
Introduction

Perhaps without being much noticed yet, a fundamental transformation in the history of Marxism and Marxist movements is upon us. Its most visible signs are the recent wars between Vietnam, Cambodia and China. These wars are of world-historical importance because they are the first to occur between regimes whose independence and revolutionary credentials are undeniable, and because none of the belligerents has made more than the most perfunctory attempts to justify the bloodshed in terms of a recognizable *Marxist* theoretical perspective. While it was still just possible to interpret the Sino-Soviet border clashes of 1969, and the Soviet military interventions in Germany (1953), Hungary (1956), Czechoslovakia (1968), and Afghanistan (1980) in terms of – according to taste – ‘social imperialism,’ ‘defending socialism,’ etc., no one, I imagine, seriously believes that such vocabularies have much bearing on what has occurred in Indochina.

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,¹ China’s assault on Vietnam in February rapidly confirmed

1. This formulation is chosen simply to emphasize the scale and the style of the fighting, not to assign blame. To avoid possible misunderstanding, it should be said that the December 1978 invasion grew out of armed clashes between partisans of the

the precedent. Only the most trusting would dare wager that in the declining years of this century any significant outbreak of inter-state 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.²

Eric Hobsbawm is perfectly correct in stating that 'Marxist movements and states have tended to become national not only in form but in substance, i.e., nationalist. There is nothing to suggest

two revolutionary movements going back possibly as far as 1971. After April 1977, border raids, initiated by the Cambodians, but quickly followed by the Vietnamese, grew in size and scope, culminating in the major Vietnamese incursion of December 1977. None of these raids, however, aimed at overthrowing enemy regimes or occupying large territories, nor were the numbers of troops involved comparable to those deployed in December 1978. The controversy over the causes of the war is most thoughtfully pursued in: Stephen P. Heder, 'The Kampuchean-Vietnamese Conflict,' in David W. P. Elliott, ed., *The Third Indochina Conflict*, pp. 21–67; Anthony Barnett, 'Inter-Communist Conflicts and Vietnam,' *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 11: 4 (October–December 1979), pp. 2–9; and Laura Summers, 'In Matters of War and Socialism Anthony Barnett would Shame and Honour Kampuchea Too Much,' *ibid.*, pp. 10–18.

2. Anyone who has doubts about the UK's claims to such parity with the USSR should ask himself what nationality its name denotes: Great Brito-Irish?

that this trend will not continue.³ Nor is the tendency confined to the socialist world. Almost every year the United Nations admits new members. And many 'old nations,' once thought fully consolidated, find themselves challenged by 'sub'-nationalisms within their borders – nationalisms which, naturally, dream of shedding this sub-ness one happy day. The reality is quite plain: the 'end of the era of nationalism,' so long prophesied, is not remotely in sight. Indeed, nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time.

But if the facts are clear, their explanation remains a matter of long-standing dispute. 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. Hugh Seton-Watson, author of far the best and most comprehensive English-language text on nationalism, and heir to a vast tradition of liberal historiography and social science, sadly observes: 'Thus I am driven to the conclusion that no "scientific definition" of the nation can be devised; yet the phenomenon has existed and exists.'⁴ Tom Nairn, author of the path-breaking *The Break-up of Britain*, and heir to the scarcely less vast tradition of Marxist historiography and social science, candidly remarks: 'The theory of nationalism represents Marxism's great historical failure.'⁵ 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

3. Eric Hobsbawm, 'Some Reflections on "The Break-up of Britain"', *New Left Review*, 105 (September–October 1977), p. 13.

4. See his *Nations and States*, p. 5. Emphasis added.

5. See his 'The Modern Janus', *New Left Review*, 94 (November–December 1975), p. 3. This essay is included unchanged in *The Break-up of Britain* as chapter 9 (pp. 329–63).

must, of course, first of all settle matters with *its own* bourgeoisie?⁶ 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?

The aim of this book is to offer some tentative suggestions for a more satisfactory interpretation of the 'anomaly' of nationalism. My sense is that on this topic both Marxist and liberal theory have become etiolated in a late Ptolemaic effort to 'save the phenomena'; and that a reorientation of perspective in, as it were, a Copernican spirit is urgently required. 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 century⁷ 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. I will also attempt to show why these particular cultural artefacts have aroused such deep attachments.

6. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, in the *Selected Works*, I, p. 45. Emphasis added. In any theoretical exegesis, the words 'of course' should flash red lights before the transported reader.

7. As Aira Kemiläinen notes, the twin 'founding fathers' of academic scholarship on nationalism, Hans Kohn and Carleton Hayes, argued persuasively for this dating. Their conclusions have, I think, not been seriously disputed except by nationalist ideologues in particular countries. Kemiläinen also observes that the word 'nationalism' did not come into wide general use until the end of the nineteenth century. It did not occur, for example, in many standard nineteenth century lexicons. If Adam Smith conjured with the wealth of 'nations,' he meant by the term no more than 'societies' or 'states.' Aira Kemiläinen, *Nationalism*, pp. 10, 33, and 48–49.

CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

Before addressing the questions raised above, it seems advisable to consider briefly the concept of 'nation' and offer a workable definition. Theorists of nationalism have often been perplexed, not to say irritated, by these three paradoxes: (1) The objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye vs. their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists. (2) The formal universality of nationality as a socio-cultural concept – in the modern world everyone can, should, will 'have' a nationality, as he or she 'has' a gender – vs. the irremediable particularity of its concrete manifestations, such that, by definition, 'Greek' nationality is *sui generis*. (3) The 'political' power of nationalisms vs. their philosophical poverty and even incoherence. In other words, unlike most other isms, nationalism has never produced its own grand thinkers: no Hobbeses, Tocquevilles, Marxes, or Webers. This 'emptiness' easily gives rise, among cosmopolitan and polylingual intellectuals, to a certain condescension. Like Gertrude Stein in the face of Oakland, one can rather quickly conclude that there is 'no there there'. It is characteristic that even so sympathetic a student of nationalism as Tom Nairn can nonetheless write that: "Nationalism" is the pathology of modern developmental history, as inescapable as "neurosis" in the individual, with much the same essential ambiguity attaching to it, a similar built-in capacity for descent into dementia, rooted in the dilemmas of helplessness thrust upon most of the world (the equivalent of infantilism for societies) and largely incurable."⁸

Part of the difficulty is that one tends unconsciously to hypostasize the existence of Nationalism-with-a-big-N (rather as one might Age-with-a-capital-A) and then to classify 'it' as *an* ideology. (Note that if everyone has an age, Age is merely an analytical expression.) It would, I think, make things easier if one treated it as if it belonged with 'kinship' and 'religion', rather than with 'liberalism' or 'fascism'.

In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following

8. *The Break-up of Britain*, p. 359.

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.⁹ Renan referred to this imagining in his suavely back-handed way when he wrote that 'Or l'essence d'une nation est que tous les individus aient beaucoup de choses en commun, et aussi que tous aient oublié bien des choses.'¹⁰ With a certain ferocity Gellner makes a comparable point when he rules that 'Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it *invents* nations where they do not exist.'¹¹ The drawback to this formulation, however, is that Gellner is so anxious to show that nationalism masquerades under false pretences that he assimilates 'invention' to 'fabrication' and 'falsity', rather than to 'imagining' and 'creation'. In this way he implies that 'true' communities exist which can be advantageously juxtaposed to nations. In fact, all 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. Javanese villagers have always known that they are connected to people they have never seen, but these ties were once imagined particularistically – as indefinitely stretchable nets of kinship and clientship. Until quite recently, the Javanese language had no word meaning the abstraction 'society.' We may today think of the French aristocracy of the *ancien régime* as a class; but surely it was imagined

this way only very late.¹² To the question 'Who is the Comte de X?' the normal answer would have been, not 'a member of the aristocracy,' but 'the lord of X,' 'the uncle of the Baronne de Y,' or 'a client of the Duc de Z.'

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. The most messianic nationalists do not dream of a day when all the members of the human race will join their nation in the way that it was possible, in certain epochs, for, say, Christians to dream of a wholly Christian planet.

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, and the allomorphism between each faith's ontological claims and territorial stretch, nations dream of being free, and, if under God, directly so. The gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state.

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.

These deaths bring us abruptly face to face with the central problem posed by nationalism: what makes the shrunken imaginings of recent history (scarcely more than two centuries) generate such colossal sacrifices? I believe that the beginnings of an answer lie in the cultural roots of nationalism.

9. Cf. Seton-Watson, *Nations and States*, p. 5: 'All that I can find to say is that a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one.' We may translate 'consider themselves' as 'imagine themselves.'

10. Ernest Renan, 'Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?' in *Oeuvres Complètes*, 1, p. 892. He adds: 'tout citoyen français doit avoir oublié la Saint-Barthélemy, les massacres du Midi au XIII^e siècle. Il n'y a pas en France dix familles qui puissent fournir la preuve d'une origine franque . . .'

11. Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change*, p. 169. Emphasis added.

12. Hobsbawm, for example, 'fixes' it by saying that in 1789 it numbered about 400,000 in a population of 23,000,000. (See his *The Age of Revolution*, p. 78). But would this statistical picture of the noblesse have been imaginable under the *ancien régime*?

Cultural Roots

No more arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism exist than cenotaphs and tombs of Unknown Soldiers. The public ceremonial reverence accorded these monuments precisely *because* they are either deliberately empty or no one knows who lies inside them, has no true precedents in earlier times.¹ To feel the force of this modernity one has only to imagine the general reaction to the busy-body who 'discovered' the Unknown Soldier's name or insisted on filling the cenotaph with some real bones. Sacrilege of a strange, contemporary kind! Yet void as these tombs are of identifiable mortal remains or immortal souls, they are nonetheless saturated with ghostly *national* imaginings.² (This is why so many different nations

1. The ancient Greeks had cenotaphs, but for specific, known individuals whose bodies, for one reason or another, could not be retrieved for regular burial. I owe this information to my Byzantinist colleague Judith Herrin.

2. Consider, for example, these remarkable tropes: 1. 'The long grey line has never failed us. Were you to do so, a million ghosts in olive drab, in brown khaki, in blue and grey, would rise from their white crosses, thundering those magic words: Duty, honour, country.' 2. 'My estimate of [the American man-at-arms] was formed on the battlefield many, many years ago, and has never changed. I regarded him then, as I regard him now, as one of the world's noblest figures; not only as one of the finest military characters, but also as one of the most stainless [sic]. . . . He belongs to history as furnishing one of the greatest examples of successful patriotism [sic]. He belongs to posterity as the instructor of future generations in the principles of liberty and

have such tombs without feeling any need to specify the nationality of their absent occupants. What else could they be *but* Germans, Americans, Argentinians ... ?)

The cultural significance of such monuments becomes even clearer if one tries to imagine, say, a Tomb of the Unknown Marxist or a cenotaph for fallen Liberals. Is a sense of absurdity avoidable? The reason is that neither Marxism nor Liberalism are much concerned with death and immortality. If the nationalist imagining is so concerned, this suggests a strong affinity with religious imaginings. As this affinity is by no means fortuitous, it may be useful to begin a consideration of the cultural roots of nationalism with death, as the last of a whole gamut of fatalities.

If the manner of a man's dying usually seems arbitrary, his mortality is inescapable. Human lives are full of such combinations of necessity and chance. We are all aware of the contingency and ineluctability of our particular genetic heritage, our gender, our life-era, our physical capabilities, our mother-tongue, and so forth. The great merit of traditional religious world-views (which naturally must be distinguished from their role in the legitimization of specific systems of domination and exploitation) has been their concern with man-in-the-cosmos, man as species being, and the contingency of life. The extraordinary survival over thousands of years of Buddhism, Christianity or Islam in dozens of different social formations attests to their imaginative response to the overwhelming burden of human suffering—disease, mutilation, grief, age, and death. Why was I born blind? Why is my best friend paralysed? Why is my daughter retarded? The religions attempt to explain. The great weakness of all evolutionary/progressive styles of thought, not excluding Marxism, is that such questions are answered with impatient silence.³ At the

freedom. He belongs to the present, to us, by his virtues and his achievements.' Douglas MacArthur, 'Duty, Honour, Country,' Address to the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, May 12, 1962, in his *A Soldier Speaks*, pp. 354 and 357.

3. Cf. Régis Debray, 'Marxism and the National Question,' *New Left Review*, 105 (September–October 1977), p. 29. In the course of doing fieldwork in Indonesia in the 1960s I was struck by the calm refusal of many Muslims to accept the ideas of Darwin. At first I interpreted this refusal as obscurantism. Subsequently I came to see it as an honourable attempt to be consistent: the doctrine of evolution was simply not compatible with the teachings of Islam. What are we to make of a scientific

same time, in different ways, religious thought also responds to obscure intimations of immortality, generally by transforming fatality into continuity (karma, original sin, etc.) In this way, it concerns itself with the links between the dead and the yet unborn, the mystery of re-generation. Who experiences *their* child's conception and birth without dimly apprehending a combined connectedness, fortuity, and fatality in a language of 'continuity'? (Again, the disadvantage of evolutionary/progressive thought is an almost Heraclitean hostility to any idea of continuity.)

I bring up these perhaps simpleminded observations primarily because 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,⁴ and, still more important,

materialism which formally accepts the findings of physics about matter, yet makes so little effort to link these findings with the class struggle, revolution, or whatever. Does not the abyss between protons and the proletariat conceal an unacknowledged metaphysical conception of man? But see the refreshing texts of Sebastiano Timpanaro, *On Materialism and The Freudian Slip*, and Raymond Williams' thoughtful response to them in 'Timpanaro's Materialist Challenge,' *New Left Review*, 109 (May–June 1978), pp. 3–17.

4. The late President Sukarno always spoke with complete sincerity of the 350 years of colonialism that his 'Indonesia' had endured, although the very concept 'Indonesia' is a twentieth-century invention, and most of today's Indonesia was only conquered by the Dutch between 1850 and 1910. Preeminent among contemporary Indonesia's national heroes is the early nineteenth-century Javanese Prince Diponegoro, although the Prince's own memoirs show that he intended to 'conquer [not liberate!] Java,' rather than expel 'the Dutch.' Indeed, he clearly had no concept of 'the Dutch' as a collectivity. See Harry J. Benda and John A. Larkin, eds., *The World of Southeast Asia*, p. 158; and Ann Kumar, 'Diponegoro (1778?–1855),' *Indonesia*,

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.'

Needless to say, I am not claiming that the appearance of nationalism towards the end of the eighteenth century was 'produced' by the erosion of religious certainties, or that this erosion does not itself require a complex explanation. Nor am I suggesting that somehow nationalism historically 'supersedes' religion. What I am proposing is that nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being.

For present purposes, the two relevant cultural systems are the *religious community* and the *dynastic realm*. For both of these, in their heydays, were taken-for-granted frames of reference, very much as nationality is today. It is therefore essential to consider what gave these cultural systems their self-evident plausibility, and at the same time to underline certain key elements in their decomposition.

THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

Few things are more impressive than the vast territorial stretch of the Ummah Islam from Morocco to the Sulu Archipelago, of Christendom from Paraguay to Japan, and of the Buddhist world from Sri Lanka to the Korean peninsula. The great sacral cultures (and for our purposes here it may be permissible to include 'Confucianism') incorporated conceptions of immense communities. But Christendom, the Islamic Ummah, and even the Middle Kingdom – which, though we think of it today as Chinese, imagined itself not as Chinese, but as

13 (April 1972), p. 103. Emphasis added. Similarly, Kemal Atatürk named one of his state banks the *Eti Banka* (Hittite Bank) and another the *Sumerian Bank*. (Seton-Watson, *Nations and States*, p. 259). These banks flourish today, and there is no reason to doubt that many Turks, possibly not excluding Kemal himself, seriously saw, and see, in the Hittites and Sumerians their Turkish forebears. Before laughing too hard, we should remind ourselves of Arthur and Boadicea, and ponder the commercial success of Tolkien's mythographies.

central – were imaginable largely through the medium of a sacred language and written script. Take only the example of Islam: 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 deeper the written language – the farther it was from speech – the better: in principle everyone has access to a pure world of signs.)

Yet such classical communities linked by sacred languages had a character distinct from the imagined communities of modern nations. One crucial difference was the older communities' confidence in the unique sacredness of their languages, and thus their ideas about admission to membership. Chinese mandarins looked with approval on barbarians who painfully learned to paint Middle Kingdom ideograms. These barbarians were already halfway to full absorption.⁵ Half-civilized was vastly better than barbarian. Such an attitude was certainly not peculiar to the Chinese, nor confined to antiquity. Consider, for example, the following 'policy on barbarians' formulated by the early-nineteenth-century Colombian liberal Pedro Fermín de Vargas:

To expand our agriculture it would be necessary to hispanicize our Indians. Their idleness, stupidity, and indifference towards normal endeavours causes one to think that they come from a degenerate race which deteriorates in proportion to the distance from its origin . . . *it would be very desirable that the Indians be extinguished, by miscegenation with*

5. Hence the equanimity with which Sinicized Mongols and Manchus were accepted as Sons of Heaven.

*the whites, declaring them free of tribute and other charges, and giving them private property in land.*⁶

How striking it is that this liberal still proposes to 'extinguish' his Indians in part by 'declaring them free of tribute' and 'giving them private property in land', rather than exterminating them by gun and microbe as his heirs in Brazil, Argentina, and the United States began to do soon afterwards. Note also, alongside the condescending cruelty, a cosmic optimism: the Indian is ultimately redeemable – by impregnation with white, 'civilized' semen, and the acquisition of private property, *like everyone else*. (How different Fermin's attitude is from the later European imperialist's preference for 'genuine' Malays, Gurkhas, and Hausas over 'half-breeds,' 'semi-educated natives,' 'wogs', and the like.)

Yet if the sacred silent languages were the media through which the great global communities of the past were imagined, the reality of such apparitions depended on an idea largely foreign to the contemporary Western mind: the non-arbitrariness of the sign. The ideograms of Chinese, Latin, or Arabic were emanations of reality, not randomly fabricated representations of it. We are familiar with the long dispute over the appropriate language (Latin or vernacular) for the mass. In the Islamic tradition, until quite recently, the Qur'an was literally untranslatable (and therefore untranslated), because Allah's truth was accessible only through the unsubstitutable true signs of written Arabic. There is no idea here of a world so separated from language that all languages are equidistant (and thus interchangeable) signs for it. In effect, ontological reality is apprehensible only through a single, privileged system of re-presentation: the truth-language of Church Latin, Qur'anic Arabic, or Examination Chinese.⁷ And, as truth-languages, imbued with an impulse largely foreign to

6. John Lynch, *The Spanish-American Revolutions, 1808–1826*, p. 260. Emphasis added.

7. Church Greek seems not to have achieved the status of a truth-language. The reasons for this 'failure' are various, but one key factor was certainly the fact that Greek remained a *living* demotic speech (unlike Latin) in much of the Eastern Empire. This insight I owe to Judith Herrin.

nationalism, the impulse towards conversion. By conversion, I mean not so much the acceptance of particular religious tenets, but alchemic absorption. The barbarian becomes 'Middle Kingdom', the Rif Muslim, the Ilongo Christian. The whole nature of man's being is sacrally malleable. (Contrast thus the prestige of these old world-languages, towering high over all vernaculars, with Esperanto or Volapük, which lie ignored between them.) It was, after all, this possibility of conversion through the sacred language that made it possible for an 'Englishman' to become Pope⁸ and a 'Manchu' Son of Heaven.

But even though the sacred languages made such communities as Christendom imaginable, the actual scope and plausibility of these communities can not be explained by sacred script alone: their readers were, after all, tiny literate reefs on top of vast illiterate oceans.⁹ A fuller explanation requires a glance at the relationship between the literati and their societies. It would be a mistake to view the former 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.¹⁰ The fundamental conceptions about 'social groups' were centripetal and hierarchical, rather than boundary-oriented and horizontal. The astonishing power of the papacy in its noonday is only comprehensible in terms of a trans-European Latin-writing clerisy, and a conception of the world, shared by virtually everyone, that the bilingual intelligentsia, by mediating between vernacular and Latin, mediated

8. Nicholas Brakespear held the office of pontiff between 1154 and 1159 under the name Adrian IV.

9. Marc Bloch reminds us that 'the majority of lords and many great barons [in mediaeval times] were administrators incapable of studying personally a report or an account.' *Feudal Society*, I, p. 81.

10. This is not to say that the illiterate did not read. What they read, however, was not words but the visible world. 'In the eyes of all who were capable of reflection the material world was scarcely more than a sort of mask, behind which took place all the really important things; it seemed to them also a language, intended to express by signs a more profound reality.' *Ibid.* p. 83.

between earth and heaven. (The awesomeness of excommunication reflects this cosmology.)

Yet for all the grandeur and power of the great religiously imagined communities, their *unselfconscious coherence* waned steadily after the late Middle Ages. Among the reasons for this decline, I wish here to emphasize only the two which are directly related to these communities' unique sacredness.

First was the effect of the explorations of the non-European world, which mainly but by no means exclusively in Europe 'abruptly widened the cultural and geographic horizon and hence also men's conception of possible forms of human life.'¹¹ The process is already apparent in the greatest of all European travel-books. Consider the following awed description of Kublai Khan by the good Venetian Christian Marco Polo at the end of the thirteenth century:¹²

The grand khan, having obtained this signal victory, returned with great pomp and triumph to the capital city of Kanbalu. This took place in the month of November, and he continued to reside there during the months of February and March, in which latter was *our* festival of Easter. Being aware that this was one of *our* principal solemnities, he commanded all the Christians to attend him, and to bring with them *their* Book, which contains the four Gospels of the Evangelists. After causing it to be repeatedly perfumed with incense, in a ceremonious manner, he devoutly kissed it, and directed that the same should be done by all his nobles who were present. This was his usual practice upon each of the principal Christian festivals, such as Easter and Christmas; and he observed the same at the festivals of the Saracens, Jews, and idolaters. Upon being asked his motive for this conduct, he said: 'There are four great Prophets who are revered and worshipped by the different classes of mankind. The Christians regard Jesus Christ as their divinity; the Saracens, Mahomet; the Jews, Moses; and the idolaters, Sogomombar-kan, the most eminent among their idols. I do honour and show respect to all the four, and invoke to my aid *whichever amongst them is in truth supreme in heaven.*' But from the

11. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 282.

12. Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, pp. 158-59. Emphases added. Notice that, though kissed, the Evangel is not read.

manner in which his majesty acted towards them, it is evident that he regarded the faith of the Christians as the truest and the best...

What is so remarkable about this passage 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.'¹³ And in the unselfconscious use of 'our' (which becomes '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*).

What a revealing contrast is provided by the opening of the letter written by the Persian traveller 'Rica' to his friend 'Ibben' from Paris in '1712':¹⁴

The Pope is the chief of the Christians; he is an ancient idol, worshipped now from habit. Once he was formidable even to princes, for he would depose them as easily as our magnificent sultans depose the kings of Iremetia or Georgia. But nobody fears him any longer. He claims to be the successor of one of the earliest Christians, called Saint Peter, and it is certainly a rich succession, for his treasure is immense and he has a great country under his control.

The deliberate, sophisticated fabrications of the eighteenth century Catholic mirror the naive realism of his thirteenth-century predecessor, but by now the 'relativization' and 'territorialization' are utterly selfconscious, and political in intent. Is it unreasonable to see a paradoxical elaboration of this evolving tradition in the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's identification of The Great Satan, not as a

13. *The Travels of Marco Polo*, p. 152.

14. Henri de Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, p. 81. The *Lettres Persanes* first appeared in 1721.

heresy, nor even as a demonic personage (dim little Carter scarcely fitted the bill), but as a *nation*?

Second was a gradual demotion of the sacred language itself. Writing of mediaeval Western Europe, Bloch noted that 'Latin was not only the language in which teaching was done, it was the *only language taught*.'¹⁵ (This second 'only' shows quite clearly the sacredness of Latin – no other language was thought worth the teaching.) But by the sixteenth century all this was changing fast. The reasons for the change need not detain us here: the central importance of print-capitalism will be discussed below. It is sufficient to remind ourselves of its scale and pace. Febvre and Martin estimate that 77% of the books printed before 1500 were still in Latin (meaning nonetheless that 23% were already in vernaculars).¹⁶ If of the 88 editions printed in Paris in 1501 all but 8 were in Latin, after 1575 a majority were always in French.¹⁷ Despite a temporary come-back during the Counter-Reformation, Latin's hegemony was doomed. Nor are we speaking simply of a general popularity. Somewhat later, but at no less dizzying speed, Latin ceased to be the language of a pan-European high intelligentsia. In the seventeenth century Hobbes (1588–1678) was a figure of continental renown because he wrote in the truth-language. Shakespeare (1564–1616), on the other hand, composing in the vernacular, was virtually unknown across the Channel.¹⁸ And had English not become, two hundred years later, the pre-eminent world-imperial language, might he not largely have retained his original insular obscurity? Meanwhile, these men's cross-Channel near-contemporaries, Descartes (1596–1650) and Pascal (1623–1662) conducted most of their correspondence in Latin; but virtually all of Voltaire's (1694–1778) was in the vernacular.¹⁹ After 1640, with fewer and fewer books coming out in Latin, and more and more in the vernacular languages, publishing was ceasing to be an

15. Bloch, *Feudal Society*, I, p. 77. Emphasis added.

16. Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book*, pp. 248–49.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 321.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 330.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 331–32.

international [sic] enterprise.²⁰ In a word, the fall of Latin exemplified a larger process in which the sacred communities integrated by old sacred languages were gradually fragmented, pluralized, and territorialized.

THE DYNASTIC REALM

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.²¹ 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.²²

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 232–33. The original French is more modest and historically exact: 'Tandis que l'on édit de moins en moins d'ouvrages en latin, et une proportion toujours plus grande de textes en langue nationale, le commerce du livre se morcelle en Europe.' *L'Apparition du Livre*, p. 356.

21. Notice the displacement in rulers' nomenclature that corresponds to this transformation. Schoolchildren remember monarchs by their first names (what *was* William the Conqueror's surname?), presidents by their last (what *was* Ebert's Christian name?). In a world of citizens, all of whom are theoretically eligible for the presidency, the limited pool of 'Christian' names makes them inadequate as specifying designators. In monarchies, however, where rule is reserved for a single surname, it is necessarily 'Christian' names, with numbers, or sobriquets, that supply the requisite distinctions.

22. We may here note in passing that Nairn is certainly correct in describing the 1707 Act of Union between England and Scotland as a 'patrician bargain,' in the sense that the union's architects were aristocratic politicians. (See his lucid discussion in *The Break-up of Britain*, pp. 136f.). Still, it is difficult to imagine such a bargain being

One must also remember that these antique monarchical states expanded not only by warfare but by sexual politics – of a kind very different from that practised today. Through the general principle of verticality, dynastic marriages brought together diverse populations under new apices. Paradigmatic in this respect was the House of Habsburg. As the tag went, *Bella gerant alii tu felix Austria nube!* Here, in somewhat abbreviated form, is the later dynasts' titulature.²³

Emperor of Austria; King of Hungary, of Bohemia, of Dalmatia, Croatia, Slavonia, Galicia, Lodomeria, and Illyria; King of Jerusalem, etc; Archduke of Austria [sic]; Grand Duke of Tuscany and Cracow; Duke of Loth [a] ringia, of Salzburg, Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, and Bukovina; Grand Duke of Transylvania, Margrave of Moravia; Duke of Upper and Lower Silesia, of Modena, Parma, Piacenza, and Guastella, of Ausschwitz and Sator, of Teschen, Friaul, Ragusa, and Zara; Princely Count of Habsburg and Tyrol, of Kyburg, Görz, and Gradiska; Duke of Trient and Brizen; Margrave of Upper and Lower Lausitz and in Istria; Count of Hohenembs, Feldkirch, Bregenz, Sonnenberg, etc.; Lord of Trieste, of Cattaro, and above the Windisch Mark; Great Voyvod of the Voyvodina, Servia. . . . etc.

This, Jászi justly observes, was, 'not without a certain comic aspect . . . the record of the innumerable marriages, hucksterings and captures of the Habsburgs.'

In realms where polygyny was religiously sanctioned, complex systems of tiered concubinage were essential to the integration of the realm. In fact, royal lineages often derived their prestige, aside from any aura of divinity, from, shall we say, miscegenation?²⁴ For such

struck between the aristocracies of two republics. The conception of a United Kingdom was surely the crucial mediating element that made the deal possible.

23. Oscar Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy*, p. 34.

24. Most notably in pre-modern Asia. But the same principle was at work in monogamous Christian Europe. In 1910, one Otto Forst put out his *Ahnentafel Seiner Kaiserlichen und Königlichen Hoheit des durchlauchtigsten Herrn Erzherzogs Franz Ferdinand*, listing 2,047 of the soon-to-be-assassinated Archduke's ancestors. They included 1,486 Germans, 124 French, 196 Italians, 89 Spaniards, 52 Poles, 47 Danes, 20 Englishmen/women, as well as four other nationalities. This 'curious document' is cited in *ibid.*, p. 136, no. 1. I can not resist quoting here Franz Joseph's wonderful

mixtures were signs of a superordinate status. It is characteristic that there has not been an 'English' dynasty ruling in London since the eleventh century (if then); and what 'nationality' are we to assign to the Bourbons?²⁵

During the seventeenth century, however – for reasons that need not detain us here – the automatic legitimacy of sacral monarchy began its slow decline in Western Europe. In 1649, Charles Stuart was beheaded in the first of the modern world's revolutions, and during the 1650s one of the more important European states was ruled by a plebeian Protector rather than a king. Yet even in the age of Pope and Addison, Anne Stuart was still healing the sick by the laying on of royal hands, cures committed also by the Bourbons, Louis XV and XVI, in Enlightened France till the end of the *ancien régime*.²⁶ But after 1789 the principle of Legitimacy had to be loudly and self-consciously defended, and, in the process, 'monarchy' became a semi-standardized model. Tennō and Son of Heaven became 'Emperors.' In far-off Siam Rama V (Chulalongkorn) sent his sons and nephews to the courts of St. Petersburg, London and Berlin to learn the intricacies of the world-model. In 1887, he instituted the requisite principle of succession-by-legal-primogeniture, thus bringing Siam 'into line with the "civilized" monarchies of Europe.'²⁷ The new system brought to the throne in 1910 an erratic homosexual who would certainly have been passed over in an earlier age. However, inter-monarchic approval of his ascension as Rama VI was sealed by the attendance at his coronation of princelings from Britain, Russia, Greece, Sweden, Denmark – and Japan!²⁸

reaction to the news of his erratic heir-apparent's murder: 'In this manner a superior power has restored that order which I unfortunately was unable to maintain' (*ibid.*, p. 125).

25. Gellner stresses the typical foreignness of dynasties, but interprets the phenomenon too narrowly: local aristocrats prefer an alien monarch because he will not take sides in their internal rivalries. *Thought and Change*, p. 136.

26. Marc Bloch, *Les Rois Thaumaturges*, pp. 390 and 398–99.

27. Noel A. Battye, 'The Military, Government and Society in Siam, 1868–1910,' PhD thesis, Cornell 1974, p. 270.

28. Stephen Greene, 'Thai Government and Administration in the Reign of Rama VI (1910–1925),' PhD thesis, University of London 1971, p. 92.

As late as 1914, dynastic states made up the majority of the membership of the world political system, but, as we shall be noting in detail below, many dynasts had for some time been reaching for a 'national' cachet as the old principle of Legitimacy withered silently away. While the armies of Frederick the Great (r. 1740–1786) were heavily staffed by 'foreigners', those of his great-nephew Friedrich Wilhelm III (r. 1797–1840) were, as a result of Scharnhorst's, Gneisenau's and Clausewitz's spectacular reforms, exclusively 'national-Prussian'.²⁹

APPREHENSIONS OF TIME

It would be short-sighted, however, to think of the imagined communities of nations as simply growing out of and replacing religious communities and dynastic realms. Beneath the decline of sacred communities, languages and lineages, a fundamental change was taking place in modes of apprehending the world, which, more than anything else, made it possible to 'think' the nation.

To get a feeling for this change, one can profitably turn to the visual representations of the sacred communities, such as the reliefs and stained-glass windows of mediaeval churches, or the paintings of early Italian and Flemish masters. A characteristic feature of such representations is something misleadingly analogous to 'modern dress'. The shepherds who have followed the star to the manger where Christ is born bear the features of Burgundian peasants. The Virgin Mary is figured as a Tuscan merchant's daughter. In many paintings the commissioning patron, in full burgher or noble costume, appears kneeling in adoration alongside the shepherds. What seems incongruous today obviously appeared wholly natural to the eyes of mediaeval worshippers. We are faced with a world in

29. More than 1,000 of the 7,000–8,000 men on the Prussian Army's officer list in 1806 were foreigners. 'Middle-class Prussians were outnumbered by foreigners in their own army; this lent colour to the saying that Prussia was not a country that had an army, but an army that had a country.' In 1798, Prussian reformers had demanded a 'reduction by one half of the number of foreigners, who still amounted to about 50% of the privates...' Alfred Vagts, *A History of Militarism*, pp. 64 and 85.

which the figuring of imagined reality was overwhelmingly visual and aural. Christendom assumed its universal form through a myriad of specificities and particularities: this relief, that window, this sermon, that tale, this morality play, that relic. While the trans-European Latin-reading clerisy was one essential element in the structuring of the Christian imagination, the mediation of its conceptions to the illiterate masses, by visual and aural creations, always personal and particular, was no less vital. The humble parish priest, whose forebears and frailties everyone who heard his celebrations knew, was still the direct intermediary between his parishioners and the divine. This 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.³⁰ 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.'³¹

Auerbach gives an unforgettable sketch of this form of consciousness:³²

30. For us, the idea of 'modern dress,' a metaphorical equivalencing of past with present, is a backhanded recognition of their fatal separation.

31. Bloch, *Feudal Society*, I, pp. 84–86.

32. Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 64. Emphasis added. Compare St. Augustine's description of the Old Testament as 'the shadow of [i.e. cast backwards by] the future.' Cited in Bloch, *Feudal Society*, I, p. 90.

If an occurrence like the sacrifice of Isaac is interpreted as prefiguring the sacrifice of Christ, so that in the former the latter is as it were announced and promised and the latter 'fulfills' . . . the former, then a connection is established between two events which are linked neither temporally nor causally—a connection which it is impossible to establish by reason in the horizontal dimension . . . It can be established only if both occurrences are vertically linked to Divine Providence, which alone is able to devise such a plan of history and supply the key to its understanding . . . the here and now is no longer a mere link in an earthly chain of events, it is *simultaneously* something which has always been, and will be fulfilled in the future; and strictly, in the eyes of God, it is something eternal, something omnitemporal, something already consummated in the realm of fragmentary earthly event.

He rightly stresses that such an idea of *simultaneity* is wholly alien to our own. It views time as something close to what Benjamin calls Messianic time, a simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present.³³ In such a view of things, the word 'meanwhile' cannot be of real significance.

Our own conception of simultaneity has been a long time in the making, and its emergence is certainly connected, in ways that have yet to be well studied, with the development of the secular sciences. But it is a conception of such fundamental importance that, without taking it fully into account, we will find it difficult to probe the obscure genesis of nationalism. What has come to take the place of the mediaeval conception of simultaneity-along-time is, to borrow again from Benjamin, an idea of 'homogeneous, empty time,' in which simultaneity is, as it were, transverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfilment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar.³⁴

Why this transformation should be so important for the birth of the imagined community of the nation can best be seen if we consider the basic structure of two forms of imagining which first flowered in

33. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p. 265.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 263. So deep-lying is this new idea that one could argue that every essential modern conception is based on a conception of 'meanwhile'.

Europe in the eighteenth century: the novel and the newspaper.³⁵ For these forms provided the technical means for 're-presenting' the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation.

Consider first the structure of the old-fashioned novel, a structure typical not only of the masterpieces of Balzac but also of any contemporary dollar-dreadful. It is clearly a device for the presentation of simultaneity in 'homogeneous, empty time,' or a complex gloss upon the word 'meanwhile'. Take, for illustrative purposes, a segment of a simple novel-plot, in which a man (A) has a wife (B) and a mistress (C), who in turn has a lover (D). We might imagine a sort of time-chart for this segment as follows:

Time:	I	II	III
Events:	A quarrels with B C and D make love	A telephones C B shops D plays pool	D gets drunk in a bar A dines at home with B C has an ominous dream

Notice that during this sequence A and D never meet, indeed may not even be aware of each other's existence if C has played her cards right.³⁶ What then actually links A to D? Two complementary conceptions: First, that they are embedded in 'societies' (Wessex, Lübeck, Los Angeles). These societies are sociological entities of such firm and stable reality that their members (A and D) can even be described as passing each other on the street, without ever becoming acquainted, and still be connected.³⁷ Second, that A and D are

35. While the *Princesse de Clèves* had already appeared in 1678, the era of Richardson, Defoe and Fielding is the early eighteenth century. The origins of the modern newspaper lie in the Dutch gazettes of the late seventeenth century; but the newspaper only became a general category of printed matter after 1700. Febvre and Martin, *The Coming of the Book*, p. 197.

36. Indeed, the plot's grip may depend at Times I, II, and III on A, B, C and D not knowing what the others are up to.

37. This polyphony decisively marks off the modern novel even from so brilliant a forerunner as Petronius's *Satyricon*. Its narrative proceeds single file. If Encolpius bewails his young lover's faithlessness, we are not simultaneously shown Gito in bed with Ascyltus.

embedded in the minds of the omniscient readers. Only they, like God, watch A telephoning C, B shopping, and D playing pool all at once. That all these acts are performed at the same clocked, calendrical time, but by actors who may be largely unaware of one another, shows the novelty of this imagined world conjured up by the author in his readers' minds.³⁸

The idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history.³⁹ An American will never meet, or even know the names of more than a handful of his 240,000-odd fellow-Americans. He has no idea of what they are up to at any one time. But he has complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity.

The perspective I am suggesting will perhaps seem less abstract if we turn to inspect briefly four fictions from different cultures and different epochs, all but one of which, nonetheless, are inextricably bound to nationalist movements. In 1887, the 'Father of Filipino Nationalism', José Rizal, wrote the novel *Noli Me Tangere*, which today is regarded as the greatest achievement of modern Filipino literature. It was also almost the first novel written by an 'Indio'.⁴⁰ Here is how it marvellously begins:⁴¹

Towards the end of October, Don Santiago de los Santos, popularly known as Capitan Tiago, was giving a dinner party. Although,

38. In this context it is rewarding to compare any historical novel with documents or narratives from the period fictionalized.

39. Nothing better shows the immersion of the novel in homogeneous, empty time than the absence of those prefatory genealogies, often ascending to the origin of man, which are so characteristic a feature of ancient chronicles, legends, and holy books.

40. Rizal wrote this novel in the colonial language (Spanish), which was then the lingua franca of the ethnically diverse Eurasian and native elites. Alongside the novel appeared also for the first time a 'nationalist' press, not only in Spanish but in such 'ethnic' languages as Tagalog and Ilocano. See Leopoldo Y. Yabes, 'The Modern Literature of the Philippines,' pp. 287-302, in Pierre-Bernard Lafont and Denys Lombard (eds), *Littératures Contemporaines de l'Asie du Sud-Est*.

41. José Rizal, *Noli Me Tangere* (Manila: Instituto Nacional de Historia, 1978), p. 1. My translation. At the time of the original publication of *Imagined Communities*, I

contrary to his usual practice, he had announced it only that afternoon, it was already the subject of every conversation in Binondo, in other quarters of the city, and even in [the walled inner city of] Intramuros. In those days Capitan Tiago had the reputation of a lavish host. It was known that his house, like his country, closed its doors to nothing, except to commerce and to any new or daring idea.

So the news coursed like an electric shock through the community of parasites, spongers, and gatecrashers whom God, in His infinite goodness, created, and so tenderly multiplies in Manila. Some hunted polish for their boots, others looked for collar-buttons and cravats. But one and all were preoccupied with the problem of how to greet their host with the familiarity required to create the appearance of longstanding friendship, or, if need be, to excuse themselves for not having arrived earlier.

The dinner was being given at a house on Anloague Street. Since we do not recall the street number, we shall describe it in such a way that it may still be recognized—that is, if earthquakes have not yet destroyed it. We do not believe that its owner will have had it torn down, since such work is usually left to God or to Nature, which, besides, holds many contracts with our Government.

Extensive comment is surely unnecessary. It should suffice to note that right from the start the image (wholly new to Filipino writing) of a dinner-party being discussed by hundreds of unnamed people, who do not know each other, in quite different parts of Manila, in a particular month of a particular decade, immediately conjures up the imagined community. And in the phrase 'a house on Anloague Street' which 'we shall describe in such a way that it may still be recognized,' the would-be recognizers are we-Filipino-readers. The casual progression of this house from the 'interior' time of the novel to the 'exterior' time of the [Manila] reader's everyday life gives a hypnotic confirmation of the solidity of a single community, embracing characters, author and readers, moving onward through calendrical time.⁴² Notice too the tone. While Rizal has not the faintest idea of his

had no command of Spanish, and was thus unwittingly led to rely on the instructively corrupt translation of Leon Maria Guerrero.

42. Notice, for example, Rizal's subtle shift, in the same sentence, from the past

readers' individual identities, he writes to them with an ironical intimacy, as though their relationships with each other are not in the smallest degree problematic.⁴³

Nothing gives one a more Foucauldian sense of abrupt discontinuities of consciousness than to compare *Noli* with the most celebrated previous literary work by an 'Indio', Francisco Balagtas (Baltazar)'s *Pinagdaanang Buhay ni Florante at ni Laura sa Cahariang Albania* [The Story of Florante and Laura in the Kingdom of Albania], the first printed edition of which dates from 1861, though it may have been composed as early as 1838.⁴⁴ For although Balagtas was still alive when Rizal was born, the world of his masterpiece is in every basic respect foreign to that of *Noli*. Its setting—a fabulous mediaeval Albania—is utterly removed in time and space from the Binondo of the 1880s. Its heroes—Florante, a Christian Albanian nobleman, and his bosom-friend Aladin, a Muslim ('Moro') Persian aristocrat—remind us of the Philippines only by the Christian-Moro linkage. Where Rizal deliberately sprinkles his Spanish prose with Tagalog words for 'realistic', satirical, or nationalist effect, Balagtas unselfconsciously mixes Spanish phrases into his Tagalog quatrains simply to heighten the grandeur and sonority of his diction. *Noli* was meant to be read, while *Florante at Laura* was to be sung aloud. Most striking of all is Balagtas's handling of time. As Lumbera notes, 'the unravelling of the plot does not follow a chronological order. The story begins *in medias res*, so that the complete story comes to us through a series of speeches that serve as flashbacks.'⁴⁵ Almost half of the 399 quatrains are accounts of Florante's childhood, student years in Athens, and subsequent military exploits, given by the hero in conversation with

tense of 'created' (*crió*) to the all-of-us-together present tense of 'multiplies' (*multiplica*).

43. The obverse side of the readers' anonymous obscurity was/is the author's immediate celebrity. As we shall see, this obscurity/celebrity has everything to do with the spread of print-capitalism. As early as 1593 energetic Dominicans had published in Manila the *Doctrina Christiana*. But for centuries thereafter print remained under tight ecclesiastical control. Liberalization only began in the 1860s. See Bienvenido L. Lumbera, *Tagalog Poetry 1570-1898, Tradition and Influences in its Development*, pp. 35, 93.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

Aladin.⁴⁶ The 'spoken flashback' was for Balagtas the only alternative to a straightforward single-file narrative. If we learn of Florante's and Aladin's 'simultaneous' pasts, they are connected by their conversing voices, not by the structure of the epic. How distant this technique is from that of the novel: 'In that same spring, while Florante was still studying in Athens, Aladin was expelled from his sovereign's court...' In effect, it never occurs to Balagtas to 'situate' his protagonists in 'society,' or to discuss them with his audience. Nor, aside from the mellifluous flow of Tagalog polysyllables, is there much 'Filipino' about his text.⁴⁷

In 1816, seventy years before the writing of *Noli*, José Joaquín Fernandez de Lizardi wrote a novel called *El Periquillo Sarniento* [The Itching Parrot], evidently the first Latin American work in this genre. In the words of one critic, this text is 'a ferocious indictment of Spanish administration in Mexico: ignorance, superstition and corruption are seen to be its most notable characteristics.'⁴⁸ The essential form of this 'nationalist' novel is indicated by the following description of its content:⁴⁹

From the first, [the hero, the Itching Parrot] is exposed to bad influences—ignorant maids inculcate superstitions, his mother indulges his whims, his teachers either have no vocation or no ability to

46. The technique is similar to that of Homer, so ably discussed by Auerbach, *Mimesis*, ch. 1 ('Odysseus' Scar').

47. 'Paalam Albaniang pinamamayanan
ng casama, t, lupit, bangis caliluhan,
acong tangulan mo, i, cusa mang pinatay
sa iyo, i, malaqui ang panghihinayang.'
'Farewell, Albania, kingdom now
of evil, cruelty, brutishness and deceit!
I, your defender, whom you now murder
Nevertheless lament the fate that has befallen you.'

This famous stanza has sometimes been interpreted as a veiled statement of Filipino patriotism, but Lumbera convincingly shows such an interpretation to be an anachronistic gloss. *Tagalog Poetry*, p. 123. The translation is Lumbera's. I have slightly altered his Tagalog text to conform to a 1973 edition of the poem based on the 1861 imprint.

48. Jean Franco, *An Introduction to Spanish-American Literature*, p. 34.

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36. Emphasis added.

discipline him. And though his father is an intelligent man who wants his son to practise a useful trade rather than swell the ranks of lawyers and parasites, it is Periquillo's over-fond mother who wins the day, sends her son to university and thus ensures that he will learn only superstitious nonsense... Periquillo remains incorrigibly ignorant despite many encounters with good and wise people. He is unwilling to work or take anything seriously and becomes successively a priest, a gambler, a thief, apprentice to an apothecary, a doctor, clerk in a provincial town... These episodes permit the author to describe hospitals, prisons, remote villages, monasteries, while at the same time driving home one major point – that Spanish government and the education system encourage parasitism and laziness... Periquillo's adventures several times take him among Indians and Negroes...

Here again we see the 'national imagination' at work in the movement of a solitary hero through a sociological landscape of a fixity that fuses the world inside the novel with the world outside. This picaresque *tour d'horizon* – hospitals, prisons, remote villages, monasteries, Indians, Negroes – is nonetheless not a *tour du monde*. The horizon is clearly bounded: it is that of colonial Mexico. Nothing assures us of this sociological solidity more than the succession of plurals. For they conjure up a social space full of comparable prisons, none in itself of any unique importance, but all representative (in their simultaneous, separate existence) of the oppressiveness of this colony.⁵⁰ (Contrast prisons in the Bible. They are never imagined as typical of this or that society. Each, like the one where Salome was bewitched by John the Baptist, is magically alone.)

Finally, to remove the possibility that, since Rizal and Lizardi both wrote in Spanish, the frameworks we have been studying are somehow 'European', here is the opening of *Semarang Hitam* [Black Semarang], a tale by the ill-fated young Indonesian communist-nationalist Mas Marco Kartodikromo,⁵¹ published serially in 1924:⁵²

50. This movement of a solitary hero through an adamant social landscape is typical of many early (anti-)colonial novels.

51. After a brief, meteoric career as a radical journalist, Marco was interned by the Dutch colonial authorities in Boven Digul, one of the world's earliest concentration camps, deep in the interior swamps of western New Guinea. There he died in 1932, after six years confinement. Henri Chambert-Loir, 'Mas Marco

It was 7 o'clock, Saturday evening; young people in Semarang never stayed at home on Saturday night. On this night however nobody was about. Because the heavy day-long rain had made the roads wet and very slippery, all had stayed at home.

For the workers in shops and offices Saturday morning was a time of anticipation – anticipating their leisure and the fun of walking around the city in the evening, but on this night they were to be disappointed – because of lethargy caused by the bad weather and the sticky roads in the kampungs. The main roads usually crammed with all sorts of traffic, the footpaths usually teeming with people, all were deserted. Now and then the crack of a horse-cab's whip could be heard spurring a horse on its way – or the clip-clop of horses' hooves pulling carriages along.

Semarang was deserted. The light from the rows of gas lamps shone straight down on the shining asphalt road. Occasionally the clear light from the gas lamps was dimmed as the wind blew from the east...

A young man was seated on a long rattan lounge reading a newspaper. He was totally engrossed. His occasional anger and at other times smiles were a sure sign of his deep interest in the story. He turned the pages of the newspaper, thinking that perhaps he could find something that would stop him feeling so miserable. All of a sudden he came upon an article entitled:

PROSPERITY

A destitute vagrant became ill
and died on the side of the road from exposure.

The young man was moved by this brief report. He could just imagine the suffering of the poor soul as he lay dying on the side of the road... One moment he felt an explosive anger well up inside. Another moment he felt pity. Yet another moment his anger was directed at

Kartodikromo (c. 1890–1932) ou L'Education Politique,' p. 208, in *Littératures contemporaines de l'Asie du Sud-Est*. A brilliant recent full-length account of Marco's career can be found in Takashi Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion: Popular Radicalism in Java, 1912–1926*, chapters 2–5 and 8.

52. As translated by Paul Tickell in his *Three Early Indonesian Short Stories by Mas Marco Kartodikromo (c. 1890–1932)*, p. 7. Emphasis added.

the social system which gave rise to such poverty, while making a small group of people wealthy.

Here, as in *El Periquillo Sarmiento*, we are in a world of plurals: shops, offices, carriages, kampungs, and gas lamps. As in the case of *Noli*, we-the-Indonesian-readers are plunged immediately into calendrical time and a familiar landscape; some of us may well have walked those 'sticky' Semarang roads. Once again, a solitary hero is juxtaposed to a socioscope described in careful, general detail. But there is also something new: a hero who is never named, but who is frequently referred to as 'our young man'. Precisely the clumsiness and literary naivety of the text confirm the unselfconscious 'sincerity' of this pronominal adjective. Neither Marco nor his readers have any doubts about the reference. If in the jocular-sophisticated fiction of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe the trope 'our hero' merely underlines an authorial play with a(ny) reader, Marco's 'our young man,' not least in its novelty, means a young man who belongs to the collective body of readers of *Indonesian*, and thus, implicitly, an embryonic Indonesian 'imagined community.' Notice that Marco feels no need to specify this community by name: it is already there. (Even if polylingual Dutch colonial censors could join his readership, they are excluded from this 'ourness,' as can be seen from the fact that the young man's anger is directed at 'the,' not 'our,' social system.)

Finally, the imagined community is confirmed by the doubleness of our reading about our young man reading. He does not find the corpse of the destitute vagrant by the side of a sticky Semarang road, but imagines it from the print in a newspaper.⁵³ Nor does he care the slightest who the dead vagrant individually was: he thinks of the representative body, not the personal life.

It is fitting that in *Semarang Hitam* a newspaper appears embedded

53. In 1924, a close friend and political ally of Marco published a novel titled *Rasa Merdeka* [Feeling Free/The Feel of Freedom]. Of the hero of this novel (which he wrongly attributes to Marco) Chambert-Loir writes that 'he has no idea of the meaning of the word "socialism": nonetheless he feels a profound malaise in the face of the social organization that surrounds him and he feels the need to enlarge his horizons by two methods: travel and reading.' ('Mas Marco', p. 208. Emphasis added.) The Itching Parrot has moved to Java and the twentieth century.

in fiction, for, if we now turn to the newspaper as cultural product, we will be struck by its profound fictiveness. 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.⁵⁴ 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 second source of imagined linkage lies in the relationship between the newspaper, as a form of book, and the market. It has been estimated that in the 40-odd years between the publication of the Gutenberg Bible and the close of the fifteenth century, more than 20,000,000 printed volumes were produced in Europe.⁵⁵ Between 1500 and 1600, the number manufactured had reached between

54. Reading a newspaper is like reading a novel whose author has abandoned any thought of a coherent plot.

55. Febvre and Martin, *The Coming of the Book*, p. 186. This amounted to no less than 35,000 editions produced in no fewer than 236 towns. As early as 1480, presses existed in more than 110 towns, of which 50 were in today's Italy, 30 in Germany, 9 in France, 8 each in Holland and Spain, 5 each in Belgium and Switzerland, 4 in England, 2 in Bohemia, and 1 in Poland. 'From that date it may be said of Europe that the printed book was in universal use.' (p. 182).

150,000,000 and 200,000,000.⁵⁶ 'From early on . . . the printing shops looked more like modern workshops than the monastic workrooms of the Middle Ages. In 1455, Fust and Schoeffer were already running a business geared to standardised production, and twenty years later large printing concerns were operating everywhere in all [sic] Europe.'⁵⁷ In a rather special sense, the book was the first modern-style mass-produced industrial commodity.⁵⁸ The sense I have in mind can be shown if we compare the book to other early industrial products, such as textiles, bricks, or sugar. For these commodities are *measured* in mathematical amounts (pounds or loads or pieces). A pound of sugar is simply a quantity, a convenient load, not an object in itself. The book, however – and here it prefigures the durables of our time – is a distinct, self-contained object, exactly reproduced on a large scale.⁵⁹ One pound of sugar flows into the next; each book has its own eremitic self-sufficiency. (Small wonder that libraries, personal collections of mass-produced commodities, were already a familiar sight, in urban centres like Paris, by the sixteenth century).⁶⁰

In this perspective, the newspaper is merely an 'extreme form' of the book, a book sold on a colossal scale, but of ephemeral popularity.

56. Ibid., p. 262. The authors comment that by the sixteenth century books were readily available to anyone who could read.

57. The great Antwerp publishing house of Plantin controlled, early in the sixteenth century, 24 presses with more than 100 workers in each shop. Ibid., p. 125.

58. This is one point solidly made amidst the vagaries of Marshall McLuhan's *Gutenberg Galaxy* (p. 125). One might add that if the book market was dwarfed by the markets in other commodities, its strategic role in the dissemination of ideas nonetheless made it of central importance to the development of modern Europe.

59. The principle here is more important than the scale. Until the nineteenth century, editions were still relatively small. Even Luther's Bible, an extraordinary best-seller, had only a 4,000-copy first edition. The unusually large first edition of Diderot's *Encyclopédie* numbered no more than 4,250. The average eighteenth-century run was less than 2,000. Febvre and Martin, *The Coming of the Book*, pp. 218–20. At the same time, the book was always distinguishable from other durables by its inherently limited market. Anyone with money can buy Czech cars; only Czech-readers will buy Czech-language books. The importance of this distinction will be considered below.

60. Furthermore, as early as the late fifteenth century the Venetian publisher Aldus had pioneered the portable 'pocket edition.'

Might we say: one-day best-sellers?⁶¹ 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. We know that particular morning and evening editions will overwhelmingly be consumed between this hour and that, only on this day, not that. (Contrast sugar, the use of which proceeds in an unclocked, continuous flow; it may go bad, but it does not go out of date.) The significance of this mass ceremony – Hegel observed that newspapers serve modern man as a substitute for morning prayers – is paradoxical. It is performed in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull.⁶² Yet each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion. Furthermore, this ceremony is incessantly repeated at daily or half-daily intervals throughout the calendar. What more vivid figure for the secular, historically clocked, imagined community can be envisioned?⁶³ At the same time, the newspaper reader, observing exact replicas of his own paper being consumed by his subway, barbershop, or residential neighbours, is continually reassured that the imagined world is visibly rooted in

61. As the case of *Semarang Hitam* shows, the two kinds of best-sellers used to be more closely linked than they are today. Dickens too serialized his popular novels in popular newspapers.

62. 'Printed materials encouraged silent adherence to causes whose advocates could not be located in any one parish and who addressed an invisible public from afar.' Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, 'Some Conjectures about the Impact of Printing on Western Society and Thought,' *Journal of Modern History*, 40: 1 (March 1968), p. 42.

63. Writing of the relationship between the material anarchy of middle-class society and an abstract political state-order, Nairn observes that 'the representative mechanism converted real class inequality into the abstract egalitarianism of citizens, individual egotisms into an impersonal collective will, what would otherwise be chaos into a new state legitimacy.' *The Break-up of Britain*, p. 24. No doubt. But the representative mechanism (elections?) is a rare and moveable feast. The generation of the impersonal will is, I think, better sought in the diurnal regularities of the imagining life.

everyday life. As with *Noli Me Tangere*, fiction seeps quietly and continuously into reality, creating that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations.

Before proceeding to a discussion of the specific origins of nationalism, it may be useful to recapitulate the main propositions put forward thus far. Essentially, I have been arguing that the very possibility of imagining the nation only arose historically when, and where, three fundamental cultural conceptions, all of great antiquity, lost their axiomatic grip on men's minds. The first of these was the idea that a particular script-language offered privileged access to ontological truth, precisely because it was an inseparable part of that truth. It was this idea that called into being the great transcontinental sodalities of Christendom, the Islamic Ummah, and the rest. Second was the belief that society was naturally organized around and under high centres – monarchs who were persons apart from other human beings and who ruled by some form of cosmological (divine) dispensation. Human loyalties were necessarily hierarchical and centripetal because the ruler, like the sacred script, was a node of access to being and inherent in it. Third was a conception of temporality in which cosmology and history were indistinguishable, the origins of the world and of men essentially identical. Combined, these ideas rooted human lives firmly in the very nature of things, giving certain meaning to the everyday fatalities of existence (above all death, loss, and servitude) and offering, in various ways, redemption from them.

The slow, uneven decline of these interlinked certainties, first in Western Europe, later elsewhere, under the impact of economic change, 'discoveries' (social and scientific), and the development of increasingly rapid communications, drove a harsh wedge between cosmology and history. No surprise then that the search was on, so to speak, for a new way of linking fraternity, power and time meaningfully together. Nothing perhaps more precipitated this search, nor made it more fruitful, than print-capitalism, which made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways.

The Origins of National Consciousness

If the development of print-as-commodity is the key to the generation of wholly new ideas of simultaneity, still, we are simply at the point where communities of the type 'horizontal-secular, transverse-time' become possible. Why, within that type, did the nation become so popular? The factors involved are obviously complex and various. But a strong case can be made for the primacy of capitalism.

As already noted, at least 20,000,000 books had already been printed by 1500,¹ signalling the onset of Benjamin's 'age of mechanical reproduction.' If manuscript knowledge was scarce and arcane lore, print knowledge lived by reproducibility and dissemination.² If, as Febvre and Martin believe, possibly as many as 200,000,000 volumes had been manufactured by 1600, it is no wonder that Francis Bacon believed that print had changed 'the appearance and state of the world.'³

One of the earlier forms of capitalist enterprise, book-publishing

1. The population of that Europe where print was then known was about 100,000,000. Febvre and Martin, *The Coming of the Book*, pp. 248–49.

2. Emblematic is Marco Polo's *Travels*, which remained largely unknown till its first printing in 1559. Polo, *Travels*, p. xiii.

3. Quoted in Eisenstein, 'Some Conjectures,' p. 56.

felt all of capitalism's restless search for markets. The early printers established branches all over Europe: 'in this way a veritable "international" of publishing houses, which ignored national [sic] frontiers, was created.'⁴ And since the years 1500–1550 were a period of exceptional European prosperity, publishing shared in the general boom. 'More than at any other time' it was 'a great industry under the control of wealthy capitalists.'⁵ Naturally, 'book-sellers were primarily concerned to make a profit and to sell their products, and consequently they sought out first and foremost those works which were of interest to the largest possible number of their contemporaries.'⁶

The initial market was literate Europe, a wide but thin stratum of Latin-readers. Saturation of this market took about a hundred and fifty years. The determinative fact about Latin—aside from its sacrality—was that it was a language of bilinguals. Relatively few were born to speak it and even fewer, one imagines, dreamed in it. In the sixteenth century the proportion of bilinguals within the total population of Europe was quite small; very likely no larger than the proportion in the world's population today, and—proletarian internationalism notwithstanding—in the centuries to come. Then and now the bulk of mankind is monoglot. The logic of capitalism thus meant that once the elite Latin market was saturated, the potentially huge markets represented by the monoglot masses would beckon. To be sure, the Counter-Reformation encouraged a temporary resurgence of Latin-publishing, but by the mid-seventeenth century the movement was in decay, and fervently Catholic libraries replete. Meantime, a Europe-wide shortage of money made printers think more and more of peddling cheap editions in the vernaculars.⁷

4. Febvre and Martin, *The Coming of the Book*, p. 122. (The original text, however, speaks simply of 'par-dessus les frontières.' *L'Apparition*, p. 184.)

5. Ibid., p. 187. The original text speaks of 'puissants' (powerful) rather than 'wealthy' capitalists. *L'Apparition*, p. 281.

6. 'Hence the introduction of printing was in this respect a stage on the road to our present society of mass consumption and standardisation.' Ibid., pp. 259–60. (The original text has 'une civilisation de masse et de standardisation,' which may be better rendered 'standardised, mass civilization.' *L'Apparition*, p. 394).

7. Ibid., p. 195.

The revolutionary vernacularizing thrust of capitalism was given further impetus by three extraneous factors, two of which contributed directly to the rise of national consciousness. The first, and ultimately the least important, was a change in the character of Latin itself. Thanks to the labours of the Humanists in reviving the broad literature of pre-Christian antiquity and spreading it through the print-market, a new appreciation of the sophisticated stylistic achievements of the ancients was apparent among the trans-European intelligentsia. The Latin they now aspired to write became more and more Ciceronian, and, by the same token, increasingly removed from ecclesiastical and everyday life. In this way it acquired an esoteric quality quite different from that of Church Latin in mediaeval times. For the older Latin was not arcane because of its subject matter or style, but simply because it was written at all, i.e. because of its status as *text*. Now it became arcane because of what was written, because of the language-in-itself.

Second was the impact of the Reformation, which, at the same time, owed much of its success to print-capitalism. Before the age of print, Rome easily won every war against heresy in Western Europe because it always had better internal lines of communication than its challengers. But when in 1517 Martin Luther nailed his theses to the chapel-door in Wittenberg, they were printed up in German translation, and 'within 15 days [had been] seen in every part of the country.'⁸ In the two decades 1520–1540 three times as many books were published in German as in the period 1500–1520, an astonishing transformation to which Luther was absolutely central. His works represented no less than one third of *all* German-language books sold between 1518 and 1525. Between 1522 and 1546, a total of 430 editions (whole or partial) of his Biblical translations appeared. 'We have here for the first time a truly mass readership and a popular literature within everybody's reach.'⁹ In effect, Luther became the first best-selling author *so known*. Or, to put it another way, the first writer who could 'sell' his *new* books on the basis of his name.¹⁰

8. Ibid., pp. 289–90.

9. Ibid., pp. 291–95.

10. From this point it was only a step to the situation in seventeenth-century

Where Luther led, others quickly followed, opening the colossal religious propaganda war that raged across Europe for the next century. In this titanic 'battle for men's minds', Protestantism was always fundamentally on the offensive, precisely because it knew how to make use of the expanding vernacular print-market being created by capitalism, while the Counter-Reformation defended the citadel of Latin. The emblem for this is the Vatican's *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* – to which there was no Protestant counterpart – a novel catalogue made necessary by the sheer volume of printed subversion. Nothing gives a better sense of this siege mentality than François I's panicked 1535 ban on the printing of *any* books in his realm – on pain of death by hanging! The reason for both the ban and its unenforceability was that by then his realm's eastern borders were ringed with Protestant states and cities producing a massive stream of smugglable print. To take Calvin's Geneva alone: between 1533 and 1540 only 42 editions were published there, but the numbers swelled to 527 between 1550 and 1564, by which latter date no less than 40 separate printing-presses were working overtime.¹¹

The coalition between Protestantism and print-capitalism, exploiting cheap popular editions, quickly created large new reading publics – not least among merchants and women, who typically knew little or no Latin – and simultaneously mobilized them for politico-religious purposes. Inevitably, it was not merely the Church that was shaken to its core. The same earthquake produced Europe's first important non-dynastic, non-city states in the Dutch Republic and the Commonwealth of the Puritans. (François I's panic was as much political as religious.)

Third was the slow, geographically uneven, spread of particular vernaculars as instruments of administrative centralization by certain well-positioned would-be absolutist monarchs. Here it is useful to remember that the universality of Latin in mediaeval Western Europe never corresponded to a universal political system. The

France where Corneille, Molière, and La Fontaine could sell their manuscript tragedies and comedies directly to publishers, who bought them as excellent investments in view of their authors' market reputations. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 310–15.

contrast with Imperial China, where the reach of the mandarinal bureaucracy and of painted characters largely coincided, is instructive. In effect, the political fragmentation of Western Europe after the collapse of the Western Empire meant that no sovereign could monopolize Latin and make it his-and-only-his language-of-state, and thus Latin's religious authority never had a true political analogue.

The birth of administrative vernaculars predated both print and the religious upheaval of the sixteenth century, and must therefore be regarded (at least initially) as an independent factor in the erosion of the sacred imagined community. At the same time, nothing suggests that any deep-seated ideological, let alone proto-national, impulses underlay this vernacularization where it occurred. The case of 'England' – on the northwestern periphery of Latin Europe – is here especially enlightening. Prior to the Norman Conquest, the language of the court, literary and administrative, was Anglo-Saxon. For the next century and a half virtually all royal documents were composed in Latin. Between about 1200 and 1350 this state-Latin was superseded by Norman French. In the meantime, a slow fusion between this language of a foreign ruling class and the Anglo-Saxon of the subject population produced Early English. The fusion made it possible for the new language to take its turn, after 1362, as the language of the courts – and for the opening of Parliament. Wycliffe's vernacular *manuscript* Bible followed in 1382.¹² It is essential to bear in mind that this sequence was a series of 'state,' not 'national,' languages; and that the state concerned covered at various times not only today's England and Wales, but also portions of Ireland, Scotland and France. Obviously, huge elements of the subject populations knew little or nothing of Latin, Norman French, or Early English.¹³ Not till almost a century after Early English's political enthronement was London's power swept out of 'France'.

On the Seine, a similar movement took place, if at a slower pace.

12. Seton-Watson, *Nations and States*, pp. 28–29; Bloch, *Feudal Society*, I, p. 75.

13. We should not assume that administrative vernacular unification was immediately or fully achieved. It is unlikely that the Guyenne ruled from London was ever primarily administered in Early English.

As Bloch wryly puts it, 'French, that is to say a language which, since it was regarded as merely a corrupt form of Latin, took several centuries to raise itself to literary dignity',¹⁴ only became the official language of the courts of justice in 1539, when François I issued the Edict of Villers-Cotterêts.¹⁵ In other dynastic realms Latin survived much longer – under the Habsburgs well into the nineteenth century. In still others, 'foreign' vernaculars took over: in the eighteenth century the languages of the Romanov court were French and German.¹⁶

In every instance, the 'choice' of language appears as a gradual, unselfconscious, pragmatic, not to say haphazard development. As such, it was utterly different from the selfconscious language policies pursued by nineteenth-century dynasts confronted with the rise of hostile popular linguistic-nationalisms. (See below, Chapter 6). One clear sign of the difference is that the old administrative languages were *just that*: languages used by and for officialdoms for their own inner convenience. There was no idea of systematically imposing the language on the dynasts' various subject populations.¹⁷ Nonetheless, the elevation of these vernaculars to the status of languages-of-power, where, in one sense, they were competitors with Latin (French in Paris, [Early] English in London), made its own contribution to the decline of the imagined community of Christendom.

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

14. Bloch, *Feudal Society*, I, p. 98.

15. Seton-Watson, *Nations and States*, p. 48.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

17. An agreeable confirmation of this point is provided by François I, who, as we have seen, banned all printing of books in 1535 and made French the language of his courts four years later!

a system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications (print), and the fatality of human linguistic diversity.¹⁸

The element of fatality is essential. For whatever superhuman feats capitalism was capable of, it found in death and languages two tenacious adversaries.¹⁹ Particular languages can die or be wiped out, but there was and is no possibility of humankind's general linguistic unification. Yet this mutual incomprehensibility was historically of only slight importance until capitalism and print created monoglot mass reading publics.

While it is essential to keep in mind an idea of fatality, in the sense of a *general* condition of irremediable linguistic diversity, it would be a mistake to equate this fatality with that common element in nationalist ideologies which stresses the primordial fatality of *particular* languages and their association with *particular* territorial units. The essential thing is the *interplay* between fatality, technology, and capitalism. In pre-print Europe, and, of course, elsewhere in the world, the diversity of spoken languages, those languages that for their speakers were (and are) the warp and woof of their lives, was immense; so immense, indeed, that had print-capitalism sought to exploit each potential oral vernacular market, it would have remained a capitalism of petty proportions. But these varied idiolects were capable of being assembled, within definite limits, into print-languages far fewer in number. The very arbitrariness of any system of signs for sounds facilitated the assembling process.²⁰ (At the same time, the more ideographic the signs, the vaster the potential

18. It was not the first 'accident' of its kind. Febvre and Martin note that while a visible bourgeoisie already existed in Europe by the late thirteenth century, paper did not come into general use until the end of the fourteenth. Only paper's smooth plane surface made the mass reproduction of texts and pictures possible – and this did not occur for still another seventy-five years. But paper was not a European invention. It floated in from another history – China's – through the Islamic world. *The Coming of the Book*, pp. 22, 30, and 45.

19. We still have no giant multinationals in the world of publishing.

20. For a useful discussion of this point, see S. H. Steinberg, *Five Hundred Years of Printing*, chapter 5. That the sign *ough* is pronounced differently in the words although, bough, lough, rough, cough, and hiccough, shows both the idiolectic variety out of which the now-standard spelling of English emerged, and the ideographic quality of the final product.

assembling zone. One can detect a sort of descending hierarchy here from algebra through Chinese and English, to the regular syllabaries of French or Indonesian.) 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.²¹

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.

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. It was no longer subject to the individualizing and 'unconsciously modernizing' habits of monastic scribes. Thus, while twelfth-century French differed markedly from that written by Villon in the fifteenth, the rate of change slowed decisively in the sixteenth. 'By the 17th century languages in Europe had generally assumed their modern forms.'²² To

21. I say 'nothing served . . . more than capitalism' advisedly. Both Steinberg and Eisenstein come close to theomorphizing 'print' *qua* print as the genius of modern history. Febvre and Martin never forget that behind print stand printers and publishing firms. It is worth remembering in this context that although printing was invented first in China, possibly 500 years before its appearance in Europe, it had no major, let alone revolutionary impact—precisely because of the absence of capitalism there.

22. *The Coming of the Book*, p. 319. Cf. *L'Apparition*, p. 477: 'Au XVII^e siècle, les langues nationales apparaissent un peu partout cristallisées.'

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.

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. Their disadvantaged cousins, still assimilable to the emerging print-language, lost caste, above all because they were unsuccessful (or only relatively successful) in insisting on their own print-form. 'Northwestern German' became Platt Deutsch, a largely spoken, thus sub-standard, German, because it was assimilable to print-German in a way that Bohemian spoken-Czech was not. High German, the King's English, and, later, Central Thai, were correspondingly elevated to a new politico-cultural eminence. (Hence the struggles in late-twentieth-century Europe by certain 'sub-'nationalities to change their subordinate status by breaking firmly into print—and radio.)

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*. The fate of the Turkic-speaking peoples in the zones incorporated into today's Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and the USSR is especially exemplary. A family of spoken languages, once everywhere assemblable, thus comprehensible, within an Arabic orthography, has lost that unity as a result of conscious manipulations. To heighten Turkish-Turkey's national consciousness at the expense of any wider Islamic identification, Atatürk imposed

compulsory romanization.²³ The Soviet authorities followed suit, first with an anti-Islamic, anti-Persian compulsory romanization, then, in Stalin's 1930s, with a Russifying compulsory Cyrillicization.²⁴

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).

Yet it is obvious that while today almost all modern self-conceived nations – and also nation-states – have 'national print-languages', many of them have these languages in common, and in others only a tiny fraction of the population 'uses' the national language in conversation or on paper. The nation-states of Spanish America or those of the 'Anglo-Saxon family' are conspicuous examples of the first outcome; many ex-colonial states, particularly in Africa, of the second. In other words, the concrete formation of contemporary nation-states is by no means isomorphic with the determinate reach of particular print-languages. To account for the discontinuity-in-connectedness between print-languages, national consciousness, and nation-states, it is necessary to turn to the large cluster of new political entities that sprang up in the Western hemisphere between 1776 and 1838, all of which self-consciously defined themselves as nations, and, with the interesting exception of Brazil, as (non-dynastic) republics. For not only were they historically the first such states to emerge on the world stage, and therefore inevitably provided the first real models of what such states should 'look like,' but their numbers and contemporary births offer fruitful ground for comparative enquiry.

23. Hans Kohn, *The Age of Nationalism*, p. 108. It is probably only fair to add that Kemal also hoped thereby to align Turkish nationalism with the modern, romanized civilization of Western Europe.

24. Seton-Watson, *Nations and States*, p. 317.

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, probably because they are readily derivable from the mid-century nationalisms of Europe, 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. All, including the USA, were creole states, formed and led by people who shared a common language and common descent with those against whom they fought.¹ Indeed, it is fair to say that language was never even an issue in these early struggles for national liberation.

In the second place, there are serious reasons to doubt the applicability in much of the Western hemisphere of Nairn's otherwise persuasive thesis that:

The arrival of nationalism in a distinctively modern sense was tied to the political baptism of the lower classes... Although sometimes

1. Creole (*Criollo*) – person of (at least theoretically) pure European descent but born in the Americas (and, by later extension, anywhere outside Europe).

naturalization every dynasty positioned to do so. Official nationalism – weld of the new national and old dynastic principles (the *British Empire*) – led in turn to what, for convenience, one can call ‘Russification’ in the extra-European colonies. This ideological tendency meshed neatly with practical exigencies. The late-nineteenth-century empires were too large and too far-flung to be ruled by a handful of nationals. Moreover, in tandem with capitalism the state was rapidly multiplying its functions, in both the metropolises and the colonies. Combined, these forces generated ‘Russifying’ school-systems intended in part to produce the required subordinate cadres for state and corporate bureaucracies. These school-systems, centralized and standardized, created quite new pilgrimages which typically had their Romes in the various colonial capitals, for the nations hidden at the core of the empires would permit no more inward ascension. Usually, but by no means always, these educational pilgrimages were paralleled, or replicated, in the administrative sphere. The interlock between particular educational and administrative pilgrimages provided the territorial base for new ‘imagined communities’ in which natives could come to see themselves as ‘nationals’. The expansion of the colonial state which, so to speak, invited ‘natives’ into schools and offices, and of colonial capitalism which, as it were, excluded them from boardrooms, meant that to an unprecedented extent the key early spokesmen for colonial nationalism were lonely, bilingual intelligentsias unattached to sturdy local bourgeoisies.

As bilingual intelligentsias, however, and above all as early-twentieth-century intelligentsias, they had access, inside the classroom and outside, to models of nation, nation-ness, and nationalism distilled from the turbulent, chaotic experiences of more than a century of American and European history. These models, in turn, helped to give shape to a thousand inchoate dreams. In varying combinations, the lessons of creole, vernacular and official nationalism were copied, adapted, and improved upon. Finally, as with increasing speed capitalism transformed the means of physical and intellectual communication, the intelligentsias found ways to bypass print in propagating the imagined community, not merely to illiterate masses, but even to literate masses *reading* different languages.

Patriotism and Racism

In the preceding chapters I have tried to delineate the processes by which the nation came to be imagined, and, once imagined, modelled, adapted and transformed. Such an analysis has necessarily been concerned primarily with social change and different forms of consciousness. But it is doubtful whether either social change or transformed consciousnesses, in themselves, do much to explain the attachment that peoples feel for the inventions of their imaginations – or, to revive a question raised at the beginning of this text – why people are ready to die for these inventions. *eso es muy central en su texto*

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,¹ 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

1. Cf. the passage in Nairn's *Break-up of Britain*, pp. 14–15 above, and Hobsbawm's somewhat Biedermeier dictum: 'the basic fact [is] that Marxists as such are not nationalists.' 'Some Reflections,' p. 10.

analogous nationalist products expressing fear and loathing.² 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 expression of national feeling. Here, for example, are the first and last stanzas of *Último Adiós*, the famous poem written by Rizal as he awaited execution at the hands of Spanish imperialism.³

1. Adiós, Patria adorada, región del sol querida,
Perla del Mar de Oriente, nuestro perdido edén,
A darte voy, alegre, la triste mustia vida;
Y fuera más brillante, más fresca, más florida,
También por ti la diera, la diera por tu bien...
12. Entonces nada importa me pongas en olvido:
Tu atmósfera, tu espacio, tus valles cruzaré;
Vibrante y limpia nota seré par tu oído;
Aroma, luz, colores, rumor, canto, gemido,
Constante repitiendo la esencia de mi fe.
13. Mi Patria idolatrada, dolor de mis dolores,
Querida Filipinas, oye el postrer adiós.
Ahí, te dejo todo: mis padres, mis amores.
Voy donde no hay esclavos, verdugos ni opresores;
Donde la fe no mata, donde el que reina es Dios.
14. Adiós, padres y hermanos, trozos del alma mía,
Amigos de la infancia, en el perdido hogar;
Dad gracias, que descanso del fatigoso día;
Adiós, dulce extranjera, mi amiga, mi alegría;
Adiós, queridos séres. Morir es descansar.

2. Can the reader think immediately of even three Hymns of Hate? The second stanza of God Save the Queen/King is worded instructively: 'O Lord our God, arise/Scatter her/his enemies,/And make them fall;/Confound their politics,/Frustrate their knavish tricks;/On Thee our hopes we fix;/God save us all.' Notice that these enemies have no identity and could as well be Englishmen as anyone else since they are 'her/his' enemies *not* 'ours.' The entire anthem is a paean to monarchy, not to the/a nation - which is not once mentioned.

3. Or in the translation of Trinidad T. Subido:

Notice not only that the nationality of the 'tyrants' goes unmentioned, but that Rizal's passionate patriotism is expressed superbly in 'their' language.⁴

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-

1. Farewell, dear Land, beloved of the sun,
Pearl of the Orient seas, lost Paradise!
Gladly, I will to you this life undone;
Were it a fairer, fresher, fuller one,
I'd cede it still, your weal to realize...
12. What matters then that you forget me, when
I might explore your ev'ry dear retreat?
Be as a note, pulsing and pure; and then,
Be scent, light, tone; be song or sign, again;
And through it all, my theme of faith, repeat.
13. Land I enshrine, list to my last farewell!
Philippines, Love, of pains my pain extreme,
I leave you all, all whom I love so well,
To go where neither slaves nor tyrants dwell,
Where Faith kills not, and where God reigns supreme.
14. Farewell to all my soul does comprehend -
O kith and kin in my home dispossessed;
Give thanks my day oppressive is at end;
Farewell, sweet stranger, my delight and friend;
Farewell, dear ones. To die is but to rest.

Jaime C. de Veyra, *El 'Último Adiós' de Rizal: estudio crítico-expositivo*, pp. 89-90, and 101-102 (the translation).

4. It was, however, quickly translated into Tagalog by the great Filipino revolutionary Andrés Bonifacio. His version is given in *ibid.*, pp. 107-109.

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.)

As noted earlier, the great wars of this century are extraordinary not so much in the unprecedented scale on which they permitted people to kill, as in the colossal numbers persuaded to lay down their lives. Is it not certain that the numbers of those killed vastly exceeded those who killed? [The idea of the ultimate sacrifice comes only with an idea of purity, through fatality.]

Dying for one's country, which usually one does not choose, assumes a moral grandeur which dying for the Labour Party, the American Medical Association, or perhaps even Amnesty International can not rival, for these are all bodies one can join or leave at easy will. Dying for the revolution also draws its grandeur from the degree to which it is felt to be something fundamentally pure. (If people imagined the proletariat merely as a group in hot pursuit of refrigerators, holidays, or power, how far would they, including members of the proletariat, be willing to die for it?)⁵ Ironically enough, it may be that to the extent that Marxist interpretations of history are felt (rather than intellected) as representations of ineluctable necessity, they also acquire an aura of purity and disinterestedness.

Here we may usefully return once more to language. First, one notes the primordialness of languages, even those known to be modern. No one can give the date for the birth of any language. Each looms up imperceptibly out of a horizonless past. (Insofar as *homo sapiens* is *homo dicens*, it can seem difficult to imagine an origin of

5. This formulation should not at all be taken to mean that revolutionary movements do not pursue material objectives. But these objectives are envisioned, not as a congeries of individual acquisitions, but as the conditions of Rousseau's shared *bonheur*.

language newer than the species itself.) Languages thus appear rooted beyond almost anything else in contemporary societies. At the same time, nothing connects us affectively to the dead more than language. If English-speakers hear the words 'Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust' - created almost four-and-a-half centuries ago - they get a ghostly intimation of simultaneity across homogeneous, empty time. The weight of the words derives only in part from their solemn meaning; it comes also from an as-it-were ancestral 'Englishness'.

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.] Singing the Marseillaise, Waltzing Matilda, and Indonesia Raya provide occasions for unisonality, for the echoed physical realization of the imagined community. (So does listening to [and maybe silently chiming in with] the recitation of ceremonial poetry, such as sections of *The Book of Common Prayer*.) 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 Martín'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.

6. Contrast this *a capella* chorus with the language of everyday life, which is typically experienced decani/cantoris-fashion as dialogue and exchange.

Seen as both a *historical* fatality and as a community imagined through language, the nation presents itself as simultaneously open and closed. This paradox is well illustrated in the shifting rhythms of these famous lines on the death of John Moore during the battle of Coruña:⁷

1. Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,
As his corse to the rampart we hurried;
Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot
O'er the grave where our hero we buried.
2. We buried him darkly at dead of night,
The sods with our bayonets turning;
By the struggling moonbeams' misty light,
And the lantern dimly burning.
3. No useless coffin enclosed his breast,
Not in sheet or in shroud we wound him;
But he lay like a warrior taking his rest,
With his martial cloak around him...
5. We thought, as we hollowed his narrow bed,
And smoothed down his lonely pillow,
That the foe and the stranger would tread o'er his head
And we far away on the billow...
8. Slowly and sadly we laid him down.
From the field of his fame fresh and gory;
We carved not a line, and we raised not a stone -
But we left him alone with his glory!

The lines celebrate a heroic memory with a beauty inseparable from the English language - one untranslatable, audible only to its speakers and readers. Yet both Moore and his eulogist were Irishmen. And there is no reason why a descendant of Moore's French or Spanish 'foes' can not fully hear the poem's resonance: English, like any other language, is always open to new speakers, listeners, and readers.

7. 'The Burial of Sir John Moore,' in *The Poems of Charles Wolfe*, pp. 1-2.

Listen to Thomas Browne, encompassing in a pair of sentences the length and breadth of man's history:⁸

Even the old ambitions had the advantage of ours, in the attempts of their vainglories, who acting early and before the probable Meridian of time, have by this time found great accomplishment of their designs, whereby the ancient Heroes have already out-lastest their Monuments, and Mechanicall preservations. But in this latter Scene of time we cannot expect such Mummies unto our memories, when ambition may fear the Prophecy of Elias, and Charles the Fifth can never hope to live within two Methusela's of Hector.

Here ancient Egypt, Greece, and Judaea are united with the Holy Roman Empire, but their unification across thousands of years and thousands of miles is accomplished within the particularity of Browne's seventeenth-century English prose.⁹ The passage can, of course, up to a point be translated. But the eerie splendour of 'probable Meridian of time,' 'Mechanicall preservations,' 'such Mummies unto our memories,' and 'two Methusela's of Hector' can bring goose-flesh to the napes only of English-readers.

On this page, it opens itself wide to the reader. On the other hand, the no less eerie splendour of the final lines of 'Yang Sudah Hilang' by the great Indonesian author Pramoedya Ananta Toer:¹⁰

Suara itu hanya terdengar beberapa detik saja dalam hidup. Getarannya sebentar berdengung, takkan terulangi lagi. Tapi seperti juga halnya dengan kali Lusi yang abadi menggarisi kota Blora, dan seperti kali itu juga, suara yang tersimpan menggarisi kenangan dan ingatan itu mengalir juga - mengalir kemuaranya, kelaut yang tak bertepi. Dan tak seorangpun tahu kapan laut itu akan kering dan berhenti berdeburan.

8. *Hydriotaphia, Urne-Buriall, or, A Discourse of the Sepulchrell Urnes lately found in Norfolk*, pp. 72-73. On 'the probable Meridian of time' compare Bishop Otto of Freising.

9. Yet 'England' goes unmentioned in this unification. We are reminded of those provincial newspapers which brought the whole world, through Spanish, into Caracas and Bogotá.

10. In *Tjerita dari Blora* [Tales from Blora], pp. 15-44, at p. 44.

Hilang.

Semua itu sudah hilang dari jangkauan panc[h]a-indera.

And thus a
closing window
on ones
some how
A

on the same print page, are most likely closed.¹¹

If every language is acquirable, its acquisition requires a real portion of a person's life: each new conquest is measured against shortening days. What limits one's access to other languages is not their imperviousness but one's own mortality. Hence a certain privacy to all languages. French and American imperialists governed, exploited, and killed Vietnamese over many years. But whatever else they made off with, the Vietnamese language stayed put. Accordingly, only too often, a rage at Vietnamese 'inscrutability,' and that obscure despair which engenders the venomous argots of dying colonialisms: 'gooks,' 'ratons', etc.¹² (In the longer run, the only responses to the vast privacy of the language of the oppressed are retreat or further massacre.)

Such epithets are, in their inner form, characteristically racist, and decipherment of this form will serve to show why Nairn is basically mistaken in arguing that racism and anti-semitism derive from nationalism – and thus that 'seen in sufficient historical depth, fascism tells us more about nationalism than any other episode.'¹³ A word like 'slant,' for example, abbreviated from 'slant-eyed', does not simply express an ordinary political enmity. It erases nation-ness by reducing the adversary to his biological physiognomy.¹⁴ It denies, by substituting for, 'Vietnamese,' just as *raton* denies, by substituting for, 'Algerian'. At the same time, it stirs 'Vietnamese' into a nameless sludge along with 'Korean,' 'Chinese,' 'Filipino,' and so on. The character of this vocabulary may become still more evident if it is contrasted with other Vietnam-War-period words like 'Charlie' and

11. Still, listen to them! I have adapted the original spelling to accord with current convention and to make the quotation completely phonetic.

12. The logic here is: 1. I will be dead before I have penetrated them. 2. My power is such that they have had to learn my language. 3. But this means that my privacy has been penetrated. Terming them 'gooks' is small revenge.

13. *The Break-up of Britain*, pp. 337 and 347.

14. Notice that there is no obvious, selfconscious antonym to 'slant.' 'Round'? 'Straight'? 'Oval'?

'V.C.', or from an earlier era, 'Boches,' 'Huns,' 'Japs' and 'Frogs,' all of which apply only to *one* specific nationality, and thus concede, in hatred, the adversary's membership in a league of nations.¹⁵

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* always an impostor.)¹⁶

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.¹⁷ No surprise then that the putative sire of modern racism should be, not some petty-bourgeois nationalist, but Joseph Arthur, Comte de Gobineau.¹⁸ Nor that, on the whole, racism and

15. Not only, in fact, in an earlier era. Nonetheless, there is a whiff of the antique-shop about these words of Debray: 'I can conceive of no hope for Europe save under the hegemony of a revolutionary France, firmly grasping the banner of independence. Sometimes I wonder if the whole "anti-Boche" mythology and our secular antagonism to Germany may not be one day indispensable for saving the revolution, or even our national-democratic inheritance.' 'Marxism and the National Question,' p. 41.

16. The significance of the emergence of Zionism and the birth of Israel is that the former marks the reimagining of an ancient religious community as a nation, down there among the other nations – while the latter charts an alchemic change from wandering devotee to local patriot.

17. 'From the side of the landed aristocracy came conceptions of inherent superiority in the ruling class, and a sensitivity to status, prominent traits well into the twentieth century. Fed by new sources, these conceptions could later be vulgarized [sic] and made appealing to the German population as a whole in doctrines of racial superiority.' Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, p. 436.

18. Gobineau's dates are perfect. He was born in 1816, two years after the restoration of the Bourbons to the French throne. His diplomatic career, 1848–1877, blossomed under Louis Napoléon's Second Empire and the reactionary monarchist regime of Marie Edmé Patrice Maurice, Comte de MacMahon, former imperialist proconsul in Algiers. His *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* appeared in 1854 – should one say in response to the popular vernacular-nationalist insurrections of 1848?

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.¹⁹

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. Colonial racism was a major element in that conception of 'Empire' which attempted to weld dynastic legitimacy and national community. It did so by generalizing a principle of innate, inherited superiority on which its own domestic position was (however shakily) based to the vastness of the overseas possessions, covertly (or not so covertly) conveying the idea that if, say, English lords were naturally superior to other Englishmen, no matter: these other Englishmen were no less superior to the subjected natives. Indeed one is tempted to argue that the existence of late colonial empires even served to shore up domestic aristocratic bastions, since they appeared to confirm on a global, modern stage antique conceptions of power and privilege.

It could do so with some effect because – and here is our second reason – the colonial empire, with its rapidly expanding bureaucratic apparatus and its 'Russifying' policies, permitted sizeable numbers of bourgeois and petty bourgeois to play aristocrat off centre court: i.e. anywhere in the empire except at home. In each colony one found this grimly amusing *tableau vivant*: the bourgeois gentleman speaking poetry against a backcloth of spacious mansions and gardens filled with mimosa and bougainvillea, and a large supporting cast of houseboys, grooms, gardeners, cooks, amahs, maids, washerwomen,

19. South African racism has not, in the age of Vorster and Botha, stood in the way of amicable relations (however discreetly handled) with prominent black politicians in certain independent African states. If Jews suffer discrimination in the Soviet Union, that did not prevent respectful working relations between Brezhnev and Kissinger.

and, above all, horses.²⁰ Even those who did not manage to live in this style, such as young bachelors, nonetheless had the grandly equivocal status of a French nobleman on the eve of a jacquerie.²¹

In Moulmein, in lower Burma [this obscure town needs explaining to readers in the metropole], I was hated by large numbers of people – the only time in my life that I have been important enough for this to happen to me. I was sub-divisional police officer of the town.

This 'tropical Gothic' was made possible by the overwhelming power that high capitalism had given the metropole – a power so great that it could be kept, so to speak, in the wings. Nothing better illustrates capitalism in feudal-aristocratic drag than colonial militaries, which were notoriously distinct from those of the metropolises, often even in formal institutional terms.²² Thus in Europe one had the 'First Army,' recruited by conscription on a mass, citizen, metropolitan base; ideologically conceived as the defender of the *heimat*; dressed in practical, utilitarian khaki; armed with the latest affordable weapons; in peacetime isolated in barracks, in war stationed in trenches or behind heavy field-guns. Outside Europe one had the 'Second Army,' recruited (below the officer level) from local religious or ethnic minorities on a mercenary basis; ideologically conceived as an internal police force; dressed to kill in bed- or ballroom; armed with swords and obsolete industrial weapons; in peace on display, in war on horseback. If the Prussian General Staff, Europe's military teacher, stressed the anonymous solidarity of a professionalized corps, ballistics, railroads, engineering, strategic planning, and the like, the colonial army stressed glory, epaulettes, personal heroism, polo, and an archaizing courtliness among its officers. (It could afford

20. For a stunning collection of photographs of such *tableaux vivants* in the Netherlands Indies (and an elegantly ironical text), see 'E. Breton de Nijs,' *Tempo Doeloe*.

21. George Orwell, 'Shooting an Elephant,' in *The Orwell Reader*, p. 3. The words in square brackets are of course my interpolation.

22. The KNIL (Koninklijk Nederlandsch-Indisch Leger) was quite separate from the KL (Koninklijk Leger) in Holland. The *Légion Étrangère* was almost from the start legally prohibited from operations on continental French soil.

to do so because the First Army and the Navy were there in the background.) This mentality survived a long time. In Tonkin, in 1894, Lyautey wrote:²³

Quel dommage de n'être pas venu ici dix ans plus tôt! Quelles carrières à y fonder et à y mener. Il n'y a pas ici un de ces petits lieutenants, chefs de poste et de reconnaissance, qui ne développe en 6 mois plus d'initiative, de volonté, d'endurance, de *personnalité*, qu'un officier de France en toute sa carrière.

In Tonkin, in 1951, Jean de Lattre de Tassigny, 'who liked officers who combined guts with "style," took an immediate liking to the dashing cavalryman [Colonel de Castries] with his bright-red Spahi cap and scarf, his magnificent riding-crop, and his combination of easy-going manners and *ducal* mien, which made him as irresistible to women in Indochina in the 1950s as he had been to Parisiennes of the 1930s.'²⁴

Another instructive indication of the aristocratic or pseudo-aristocratic derivation of colonial racism was the typical 'solidarity

23. *Lettres du Tonkin et de Madagascar (1894-1899)*, p. 84. Letter of December 22, 1894, from Hanoi. Emphases added.

24. Bernard B. Fall, *Hell is a Very Small Place: The Siege of Dien Bien Phu*, p. 56. One can imagine the shudder of Clausewitz's ghost. [Spahi, derived like Sepoy from the Ottoman Sipahi, meant mercenary irregular cavalymen of the 'Second Army' in Algeria.] It is true that the France of Lyautey and de Lattre was a Republican France. However, the often talkative Grande Muette had since the start of the Third Republic been an asylum for aristocrats increasingly excluded from power in all other important institutions of public life. By 1898, a full quarter of all Brigadier- and Major-Generals were aristocrats. Moreover, this aristocrat-dominated officer corps was crucial to nineteenth and twentieth-century French imperialism. 'The rigorous control imposed on the army in the *métropole* never extended fully to la France d'outre-mer. The extension of the French Empire in the nineteenth century was partially the result of uncontrolled initiative on the part of colonial military commanders. French West Africa, largely the creation of General Faidherbe, and the French Congo as well, owed most of their expansion to independent military forays into the hinterland. Military officers were also responsible for the *faits accomplis* which led to a French protectorate in Tahiti in 1842, and, to a lesser extent, to the French occupation of Tonkin in Indochina in the 1880's... In 1897 Galliéri summarily abolished the monarchy in Madagascar and deported the Queen, all without consulting the French government, which later accepted the *fait accompli*...' John S. Ambler, *The French Army in Politics, 1945-1962*, pp. 10-11 and 22.

among whites,' which linked colonial rulers from different national metropolises, whatever their internal rivalries and conflicts. This solidarity, in its curious trans-state character, reminds one instantly of the class solidarity of Europe's nineteenth-century aristocracies, mediated through each other's hunting-lodges, spas, and ballrooms; and of that brotherhood of 'officers and gentlemen,' which in the Geneva convention guaranteeing privileged treatment to captured enemy *officers*, as opposed to partisans or civilians, has an agreeably twentieth-century expression.

The argument adumbrated thus far can also be pursued from the side of colonial populations. For, the pronouncements of certain colonial ideologues aside, it is remarkable how little that dubious entity known as 'reverse racism' manifested itself in the anticolonial movements. In this matter it is easy to be deceived by language. There is, for example, a sense in which the Javanese word *londo* (derived from Hollander or Nederlander) meant not only 'Dutch' but 'whites.' But the derivation itself shows that, for Javanese peasants, who scarcely ever encountered any 'whites' but Dutch, the two meanings effectively overlapped. Similarly, in French colonial territories, '*les blancs*' meant rulers whose Frenchness was indistinguishable from their whiteness. In neither case, so far as I know, did *londo* or *blanc* either lose caste or breed derogatory secondary distinctions.²⁵

On the contrary, the spirit of anticolonial nationalism is that of the heart-rending Constitution of Makario Sakay's short-lived Republic of Katagalugan (1902), which said, among other things:²⁶

25. I have never heard of an abusive argot word in Indonesian or Javanese for either 'Dutch' or 'white.' Compare the Anglo-Saxon treasury: niggers, wops, kikes, gooks, slants, fuzzywuzzies, and a hundred more. It is possible that this innocence of racist argots is true primarily of colonized populations. Blacks in America - and surely elsewhere - have developed a varied counter-vocabulary (honkies, ofays, etc.).

26. As cited in Reynaldo Ileto's masterly *Pasyón and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910*, p. 218. Sakay's rebel republic lasted until 1907, when he was captured and executed by the Americans. Understanding the first sentence requires remembering that three centuries of Spanish rule and Chinese immigration had produced a sizeable mestizo population in the islands.

No Tagalog, born in this Tagalog archipelago, shall exalt any person above the rest because of his race or the colour of his skin; fair, dark, rich, poor, educated and ignorant – all are completely equal, and should be in one *loob* [inward spirit]. There may be differences in education, wealth, or appearance, but never in essential nature (*pagkatao*) and ability to serve a cause.

One can find without difficulty analogies on the other side of the globe. Spanish-speaking mestizo Mexicans trace their ancestries, not to Castilian conquistadors, but to half-obliterated Aztecs, Mayans, Toltecs and Zapotecs. Uruguayan revolutionary patriots, creoles themselves, took up the name of Tupac Amaru, the last great indigenous rebel against creole oppression, who died under unspeakable tortures in 1781.

It may appear paradoxical that the objects of all these attachments are 'imagined' – anonymous, faceless fellow-Tagalogs, exterminated tribes, Mother Russia, or the *tanah air*. But *amor patriae* does not differ in this respect from the other affections, in which there is always an element of fond imagining. (This is why looking at the photo-albums of strangers' weddings is like studying the archaeologist's groundplan of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon.) What the eye is to the lover – that particular, ordinary eye he or she is born with – language – whatever language history has made his or her mother-tongue – is to the patriot. Through that language, encountered at mother's knee and parted with only at the grave, pasts are restored, fellowships are imagined, and futures dreamed.

The Angel of History

We began this brief study with the recent wars between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Democratic Kampuchea, and the People's Republic of China; so it is only fitting to return finally to that point of departure. Does anything of what has meantime been said help to deepen our understanding of their outbreak?

In *The Break-up of Britain*, Tom Nairn has some valuable words on the relationship between the British political system and those of the rest of the modern world.¹

Alone, [the British system] represented a 'slow, conventional growth, not like the others, the product of deliberate *invention*, resulting from a theory.' Arriving later, those others 'attempted to sum up at a stroke the fruits of the experience of the state which had evolved its constitutionalism through several centuries'... Because it was first, the English – later British – experience remained distinct. Because they came second, into a world where the English Revolution had already succeeded and expanded, later bourgeois societies could not repeat this early development. Their *study and imitation engendered something substantially different*: the truly modern doctrine of the abstract

1. At pp. 17–18. Emphases added. The inner quotation is taken from Charles Frederick Strong's *Modern Political Constitutions*, p. 28.