Introduction:

Declaration of Interdependence

Paris, Autumn 2015

Early morning. September 2, 2015. A Turkish photojournalist was wandering an Anatolian beach. He name is Nilüfer Demir. Refugees had been crossing the Mediterranean Sea for months on overcrowded vessels. Demir was shooting some huddled Pakistanis waiting to embark when she happened upon the corpses of two drowned boys. One of them was Aylan Kurdi. Little waves lapped around his three-year old body, his face half-down in the sand. A distraught Demir raised the viewfinder to her eye and started to shoot. Soon, an emergency worker appeared. Demir continued shooting. At the end of the day, her photos joined that summer's collage of images of half-sunk rafts and marching caravans, images that fueled a sense of helplessness and outrage. This image, however, cried out. It was both horrible and recognizable; our kids sleep like that.

To many, the Middle East crisis seem like the first to be waged so fully on two fronts at the same time: on the streets of Syria or Lebanon and on the stage of global social media. The people of Aleppo climbed to the rooftops and posted images on Facebook of Syrian air force jets dropping payloads on neighborhoods. When Iraqi troops, Kurdish fighters, and Sunni and Shia militiamen rallied to re-take the city of Mosul from the Islamic State in 2016, bombing strikes

were being ordered by WhatsApp, the same app I use to communicate with my students about the industrial revolution or their mid-term exams.[1]

The mediatized upheaval in the Middle East coursed through the veins of global politics – at a time in which leaders were grappling with the scale and shock of the migrant crisis. Millions responded to violence, hardship, and intolerance by fleeing their homes. Would they find homes elsewhere? It was not clear. The Hungarian government erected fences. German Neo-Nazis rallied in front of refugee centers. Even moderate governments turned their backs or dithered. But this photo had an impact, at least for a while. After Aylan's photo went viral, the German premier, Angela Merkel, announced a massive refugee support plan and declared Germany's commitment to welcoming fugitives. Pope Francis (who had been calling upon the world's grace to help) greeted stragglers into the Vatican. Shortly thereafter, Canadian voters trounced the Canadian government that had denied Aylan's family asylum. The sight of a child's face buried in the sand was not the trigger; but it helped tip the scales against a heartless Prime Minister in a safe and wealthy country far away from the calamity.

Demir's photograph was on my mind late one night in Paris several months later as I was writing this book and a magazine piece about photography and humanitarianism.[2] I was also tracking the migrant crisis because I was working on long-distance education for refugees. It was November 11th 2015. In the background, news flickered on a muted television. European heads of state were in Malta to discuss how to "burden-share" the migrants streaming over the Balkans and crossing the Mediterranean in dodgy rafts. A journalist pressed a microphone in

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[1] James Verini, *They Will Have to Die Now: Mosul and the Fall of the Caliphate* (New York: W W Norton, 2019), pp. 97-98

[2] It eventually came out as "Don't Look Away," Aeon, 13 September 2017. See https://aeon.co/essays/does-photography-make-us-act-or-inure-us-to-despair

front of one of the summit delegates in Malta and asked if he was concerned that the migrant crisis might pose a security issue. I looked up at the TV and raised the volume to catch the reply.

No, the delegate insisted.

This was purely a humanitarian issue; delegates were not worried about the threat. Just the responsibility.

I returned to my laptop.

Two days later, gunmen and suicide bombers opened fire in Paris on cafés, bombed a nightclub blocks away from my flat, and tried to blow themselves up in the Stade de France. Planning the assault from Syria and staging it from Belgium, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant claimed responsibility for the dead (now, 131). Tragically, some of the attackers had been part of the refugee flux of the previous months. Within a week, the discourse across Europe about how to welcome needy strangers gave way to suspicion and fear. A pall fell across the idea of sharing responsibility. Then, remarkably, on November 27th, the City of Lights received hundreds of heads of state, UN executives, scientists, philosophers, and reporters to debate how – not whether – to tackle climate change. Even the US President signed the landmark accord.

The autumn of 2015 was a tilting moment in world history; Paris was a ground zero for the planet's fears and hopes. While Pope Francis and borderland communities in Jordan, Turkey, Uganda, and many other countries in the global south were taking in millions refugees, a few months later a slim majority of Britons voted to break away from the European Union; Brexiteers shamelessly used images of destitute migrants as a – the – reason to leave. Nigel Farage, leader of the UK Independence Party, posed in front of a giant poster of migrants in the

Balkans a week before the plebiscite. *This*, he gestured, this is why we have to *break free* from Europe and *take back control of our borders*.[3]

Then came the election of Donald Trump and promises to build beautiful walls while deporting millions, the sound of wailing children in border "internment centers" that looked and smelled like concentration camps, Jair Bolsonaro and gleeful promises to raze the Amazon, Narendra Modi and the celebration of second-class citizenship for Muslims in India, Assad's consolidated dictatorship in Syria. And so on.

These examples of our interwoven-yet-polarized world remind us that what happens far away can hit close to home. The fear and the upheaval caused by COVID-19 have been the latest, and dramatic, reminders that what can happen in distant Wuhan can change life in Wisconsin and *vice versa* – and, in commonplace ways we don't often realize. Strangers are present in our lives as never before. Strangers are present not just because images of suffering pull at heartstrings or make us quiver in fear, but because distant fates are tangled in thousands of

[3] https://www.pri.org/stories/2016-06-24/how-brexit-campaign-used-refugees-scare-voters

threads of routine, everyday, ways. Their presence produces a dizzying array of feelings: fear and compassion, pathos and disgust, attachment and aversion.

How to make sense of this confusion of sentiments about strangers? It helps to start with the words we use to organize and classify our thoughts. In an earlier era, a sign of being worldly was being curious about strangers; this found expression above all in the classical cosmopolitan imaginary. There was also a humanitarian tradition, some stemming from Christian belief, that held that strangers should care for each other. But curiosity and care do not quite capture the depth and complexity of what modern global integration has created. The ferment of our times is about something deeper: strangers *need* each other for survival. Food, fuel, medicine, and knowledge that sustain us come from far away. There are also more abstract forms of mutual reliance, like the cladding of security arrangements that (barely) contain nuclear proliferation or shared commitments to curb chlorofluorocarbons from gashing the ozone layer. Words like need and dependency do not necessarily replace curiosity and care. But unpacking them – as this book seeks to do – gives us insight in sharper, edgier, more divergent, emotional responses and arguments that neither curiosity nor caring do. Relying on strangers elicits strong *and* contradictory responses. This needs to be understood now because not since the 1930s has there been so much debate and so much polarization about what it means to live, how to live, in an interdependent world. We know how the 1930s turned out. What awaits us now?

To understand the significance of strangers in the making of the modern world, this book chronicles how trade, technology, and political pressures brought distant strangers close together and merged them into one survival unit. Sometimes, this convergence was physical. People moved on a scale that humans had never done before. Political fusions and divisions sorted people together into enlarged, massive, communities. The merger across long distances could

also be commercial, as societies relied on each others' comparative advantages and resources. In turn, the drive to produce more for more people turned ecological exchange into to the remaking of a single, complex, planetary ecosystem. And all of this was increasingly known, visible, recognized, and at crucial moments, weaponized. Newspapers, televisions, and eventually personal and portable screens, the makeup of modern communications, made these ties more visible, more familiar and more estranging. In other words, as the world became more interdependent, this dependency also became more intervisible, with complicated and often highly charged results.

Returning to Paris in those autumn months of 2015, I had finished most of a draft of this book. Originally called *The Opening of the Global Mind*, the title betrayed its bias, starting with the use of the word "opening." For all the complexity and confusion surrounding our responsibility for the planet and its inhabitants, I believed that there were signs that societies were accumulating historical lessons and accepting that modern challenges, from climate change to forced migration, demanded cross-border solutions for a new scale of life. Yes, there was flailing and resistance, especially in response to the more protracted problems. But: governments and their electorates seemed to be stepping up.

However, the cascading events from late 2015 challenged the fundaments of this book. They forced me to reconsider the ways in which merging strangers' lives produced contradictory, not concerted, sentiments. This was evident even in the groundswells provoked by the photos of Aylan Kurdi. While many turned the child into a martyr and others scowled that he was not their concern, many were fed up with the bombardment of tragic imagery; along with the grief, there was outrage, not just at government (in)action but at humanitarian mongering. This cry of impatience – ENOUGH – crossed my screen in mid-November, 2015:

As the world splintered, even the vocabulary of global integration was coming apart. The post-Cold War narrative of what came to be called globalization rested on a catalogue of uplifting words like opportunity, expansion, and opening. However: that euphoric vocabulary had drowned out other words like risk, loss, and closure, words that slipped through the gaps of unfulfilled promises into growing anxiety. They were more audible in societies which had been grappling with the pressures of austerity, that is among the *piqueteros* of Argentina after the collapse of 2001 or among struggling farmers of desiccated Syria. After 2008, the grievances could be heard more and more in wealthy societies less accustomed to feeling buffeted by global shocks. Lately, those grievances have pooled into powerful nativist movements. For these critics, the once-euphoric globalizers and worldly humanitarians spoke in the abstractions of global citizenry, inattentive to the risks posed by reliance upon strangers and the toll on other citizens. One stranger's opening was another stranger's loss, each side slinging their preferred words at each other. Even the same word – like globalization – could evoke completely different meanings.

How to write a story about global integration that captures the torn and tearing sentiments it produces? I had to square up to the emotional swings that dependence on strangers has

produced, to see boosters and backlashers as voices in an ongoing quarrel about relying on others. Framed this way, the arc of history never has bent in any particular direction – towards "opening" or towards some fatalistic crisis. And yet: what has changed over time are the stakes. Two centuries of cumulative interdependence, thickening webs of trade and cultural exchange and blending, not to mention financial bondage and addiction to fossil fuels, have placed entire species and landscapes on the line. One might say that two centuries of global integration has made us more interdependent, more bountiful and more fractious, without settling the foundational argument.

The word interdependence itself, starting with its prefix, "inter," is a boggy mess; inter means that stuff goes both ways, not just one way. Contrast interdependence with its verbal twin: independence. Independence evokes the idea that reliance goes only in one direction, from one side that needs the other. It's a sign of being stunted, less mature, not grown up, "under"-developed, as if being mature and developed meant autonomy, self-determining. To becoming free has meant breaking away from the tyranny and control of others, to be unconstrained, a master of one's fate. It has been the credo of secessionists for centuries, from the champions of American "independence" in 1776 to Brexiteering 2015. The slogan of the 2015 Brexit campaign in Britain was, it bears recalling, "Take Back Control" – as if there was once control and, even more, as if it never implied controlling others. Dropping the prefix "inter," creates the illusion that one can live in a capitalist world without needing others *and* it obscures the long history of hierarchy and domination that has been part of the modern, capitalist world. It was not accidental that champions of Taking Back Control in Britain appealed to memories, many of them fond enough, of empire. On the US side, the rhetoric of Make America Great Again has never bothered hiding nostalgia for a time in which "America" could tell others what to do. The

secret success of calls to return to some glorious era of autonomy and freedom was that they also implied a return to an order in which freedom-lovers could worry less about the freedom of others. These word games were such effective responses to the inequalities and risks of globalization because they tuned out strangers upon whom one depends and strategically portray them as carpet-baggers or threats; strangers are the ones with needs, not us! With such simple formulae, who wants to celebrate the messy, unsatisfying, burdens that come with *inter*dependence? Who wants to deal with feeling vulnerable, or reckoning with being superior, in a world in which power and reliance flow both ways?

Integration and Resistance

As I rethought my chosen words, the first thing to go was my original title. After that went the narrative core. I had to see that the urge to evict, to fence, to exit, to reach for fuck-you solutions to shared problems was not a last-gasp of nativism; that openings have always implied closures, opportunities come with resentments. What is more, the integration of strangers can also bring estrangement at home, feeling pushed aside by newcomers, eclipsed by talent or low wages overseas, attached to local values when pundits and professors extol the virtues of widened horizons. The bitterness fueled, exploited, and clenched into a mailed fist by Brexiteers and Bolsonaro, Trump and Modi, no matter how aversive they seem to internationalists in the shelter of their certainties, have shadowed global integration from the beginning. Resentment and fear of strangers did not start in recent years as reactions to WTO technocratese or the spectacle of a demographic invasion have been around, in different guises, for centuries.

Seeing the origins and history of our current debate puts backlashing of our day in a new light. One take-away from this account is: it is simply misguided – and self-serving – to see modern resistance as a yearning for splendid isolation. For the most part, what backlashers have wanted is not separation from others but interdependence on their own terms, free of the need to cooperate with, sacrifice for, or listen to strangers, free to deal with risk and threat by dominating strangers. After all, Nation-First – whether it's Trump Americana or Modi's Hindu revanchism – implies that other nations come Second, Third. And Last. Nation-First denotes hierarchy and vertical control by the powerful of the powerless; coercive interdependence, not blissful independence. If there is a place for solidarity, Nation-First alludes to a comradeship of superior castes of nations, races, and creeds prevailing over others. In the nineteenth century, it was a club of white, European, self-anointed civilizing empires. Nowadays, the club is less racially striped, though there are some who yearn for by-gone days of white, Anglo-Saxon, hegemony (those were certainly fumes that intoxicated leading Brexiteers). But it is no less clubby.

So, the debate has not been about interdependence or independence; it has been over what kind of interdependence. To simplify, consider two recognizable positions. The internationalist speaks of welcoming others, of managing open markets by cooperation across borders, even if some of the cooperation be cordoned off for technocrats and the comforts of their expertise. The internationalist gilds mutual dependence with appeals to human rights to moralize a regime held together by shared interests in security and prosperity. Then, there are Nation-Firsters who tend to be more suspicious of strangers, who appeal to the use of power and not compromise, and dispense with rhetorical nods to human rights or the plight of the powerless. But they still want access to supply chains for baubles and distant markets to sell their produce. Nation-Firsters stock less in compassion and more in command to manage and to

rule. Backlashers don't want isolation; they are lashing out against internationalism, unafraid to call out (and to exaggerate and to mock) its blindspots, shortfalls, and hollow rhetoric.

My own sympathies lie with internationalists, if only because they are more open to admitting dissent and acknowledge their own limits. But I hasten to add that this willingness is too often reluctant and incomplete. Internationalists have a propensity to hubris. When they wave off dissent and forget humility – as the globalizing chest-beaters did in the heady years after the Cold War – they create lasting problems. Backlashers have been effective at spotlighting what the internationalists waved away. It was Nation-Firsters who have seen that political power, in the end, reduces to national polities even if world markets criss-cross them. It has been their cunning, now and in earlier times, to seize the language of the nation as a banner of resistance to the effects of interdependence. Internationalists of all kinds, by 2015, had few effective answers that did not ask national citizens to cede ever more control to unelected rulers, whether in the WTO or in the proliferating world of non-governmental organizations far away.

The struggle for answers to vexing questions about global fusion and national control flows through the last two centuries like a great river. It has yielded to major wars and exterminations as well as heroic efforts at peace and respect. Revisiting earlier debates means confronting how interdependence yields a tension between rival impulses and their respective affective states, optimism and pessimism, euphorias and dysphorias. As societies have confronted the interdependence of the human survival unit – now utterly and inescapably planetary – they have responded in contradictory ways.[4] This is not because some people are bad and others good, some realistic and others naïve, some caring and others not. It is because *need* produces mixed sentiments from the same origin point. Like truth and lies, love and hate,

[4] On survival units, see Norbert Elias, *What is Sociology?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 134

cooperation and competition, sympathy and threat are coiled together. If we can accept this, hold two contradictory sets of ideas and impulses in our heads at the same time, it might be easier to talk in less adversarial, stand-my-ground, terms – because it means seeing that what binds also divides; needing others can be comforting and agonizing at the same time.

The story of the world's fractured unity has been less about the triumph of one style of thinking – opening over closure, for instance – and more as an epic debate, one that has swung back and forth, mobilized new actors and exterminated others, while becoming ever-more diverse and polyphonic. Interdependence, from the moment that observers began to reflect on it, has been contested. For some it has meant freedom, for others oppression. Interdependence has inspired utopias of a united humanity. It has also stirred fears of domination and extinction, of winner-take-all struggles for survival. Once local worlds folded (or got folded) into one interdependent world, how humans came to deal with, to embrace and to resist, dependence upon strangers would define the modern condition.

On one thing celebrants and critics have agreed. Once in place, interdependence is inescapable. The nature of dependency bolts parts together by making it punitive to defect; there is no escape from the stranger. The reasons are complex and shift with time. Looking back over the previous two centuries of world history, it is notable how seldom societies sought to cut away from the fabric of interdependence; the costs of remaining outside the world market or of breaking from it were so punishing that defection was the rare exception. Those that tried exit faced annihilation: instruments of extinction from the nineteenth century, dispossession of humans from their homelands and herding into concentration camps, were not side-effects of integration. Violence was intrinsic to global integration because many resisted getting locked in. Once locked, the struggle was less over how to defect than how to correct the world system.

This is important because inescapability adds fuel to the affective tension. For some, it is a good thing and appeals to the idea, if not ideal, of a transcendent humanity. For others, it presents an existential threat; the stranger's gain is one's loss. No wonder that integration has been a globe-spanning debate for the past two centuries. The wonder is that we have avoided seeing it this way.

Little Finger

In earlier times, strangers appeared in markets and temples where they bought and sold goods and shared prophecies from far away. Migrants settled among natives. Merchants hawked spices and exotic cloths. Direct interactions among strangers yielded codes of behavior and exchange. It was relatively easy to hold strangers accountable: the merchandise, after all, could be inspected on the spot. One could shake hands.

The nineteenth century brought a fundamental shift. The spread of empires, free trade, foreign investment, and mass migration – enabled by screw propellers, long-distance cables, the mechanization of print, railways, and steam – opened the world of villages into an integrated, and increasingly interdependent, unit. Near-strangers remained fixtures of life; handshaking went on. But the upheavals of the nineteenth century meant that societies got tethered to distant-strangers who were not just culturally remote but physically separated. Global ties widened the horizons of opportunities while thinning the bonds between people who depended on each other.

Some observers saw new openings and potential perils coming. Notably, a group of Scottish writers worried about what has been called "dilemma of distance." It obsessed them.[5]

[5] Silvia Sebastiani, "What Constituted Historical Evidence of the New World? Closeness and Distance in William Robertson and Francisco Javier Clavijero," *Modern Intellectual History*, 11:3 (August, 2014), pp. 677-695

They saw how the rise of commercial society could generate bonds of sympathy between people; they also foresaw that as commerce reached into remote corners, it also stretched these bonds, thinned them out. Let's start with the bonding. The founder of modern economics, Adam Smith, argued that morals and markets conspired to create virtues, trust, politeness, and respect – practices that glued societies together. In one of his most famous passages of *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), Smith argued that the division of labor appealed to self-interest *and* brought people into a common purpose. In Book One, Chapter Two, he noted famously that "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages." For Smith, humans didn't have an innate regard and love for each other; their instinct for self-preservation and pursuit of advantage drove them to reciprocal association with others. In effect, it was not noblesse but necessity that brought people together into mutual regard and tethered them through specialization.

This is crucial: Smith was commenting not just on the needs *of* strangers but the need *for* strangers. It was, he believed, in the self-interest of people to depend on each other. The need for strangers would trigger the regard of strangers' needs. From this flowed a harmony of human forces that pushed societies forwards and upwards.

Smith's friend, David Hume, took the argument for interdependence a step further. It was, he argued, commercial nations that were "both the happiest and most virtuous." In an essay he wrote in 1752, and which deeply influenced Smith's thinking about trade, Hume explained that "industry, knowledge, and humanity, are linked together by an indissoluble chain, and are found from experience as well as reason, to be peculiar to the more polished, and are what are

more commonly denominated, the more luxurious ages." It was from trade among strangers and the spread of consumption that people learned habit of "conversing together." And of all trade, the most beneficial is foreign trade. Here Hume advanced his case for a congenital model of interdependence to its acme. Foreign trade exposes peoples of the world to different goods, tastes, and desires. It "rouses men from their indolence; and presenting the gayer and more opulent part of the nation with objects of luxury, which they have never before dreamed of, raises in them a desire of a more splendid way of life than their ancestors enjoyed."[6] Since Hume and Smith's time, it has been a basic precept of an optimistic view of progress – even if, in the hands of some would-be Smithian devotees, the moral side of his argument often got elbowed aside by the market side.

Smith and his peers could have stopped there. But they did not. There was a problem. What happened as distance crept in? What happened when strangers became less visible to each other, when they lived beyond familiar moral communities of the village, or even the nation? This is where it is important to reckon with the ways commerce also thinned the bonds of human-to-human relations even as it multiplied and extended them. Distance had been haunting Smith even before he made the case for the virtues of self- interest. It was a wrinkle in his scheme. As a young philosopher in Glasgow, and borrowing from Hume, he fastened on what he called the "mutual sympathy of sentiments" as a bedrock of social relations; sympathy was the underlying fabric that curbed self-interest's potentially ruinous urges, restraining its dangerous passions, like avarice, to make them more "social." However, it was one thing to have sympathy for neighbors or near-strangers; it was quite another to project the same feeling to far-strangers.

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[6] "Of Refinement in the Arts," quoted in Margaret Schabas & Carl Winnerlind, *A Philosopher's Economist" Hume and the Rise of Capitalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), pp. 114 & 127.

Could one be separated and sympathetic at the same time? Integration and specialization spread the bonds of mutual needs, but could they induce mutual sympathy in equal measure? Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (published in 1759) speculated on the human capacity to sympathize with the suffering for those far away. Smith wondered how "a man of humanity" might feel about learning of the plight of many Chinese swallowed up by an earthquake? One might imagine this gentleman sipping his green tea from Canton. Of course, Smith noted, he would study the effects of the earthquake "upon the commerce of Europe, and the trade and business of the world in general." And then? "And when all this fine philosophy was over, when all these humane sentiments had been once fairly expressed, he would pursue his business or his pleasure, take his repose or his diversion, with the same ease and tranquillity, as if no such accident had happened." In one of his memorable passages, Smith squared up to the diminishing power of sympathy for those suffering far away:

> "If he [this imagined man of humanity] was to lose his little finger to-morrow, he would not sleep to-night; but, provided he never saw them [the suffering Chinese], he will snore with the most profound security over the ruin of a hundred millions of his brethren, and the destruction of that immense multitude seems plainly an object less interesting to him, than this paltry misfortune of his own."[7]

Keyword in this passage are *provided he never saw them*. That's what distance did: made the fortunes of strangers invisible and unimaginable back home. Remember this passage because it will be relevant to our discussion below when we consider the new technologies of long-distance visibility. For now, we need to unpack the little finger problem. Does one lose sleep over the plight of endangered far-strangers or the prospect of losing a little finger? That Smith could anticipate this as the commercial trucking between Asia and Europe, the Americas and Africa, was just scratching the surface of how societies met their material necessities by merging

[7] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1976), p. 233

them, is one reason he was prophetic. He predicted a predicament. Adam Smith and David Hume worried that "beneficence" tended to fade as a stranger receded from the spectatorial center. The dynamic resembles, Hume noted in his *Treatise of Human Nature* (Book Three, Section Three on "Of Goodness and Benevolence"), "all objects [that] seem to diminish by their distance." This was how a painful little finger might obsess someone more than the death of thousands of strangers far away.[8]

Herein lay the dilemma for the prophets of capitalism before its triumph.[9] While specialization and mutual need created structural bonds of necessity that pressed the horizons of interdependence into the distance, the regard for strangers was contingent. There was no physical law, no gravitational pull, drawing people to be more social with far-strangers, no automatic trigger to summon what Hume called "tender passions" to accompany the mutuality of cold self-interest. The word tender was central to Hume's ruminations. But tenderness sparred with other emotions like courage, ambition, and greed, which were potentially destructive and could dispose people to be "a tyrant and public robber." There was, in other words, a duel of

[8] And yet, Hume hoped, there was reason to stock faith in "calm judgements concerning the characters of men." For when the passions got restrained and the sympathies got aroused by exchanges across distance, the problem of distance might dissolve. "Besides, that we ourselves often change our situation in this particular, we every day meet with persons, who are in a different situation from ourselves, and who could never converse with us on any reasonable terms, were we to remain constantly in that situation and point of view, which is peculiar to us." In other words, the propensity in commercial society for people to move, to trade, to encounter others, enables people to see differently and to see difference. "The intercourse of sentiments, therefore, in society and conversation, makes us form some general inalterable standard, by which we may approve or disapprove of characters and manners." Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, B3.3.3; Fonna Forman-Barzlai, *Adam Smith and the Circles of Sympathy: Cosmopolitanism and Moral Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 5. Hume was groping for a way to gauge human conduct beyond the immediate customs and obligations that governed intimate worlds, to measure the human ability to sustain well-mannered regard for others they could not know or see. Hume's account of sympathy was more congenital than Smith's; Smith saw more obstacles and recognized the complex cognitive steps implied in connecting strangers.

[9] Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before its Triumph* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977)

passions within each member of commercial society. And there was little to predict whether tenderness or greed might prevail.

The very same commercial society that fostered interdependence, motivated the appreciation of arts and luxuries and bred good manners also pushed strangers apart; the bonds of sympathy did not automatically keep pace with the spread of self-interest. Eighteenth-century thinkers like Smith and Hume anticipated a tension that would grow as economies, technologies, and migrations stitched the world together in a way that they could scarcely imagine. At the time, if they fretted about waning sympathy as distance grew, they worried more about indifference, a lack of caring about strangers even as strangers needed each other. They worried less about cruelty (with the exception of slavery, which was a thorn in the side of their market schema). They could not quite see how fading sympathy for far-strangers might induce some people to act in beastly and exploitative ways. Even in the case of slavery, the hope was that expanding commercial society would make it obsolete, which became a staple for slavery's squirming Enlightened apologists. Smith and Hume could not foresee how the need for strangers might lead to more than indifference; it might yield resentments and anxieties that drove some strangers to demote and dehumanize others.

Intervisible world

The debate over what it has meant to need strangers might not have been so ferocious were it not for that fact that interdependence *did* become visible. What the eighteenth-century prophets could not see coming, and why they presumed that it was the threat of indifference that grew with distance, and not cruelty and dispossession, was a transformation in media and

communications. News agents, reporters, and valuable knowledge flowed across borders as commodities, migrants, and capital did. Indeed, the circulation of information enabled and prompted the flows of products and people in pursuit of opportunities. As a result, distant-strangers lived far away but they were not unseen; interdependence coiled with the emergence of a society of spectacles, one in which remote social relations were mediated by news, stories, and images. "We are speaking of the elements of the new commercial relationships," noted the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas: "the traffic in commodities and news created by early capitalist long-distance trade." The old vertical relationships of dependence, associated with local life and feudal ways, got eclipsed by "a far-reaching network of horizontal economic dependencies."[10]

Few forces gave more immediacy and visibility to emerging dependencies than the movement of photographic images and the creation of a "documentary vision."[11] The camera joined the mobility of information and changed how people saw the world, partly because envisioning became more accessible, but also because the camera changed vision itself. Photographs could be reproduced and disseminated cheaply, and contained the sense of immediacy, objectivity, of being there, becoming a witness to events without being present. Images, like that of Aylan Kurdi, super-charged the affective dimensions of living in a shrinking world. They made togetherness a spectacle and heightened complex and contradictory affective responses.

Creating and sharing a documentary vision went beyond the pros. The camera turned its possessor into a chronicler; because it was cheap and appeared (unlike academically-credentialed

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[10] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1989), orig 1962, p. 13.
[11] Nathan Jurgenson, *The Social Photo: On Photography and Social Media* (New York/London: Verso, 2019), p. 2

painters) easy to master, the urge to produce and circulate portraits of distant people and places multiplied the quantity and personalized the kind of distant encounters. The circulation of stories and images was also the handiwork of amateurs who did not live off the sale of their reporting but who brokered it for other ends to make an interdependent world an intervisible one. One only has to think of postcards or images taken on smart phones while on vacation far away to be posted on Instagram – or, for that matter, the way in which the documentary vision has chronicled police brutality in Belarus or Minnesota. The advent of digital photography and social media closed the cycle of amateur production and circulation – and made images of strangers more commonplace, fluid, impermanent, ever more liquid and ubiquitous.[12] This was how Nilüfer Demir's shot of Aylan Kurdi blended into the home-made collages from Aleppo rooftops.

When my grandfather left Canada for China as a missionary in the 1930s, his vessel docked first in Hong Kong. He clamored down the gangplank to hunt down a camera store to get a Leica, a recently invented fast and portable machine of his own. He was fascinated by the latest gadget. Already, the Leica was becoming a legend and would become a staple of photoreportage of atrocities starting with the Spanish Civil War. We will explore this aspect of interdependence in due course. For now, what is important about the amateur like Reverend William Smith, is that making interdependence visible world took multiple, commonplace, and industrialized, forms. It also served many purposes. My grandfather recorded his travels and his missioning to create stories of the toil of layering a moral economy on to the world's market economy. He appealed to parishioners in Canada for their prayers and to raise money for the proselytizing business. He was not in it to save money; his commitment was to save souls. But

[12] Jurgenson, *The Social Photo*, p. 21

he did need money; the images were one effective way to stir Canadians to set aside a share of their meager inter-war savings to support a far-away mission. The photograph below, taken around 1933 of an itinerant vendor who used a sail to propel his barrow across the flatlands of rural Shandong, became a staple of posters and slide shows my grandfather exhibited to co-believers back home. Like so many other missionaries, adventurers, and scientists, amateurs in the making of a world of spectacles, Reverend Smith also contributed to the ways in which strangers regarded each other. In his case it was in common pursuit of God's grace.

Pros and amateurs, Nilüfer Demir and Reverend Smith, were among the many involved in recording the world as it was integrating. Documenting the world was part of the integrating process because information, in the form of statistics, stories, and images, was becoming valuable. Information moved along with the other elements put in motion by converging worlds and collapsing walls. This was how the traffic in commodities, people, capital, and information raveled together to form an intervisible and interdependent order. In so doing, a new forum emerged for debating the world as it was coming into being, a theatre for rival narratives, contested explanations, and complex feelings triggered by the need for strangers.

The need for strangers has been debated since it dawned on observers in the eighteenth century. Ever since, we have been arguing and agreeing over what it has meant to rely on strangers who live far away for food, fuel, fibers, and recognition. The need for strangers aroused elation for the peace and riches it promised as well as anxiety and apprehension about being forgotten, falling behind, losing to competitors or finding one's neck under someone else's jackboot. Though the world's parts converged, there was never a convergence of opinion.

I had not fully appreciated how sharing the earth necessarily provoked disputes when drafting this book five years ago, when I thought the arc of history was bending – windingly but inexorably – to a more enlightened conception of regard for strangers. I had not recognized its shadow, which grows when interdependence seems riskier, menacing, when the specter of shortage looms, when rivals forage for necessities among other peoples and their lands.

By the time a financial crisis hit in 2008, and the commentariat buzzed about black swans, zombie banks, and systemic collapses, the world fell into an economic crisis and a conceptual impasse at the same time. The apostles of globalization had waved away resistances and alarms as if they were the rasping voices of a passing time. But they missed the point about the anxieties of integration, including the fear of estrangement in one's own land, made a relic by supply chains that seemed to rout everywhere but home.[13] And as the difficulties – not to say failures – coordinating a response to a global pandemic in 2020 remind us, the impasse could be lethal. The spectacle of Chinese and American leaders hurling conspiracy theories at each other like angry children, or armed vigilantes in Greece and India patrolling shores to stop destitute refugees from disembarking on their shores, are only more recent unseemly examples of the rancor of interdependence – even though it was rising interdependence that enabled economies to

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[13] Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Strangers in their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (New York: The New Press, 2016).

grow and cultures to flourish. The gleam on the post-Cold War globalization was gone. With it went the sense of purpose or bounty; all that seems left is the danger. As if to seal the conundrum that global fusion is ever more deep and ever more dangerous, scientists coined a new term, the Anthropocene, to depict a inescapable fate of horrific potential wrought by co-dependence on fossil fuels and a determination to spread the bounty of market life.

Fears and suspicion have played into the hands of those who would remake interdependence in the eye of the powerful. Some might say that this is just a return to normal, the restoration of a much-needed hierarchy after decades of flat-earth talk. It became easy, especially after the financial crisis of 2008 widened the chasm between haves and have-nots, to view internationalists as unmoored dreamers or sheer opportunists who neglected their backyards or preferred to meddle in other peoples' yards with too much faith in unenforceable treaties and wooly rhetoric of obligations to protect needy strangers. Obligations to whom, asked backlashers? Strangers far away or citizens back home? But in championing a bare-knuckled hierarchy, backlashers also missed a point about the *inter* of interdependence. It goes both ways. Nation-Firsters exaggerated what anyone – even a Leviathan with an outsized self-image and too little understanding of others – can fix upon a world of strangers. It is in the nature of integration that strangers affect lives far away no matter how much one yearns to control them.

If the troubles of our times put to rest the certainties of the neo-liberal formulae, they also remind us that, as we bicker, the hierarchy of Nation-Firsters are no closer to solving basic problems. In fact, they compound them. Meanwhile, the clock is ticking. Climate change and the global migrant crisis have made shared solutions to common problems indispensable and urgent. Any resolution begins with a more enlightened debate – and better arguments. For that

to happen, we need an understanding of the crooked path to the present and how it has been twisted by mixed feelings about needing strangers.