

Boundary and Presence

I woke up Thursday morning (April 20) and turned on AM 900, a pretty good little talk radio station (always a little right-wing, but not too right-wing). It was 5:30 in the morning and morning show hosts said that police had just been dispatched to the native protest in Caledonia (I believe this made national headlines). Caledonia is small town neighboring Canada's largest native reserve. Some native people moved onto a section of land under development claiming it was rightfully theirs. This was interesting, but all the more interesting to me as I knew that I would have to drive through Caledonia to pick some materials for work that morning.

As I approached the small picturesque town (most small towns in southern Ontario seem to at least be quaint) I realized that I would need to turn before reaching the disputed area. As good grace would have it there was construction at my turn-off. I could have turned around and tried another route but I thought, "Why not go a little further?" Before I knew it a scene emerged ahead of me where large trucks were pulled across the highway, gravel was dumped on it, black smoke billowed into the sky (I found out later that these may have indeed functioned as 'smoke signals'), police cars and officers were scattered throughout the town, and radio reports offered contradicting reports of what happened ('force' has used on both sides of the conflict).

It struck me that this story would have had little to no impact on me had I not come into its *presence*.

Most of life is lived in well maintained boundaries. And indeed this must be so. Our bodies only function within the boundaries of our skin. The difference of form whether in art, language, or culture only exists with boundaries. However, to engage with life around us things must pass through or boundaries. Air must enter our lungs, food our stomach, and, well, other things must enter other things for life as know it to continue. It is this largely this final unspoken (or overspoken) reality of sex that bridges our concepts of the seen and the unseen boundaries. In our sexuality we carry the greatest possibilities of triumph and terror. Here accepted frameworks of belief and practice strain under the force of our god-like but fallen selves.

Our sexuality does not and will not lay down to prescribed categories, and here I return to Caledonia. The native position (as I have witnessed it) is one where, for whatever other complexities are involved, a people have not lived along the boundaries set for them. If the national government is our "body" then with the native community there exists the constant possibility of haemorrhaging. The native "bloodline" will flow along its given channels until it is met with obstruction (the police moving in Thursday morning). Caledonia began to throb with the possibility that its citizen's established life was no longer tenable in the relation to native reserve it bordered.

What I reflected on was that this carried with it the great and terrible possibility of holiness. Those in its path would either be cleansed in its flow or charred in its wake. In any event, that morning was a reminder that we live largely to insulate ourselves from

such possibilities. Most experiences with the intimate realities of another can at best be called “raw.” This was not so for the Israelites. While both the Tabernacle and Temple were highly ordered structures they existed for the express purpose inviting or perhaps enduring the holy presence of God. But Christians believe that the Temple curtain has been torn and holiness is on the prowl, hugging the walls of constructed social forms pressing at seams, unrelenting in its movement and engagement with us. As an evangelical I need to discard irreverent notions of achieved holiness. “Be holy as I am holy.” This is not a call to action. This is only one of two possible options. Be holy as I am holy, or as with the sons of Aaron, be consumed as I come into your presence as I find the gate to the Temple of your body.