre 16th century society is as far as I understand, pretty rigid and hierarchical. So it's like you are born into your social standing. And that is the social standing you have, you are not climbing. You are not going to be born a peasant and become the king. That's not a thing. And in addition to that sort of lack of mobility within those hierarchies, there's also a comparative lack of actual physical mobility, like you're probably just not going a lot of places.

Marcelle Kosman 30:10

That is exactly right. But gradually the moving parts of what we now call modernity begin to shake things up. In the early modern period we have the invention of the printing press, we have the beginnings of European exploration beyond the oceans tide, and we have scientific discovery, among other things. So all of this new access to knowledge started making aristocratic and dynastic claims to rule a little bit dubious.

Hannah McGregor 30:46

Oh! Because it relied on just people not really asking a lot of questions.

Marcelle Kosman 30:50

Precisely, not asking questions and not having knowledge. With access to religious texts in the vernacular, for example, regular people began to question the divinity of rulers. *(Hannah laughs)* Especially the divinity of those rulers who did not have the people's interest in mind. So because we'll never let the argument that time is a social construct go, print is also a major contributor to the average person's ability to identify with their fellow citizens, most of whom they could not and would never meet.

So there's a whole argument to be made here about time, which is most certainly a social construct. *(Hannah laughs)* Because this ability to identify with strangers has to do with the ability to perceive simultaneity, which didn't exist before print! The way that people understood time was just different. It had to do with the preordained, and then the fulfillment of the preordained. So novels and newspapers both provide their readers with the tools to see themselves as aligned with others, irrespective of whether or not they've ever met, because they both exist in this place simultaneously.

Hannah McGregor 32:13

This is where coffee houses come in, right? Like people would go into coffee houses in the 18th century and read the newspaper and talk about what they'd read. And it started to generate this idea that they had a shared identity with other people who were reading the same thing. It was like a literacy revolution.

Marcelle Kosman 32:30

Revolution. Yes, indeed. In fact, Hannah, the late modern period is all revolutions all the time. The French Revolution, the American Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, even the Russian Revolution, all of which had been made possible by things like print, and science. And along with these revolutions, comes the emergence of nationalism.

Hannah McGregor 32:58

One thing I love about this is that nationalism and its relationship to revolution, and to print is a real chicken in the egg situation. Which comes first? The idea of nationalism that leads you to revolt or the revolution that leads to nationalism? The answer is, and this is the same argument that scholars of the history of print make, is that you can't say that print caused the revolution because nobody would have wanted print in the first place if they weren't trying to start a revolution. And so really like the question of how does this change begin to foment is kind of an unanswerable complex one, but what we know is a bunch of revolutions happened. And then we had nations, baby.

Marcelle Kosman 33:44

I think it's crucial to note here that Anderson identifies different kinds of nationalism. And I'm not talking about Canadian nationalism and American nationalism. On the one hand, we have the emergence of nation states as organized around popular vernacular. So like people who speak the same language and have the same cultural reference points, and they emerge in response to what the people themselves consider to be illegitimate rule. Popular national movements, developed in light of a growing consciousness of shared culture.

Hannah McGregor 34:17

So the nation state, just to clarify, is where the state, which is the like political body that sort of governs and the nation, which is like the cultural body with like shared history and shared language are imagined as being the same thing, as inherently tied together, that the natural way for politics to be organized is around the unit of the nation.

Marcelle Kosman 34:43

Yeah, that the leaders are themselves of the people who are governed.

Hannah McGregor 34:48

Yes. Okay. So that makes it distinct from national cultures that exist within empires.

Marcelle Kosman 34:53

Exactly. So this is actually a really smooth transition into what Anderson calls official nationalisms, which is a very tongue in cheek term for illegitimate ruling class efforts to avoid nationalist revolutions. Because these national cultures that exist within empires were themselves precisely the groups of people that were seeking national sovereignty. And so official nationalism is where the ruling class of the empire or the dynasty reacts to popular nationalist movements. So with official nationalism, the increasingly obsolete ruling class seeks to maintain control of an otherwise disaffected or unrepresented people and to shore up the legitimacy of its rule by then mimicking some of the characteristics of popular nationalism. And British imperialism is a great and very instructive example of this.

So right around the time that nationalism is, let's say, becoming cool in Europe, England starts shipping members of its middle class out to various colonies to spread what's called anglicization, around the world. So in this way, the Crown recruited members of the middle class who might otherwise have been disaffected, impoverished, and otherwise ripe for revolution and provided them with opportunities to play aristocracy to represent England and live in greater comfort and prestige than they would have done if they had stayed at home. And in so doing, Anderson suggests that the British Crown secured its, for example, tenuous possession of Scotland, and also shored up the legitimacy of its aristocracy by giving middle class subjects, subjects of their own. In other words, British imperialism says to the British subject, including the Scots, it's okay that the English lords are naturally superior to you, because you are naturally superior to these people over here. Go and rule over them.

Hannah McGregor 37:27

I know this history. That's Canada. That's like the whole thing that happened here.

Marcelle Kosman 37:33

So another cheeky aside of Anderson's that I really appreciate is the fact that he calls colonial militaries quote, "capitalism in Feudal aristocratic drag," because they were notoriously distinct from the military of the Metropole, and weren't actually real militaries. But official nationalism, and in this case, British imperialism, is not actually nationalism, it's just the ruling class attempting to mimic nationalism to sort of stave off nationalist revolutions. And so we think about British imperialism, it doesn't have those three characteristics of the nation that Anderson outlines, it is inherently not limited. The British Empire famously attempted to cover-

Hannah McGregor 38:19

The globe, yup.

Marcelle Kosman 38:20

-the British Empire denies the sovereignty of all except for the Crown, and it doesn't perceive its citizenry as a fraternity. And one great example of this is the fact that while Indian magistrates might rule over sections of colonial India, they're never deployed to, say, Canada as representatives of the crown. So there's always a hierarchy between English, English, and non English British subjects. But while British imperialism failed to maintain control over the millions of people that it sought to colonize, it has succeeded in aligning English nationalism with Great Britain and the Crown, which I think is not insignificant and something that we see in Harry Potter.

Hannah McGregor 39:11

Yes, we do. That kind of helps me to understand how we see British people continuing to defend British imperialism from the

standpoint of nationalism, even though Imperialism is inherently not national.

Marcelle Kosman 39:26

Yeah, because for the British subject, it was a kind of nationalism, just not for anybody else.

Hannah McGregor 39:35

Gotcha. Gotcha.

Marcelle Kosman 39:36

So, Anderson himself a nationalist, he really resists the idea that nationalism breeds racism, and while I don't agree with him, I do think that his argument is somewhat compelling. So he claims that nationalism and racism, including anti semitism, have divergent focuses. Specifically, he says that the quote, "dreams of racism have their origin in ideologies of class" end quote, now, I do find this compelling. And I want to come back to it when we talk about the Malfoys and the issues of mudbloods, and blood purity and magic and all of that.

Anderson argues that racism relies on claims to divinity among rulers, and blood purity, reminiscent of the ideologies of and breeding practices of aristocracy. He further notes that while nations may wage war against one another, racism manifests itself not across national boundaries, but within them. So racism is typically not used to justify foreign wars, but it is absolutely used to justify domestic repression and domination. He likewise relates racism to official nationalism, which isn't supposed to be real nationalism, but it's rather a class based move to maintain power over the otherwise subjugated peoples.

Hannah McGregor 41:08

So what about how closely aligned nationalism is, in the 21st century, with white supremacy?

Marcelle Kosman 41:18

The issue of white nationalism in our current society is more a response to transnationalism and globalization than it is to the kind of nationalism that Anderson is talking about, quite romantically at times. The ideas of nationalism, the idea of what the nation is, these things change over time. And in what I think we might hesitantly call the post modern period. **(Laughs)** This period of late capitalism, we live in a very globalized society. And so like, indeed, Minerva's owl flew at dusk. Nationalism is no longer the sort of defining feature of either international capital or economic or political exchange or movement or negotiation, like now it's transnationalism. It's globalization.

Hannah McGregor 42:18

So what I hear you explaining, Marcelle, is that the way that I see nationalism and racism to be entangled with one another is a sort of function of post modernity, as we've been calling it, because of the way that globalization means that lots of people are moving around all the time. And that that political formation was just not the case so much in the sort of mid 20th century nationalism that Anderson is dealing with?

Marcelle Kosman 42:55

Yeah, I mean, it is a fairly convenient argument for him to make that like nationalism is okay, imperialism is the thing that's bad. When like, as Canadians, for example, our celebration of Canada today is a necessarily colonial and oppressive holiday. Like for us, we can't separate those things, even though a political philosopher may be able to.

Hannah McGregor 43:21

I'm actually going to go ahead and venture to say that Anderson is wrong, **(Soundbite of buzzer)** and that his wrongness has to do with a really limited perspective on what postwar culture actually was like for people of color, for example, in the UK, and that we can simultaneously say, well, he's a dead white guy, so probably wrong about a lot of things. But some interesting stuff to be pulled

out of here in relation to nationalism, and in relation to how racism is entangled with the sort of aristocratic fantasies of national purity.

Marcelle Kosman 44:00

I think that's a great way to put it.

Hannah McGregor 44:02

He's definitely wrong though. (*Marcelle laughs*)

(Witch, Please Theme Music plays)

Marcelle Kosman 44:13

Okay, listen, if you really want to trick everyone into thinking you're one of the 10 people who have actually read *Imagined Communities* cover to cover, we're gonna have to test your knowledge of these theories and how they work in O.W.L.'s. (*Soundbite of owl hooting*)

Hannah McGregor 44:32

Okay, Marcelle, based on everything we've just discussed, I want to revisit a basic yet deeply complex question that we asked earlier in this episode. Why the heck would there be nationalism in the wizarding world?

Marcelle Kosman 44:48

I don't think that there is a logical narrative explanation. I think that the only conceivable explanation is that the concept of nations and nationalism is so inherent to our understanding of the world, the author's understanding of the world, most people's understanding of the world that, like you said at the beginning of the episode, it's just a necessary and useful reference point.

Hannah McGregor 45:20

I think you're absolutely right, that what we see in the text is this naturalization of the nation and of citizenship as a kind of way of identifying with one another as well as with particular

organizations and particular cultural touch points. And that we also get gestures towards other ways of organizing the world, which in part for me comes back to the regionalism of the wizarding schools, because the wizarding schools while in some ways in this book, they're being mapped against nationalism. So Hogwarts is the English school and Durmstrang is the Bulgarian school and Beauxbatons is the French school, but that is absolutely not the case. I mean, one, Hogwarts is not in England, and Hogwarts as an institution predates the United Kingdom quite significantly.

Marcelle Kosman 46:19
(laughs) Yeah. Yes.

Hannah McGregor 46:21

Two, we know that Durmstrang and Beauxbaton and Hogwarts are the only three major wizarding schools in the entirety of Europe. Now, what makes up the gap between all of the other many nations in Europe is a matter of either fan theory or JK Rowling's like hand waving tomfoolery over on Pottermore being led well, actually people largely homeschooled, like you just didn't think it through because there's no explanation for why there would be a wizarding school in Japan, but not China.

Marcelle Kosman 46:54

No, exactly. The very fact that the schools are sort of set up along national lines is totally anachronistic because we don't have any evidence that they aren't nationalized. No one at Hogwarts got an invitation to either Durmstrang or Beauxbaton.

Hannah McGregor 47:11

But they are regionalised, like I think they kind of interestingly point to a prenational form of cultural organization. Durmstrang is like the Slavic school, and Beauxbaton is like the Romance languages school and Hogwarts is like the Norman Anglo Saxon

school, I don't know. But Beauxbaton is not just French students, it's French students and Italian students and Spanish students.

Marcelle Kosman 47:39

Is it? (*laughs*)

Hannah McGregor 47:40

I mean, yeah, it did some research. This is the claim, and that Durmstrang serves all of eastern and northern Europe. This book deeply naturalizes “nation” as an organizing unit for understanding human cultures, the world, how people relate to each other, and we can see how sweatily it's attempting to naturalize “nation,” when it gestures to wizarding institutions that predate the history you have described. So all of these schools are older than the nation state. Right? We are all significantly older, they all predate it, and they all kind of defy it because like, Hogwarts is in Scotland. Similarly it's established that they are at the 400 and somethingth Quidditch World Cup, which means that the Quidditch World Cup would also predate the concept of the nation by several centuries.

Marcelle Kosman 48:42

Yes, yes.

Hannah McGregor 48:43

And the whole idea of something being a World Cup makes zero sense prior to nations. And so even in those slippages, those moments where the text ceases to make sense, we can see reinforced a sort of compulsive desire on the part of the narrative to insist on nation as an enduring, a historical fact, rather than a very particular historical formation.

Marcelle Kosman 49:22

I think that Anderson would also say that that is how nationalism functions. He does actually say in the book that it's a paradox, right, that on the one hand, it is a fact of history. It starts at a particular time, but the way in which nationalism rallies its people

depends on a very heavy reliance on the idea of antiquity, like we have always been German or something, you know?

Hannah McGregor 49:54

Yeah, so because nationalism needs to be naturalized as part of how it operates, it needs people to feel a deep identification with it to sort of buy into the ideological formation of the nation. It can't also be perceived as like a historical construct that began at a particular point for a particular function.

Marcelle Kosman 50:24

So this is a thing that I didn't get into from *Imagined Communities*. But nationalism needs people to be willing to die for the nation. And you're not going to do that if you don't have an emotional stake in the nation. And I think that we see the logic of this happening, even in the moment when there are Death Eaters at the World Cup causing havoc, and Mr. Weasley, and his three eldest sons are like, we're going to help the ministry, come along, boys, we've got a job to do, we must protect the state.

Hannah McGregor 51:06

Indeed, I think when we think about why it is that the Quidditch World Cup is the narrative event that introduces a book that's ultimately going to be about the Triwizard Tournament, that part of what it's doing is establishing, I mean, the existence of nationalism in the wizarding world, right? It's working very hard, that part of the text to like, establish that nationalism is a thing, but it's also establishing on the part of our heroes, not only their identification with the nation, but also their willingness to fight for it, whether literally or figuratively, their willingness to cheer for it, to wear a flag for it, to sing its national anthem, to bleed for it, if necessary, that that is all being set up for us as how their identities are operating in the Quidditch World Cup chapters. So then, when we are told that there is no choice, but for this 14 year old to compete in a deadly competition that he should not have been able to participate in and that is absolutely not qualified, or

able to participate safely, that all of the heads of the houses agree.

They're all like, oh, well, yeah, yeah, I can't see a way around this. I mean, otherwise, it would invalidate the legitimacy of the Triwizard Tournament as an institution. And it's like, okay, and then what would happen? *(Marcelle laughs)* Like, what would be the consequence of that, but like, it's already been naturalized for us. Of course, it has to happen. He has been asked to represent his institution. And then that leads us into why it is so agonizing for him to have been selected as the false representative of his nation because he wants to be a good representative of his imagined community. And he's perceived as a usurper.

Marcelle Kosman 53:20

And particularly a usurper, because the otherwise underdog Hufflepuff champion doesn't get the glory.

Hannah McGregor 53:28

You know, there's one more piece of this book that I think ties into Anderson's understanding of the nation state and imagined communities in a really interesting way. And that is the fact that this is the book that contains the largest role the newspaper has played yet. We not only have multiple references to the Daily Profit, but we actually get the introduction of this character Rita Skeeter, this journalist. I was thinking as I was rereading the Rita Skeeter passages, the fact that she is actively misrepresenting what is happening, we see via the enchanted Quill, that it's actively fabricating a mythologized version of reality. And then we get to see in real time how that mythologized version of reality has these real lived repercussions for Harry in a way that really reminds us that the sort of reality of these imagined communities is shaped by the experience of that sort of simultaneous print culture.

Marcelle Kosman 54:35

Yeah, print culture and print cultures power of representation, like even the way that Mrs. Weasley cries because she didn't know that Harry still cries about his parents and it is indeed a powerful thing.

Hannah McGregor 54:50

And we're gonna have to talk more in a future episode about Rita Skeeter as a character because there's a lot more going on there but it is helpful me to take a step back from my ongoing frustration with how poorly thought out the world building of these novels sometimes is, and instead saying like, why is nation so important here? Or as we asked at the beginning, how does nation mean? So I guess I was asking the wrong question. The question isn't why is there nationalism in the wizarding world? But how is the nationalism of the wizarding world operating in this text in order to do particular kinds of work?

Marcelle Kosman 55:32

Oh, that's a great question. Let's do a whole episode about that.

Hannah McGregor 55:37

No. (*Marcelle laughs*)

(Witch, Please Theme Music plays)

Thank you, witches, for joining us for episode 22 of *Witch, Please*. You can find the rest of our episodes by heading over to NotSorryWorks.com or ohwitchplease.ca, or of course wherever podcasts are found. If you want to hang out with us more, we're on Twitter and Instagram @ohwitchplease.

Witch, Please is produced in partnership with Not Sorry and distributed by Acast. Special thanks to Not Sorry for having us. And we're delighted to introduce to you our long awaited brand new producer, who is confusingly named Hannah, but who we've decided to call Coach. Hi, coach.

Marcelle Kosman 56:33

Welcome Coach. (***Soundbite of sports whistle blowing***) If you're into the podcast, why don't you let us know by dropping a review on Apple Podcasts. At the end of every episode we'll shout out everyone who left us a 5-star review, so you've gotta review us if you want to hear me do THIS

Thanks to: Sada 7686, Maria Dyregierg, glozee, Sel0515, Ccbrelsmal, MidwificalMe, not-my-daughter-you-witch, jennylovinmomofbogie, and andi_noel.

Hannah McGregor 57:21

If you want to hear even more from us, don't forget to head over to patreon.com/ohwitchplease to check out the many, exciting forms of bonus content available to you. Such as the witch please tell me segment that we're about to record after recording this episode for two hours. It's gonna be weird. Special thanks to everyone who supports us on Patreon. We are physically incapable of reading off all of your names but that doesn't mean we love you any less.

Marcelle Kosman 57:52

On our next episode we're continuing our discussion of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* with a whole new focus -- and a special guest! But until then:

Hannah McGregor 58:03

Later Witches!