

Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism

By: Benedict Anderson

The question of belonging or national identity rarely has a straightforward answer. For me, it is especially so. I am a United States citizen of mixed Jewish and ethnic Ukrainian ancestry – identities that have occasionally been a point of confusion even in my own family.

I was raised in Saint Petersburg and came to the US as a teenager following the collapse of the Soviet Union. To my American peers, I am simply Russian even though my ancestors hail from Zaporizhzhia and Korosten, which are two cities that belong to modern-day Ukraine but have been subject to a litany of territorial disputes over centuries.

I can trace the rise of nationalism in my own lived experience across all three of my countries of origin. For example, when I was a child, the distinction between Russian and Ukrainian was of relatively little consequence, we were all Soviet. Unlike other Soviet Republics annexed by force, Ukraine and Russia's union was one of the less objectionable ones. But as the Soviet regime fell, the purchase of national distinctions came back with a vengeance. By the time I reached my twenties, Putin's anti-Western propaganda machine had rendered me a suspicious American to the few people I left behind in Saint Petersburg that I call friends. Now, not only was I suspect for my Jewishness but this scrutiny was backed up by my so-called Western-ness.

Today my family is scattered between the diasporas of refugees who settled in the United States and Israel. As a Soviet Jew, there is an irony

that is not lost on me that I contemplate nationhood at a time when Russia is bombing the people of Zaporizhzhia – technically a mostly Russian-identifying population – under the pretext of answering “Ukrainian aggression.” While at the same time, Palestinians in Gaza are preparing for Israel’s second naked attempt at a revanchist land grab. To positively affirm a sense of national belonging at the crossroads of these histories is at best absurd and at worst perverse.

As nationalist movements reignite across the globe, I wish to explore the origins of nationalism in order to imagine a world no longer in its shadow. I am excited to read one of the most influential studies on the topic, and I invite others to join me as a means to make sense of the present. Together, we might sketch an alternative to a world fractured by a logic of division and exclusion.

– Masha Yamnitski

Anderson – Imagined Communities Introduction

If the Vietnamese invasion and occupation of Cambodia in December 1978 and January 1979 represented the first *large-scale conventional war* waged by one revolutionary Marxist regime against another, China's assault on Vietnam in February rapidly confirmed the precedent. Only the most trusting would dare wager that in the declining years of this century any significant outbreak of interstate hostilities will necessarily find the USSR and the PRC – let alone the smaller socialist states – supporting, or fighting on, the same side. Who can be confident that Yugoslavia and Albania will not one day come to blows? Those variegated groups who seek a withdrawal of the Red Army from its encampments in Eastern Europe should remind themselves of the degree to which its overwhelming presence has, since 1945, ruled out armed conflict between the region's Marxist regimes.

Such considerations serve to underline the fact that since World War II every successful revolution has defined itself in *national* terms – the People's Republic of China, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and so forth – and, in so doing, has grounded itself firmly in a territorial and social space inherited from the prerevolutionary past. Conversely, the fact that the Soviet Union shares with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland the rare distinction of refusing nationality in its naming suggests that it is as much the legatee of the prenational dynastic states of the nineteenth century as the precursor of a twenty-first century internationalist order. (1–2)

Nation, nationality, nationalism – all have proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone to analyse. In contrast to the immense influence that nationalism has exerted on the modern world, plausible theory about it is conspicuously meagre. ... [One important historian, who holds a Marxist view of historical change, for example, confesses] 'The theory of nationalism represents Marxism's great historical failure.' But even this confession is somewhat misleading, insofar as it can be taken to imply the regrettable outcome of a long, self-conscious search for theoretical clarity. It would be more exact to say that nationalism has proved an uncomfortable *anomaly* for Marxist theory and, precisely for that reason, has been largely elided, rather than confronted. How else to explain Marx's failure to explicate the crucial adjective in his memorable formulation of 1848: 'The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its *own* bourgeoisie'? How else to account for the use, for over a century, of the concept 'national bourgeoisie' without any serious attempt to justify theoretically the relevance of the adjective? Why is this segmentation of the bourgeoisie – a world-class insofar as it is defined in terms of the relations of production – theoretically significant? (3–4)

The aim of this book is to offer some tentative suggestions for a more satisfactory interpretation of the 'anomaly' of nationalism. ... My point of departure is that nationality, or, as one might prefer to put it in view of that word's multiple significations, nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind. To understand them properly we need to consider carefully how they have come into historical being, in what ways their meanings have changed over time, and why, today, they command such profound emotional legitimacy. I will be trying to argue that the creation of these artefacts towards the end of the eighteenth century was the spontaneous distillation of a complex 'crossing' of discrete historical forces; but that, once created, they became 'modular,' capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations.

In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.

It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. ... [A]ll communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps

even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined. (4, 5–6)

The nation is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind.

It is imagined as *sovereign* because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm. Coming to maturity at a stage of human history when even the most devout adherents of any universal religion were inescapably confronted with the living *pluralism* of such religions.

Finally, it is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings. (7)

Chapter 2: Cultural Roots

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In Western Europe the eighteenth century marks not only the dawn of the age of nationalism but the dusk of religious modes of thought. The century of the Enlightenment, of rationalist secularism, brought with it its own modern darkness. With the ebbing of religious belief, the suffering which belief in part composed did not disappear. Disintegration of paradise: nothing makes fatality more arbitrary. Absurdity of salvation: nothing makes another style of continuity more necessary. **What then was required was a secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning.** As we shall see, few things were (are) better suited to this end than an idea of nation. If nation-states are widely conceded to be 'new' and 'historical,' the nations to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past, and, still more important, glide into a limitless future. It is the magic of nationalism to turn chance into destiny. With Debray we might say, 'Yes, it is quite accidental that I am born French; but after all, France is eternal.'

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If Maguindanao met Berbers in Mecca, knowing nothing of each other's languages, incapable of communicating orally, they nonetheless understood each other's ideographs, *because* the sacred texts they shared existed only in classical Arabic. In this sense, written Arabic functioned like Chinese characters to create a community out of signs, not sounds. (So today mathematical language continues an old tradition. Of what the Thai call + Rumanians have no idea, and vice versa, but both comprehend the symbol.) **All the great classical communities conceived of themselves as cosmically central, through the medium of a sacred language linked to a superterrestrial order of power.** Accordingly, the stretch of written Latin, Pali, Arabic, or Chinese was, in theory, unlimited. (In fact, the deader the written language - the farther it was from speech - the better: in principle everyone has access to a pure world of signs.)

...

It would be a mistake to view the [literati of these societies] as a kind of theological technocracy. The languages they sustained, if abstruse, had none of the self-arranged abstruseness of lawyers' or economists' jargons, on the margin of society's idea of reality. Rather, the literati were adepts, strategic strata in a cosmological hierarchy of which the apex was divine. The fundamental conceptions about 'social groups' were centripetal and hierarchical, rather than boundary-oriented and horizontal.

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What is so remarkable about this passage [on Marco Polo's meeting with Kublai Khan] is not so much the great Mongol dynast's calm religious relativism (it is still a *religious* relativism), as Marco Polo's attitude and language. It never occurs to him, even though he is writing for fellow-European Christians, to term Kublai a hypocrite or an idolater. (No doubt in part because 'in respect to number of subjects, extent of territory, and amount of revenue, he surpasses every sovereign that has heretofore been or that now is in the world.') 'their'), and the description of the faith of the Christians as 'truest,' rather than 'true,' we can detect the seeds of a territorialization of faiths which foreshadows the language of many nationalists ('our' nation is 'the best'- in a competitive, *comparative field*).

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These days it is perhaps difficult to put oneself empathetically into a world in which the dynastic realm appeared for most men as the only imaginable 'political' system. For in fundamental ways 'serious' monarchy lies transverse to all modern conceptions of political life. Kingship organizes everything around a high centre. Its legitimacy derives from divinity, not from populations, who, after all, are subjects, not citizens. In the modern conception, state sovereignty is fully, flatly, and evenly operative over each square centimetre of a legally demarcated territory. **But in the older imagining, where states were defined by centres, borders were porous and indistinct, and sovereignties faded imperceptibly into one another.** Hence, paradoxically

enough, the ease with which pre-modern empires and kingdoms were able to sustain their rule over immensely heterogeneous, and often not even contiguous, populations for long periods of time.

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(Discussing the depiction of Biblical icons in local attire)

[The] juxtaposition of the cosmic-universal and the mundane-particular meant that however vast Christendom might be, and was sensed to be, it manifested itself *variously* to particular Swabian or Andalusian communities as replications of themselves. Figuring the Virgin Mary with 'Semitic' features or first-century' costumes in the restoring spirit of the modern museum was unimaginable because the mediaeval Christian mind had no conception of history as an endless chain of cause and effect or of radical separations between past and present. Bloch observes that people thought they must be near the end of time, in the sense that Christ's second coming could occur at any moment: St. Paul had said that 'the day of the Lord cometh like a thief in the night.' It was thus natural for the great twelfth-century chronicler Bishop Otto of Freising to refer repeatedly to we who have been placed at the end of time.' Bloch concludes that as soon as mediaeval men 'gave themselves up to meditation, nothing was farther from their thoughts than the prospect of a long future for a young and vigorous human race.'

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What is the essential literary convention of the newspaper? If we were to look at a sample front page of, say, *The New York Times*, we might find there stories about Soviet dissidents, famine in Mali, a gruesome murder, a coup in Iraq, the discovery of a rare fossil in Zimbabwe, and a speech by Mitterrand. Why are these events so juxtaposed? What connects them to each other? Not sheer caprice. Yet obviously most of them happen independently, without the actors being aware of each other or of what the others are up to. The arbitrariness of their inclusion and juxtaposition (a later edition will substitute a baseball triumph for Mitterrand) shows that the linkage between them is imagined.

This imagined linkage derives from two obliquely related sources. The first is simply calendrical coincidence. The date at the top of the newspaper, the single most important emblem on it, provides the essential connection — the steady onward clocking of homogeneous, empty time. Within that time, 'the world' ambles sturdily ahead. The sign for this: if Mali disappears from the pages of *The New York Times* after two days of famine reportage, for months on end, readers do not for a moment imagine that Mali has disappeared or that famine has wiped out all its citizens. The novelistic format of the newspaper assures them that somewhere out there the 'character' Mali moves along quietly, awaiting its next reappearance in the plot.

...

The obsolescence of the newspaper on the morrow of its printing - curious that one of the earlier mass produced commodities should so prefigure the inbuilt obsolescence of modern durables - nonetheless, for just this reason, creates this extraordinary mass ceremony: the almost precisely simultaneous consumption ('imagining') of the newspaper-as-fiction.

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At bottom, it is likely that the esotericization of Latin, the Reformation, and the haphazard development of administrative vernaculars are significant, in the present context, primarily in a negative sense — in their contributions to the dethronement of Latin. It is quite possible to conceive of the emergence of the new imagined national communities without any one, perhaps all, of them being present. What, in a positive sense, made the new communities imaginable was a half-fortuitous, but explosive, interaction between a system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications (print), and the fatality of human linguistic diversity.

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Nothing served to 'assemble' related vernaculars more than capitalism, which, within the limits imposed by grammars and syntaxes, created mechanically reproduced print-languages capable of dissemination through the market.

These print-languages laid the bases for national consciousnesses in three distinct ways. First and foremost, they created unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars. Speakers of the huge variety of Frenches, Englishes, or Spanishes, who might find it difficult or even impossible to understand one another in conversation, became capable of comprehending one another via print and paper. In the process, they gradually became aware of the hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people in their particular language-field, and at the same time that only those hundreds of thousands, or millions, so belonged. These fellow-readers, to whom they were connected through print, formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community.

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Second, print-capitalism gave a new fixity to language, which in the long run helped to build that image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation. As Febvre and Martin remind us, the printed book kept a permanent form, capable of virtually infinite reproduction, temporally and spatially....To put it another way, for three centuries now these stabilized print-languages have been gathering a darkening varnish; the words of our seventeenth-century forebears are accessible to us in a way that to Villon his twelfth-century ancestors were not.

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Third, print-capitalism created languages-of-power of a kind different from the older administrative vernaculars. Certain dialects inevitably were 'closer' to each print-language and dominated their final forms.... It remains only to emphasize that in their origins, the fixing of print-languages and the differentiation of status between them were largely unselfconscious processes resulting from the explosive interaction between capitalism, technology and human linguistic diversity. But as with so much else in the history of nationalism, once 'there,' they could become formal models to be imitated, and, where expedient, consciously exploited in a Machiavellian spirit. Today, the Thai government actively discourages attempts by foreign missionaries to provide its hill-tribe minorities with their own transcription-systems and to develop publications in their own languages: the same government is largely indifferent to what these minorities speak.

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We can summarize the conclusions to be drawn from the argument thus far by saying that the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation. The potential stretch of these communities was inherently limited, and, at the same time, bore none but the most fortuitous relationship to existing political boundaries (which were, on the whole, the highwater marks of dynastic expansionisms).

Imagined Communities – Creole Pioneers

The new American states of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are of unusual interest because it seems almost impossible to explain them in terms of two factors which ... have dominated much provincial European thinking about the rise of nationalism.

In the first place, whether we think of Brazil, the USA, or the former colonies of Spain, language was not an element that differentiated them from their respective imperial metropolises.

In the second place, there are serious reasons to doubt the [prevailing thesis that modern nationalism in the American colonies took root because colonial functionaries, sympathetic to the cause of independence, sought to channel the power of a growing underclass by including them into political life.]

Far from seeking to 'induct the lower classes into political life,' one key factor initially spurring the drive for independence from Madrid, in such important cases as Venezuela, Mexico and Peru, was the *fear* of 'lower-class' political mobilizations: to wit, Indian or Negro-slave uprisings. When, in 1789, Madrid issued a new, more humane, slave law specifying in detail the rights and duties of masters and slaves, 'the creóles rejected state intervention on the grounds that slaves were prone to vice and independence [!], and were essential to the economy. In Venezuela – indeed all over the Spanish Caribbean – planters resisted the law and procured its suspension in 1794.

Here then is the riddle: why was it precisely *creóle* communities that developed so early conceptions of their nation-ness – well before most of Europe? Why did such colonial provinces, usually containing oppressed, non-Spanish-speaking populations, produce creóles who consciously redefined these populations as fellow-nationals? And Spain, to whom they were, in so many ways, attached, as an enemy alien? Why did the Spanish-American Empire, which had existed calmly for almost three centuries, quite suddenly fragment into eighteen separate states? (47, 49, 50)

[Spain's greedy extraction from the colonies and the spirit of liberalism] while central to any understanding of the impulse of resistance in the Spanish Americas, do not in themselves explain why entities like Chile, Venezuela, and Mexico turned out to be emotionally plausible and politically viable. ... Nor, ultimately, do they account for the real sacrifices made. For while it is certain that the upper creóle classes, *conceived as historical social formations*, did nicely out of independence over the long haul, many actual members of those classes *living* between 1808 and 1828 were financially ruined. (To take only one example: during Madrid's counter-offensive of 1814-16 'more than two-thirds of Venezuela's landowning families suffered heavy confiscations.') And just as many willingly gave up their lives for the cause. This willingness to sacrifice on the part of comfortable classes is food for thought.

What then? The beginnings of an answer lie in the striking fact that 'each of the new South American republics had been an administrative unit from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century.' In this respect they foreshadowed the new states of Africa and parts of Asia in the mid-twentieth century, and form a sharp contrast to the new European states of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The original shaping of the American administrative units was to some extent arbitrary and fortuitous, marking the spatial limits of particular military conquests. But, over time, they developed a firmer reality under the influence of geographic, political and economic factors. The very vastness of the Spanish American empire, the enormous variety of its soils and climates, and, above all the immense difficulty of communications in a pre-industrial age, tended to give these units a self-contained character. (51-52)

To see how administrative units could, over time, come to be conceived as fatherlands, not merely in the Americas but in other parts of the world, one has to look at the ways in which administrative organizations create meaning. The anthropologist Victor Turner has written illuminatingly about the

'journey', between times, statuses and places, as a meaning-creating experience. ... For our purposes here, the model journey is the pilgrimage. ... As noted earlier, the strange juxtaposition of Malays, Persians, Indians, Berbers, and Turks in Mecca is something incomprehensible without an idea of their community [*as Muslims*] in some form.

Though the religious pilgrimages are probably the most touching and grandiose journeys of the imagination, they had, and have, more modest and limited secular counterparts. For our present purposes, the most important were the differing passages created by the rise of absolutizing monarchies [i.e., highly centralized, authoritarian kingdoms, which impose a Europe-centric public life]. ... Absolutist functionaries [creoles of the colonies] thus undertook their own journeys which were basically different from those of feudal nobles [whose investiture pilgrimages merely required a round-trip journey between the king and the feudal lord's home]. For the new functionary, however, things are more complex. ... He travels up corniches in a series of looping arcs. Sent out to township A at rank V, he may return to the capital at rank W; and end his pilgrimage in the capital at rank Z. ... [And] on his upward-spiraling road he encounters, as eager fellow-pilgrims, his functionary colleagues, from places and families he has scarcely heard of and surely hopes never to have to see. But in experiencing them as traveling-companions, a consciousness of connectedness emerges. (53, 54, 55-56)

[It] was nearly unheard-of for a creole to rise to a position of official importance in Spain. Moreover, the pilgrimages of creole functionaries were not merely vertically barred. If *peninsular* officials could travel the road from Zaragoza to Cartagena, Madrid, Lima, and again Madrid, the 'Mexican' or 'Chilean' creole typically served only in the territories of colonial Mexico or Chile: his lateral movement was as cramped as his vertical ascent. In this way, the apex of his looping climb, the highest administrative centre to which he could be assigned, was the capital of the imperial administrative unit in which he found himself. Yet on this cramped pilgrimage he found traveling-companions, who came to sense that their fellowship was based not only on that pilgrimages particular stretch, but on the shared fatality of trans-Atlantic birth.

From the sovereign's angle of vision, the American creoles, with their ever-growing numbers and increasing local rootedness ... presented a historically unique political problem. For the first time the metropolises had to deal with ... vast numbers of 'fellow Europeans' [comparable in military means and social complexity] ... outside Europe. ... In other words [creoles] had readily at hand the political, cultural, and military means for successfully asserting themselves. ... One can see ... a certain parallelism between the position of the creole magnates and of feudal barons, crucial to the sovereign's power, but also menace to it. Thus the *peninsulares* dispatched as viceroys and bishops served the same functions as did the *homines novi* of the proto-absolutist bureaucracies. (57, 58-59)

Our attention thus far has been focussed on the worlds of functionaries in the Americas – strategically important, but still small worlds. Moreover, they were worlds which, with their conflicts between *peninsulares* and creoles, predated the appearance of American national consciousnesses at the end of the eighteenth century. Cramped viceregal pilgrimages had no decisive consequences until their territorial stretch could be imagined as nations, in other words until the arrival of print-capitalism.

What were the characteristics of the first American newspapers, North or South? They began essentially as appendages of the market. Early gazettes contained – aside from news about the metropole – commercial news (when ships would arrive and depart, what prices were current for what commodities in what ports), as well as colonial political appointments, marriages of the wealthy, and so forth. In other words, what brought together, on the same page, *this* marriage with *that* ship, *this* price with *that* bishop, was the very structure of the colonial administration and market-system itself. In this way, the newspaper of Caracas quite naturally, and even apolitically, created an imagined community among a specific assemblage of fellow-readers, to whom *these* ships, brides, bishops and prices belonged. In time, of course, it was only to be expected that political elements would enter in. (61, 62)

Imagined Communities:

Chapter 5, p. 67-82, "Old Languages, New Models"

p.70, 71

In due course, discovery and conquest also caused a revolution in European ideas about language. From the earliest days, Portuguese, Dutch, and Spanish seamen, missionaries, merchants and soldiers had, for **practical reasons** ... [I]n the later eighteenth century that the scientific comparative study of languages really got under way.... Out of these discoveries came philology, with its studies of comparative grammar, classification of languages into families, and reconstructions by scientific reasoning of 'proto-languages' out of oblivion.

...The energetic activities of these professional intellectuals were central to the shaping of nineteenth-century European nationalisms in complete contrast to the situation in the Americas between 1770 and 1830.... **The visionary drudges who devoted years to their compilation were of necessity drawn to or nurtured by the great libraries of Europe, above all those of the universities.** And much of their immediate clientele was no less inevitably university and pre-university students.

p. 75-76

At the same time, [...] all these lexicographers, philologists, grammarians, folklorists, publicists, and composers **did not carry on their revolutionary activities in a vacuum. They were, after all, producers for the print-market, and they were linked, via that silent bazaar, to consuming publics. Who were these consumers? In the most general sense: the families of the reading classes** - not merely the 'working father,' but [any member of the family]. If we note that as late as 1840, even in Britain and France, the most advanced states in Europe, **almost half the population was still illiterate** (and in backward Russia almost 98 percent), **'reading classes' meant people of some power.** More concretely, they were, in addition to the old ruling classes of nobilities and landed gentries, courtiers and ecclesiastics, rising middle strata of plebeian lower officials, professionals, and commercial and industrial Bourgeoisies.

Mid-nineteenth-century Europe witnessed a rapid increase in state expenditures and the size of state bureaucracies (civil and military), despite the absence of any major local wars.[...] **Bureaucratic expansion, which also meant bureaucratic specialization, opened the gates of official preferment to much greater numbers and of far more varied social origins than hitherto.** [In the] decrepit Austro-Hungarian state machinery: the percentage of men of middle class origins in the top echelons of its civil half rose from 0 in 1804, through 27 in 1829, 35 in 1859, to 55 in 1878. In the armed services, the same trend appeared, though characteristically at a slower, later pace: **the middle class component of the officer corps rose from 10 per cent to 75 per cent** between 1859 and 1918.

If the **expansion of bureaucratic middle classes was a relatively even phenomenon**, occurring at comparable rates in both advanced and backward states of Europe,

the rise of commercial and industrial bourgeoisies was of course highly uneven — massive and rapid in some places, slow and stunted in others. But no matter where, this 'rise' has to be understood in its relationship to vernacular print-capitalism.

p.76-77

The pre-bourgeois ruling classes generated their cohesions in some sense outside language, or at least outside print-language. If the ruler of Siam took a Malay noblewoman as a concubine, or if the King of England married a Spanish princess — did they ever talk seriously together? Solidarities were the products of kinship, clientship, and personal loyalties. [...] **The relatively small size of traditional aristocracies, their fixed political bases, and the personalization of political relations implied by sexual intercourse and inheritance, meant that their cohesions as classes were as much concrete as imagined.** An illiterate nobility could still act as a nobility. But the bourgeoisie? **Here was a class which, figuratively speaking, came into being as a class only in so many replications.** Factory-owner in Lille was connected to factory-owner in Lyon **only by reverberation.** They had no necessary reason to know of one another's existence; they did not typically marry each other's daughters or inherit each other's property. **But they did come to visualize in a general way the existence of thousands and thousands like themselves through printlanguage.** For an illiterate bourgeoisie is scarcely imaginable. Thus in world-historical terms bourgeoisies were the first classes to achieve solidarities on an essentially imagined basis. But in a nineteenth-century Europe in which Latin had been defeated by vernacular print-capitalism for something like two centuries, **these solidarities had an outermost stretch limited by vernacular legibilities.** To put it another way, one can sleep with anyone, but one can only read some people's words.

p.80

[...] **'The Galician peasants in 1846 opposed the Polish revolutionaries even though these actually proclaimed the abolition of serfdom, preferring to massacre gentlemen and trust to the Emperor's officials.'** But everywhere, in fact, as literacy increased, it became easier to arouse popular support, with the masses discovering a new glory in the print elevation of languages they had humbly spoken all along.

Up to a point, then, Nairn's arresting formulation - **'The new middle-class intelligentsia of nationalism had to invite the masses into history; and the invitation-card had to be written in a language they understood'** — is correct. But it will be hard to see why the invitation came to seem so attractive, and why such different alliances were able to issue it, unless we turn finally to piracy.

P.80-81

Hobsbawm [notes] **'The French Revolution was not made or led by a formed party or movement in the modern sense, nor by men attempting to carry out a systematic programme. ...'** But once it had occurred, it entered the accumulating memory of print. The

overwhelming and bewildering concatenation of events experienced by its makers and its victims became a 'thing' — and with its own name: The French Revolution. Like a vast shapeless rock worn to a rounded boulder by countless drops of water, the experience was shaped by millions of printed words into a concept' on the printed page, and, in due course, into a **model**. Why 'it' broke out, what 'it' aimed for, why 'it' succeeded or failed, became subjects for endless polemics on the part of friends and foes: but of its 'it-ness', as it were, no one ever after had much doubt.

In much the same way, the independence movements in the Americas became, as soon as they were printed about, 'concepts,' 'models', and indeed 'blueprints.' In 'reality', 'Bolivar's fear of Negro insurrections and San Martin's summoning of his indigenes to Peruvianness jostled one another chaotically. **But printed words washed away the former almost at once, so that, if recalled at all, it appeared an inconsequential anomaly.** Out of the American welter came these imagined realities: nation-states, republican institutions, common citizenships, popular sovereignty, national flags and anthems, etc., and **the liquidation of their conceptual opposites**: dynastic empires, monarchical institutions, absolutisms, subjecthoods, inherited nobilities, serfdoms, ghettos, and so forth. (Nothing more stunning, in this context, than the general 'elision' of massive slavery from the 'modal' USA of the nineteenth century, and of the shared language of the '**modal**' Southern republics.) Furthermore, the validity and generalizability of the blueprint were undoubtedly confirmed by the plurality of the independent states.

Imagined Communities, Benedict Anderson.

Chapter 6 "Official Nationalism and Imperialism," **pp. 83-111**

After the middle of the nineteenth century, however, German increasingly acquired a double status: 'universal-imperial' and 'particular-national'. The more the dynasty pressed German in its first capacity, the more it appeared to be siding with its German-speaking subjects, and the more it aroused antipathy among the rest. Yet if it did not so press, indeed made concessions to other languages, above all Hungarian, not only was unification set back, but its German-speaking subjects allowed themselves to feel affronted. Thus it threatened to be hated simultaneously as champion of the Germans and traitor to them. **pp. 84-85**

Insofar as all dynasts by mid-century were using some vernacular as language-of-state, and also because of the rapidly rising prestige all over Europe of the national idea, there was a discernible tendency among the Euro-Mediterranean monarchies to sidle towards a beckoning national identification. [...] On the one hand, these new identifications shored up legitimacies which, in an age of capitalism, scepticism, and science, could less and less safely rest on putative sacrality and sheer antiquity. On the other hand, they posed new dangers. If Kaiser Wilhelm II cast himself as 'No. 1 German,' he implicitly conceded that he was one among many of the same kind as himself that he had a representative function, and therefore could, in principle, be a traitor to his fellow-Germans (something inconceivable in the dynasty's heyday. Traitor to whom or to what?). **p. 85**

The 'naturalizations' of Europe's dynasties — maneuvers that required in many cases some diverting acrobatics — eventually led to what Seton-Watson bitingly calls 'official nationalisms,' of which Czarist Russification is only the best-known example. These 'official nationalisms' can best be understood as a means for combining naturalization with retention of dynastic power, in particular over the huge polyglot domains accumulated since the Middle Ages, or, to put it another way, for stretching the short, tight, skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the empire. 'Russification' of the heterogeneous population of the Czar's subjects thus represented a violent, conscious welding of two opposing political orders, one ancient, one quite new. [...] The key to situating 'official nationalism'—willed merger of nation and dynastic empire—is to remember that it developed after, and in reaction to, the popular national movements proliferating in Europe since the 1820s. If these nationalisms were modelled on American and French histories, so now they became modular in turn. It was only that a certain inventive legerdemain was required to permit the empire to appear attractive in national drag. **pp. 86-87**

But combined, they had effectively eliminated, 'before' the age of nationalism, any possibility of a European-style vernacular-specific nationalist movement. Why not one in the American style? Part of the answer is given by Nairn in passing, when he speaks of a 'massive intellectual migration' southwards from the mid eighteenth century onwards. But there was more than an intellectual migration. Scottish politicians came south to legislate, and Scottish businessmen had open access to London's markets. In effect, in complete contrast to the Thirteen Colonies (and to a lesser extent Ireland), there were no barricades on all these pilgrims' paths towards the centre. (Compare the clear highway before Latin- and German-reading Hungarians to Vienna in the eighteenth century.) English had yet to become an 'English' language. **p. 90**

Czardom remained a 'continuous' continental domain, confined to the temperate and arctic zones of Eurasia. One could, so to speak, walk from one end of it to the other. Linguistic kinship with the Slavic populations of Eastern Europe, and - to put it pleasantly—historical, political, religious and economic ties with many non-Slavic peoples, meant that relatively speaking, the barriers on the road to St. Petersburg were not impermeable. The British Empire, on the other hand, was a grab-bag of primarily tropical possessions scattered over every continent. Only a minority of the subjected peoples had any long-standing religious, linguistic, cultural, or even political and economic, ties with the metropole. Juxtaposed to one another in the Jubilee Year, they resembled those random collections of Old Masters hastily assembled by English and American millionaires which eventually turn into solemnly imperial state museums. **p. 92**

It was not simply that, no matter how Anglicized a Pal became, he was always barred from the uppermost peaks of the Raj. He was also barred from movement outside its perimeter - laterally, say, to the Gold Coast or Hong Kong, and vertically to the metropole. 'Completely estranged from the society of his own people' he might be, but he was under life sentence to serve among them. (To be sure, who 'they' included varied with the stretch of British conquests on the subcontinent.) [...] Nothing more sharply underscores the fundamental contradiction of English official nationalism, i.e. the inner incompatibility of empire and nation. **p. 93**

Centuries of Japanese isolation, however, meant that: "an awareness of equality in international affairs was totally absent. The advocates of expulsion [of the barbarians] viewed international relations from positions within the national hierarchy based on the supremacy of superiors over inferiors. Consequently, when the premises of the national hierarchy were transferred horizontally into the international sphere, international problems were reduced to a single alternative: conquer or be conquered. In the absence of any higher normative standards with which to gauge international relations, power politics is bound to be the rule and yesterday's timid defensiveness will become today's unrestrained expansionism." [Maruyama Masao] **p. 97**

The target of [Wachirawut's] nationalism, however, was neither the United Kingdom, which controlled 90 per cent of Siam's trade, nor France, which had recently made off with easterly segments of the old realm: it was the Chinese whom his father had so recently and blithely imported. [...] 'The Chinese' thus appeared as harbingers of a popular republicanism profoundly threatening to the dynastic principle. Second, as the words 'Jews' and 'Orient' suggest, the Anglicized monarch had imbibed the particular racisms of the English ruling class. [...] Here is a fine example of the character of official nationalism — an anticipatory strategy adopted by dominant groups which are threatened with marginalization or exclusion from an emerging nationally imagined community. **pp. 100-101**

In conclusion, then it has been argued that from about the middle of the nineteenth century there developed what Seton-Watson terms 'official nationalisms' inside Europe. These nationalisms were historically 'impossible' until after the appearance of popular linguistic-nationalisms, for, at bottom, they were responses by power-groups - primarily, but not exclusively, dynastic and aristocratic - threatened with exclusion from, or marginalization in, popular imagined communities. [...] Such official nationalisms were conservative, not to say reactionary, policies, adapted from the model of the largely spontaneous popular nationalisms that preceded them. Nor were they ultimately confined to Europe and the Levant. **pp. 110-111**

Chapter 7. The Last Wave

Yet increasingly after the middle of the nineteenth century, and above all in the twentieth, the journeys were no longer made by a mere handful of travellers, but rather by huge and variegated crowds.

The sheer size of the global European empires, and the vast populations subjected, meant that purely metropolitan, or even Creole, bureaucracies were neither recruitable nor affordable. The colonial state, and, somewhat later, corporate capital, needed armies of clerks, who to be useful had to be bilingual, capable of mediating linguistically between the metropolitan nation and the colonized peoples. [115]

Yet there is a characteristic feature of the emerging nationalist intelligentsias in the colonies which to some degree marks them off from the vernacularizing nationalist intelligentsias of nineteenth century Europe. Almost invariably they were very young, and attached a complex political significance to their youth — a significance which, though it has changed over time, remains important to this day. [...] Both in Europe and in the colonies 'young' and 'youth' signified dynamism, progress, self-sacrificing idealism and revolutionary will. But in Europe 'young' had little in the way of definable sociological contours.

Youth meant, above all, the first generation in any significant numbers to have acquired a European education, marking them off linguistically and culturally from their parents' generation, as well from the vast bulk of their colonized agemates (cf. B. C. Pal [118-119])

Nothing nurtured this bonding more than the schools that the regime in Batavia set up in increasing numbers after the turn of the century. [...] Uniform textbooks, standardized diplomas and teaching certificates, a strictly regulated gradation of age-groups, classes and instructional materials, in themselves created a self-contained, coherent universe of experience. But no less important was the hierarchy's geography. Standardized elementary schools came to be scattered about in villages and small townships of the colony; junior and senior middle schools in larger towns and provincial centres; while tertiary education (the pyramid's apex) was confined to the colonial capital of Batavia and the Dutch-built city of Bandung, 100 miles southwest in the cool Priangan highlands.

[...] their common experience, and the amiably competitive comradeship of the classroom, gave the maps of the colony which they studied (always coloured differently from British Malaya or the American Philippines) a territorially specific imagined reality which was every day confirmed by the accents and physiognomies of their classmates. [121-122]

Broadly speaking, the educational policy pursued by the colonial rulers of 'Indochine' had two fundamental purposes - both of which, as it turned out, contributed to the growth of an 'Indochinese' consciousness. One aim was to break existing politico-cultural ties between the colonized peoples and the immediate extra-Indochinese world.

Henceforth, recruitment into the civil services of Indochina was to take place exclusively through a developing French colonial education system. Furthermore, *quoc ngu*, a romanized phonetic script originally devised by Jesuit missionaries in the seventeenth century, and adopted by the authorities for use in 'Cochin China' as early as the 1860s, was consciously promoted to break the links with China — and perhaps also with the indigenous past — by making dynastic records and ancient literatures inaccessible to a new generation of colonized Vietnamese.

The second aim of educational policy was to produce a carefully calibrated quantum of French-speaking and French-writing Indochinese to serve as a politically reliable, grateful, and acculturated indigenous elite, filling the subordinate echelons of the colony's bureaucracy and larger commercial enterprises. [124-126]

It is always a mistake to treat languages in the way that certain nationalist ideologues treat them - as *emblems* of nationness, like flags, costumes, folk-dances, and the rest. Much the most important thing about language is its capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect *particular solidarities*.

In a world in which the national state is the overwhelming norm, all of this means that nations can now be imagined without linguistic communality — not in the native spirit of *nosotros los Americanos*, but out of a general awareness of what modern history has demonstrated to be possible. [133,135]

All of the preceding evidence indicates that Swiss nationalism is best understood as part of the 'last wave'. If Hughes is right in dating its birth to 1891, it is not much more than a decade older than Burmese or Indonesian nationalism. In other words, it arose in that period of world history in which the nation was becoming an international norm, and in which it was possible to 'model' nationness in a much more complex way than hitherto. If the conservative political, and backward socio-economic, structure of Switzerland 'delayed' the rise of nationalism, the fact that its pre-modern political institutions were non-dynastic and non-monarchical helped to prevent the excesses of official nationalism (contrast the case of Siam discussed in Chapter 6). Finally, as in the case of the Southeast Asian examples, the appearance of Swiss nationalism on the eve of the communications revolution of the twentieth century made it possible and practical to 'represent' the imagined community in ways that did not require linguistic uniformity. [139]

In an age when it is so common for progressive, cosmopolitan intellectuals (particularly in Europe?) to insist on the near-pathological character of nationalism, its roots in fear and hatred of the Other, and its affinities with racism, it is useful to remind ourselves that nations inspire love, and often profoundly self-sacrificing love. The cultural products of nationalism – poetry, prose fiction, music, plastic arts – show this love very clearly in thousands of different forms and styles. On the other hand, how truly rare it is to find analogous nationalist products expressing fear and loathing. Even in the case of colonized peoples, who have every reason to feel hatred for their imperialist rulers, it is astonishing how insignificant the element of hatred is in these expressions of national feeling. (141-2)

Something of the nature of this political love can be deciphered from the ways in which languages describe its object: either in the vocabulary of kinship (motherland, *Vaterland*, *patria*) or that of home (*heimat* or *tanah air* [earth and water, the phrase for the Indonesians' native archipelago]). Both idioms denote something to which one is naturally tied. As we have seen earlier, in everything 'natural' there is always something unchosen. In this way, nation-ness is assimilated to skin-colour, gender, parentage and birth-era – all those things one can not help. And in these 'natural ties' one senses what one might call 'the beauty of *gemeinschaft*'. To put it another way, precisely because such ties are not chosen, they have about them a halo of disinterestedness.

While it is true that in the past two decades the idea of the family-as-articulated-power-structure has been much written about, such a conception is certainly foreign to the overwhelming bulk of mankind. Rather, the family has traditionally been conceived as the domain of disinterested love and solidarity. So too, if historians, diplomats, politicians, and social scientists are quite at ease with the idea of 'national interest,' for most ordinary people of whatever class the whole point of the nation is that it is interestless. Just for that reason, it can ask for sacrifices. (144)

Second, there is a special kind of contemporaneous community which language alone suggests – above all in the form of poetry and songs. Take national anthems, for example, sung on national holidays. No matter how banal the words and mediocre the tunes, there is in this singing an experience of simultaneity. At precisely such moments, people wholly unknown to each other utter the same verses to the same melody. The image: unisonance....How selfless this unisonance feels! If we are aware that others are singing these songs precisely when and as we are, we have no idea who they may be, or even where, out of earshot, they are singing. Nothing connects us all but imagined sound.

Yet such choruses are joinable in time. If I am a Lett, my daughter may be an Australian. The son of an Italian immigrant to New York will find ancestors in the Pilgrim Fathers. If nationalness has about it an aura of fatality, it is nonetheless a fatality embedded in *history*. Here San Martin's edict baptizing Quechua-speaking Indians as 'Peruvians' – a movement that has affinities with religious conversion – is exemplary. For it shows that from the start the nation was conceived in language, not in blood, and that one could be 'invited into' the

imagined community. Thus today, even the most insular nations accept the principle of *naturalization* (wonderful word!), no matter how difficult in practice they may make it.

Seen as both a *historical* fatality and as a community imagined through language, the nation presents itself as simultaneously open and closed. (145-6)

The fact of the matter is that nationalism thinks in terms of historical destinies, while racism dreams of eternal contaminations, transmitted from the origins of time through an endless sequence of loathsome copulations: outside history. Niggers are, thanks to the invisible tar-brush, forever niggers; Jews, the seed of Abraham, forever Jews, no matter what passports they carry or what languages they speak and read. (Thus for the Nazi, the *Jewish* German was always an imposter.)

The dreams of racism actually have their origin in ideologies of *class*, rather than in those of nation: above all in claims to divinity among rulers and to 'blue' or 'white' blood and 'breeding' among aristocracies. No surprise then that the putative sire of modern racism should be, not some petty-bourgeois nationalist, but Joseph Arthur, Comte de Gobineau. Nor that, on the whole, racism and anti-semitism manifest themselves, not across national boundaries, but within them. In other words, they justify not so much foreign wars as domestic repression and domination.

Where racism developed outside Europe in the nineteenth century, it was always associated with European domination, for two converging reasons. First and most important was the rise of official nationalism and colonial 'Russification'. As has been repeatedly emphasized official nationalism was typically a response on the part of threatened dynastic and aristocratic groups - upper classes - to popular vernacular nationalism. (149-50)

Chapter 9: The Angel of History

156-157

As noted earlier, Hobsbawm was right to observe that 'the French Revolution was not made or led by a formed party or movement in the modern sense, nor by men attempting to carry out a systematic programme.' But, thanks to print-capitalism, the French experience was not merely ineradicable from human memory, it was also learnable- from. Out of almost a century of modular theorizing and practical experimentation came the Bolsheviks, who made the first successful 'planned' revolution (even if the success would not have been possible without Hindenburg's earlier triumphs at Tannenberg and the Masurian Lakes) and attempted to carry out a systematic programme (even if in practice improvisation was the order of the day). It also seems clear that *without* such plans and programmes a revolution in a realm barely entering the era of industrial capitalism was out of the question. The Bolshevik revolutionary model has been decisive for all twentieth-century revolutions because it made them imaginable in societies still more backward than All the Russias. (It opened the possibility of, so to speak, cutting history off at the pass.) The skillful early experimentations of Mao Tse-tung confirmed the utility of the model outside Europe. One can thus see a sort of culmination of the modular process in the case of Cambodia, where in 1962 less than 2.5 per cent of the two-and-a-half-million-strong adult work-force was 'working class,' and less than 0.5 per cent 'capitalists.'

159-161

As we have seen, 'official nationalism' was from the start a conscious, self-protective *policy*, intimately linked to the preservation of imperial-dynastic interests. But once 'out there for all to see,' it was as copyable as Prussia's early-nineteenth-century military reforms, and by the same variety of political and social systems. The one persistent feature of this style of nationalism was, and is, that it is *official* – i.e. something emanating from the state, and serving the interests of the state first and foremost,

...

Thus the model of official nationalism assumes its relevance above all at the moment when revolutionaries successfully take control of the state, and are for the first time in a position to use the power of the state in pursuit of their visions. The relevance is all the greater insofar as even the most determinedly radical revolutionaries always, to some degree, inherit the state from the fallen regime. Some of these legacies are symbolic, but not the less important for that. Despite Trotsky's unease, the capital of the USSR was moved back to the old Czarist capital of Moscow; and for over 65 years CPSU leaders have made policy in the Kremlin, ancient citadel of Czarist power – out of all possible sites in the socialist state's vast territories. Similarly, the PRC's capital is that of the Manchus (while Chiang Kai-shek had moved it to Nanking), and the CCP leaders congregate in the Forbidden City of the Sons of Heaven. In fact, there are very few, if any, socialist leaderships which have *not* clambered up into such worn, warm seats. At a less obvious level, successful revolutionaries also inherit the wiring of the old state: sometimes functionaries and informers, but always files, dossiers, archives, laws, financial records, censuses, maps, treaties, correspondence, memoranda, and so on. Like the complex electrical system in any large mansion when the owner has fled, the state awaits the new owner's hand at the switch to be very much its old brilliant self again.

...

One should therefore not be much surprised if revolutionary *leaderships*, consciously or unconsciously, come to play lord of the manor. We are not thinking here simply of Djughashvili's self-identification with Ivan Groznii, or Mao's expressed admiration for the tyrant Ch'in Shih Huang-ti, or Josip Broz's revival of Ruritanian pomp and ceremony. 'Official nationalism' enters post-revolutionary

leadership styles in a much more subtle way. By this I mean that such leaderships come easily to adopt the putative *nationalnost* of the older dynasts *and* the dynastic state. In a striking retroactive movement, dynasts who knew nothing of 'China,' 'Yugoslavia,' 'Vietnam' or 'Cambodia' become nationals (even if not always 'deserving' nationals). Out of this accommodation comes invariably that 'state' Machiavellism which is so striking a feature of post-revolutionary regimes in contrast to revolutionary nationalist movements. The more the ancient dynastic state is naturalized, the more its antique finery can be wrapped around revolutionary shoulders. The image of Suryavarman II's Angkor Wat, emblazoned on the flag of Marxist Democratic Kampuchea (as on those of Lon Nol's puppet republic and of Sihanouk's monarchical Cambodia), is a rebus not of piety but of power.

CH. 10 “Census, Map, Museum”

In two valuable recent papers the sociologist Charles Hirschman has begun the study of the *mentalités* of the British colonial census-makers for [colonial territories that now form modern Malaysia]. Hirschman's [study of the identity categories of nearly a century of census records] show an extraordinarily rapid, superficially arbitrary, series of changes, in which categories are continuously agglomerated, disaggregated, recombined, intermixed, and reordered. ... From these censuses he draws two principal conclusions. The first is that, as the colonial period wore on, the census categories became more visibly and exclusively racial. Religious identity, on the other hand, gradually disappeared as a primary census classification. ... His second conclusion is that ... the large racial categories were retained and even concentrated after [Malaysian] independence.

[But Hirschman's analysis can be taken further.] Take, for example, the 1911 Federated Malay States Census, which lists under 'Malay Population by Race' the following: 'Malay,' 'Javanese,' 'Sakai,' 'Banjarese,' 'Boyonese,' 'Mendeling,' 'Krinchi,' 'Jambi,' 'Achinese,' 'Bugis,' and 'Other.' Of these 'groups' all but (most) 'Malay' and 'Sakai' originated from the islands of Sumatra, Java, Southern Borneo, and the Celebes, all parts of the huge neighboring colony of the Netherlands. ... But these [extra-Federated Malay State] origins receive no recognition from the census-makers who, in constructing their 'Malays,' keep their eyes modestly lowered to their own colonial borders. 'Jambi' and 'Krinchi' refer to places, rather than to anything remotely identifiable as ethnolinguistic. It is extremely unlikely that, in 1911, more than a tiny fraction of those categorized and subcategorized would have recognized themselves under such labels. These 'identities,' imagined by the (confusedly) classifying mind of the colonial state, still awaited a reification which imperial administrative penetration would soon make possible. One notices ... the census-makers' passion for completeness and unambiguity. Hence their intolerance of multiple, politically 'transvestite,' blurred, or changing identifications. Hence the weird subcategory, under each racial group, of Others – who, nonetheless, are absolutely not to be confused with *other* 'Others.' The fiction of the census is that everyone is in it, and that everyone has one – and only one – extremely clear place. No fractions. (164–166)

This mode of imagining by the colonial state had origins much older than the censuses of the 1870s, so that, in order fully to understand why the late-nineteenth-century censuses are yet profoundly novel, it is useful to look back to the earliest days of European penetration of Southeast Asia. Two examples, drawn from the Philippine and Indonesian archipelagoes, are instructive. In an important recent book, William Henry Scott has attempted meticulously to reconstruct the class structure of the pre-Hispanic Philippines, on the basis of the earliest Spanish records. ... [It might be assumed that Scott's project is motivated by sympathies with a Filipino nationalism, which aspires to recover a precolonial picture of the islands.] But the chances are good that the deeper basis for the shaping of his imagination was the sources on which he was compelled to rely. For the fact is that wherever in the islands the earliest clerics and conquistadors ventured they espied, on shore, *principales*, *hidalgos*, *pecheros*, and *esclavos* (princes, noblemen, commoners and slaves) – quasi-estates adapted from the social classifications of late mediaeval Iberia. The documents they left behind offer plenty of incidental evidence that the '*hidalgos*' were mostly unaware of one another's existence in the huge, scattered, and sparsely populated archipelago, and, where aware, usually saw one another not as *hidalgos*, but as enemies or potential slaves. But the power of the grid is so great that such evidence is marginalized in Scott's imagination, and therefore it is hard for him to see that the 'class structure' of the precolonial period is a 'census' imagining created from the poops of Spanish galleons. (166–167)

[Also toward the end of the 19th century the Mercatorian map] brought in by the European colonizers, was beginning, via print, to shape the imagination of Southeast Asians.

Up until ... 1851 ... only two types of map existed in Siam [both hand drawn] ... One was what could be called a 'cosmograph,' a formal, symbolic representation of the Three Worlds of traditional Buddhist

cosmology. The cosmograph was not organized horizontally ... rather a series of supraterrrestrial heavens and subterrrestrial hells wedged in the visible world along a single vertical axis. It was useless for any journey save that in search of merit and salvation. The second type, wholly profane, consisted of diagrammatic guides for military campaigns and coastal shipping. Organized roughly by the quadrant, their main features were written-in notes on marching and sailing times, required because the mapmakers had no technical conception of scale. Covering only terrestrial, profane space, they were usually drawn in a queer oblique perspective or mixture of perspectives.

Neither type of map marked borders. ... Boundary-stones and similar markers did exist, and indeed multiplied along the western fringes of the realm as the British pressed in from Lower Burma. ... Only in the 1870s did Thai leaders begin thinking of boundaries ... demarcating an exclusive sovereignty wedged between other sovereignties.

[A study of this period] notes that the vectoral convergence of print-capitalism with the new conception of spatial reality presented by [the Mercator projection map] had an immediate impact on the vocabulary of Thai politics. Between 1900 and 1915, the traditional words *krung* and *muang* largely disappeared, because they imaged dominion in terms of sacred capitals and visible, discontinuous population centers. In their place came *prathet*, 'country,' which imaged it in the invisible terms of bounded territorial space.

Like censuses, European-style maps worked on the basis of a totalizing classification, and led their bureaucratic producers and consumers towards policies with revolutionary consequences. ... In Southeast Asia, the second half of the nineteenth century was the golden age of military surveyors – colonial and, a little later, Thai. They were on the march to put space under the same surveillance which the census-makers were trying to impose on persons. Triangulation by triangulation, war by war, treaty by treaty, the alignment of map and power proceeded. ... By the turn of the century ... the administration of the realm was finally put on a wholly territorial-cartographic basis, following earlier practice in the neighboring colonies. (171–172, 173–174)

The present proliferation of museums around Southeast Asia suggests a general process of political inheriting at work. Any understanding of this process requires a consideration of the novel nineteenth-century colonial archaeology that made such museums possible.

Up until the early nineteenth century the colonial rulers in Southeast Asia exhibited very little interest in the antique monuments of the civilizations they had subjected. [But by the mid-nineteenth century] with increasing speed, the grandeurs of the Barobudur, of Angkor, of Pagan, and of other ancient sites were successively disinterred ... analyzed, and displayed.

To explore fully why this happened, when it happened, would take us too far afield. It may be enough here to suggest that the change was associated with the eclipse of the commercial – colonial regimes of the two great East India Companies, and the rise of the true modern colony, directly attached to the metropole. The prestige of the colonial state was accordingly now intimately linked to that of its homeland superior.

Interlinked with one another, then, the census, the map and the museum illuminate the late colonial state's style of thinking about its domain. The 'warp' of this thinking was a totalizing classificatory grid, which could be applied with endless flexibility to anything under the state's real or contemplated control: peoples, regions, religions, languages, products, monuments, and so forth. The effect of the grid was always to be able to say of anything that it was this, not that; it belonged here, not there. It was bounded, determinate, and therefore – in principle – countable. (The comic classificatory and sub-classificatory census boxes entitled 'Other' concealed all real-life anomalies by a splendid bureaucratic *trompe l'oeil*). The 'weft' was what one could call serialization: the assumption that the world was made up of replicable plurals. The particular always stood as a provisional representative of a series, and was to be handled in this light. (178–180, 184)

193-4

It is difficult today to recreate in the imagination a condition of life in which the nation was felt to be something utterly new. But so it was in that epoch. The Declaration of Independence of 1776 makes absolutely no reference to Christopher Columbus, Roanoke, or the Pilgrim Fathers, nor are the grounds put forward to justify independence in any way 'historical,' in the sense of highlighting the antiquity of the American people. Indeed, marvellously, the American nation is not even mentioned. A profound feeling that a radical break with the past was occurring – a 'blasting open of the continuum of history'? – spread rapidly. Nothing exemplifies this intuition better than the decision, taken by the Convention Nationale on 5 October 1793, to scrap the centuries-old Christian calendar and to inaugurate a new world-era with the Year One, starting from the abolition of the *ancien régime* and the proclamation of the Republic on 22 September 1792....

Yet things could not long remain this way – for precisely the same reasons that had precipitated the sense of rupture in the first place. In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Britain alone was manufacturing between 150,000 and 200,000 watches a year, many of them for export. Total European manufacture is likely to have then been close to 500,000 items annually. Serially published newspapers were by then a familiar part of urban civilization. So was the novel, with its spectacular possibilities for the representation of simultaneous actions in homogeneous empty time. The cosmic clocking which had made intelligible our synchronic transoceanic pairings was increasingly felt to entail a wholly intramundane, *serial* view of social causality; and this sense of the world was now speedily deepening its grip on Western imaginations. It is thus understandable that less than two decades after the Proclamation of Year One came the establishment of the first academic chairs in History – in 1810 at the University of Berlin, and in 1812 at Napoleon's Sorbonne. By the second quarter of the nineteenth century History had become formally constituted as a 'discipline,' with its own elaborate array of professional journals. Very quickly the Year One made way for 1792 A.D., and the revolutionary ruptures of 1776 and 1789 came to be figured as embedded in the historical series and *thus as historical precedents and models*.

198-9

Here and elsewhere Michelet made it clear that those whom he was exhuming were by no means a random assemblage of forgotten, anonymous dead. They were those whose sacrifices, throughout History, made possible the rupture of 1789 and the selfconscious appearance of the French nation, *even when these sacrifices were not understood as such by the victims*....Michelet not only claimed to speak on behalf of large numbers of anonymous dead people, but insisted, with poignant authority, that he could say what they 'really' meant and 'really' wanted, since they themselves 'did not understand.' From then on, the silence of the dead was no obstacle to the exhumation of their deepest desires. In this vein, more and more 'second-generation'

nationalists, in the Americas and elsewhere, learned to speak 'for' dead people with whom it was impossible or undesirable to establish a linguistic connection. This reversed ventriloquism helped to open the way for a selfconscious *indigenismo*, especially in the southern Americas. At the edge: Mexicans speaking in Spanish 'for' pre-Columbian 'Indian' civilizations whose languages they do not understand. How revolutionary this kind of exhumation was appears most clearly if we contrast it with the formulation of Fermín de Vargas, cited in chapter 2. For where Fermín still thought cheerfully of 'extinguishing' living Indians, many of his political grandchildren became obsessed with 'remembering,' indeed 'speaking for' them, perhaps precisely because they had, by then, so often been *extinguished*.

200-1

The effect of this tropology is to figure episodes in the colossal religious conflicts of mediaeval and early modern Europe as reassuringly fratricidal wars between - who else? - *fellow Frenchmen*. Since we can be confident that, left to themselves, the overwhelming majority of Renan's French contemporaries would never have heard of 'la Saint-Barthélemy' or 'les massacres du Midi,' we become aware of a systematic historiographical campaign, deployed by the state mainly through the state's school system, to 'remind' every young Frenchwoman and Frenchman of a series of antique slaughters which are now inscribed as 'family history.' Having to 'have already forgotten' tragedies of which one needs unceasingly to be 'reminded' turns out to be a characteristic device in the later construction of national genealogies....A vast pedagogical industry works ceaselessly to oblige young Americans to remember/forget the hostilities of 1861-65 as a great 'civil' war between 'brothers' rather than between - as they briefly were - two sovereign nation-states. (We can be sure, however, that if the Confederacy had succeeded in maintaining its independence, this 'civil war' would have been replaced in memory by something quite unbrotherly.)

204-5

All profound changes in consciousness, by their very nature, bring with them characteristic amnesias. Out of such oblivions, in specific historical circumstances, spring narratives. After experiencing the physiological and emotional changes produced by puberty, it is impossible to 'remember' the consciousness of childhood. How many thousands of days passed between infancy and early adulthood vanish beyond direct recall! How strange it is to need another's help to learn that this naked baby in the yellowed photograph, sprawled happily on rug or cot, is you. The photograph, fine child of the age of mechanical reproduction, is only the most peremptory of a huge modern accumulation of documentary evidence (birth certificates, diaries, report cards, letters, medical records, and the like) which simultaneously records a certain apparent continuity and emphasizes its loss from memory. Out of this estrangement comes a conception of personhood, identity (yes, you and that naked baby are identical) which, because it can not be 'remembered,' must be narrated. Against biology's demonstration that every single cell in a human body is replaced over seven years, the narratives of autobiography and biography flood print-capitalism's markets year by year....

As with modern persons, so it is with nations. Awareness of being embedded in secular, serial time, with all its implications of continuity, yet of 'forgetting' the experience of this continuity – product of the ruptures of the late eighteenth century – engenders the need for a narrative of 'identity.' The task is set for Michelet's magistrate. Yet between narratives of person and nation there is a central difference of emplotment. In the secular story of the 'person' there is a beginning and an end. She emerges from parental genes and social circumstances onto a brief historical stage, there to play a role until her death. After that, nothing but the penumbra of lingering fame or influence. (Imagine how strange it would be, today, to end a life of Hitler by observing that on 30 April 1945 he proceeded straight to Hell). Nations, however, have no clearly identifiable births, and their deaths, if they ever happen, are never natural. Because there is no Originator, the nation's biography can not be written evangelically, 'down time,' through a long procreative chain of begettings. The only alternative is to fashion it 'up time' – towards Peking Man, Java Man, King Arthur, wherever the lamp of archaeology casts its fitful gleam. This fashioning, however, is marked by deaths, which, in a curious inversion of conventional genealogy, start from an originary present. World War II begets World War I; out of Sedan comes Austerlitz; the ancestor of the Warsaw Uprising is the state of Israel.

X I I I

Every day our cause becomes clearer and people get smarter.

—Wilhelm Dietzgen, DIE RELIGION DER SOZIALDEMOKRATIE

Social Democratic theory, and even more its practice, have been formed by a conception of progress which did not adhere to reality but made dogmatic claims. Progress as pictured in the minds of Social Democrats was, first of all, the progress of mankind itself (and not just advances in men's ability and knowledge). Secondly, it was something boundless, in keeping with the infinite perfectibility of mankind. Thirdly, progress was regarded as irresistible, something that automatically pursued a straight or spiral course. Each of these predicates is controversial and open to criticism. However, when the chips are down, criticism must penetrate beyond these predicates and focus on something that they have in common. The concept of the historical progress of mankind cannot be sundered from the concept of its progression through a homogeneous, empty time. A critique of the concept of such a progression must be the basis of any criticism of the concept of progress itself.

X I V

Origin is the goal.

—Karl Kraus, WORTE IN VERSEN, Vol. I

History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now [*Jetztzeit*].* Thus, to Robespierre ancient Rome was a past charged with the time of the now which he blasted out of the continuum of history. The French Revolution viewed itself as Rome reincarnate. It evoked ancient Rome the way fashion evokes costumes of the past. Fashion has a flair for the topical, no matter where it stirs in the thickets of long ago; it is a tiger's leap into the past. This jump, however, takes place in an arena where the ruling class gives the commands. The same leap in the open air of history is the dialectical one, which is how Marx understood the revolution.

x v

The awareness that they are about to make the continuum of history explode is characteristic of the revolutionary classes at the moment of their action. The great revolution introduced a new calendar. The initial day of a calendar serves as a historical time-lapse camera. And, basically, it is the same day that keeps recurring in the guise of holidays, which are days of remembrance. Thus the calendars do not measure time as clocks do; they are monuments of a historical consciousness of which not the slightest trace has been apparent in Europe in the past hundred years. In the July revolution an incident occurred which showed this consciousness still alive. On the first evening of fighting it turned out that the clocks in towers were being fired on simultaneously and independently from several places in Paris. An eye-witness, who may have owed his insight to the rhyme, wrote as follows:

Qui le croirait! on dit, qu'irrités contre l'heure
De nouveaux Josués au pied de chaque tour,
Tiraient sur les cadrans pour arrêter le jour.*

* Who would have believed it! we are told that new Joshuas at the foot of every tower, as though irritated with time itself, fired at the dials in order to stop the day.

x v i i

Historicism rightly culminates in universal history. Materialistic historiography differs from it as to method more clearly than from any other kind. Universal history has no theoretical armature. Its method is additive; it musters a mass of data to fill the homogeneous, empty time. Materialistic historiography, on the other hand, is based on a constructive principle. Thinking involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well. Where thinking suddenly stops in a configuration pregnant with tensions, it gives that configuration a shock, by which it crystal-

lizes into a monad. A historical materialist approaches a historical subject only where he encounters it as a monad. In this structure he recognizes the sign of a Messianic cessation of happening, or, put differently, a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past. He takes cognizance of it in order to blast a specific era out of the homogeneous course of history—blasting a specific life out of the era or a specific work out of the lifework. As a result of this method the lifework is preserved in this work and at the same time canceled *; in the lifework, the era; and in the era, the entire course of history. The nourishing fruit of the historically understood contains time as a precious but tasteless seed.

A

Historicism contents itself with establishing a causal connection between various moments in history. But no fact that is a cause is for that very reason historical. It became historical posthumously, as it were, through events that may be separated from it by thousands of years. A historian who takes this as his point of departure stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary. Instead, he grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one. Thus he establishes a conception of the present as the "time of the now" which is shot through with chips of Messianic time.