Anti-Colonial Nationalism and the West:
Toward a Critique of Recent, Western-Based, Anti-Nationalist Scholarship

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ABSTRACT

Although nationalism was the single most successful form of anti-colonial resistance in the Third World, recent Western-based scholarship, especially within the field of post-colonial literary and cultural theory, has generally tended to repudiate nationalism and delegitimise the modern nation (-state). While the traditional scholarship views nationalism as an exclusively Western idea, simply inappropriate to non-Western societies, socio-anthropological critics see the emergent nation-state in the Third World as consolidating imaginative colonial geographies and repeating a colonial practice of excluding or suppressing internal tribal and ethnic differences. Moreover, deconstructive critics argue that nationalism, by remaining locked up in a counter-discourse to Western imperialism, reproduces all the terms and structures of colonial discourse, and thus colludes with Western imperialism. Acknowledging some of these objections to anti-colonial nationalism, the article points out some of their serious critical shortcomings. Simultaneously, it draws attention to alternative ways of conceiving nation and nationalism, beyond the too simplified notions of "imitation," "importation" and "imposition." Finally, the article stresses the continued necessity of nationalism in the struggle against imperialism, and argues that although nationalism is in some sense the product of imperialism, nationalism's objectives are not completely determined by its antagonist.

KEYWORDS: Nationalism and the West, nationalism and postcolonial theory, criticism of anti-colonial nationalism, problems of anti-colonial resistance, Frantz Fanon.

INTRODUCTION

In his important study *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said (1993) points out that one major *topos* to be found in the cultural discourses and narratives contesting those of the culture of imperialism is restoring the nation on the basis of an ideology defined as "nationalism." This anti-colonial nationalism is, as Basil Davidson (1978: 156) has also pointed out, principally directed at establishing a "wider unity than any known before," to combat the pressures, encroachments and disruption inflicted upon colonised communities by both imperialism and its territorial progeny, colonialism. This form of nationalism was one of the most fundamental categories of anti-colonial resistance. "No one needs to be

reminded," Said (1993: 261) writes, "that through the imperial world during the decolonizing period, protest, resistance, and independence movements were fuelled by one or another nationalism." Moreover, nationalism, at least as a mass configuration, was not only a primary anti-colonial resistance strategy; it also proved to be the single most successful, radical force of modernity appropriated by the colonised in their opposition to their colonisers. It was on the terrain of the "nation" that classical colonialism was most destabilised, and finally eradicated. That nationalism has been so successful as cultural politics in the anti-colonial struggles is a fact acknowledged even by some of its most disobliging critics. Even a Derridean poststructuralist such as Robert Young (1996: 110), for whom consensuality as such would be incipiently oppressive, has grudgingly confessed that in the twentieth-century anti-colonial struggles, nationalism has been, "politically speaking, one of the most significant and successful forms of cultural

politics ever."

Now although anti-colonial nationalism has undeniably been an important political and cultural strategy in destabilising, and finally achieving very significant victories against, imperialism, it has been recently characteristic of Western-based scholarship to read Third World nation and nationalism very disparagingly. There is also a noticeable overlap between the traditional Western ethnocentric opposition to Third World nationalism and recent deconstructionist readings of the nation within the nascent field of post-colonial literary and cultural theory (Lazarus, 1994: 198). For the repudiation of the phenomenon of nationalism ranges from the argument that the category of the "nation" is a European creation, simply inappropriate to the colonial world, to speculations that nationalism is literally a neo-colonial discourse whose epistemic and literal violence is no less serious than that of colonialism proper. Acknowledging the contradiction and multi-facetedness of nation and nationalism, this essay explains the theoretically insufficient nature of many post-colonial readings of the problematics of nationalism. It also contests some of the premises of what I would label as easy, premature "post-nationalism," and argues that a progressive form of nation and nationalism remains a politically necessary project in Third World struggles against continued Western cultural, political and economic hegemony.

Clarification by Demarcation

Before I proceed with my argument, a few conceptual demarcations should be made clear. First, the focus of this article is not nationalism in general; it is rather that kind of oppositional nationalism which has been associated with Third World movements of decolonisation and liberation. We can therefore label this kind of nationalism as anti-colonial or anti-imperial. Second, this nationalism must also be demarcated from the sort of ostensibly anti-imperial nationalism fostered by the post-independence state, which thereby could be branded as state-nationalism. However, we have to acknowledge here the fact that a clear-cut demarcation to preserve some *pure* anti-colonial nationalism from other categories is not always possible, since, as we shall see, these distinctions have a habit of blurring. Nevertheless, they must be borne in mind because much of the current research on nationalism tends to homogenise and dehistoricise the different manifestations of this

phenomenon. For example, anti-nationalists claim that the flaws of the post-colonial nation-states are attributed at least in part to their nationalist origins. However, while their case is in some sense undoubtedly valid, they slide into essentialising nationalism. They end up, as Aijaz Ahmad (1992: 102) points out, with the absolutist view that nationalism is "some unitary thing with predetermined essence and value." This in turn allows, as McClintock (1995: 353) also points out, for the production of such undifferentiating concepts or formulations as "[a]ll nationalisms are gendered, all are invented and all are dangerous"- dangerous in the sense of having to be unremittingly opposed, as Eric Hobsbawm (1990) avers. Such blanket dismissal of nationalism, as Ahmad (1992) reminds us, fails not only to differentiate between progressive and reactionary kinds of nationalism with reference to particular histories, but also to examine the troubling question of how certain nationalist projects may combine progressive and reactionary features. For "so many different kinds of ideologies and political practices have invoked the nationalist claim," which makes it "always very hard to think of nationalism at the level of theoretical abstraction alone, without weaving into the this abstraction the experience of particular nationalisms and distinguishing between progressive and retrograde kinds of practices (p. 7)." Further, to judge whether or not a nationalism will produce progressive cultural and political practices depends, as Ahmad puts it in Gramscian terms, upon "the political character of the power bloc which takes hold of it and utilizes it, as a material force, in the process of constituting its own hegemony (p.102)." This important standpoint is also that of Ernesto Laclau (1979). Laclau studies how nationalism can be harnessed to bourgeois-liberal practice, popular-democratic struggle, and in some cases to "nationalist socialism," which is nothing other than fascism or Nazism. A similar case is urged by David Lloyd (1995), who has recently argued that "the history of nationalist movements must be understood in terms of their constant inflection not only by conditions of struggle but by their interaction with allied but differently tending social movements." Focusing on the history of Irish nationalism, Lloyd shows that the social ferment that preceded the Easter Rising in 1916 and the subsequent Anglo-Irish war of 1919-1922 was not the unfolding of a unitary homogeneous nationalist movement, but rather the outcome of conjunctions among ideologically different social and political movements

ranging from the racialist nationalism of Arthur Griffith to the Marxist republican socialism of James Connolly. This bloc of forces also included the pacifist feminism of Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington, the cultural nationalism of the Irish Literary Revival and Language Movement, and the socialist feminism of Constance Markievicz and, in her later years, Maud Gonne (p. 266). United by their common anti-colonial aspirations, these movements converged on Easter 1916, but still moved at their own pace (p. 267). Lloyd also traces comparable conjunctions within the Philippine anti-colonial left since the mid-sixties.

If these demarcations are useful to clarify what sort of nationalism this article will focus on, they are also useful in foregrounding the fact that there are some other compelling cases against nationalism in general, whether in the West or in the so-called Third World. Nationalisms tend sometimes to be not only xenophobic and racially exclusivist, but also misogynous and homophobic (McClintock, 1995; Fuss, 1994). Moreover, atavism and fetishisation of the past are almost endemic to all nationalisms. Useful in this regard is the work of Frantz Fanon (1967), Benedict Anderson (1983), Timothy Brennan (1990), and particularly the work of Gyan Prakash (1997). However, insofar as this article focuses specifically on anti-colonial nationalism, these latter objections to nationalism in general fall out of its scope. As such, the present paper addresses itself specifically to the main objections which have been raised against anti-colonial nationalism.

To begin with, it is useful to state these main objections and then move to point out some of their general features.

The Traditional Case: European Origination of the Nationalist Idea

A standard indictment of anti-colonial nationalism has been traditionally advanced in terms of the inventedness and historically European provenance of the nationalist idea. For example, Elie Kedourie (1960: 9) argues that "nationalism is a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century," and that every aspect of this doctrine can be traced back to some European theory. For example, the notion that a nation is to be uniquely defined by a specific culture and a specific language, is an invention of nineteenth-century European, particularly German, thinkers such as Herder, Schlegel, Fichte and Schleiermacher. Nationalist thinkers in the

Third World have subsequently applied to their own contexts these European nationalist ideas. In another text, Kedourie (1971: 29) reiterates his original claim that the idea of the "nation" is wholly foreign to the non-European world. "It is neither indigenous to these areas," he says by way of summing up, "nor an irresistible tendency of the human spirit everywhere, but rather an importation from Europe clearly branded with the mark of its origin." In a similar vein, but in sharper Eurocentric terms, Hobsbawm (1990: 151) confers on Europe the honour of being nationalism's "original home," and dismisses anti-imperial, Third World nationalisms as representing no more than imitation of European notions of "national self-determination," "popular anti-western xenophobia" or "the natural high spirits of martial tribes."

It is from a different, but related position that David Caute and John Mowitt attack the national anti-colonial politics of Frantz Fanon, the Martinican-born theorist who supported the Algerians in their struggle against French colonialism. Caute (1970: 80-1) argues that the concept of the nation is a "European structure" that Fanon absurdly imposes on African societies to which such a quintessentially European structure is not only alien but also ill-suited. Mowitt (1992), too, views the nation as "a fundamentally problematic category within the analysis of, and the struggle against, European colonialism," and that Fanon's "unproblematic importation of the national model" "contradicts the interests the Algerians may have otherwise formed for themselves (pp. 169, 171, 176, respectively)."

Hobsbawm, Kedourie, Caute and Mowitt represent, in fact, proponents of the claim that the category of the nation is a European creation, hijacked by Third-Worlders trying to imitate the West, but is nonetheless totally inappropriate to their contexts. This case has its kernel of truth, not least the claim that nationalism was a Western invention, about which there is nothing 'natural.' But to this extent, which of our political concepts is not invented? Nationalism was also "foreign" to many Third World social formations, whose secularising, modernising thrusts are still to date a matter of debate and contention, rather than taken for granted. And as far as Algeria is concerned, one can readily agree with Mowitt that the Algerians may have fought French colonialism less in the name of some modern notion of nationalism and more for a return to their ancient Arab and Islamic traditions, as the post-independence political upheavals in Algeria clearly attest. However, what is at stake here is

not the self-evident fact that nationalism is an invented Western concept, but rather the problematic opposition to its use outside the West. For this opposition couches itself in Eurocentric terms, declaring that ideas originating in the rational West are applicable only to the West, and are therefore likely to be abused by people in other parts of the world who are unable to comprehend such alien concepts. Furthermore, opposition to nationalism in these terms simplifies the complicated (post-) colonial condition in which the idea of nationalism was, as we shall see later, more of an objective, political necessity than a misguided attempt on the part of some nationalist thinkers in the Third World to imitate the West. Finally, one may note that the objection to nationalism in the Third World on account of its Western origins ignores the creative ways in which it was redefined and "reworked" to suit the requirements of the anti-colonial struggle.

The Socio-Anthropological Case: Ethnicity versus Unethical Nationalism

Socio-anthropologically oriented critics of nationalism rightly argue that the construction of modern (nation-) states in the (post-) colonial world is based on colonial geographies that do not respect the ethnic and cultural make-up of the nation. To this extent, nationalism indeed colludes with the literal violence of colonialism by accepting as a matter of fact its violent territorial consequences. In this respect, we can take as example the criticisms advanced against Frantz Fanon's vision of nation-building, especially that his theories of national liberation are currently seen in post-colonial theory as the paradigm of anti-colonial resistance *par excellence*. As many of his critics maintain, Fanon has run the risk of endorsing and consolidating the imaginative boundaries drawn by the colonial power by according the colonial experience a high importance in shaping the emergent colonial nation. Neil Lazarus (1994: 201), for example, argues that Fanon "simply takes for granted the unforgoability even the world-historical 'appropriateness' of what has been imposed upon African societies by colonial powers, privileging the nation as the primary unit of anti-imperialist struggle." In his criticism of Fanon's call for the "re-establishment of the nation … in the strictly biological sense of the phrase," Caute (1970: 80) similarly argues that the modern nation-states in Africa are predominantly "creations of European imperialism," and the borders demarcating these nations "were generally dictated less

by tribal or ethnic considerations than by European rivalries and administrative convenience."

Christopher Miller (1990) advances an equally interesting case as he interrogates Fanon's paradigm of nation through his own conception of "ethnicity" and "ethics." Through a definition of "ethnicity as a sense of identity and difference among peoples, founded on a fiction of origin and descent and subject to forces of politics, commerce, language, and religious culture (p. 35)," Miller proceeds to argue that the Fanonian nation 'covers over important, unresolved tensions between "ethnicity" and ethics.' By making the nation as the centre of his concern for African development and progress, without interrogating the complexities of its applications to disparate geographical and cultural environments, "Fanon winds up imposing his own idea of nation in places where it may need reappraising." Insofar as the emergent modern African nation-states are originally no more than a colonial creation for convenience, Miller views them quite properly as arbitrary and absurd. 'Far from being "natural national entities" or cohesive nation-states,' he writes, 'the modern nations of black Africa must make do with borders created to satisfy European power brokering in the "scramble for Africa," borders that often violate rather than reinforce units of culture (p. 48).' In these terms, Caute (1970: 80) is also right in his conclusion that "it is curious that Fanon, who wanted to snap the bonds of European culture, should have transformed arbitrary European structures into the natural units of African progress."

For both Miller and Caute, then, this nation-forming project is deeply flawed because it is insensitive to ethnic differences among tribes or ethnic groups that happened to exist spatially within the imaginative geography of the colonial state. This view is certainly true in that it draws attention to one important aspect of anti-colonial nationalism – the fact that it simply consolidates the colonial legacy, reappropriating the colonial state structures rather than questioning and subverting them. Moreover, anti-colonial nationalism, under the exigencies of the political struggle against colonialism, often mutes internal social divisions and represses pre-colonial modes of identity (tribalism or ethnicity) in the name of a higher, modern identification with the "nation." In these terms, Caute (1970) is right in pointing out that Fanon abstains from discussing internal differences regarding ethnicities within the structure of the nation. Even when "he alludes

to them or [to] their effects," as Caute writes, "they are associated with outbreaks of 'racism.'" "These outbreaks of 'racism' would be better described as outbreaks of 'tribalism'" which, in Fanon's opinion, must be passed over in favour of a higher affiliative loyalty to the nation (pp. 79-80). From another perspective, the repression of particularities by nationalism in the name of identity often degenerates into a systematic exclusionary practice as when one ethnic group within the "nation" swallows up the entire state-apparatus to the detriment of other ethnic groups. Thus, the nation in many parts of the colonial world could be said to be less the representation of the totality of "the people" than the identification of one ethnic group with the nation (state), thereby excluding other ethnic groups or relegating them to the status of "minorities." However, problematic Fanon's nation-building project may be, it is still difficult to accept that Fanon's politics of nation and national liberation runs through these ethical problems of excluding or "liquidating" ethnic differences, as Miller would have us believe. Miller who is, as we have seen, rather concerned about the *ethical* implication of "forcing" upon Africa such an arbitrary creation as the nation, takes Fanon's commitment to the national question to be irreducibly related to his commitment to Marxism (Lazarus, 1994: 201; and Lazarus, 1999). More precisely, since Miller (1990) regards Marxism as "lacking relativism," insofar as the allegedly Eurocentric "totalizing unity" through which it operates 'tends to overlook or "liquidate"' what it cannot accommodate (p. 64), he accuses Fanon's national politics of repeating the same exclusionary gesture with regards to ethnicity. "The loss of ethnic identity," Miller writes, 'does not trouble Fanon, for the fragmentation of "tribalism" must be transcended, as it was, according to him, in Slovakia, Estonia and Albania.' In sum, Fanon's (and Amilcar Cabral's) theory of nation-ness fails to address the question of ethnicity save as a 'primitive stage to be transcended, or, in Fanon's vocabulary, "liquidated" (p. 49).' As we shall see later, this reading of Fanon and Cabral is questionable, if not wrong.

As can be seen above, the arguments of both Miller and Caute move from a positive register in their criticism of anti-colonial nationalism to a quite different, but implicit one. These critics seem to imply, problematically, that "good" nations in the modern world are entirely based on distinct ethnic groups, while "bad" ones in the colonial world violate ethnicities rather than

reflect this supposed harmony between ethnicity and nation. Second, there is the implication that nationalism is a matter of choice and "imposition," as though thinkers like Cabral and Fanon had other, more ethically sound options, but somehow still stubbornly insisted on an unworkable choice of national politics. As in the previous case against anti-colonial nationalism, this one, in its positive criticism of one aspect of the colonial experience (the arbitrary structure of the colonial nation-state), ignores the other aspects of it (for example, colonialism as a transformative experience, which complicates the simplified notions of nationalism as a matter of "borrowing" or "importation" form Western culture, or as an unpalatable "imposition," and so on).

The Deconstructionist Case: Nationalism is an Inverted Imperialism

The deconstructionist agenda, as Benita Parry (1996: 84) has argued, "disdains the objective of restoring the colonised as subject of its own history … on the grounds that a simple inversion perpetuates the coloniser/colonised opposition within the terms defined by colonial discourse." Nationalism is assumed to do so by "remaining complicit" with the assumptions of colonial discourse, "retaining undifferentiated identity categories, and failing to contest the conventions of that system of knowledge it supposedly challenges." For Gayatri Spivak (1985; 1986) and Robert Young (1990), this nationalist, anti-colonial stance can best be described as reverse ethnocentrism. Elaborating on Spivak's position (1985: 121) in regarding nativism as "a hyperbolic admiration or ... pious guilt that today is the mark of a reverse ethnocentrism," Young (1990: 168) endorses Spivak's thesis that "through the analyses of the discursive formations around specific fields," "it is possible to show … that all such arguments, whether from the colonizer or the colonized, tend to revolve around the terms which the colonizer have constructed." "To invert an opposition of this kind," argues Young, "is to remain caught within the very terms that are being disputed." If this "pious guilt" is characteristic of the nativist discourse, Young goes on to argue that a similar guilt punctuates the nationalist discourse, too. "Nationalist resistance to imperialism, for example," he writes, "itself derives its notion of nation and of national self-determination from the Western culture that is being resisted." Young moves even further to aver that nationalism is not only an acquiescent prisoner of the

imperial discourse, it is also a "product of imperialism." By reproducing the colonial terms and structures it resists, nationalism as such can only change the "geopolitical conjuncture from territorial imperialism to neo-colonialism." Drawing on Ranajit Guha's critique of postcolonial histories that often do not acknowledge subaltern resistance not organised around this nationalist ethos, Young concludes by stating that "in effect the elite culture of nationalism continues to participate with the colonizer." Thus, Young ironically doubles the Western ethnocentric guilt by implying that "we" Westerners have even given them this (imperfect) mode of resistance to us.

A similar argument that shares the same conceptual framework of Young's has been recently advanced by Kwame Anthony Appiah (1988). Appiah, too, argues that nationalism is unable to purge itself of "the specific institutional determinations of the West," and, as such, it must be discredited as complicit with the terms of colonialism's discourse. Appiah identifies within the anti-colonial nationalist discourse a "nativist topology" in the form of binarisms - inside/outside, indigene/alien, Western/tradition - which are ideologically inscribed in "a position of counter-identification" to Western power/knowledge (p. 162). However, the operation of this topology, though reverses the disputed terms, still allows the coloniser to be "dynamic donor" and initiator while the colonised remains "docile recipient" and passive imitator (Parry, 1996: 89). Cultural nationalists, contends Appiah, continue therefore "to participate in an institutional configuration - to be subjected to cultural identities - they ostensibly decry." Though they rail "against the cultural hegemony of the West," the cultural nationalists remain "of its party without knowing it." In a manner comparable to that of Spivak and Young, Appiah proceeds to argue that "indeed, the very arguments, the rhetoric of defiance, that our nationalists muster are, in a sense, canonical, time-tested. For they enact a conflict *interior* to the very nationalist ideology that provided the category of 'literature' and its conditions of emergence: the defiance is determined less by 'indigenous' notions of resistance than by the dictates of the West's own Herderian legacy - its highly elaborated ideologies of national autonomy, of language and literature as their cultural substrate (p. 162)." In sum, anti-colonial nationalism, in its cultural and political aspirations, inhabits a "Western architecture" (p. 163), and its reverse discourse

represents what Young (1990: 165) calls "the narcisstic desire to find another that will reflect Western assumptions of selfhood," autonomy and self-determination.

The deconstructionist case against anti-colonial nationalism is, as can be seen, the most serious and elaborate one, and one can do much better than lightly dismiss it. It presents a compelling instance of what one may call the "structural problematic" of anti-colonial cultural nationalism. Insofar as it constitutes itself in opposition to colonial discourse, anti-colonial nationalist resistance is forced to address itself to the terms of the former – for, indeed, how can one be *oppositional* without taking up the terms of one's antagonists? However, precisely by doing so, anti-colonial resistance risks remaining locked up within the terms of colonial discourse. Thus, colonialism is reinforced at exactly the moment when it is resisted. The kind of problem involved here can be suggested perhaps by comparing it to the situation in which Negritude found itself. Simply to counter the colonial claims that the "Negro" is evil and irrational, by affirming that the "Negro" is in fact as good and rational as the "White Man," is not only to remain caught up in the original colonial opposition, but also to forget that "Negroes" are colonial creations in the first place. Moreover, the deconstructionist critique in these terms is corrective of the old view which held that the effects of colonialism could simply be abolished or rectified once nationalism reconstituted, for example, the native self or its past which colonialism had repressed, interrupted or denigrated as its "other." Unable to see the extent to which their own opposition is conditioned by colonialism, nationalists often tend to idealise the possibility of restoring the figures of the self or the past, without allowing for the fact that these figures are themselves to a certain extent constructed in terms of the coloniser's self-image (Young, 1990: 168). If the image of the Arab "other," for example, is in fact no more than a Western orientalist fantasy about its *own* Western society, which helped to consolidate the Western colonialist self, then the attempt by some Arab critics to recover an Arab past, interrupted and disfigured by imperialism, falls easily into the pitfall of projecting this Western orientalist fantasy back onto the society of the other and naming it 'the Arab society.' The problem here can be explained perhaps by reference to Adonis's "nativist," ethnocentrically reversed conception of the West/East opposition (Adonis, 1980), in which the "East" is indeed

a pure Western fantasy reversed:

> Creatively, I mean, on the level of civilisation in its most human and profound meaning, there is nothing in the West that is not taken over from the East: religion, philosophy, poetry and arts in general are all 'oriental.' In this regard, you can refer to the names of the creative writers in these fields, from Dante up to the present. For the specificity of the 'West' is technology, not creativity. Therefore, it is possible to say that the West is, culturally speaking, the East's descendent, but technologically it is a 'foundling:' perversion, exploitation, hegemony, colonialism and imperialism. In other words, it constitutes a rebellion against the father, and now it is not content just to rebel against the father – it wants to kill him, too (p.150, my translation).

> Let us finally note that the West today is technology/progress - that is, staying within the realm of the visible, and that the East is that thought which sees the visible only as a threshold into the inner – the inner which is the home of truth, that is, the home of Man (p. 154, my translation).

In another respect, in a simple opposition to the colonial value system, anti-colonial nationalist resistance risks distorting its own identity by, for example, "inventing" cultural categories that do not originally exist, or by bringing to the fore practices that are not prominent in its own culture, to counter-pose them to Western values (Nandy, 1983). Thus, one suspects that the fervent attempt on the part of some Arab critics to "find" an ancient Arab "modernism" that goes back to Abu Nuwas and Al-Jurjani (Adonis, 1990: 79-81; 1980), is itself the product of a guilty admiration of the Western modernist tradition, and an unconscious desire to re-constitute the Arab literary tradition in terms of its Western "counterpart," rather than to find a different way to value it.

Accepting a certain degree of complicity between nationalism and colonialism in deconstructionist terms, however, one still wants to know to what extent colonialism determines the objectives of the anti-colonial struggle. For the deconstructionist argument tends to view nationalism as *totally* constituted by colonialism, and therefore incapable of achieving any degree of autonomy that allows it to resist colonialism without reproducing the colonial terms and structures. It is this conception which allows Young, for example, to state that nationalism is 'a product of imperialism,' a conception that we have reason to doubt, as we shall see in due course.

General Features of Anti-Nationalist Scholarship

While compelling and indisputable in certain aspects, the arguments we have seen above, whether "traditionalist," socio-anthropological or deconstructionist, against a complex category such as anti-colonial nationalism are to some extent problematic, and thus open themselves to criticism. First let us observe some general features in these arguments, and then proceed to make our criticisms of each specific case. The first thing that can be noticed about these arguments is that there is a flagrant homogenisation and dehistoricisation of anti-colonial nationalism. A particular Western discourse such as that of nationalism unnoticeably and unproblematically slips into "colonial discourse." Therefore, any nationalism outside the West reproduces the categories of colonial discourse merely by "virtue" of being a nationalism at all. Moreover, anti-colonial nationalism (a civic, secular, enlightened discourse) emerges as isomorphic with nativism (often an ethnic, non-secular, essentialist discourse), and both of them are delineated as co-extensive with the very imperialism they resist. The problem with this view is that it erases the distinction between nativism and nationalism. Indeed, nationalism in its cultural politics is often nativist. However, the distinction between the two concepts must be kept, since nationalism cannot be entirely reduced to the problematic of nativism. Nationalism at its best is a secular, enlightened ideology whose aim is not only to evict the colonisers from the occupied territory; it has its modern orientation towards setting up a civil society with the attendant notions of government, citizenship and the rest, although it often ideologically represents these modernising notions in archaic or atavistic (i.e. nativist) terms. From another perspective, one can be nationalist in the sense of believing that it is politically imperative for a group of people, possessing a common language and a common (colonial) history, to construct a modern nation, without having to be nativist in the sense of believing, in ahistorical, essentialist terms, that this group possesses an "essence" or a unique "personality." This was the position of Fanon (1967), who saw the nation as a

politically necessary project in the fight against colonialism, but rejected Negritude and black nationalism as no more than mystification, as Young (1990: 168) himself is aware. Ironically, Young, Spivak and Appiah, who are supposedly pluralist critics, fail not only to observe this distinction in the colonial context, but they also homogenise under one single rubric the diverse forms nationalism might take, or actually have taken. Young's qualifying term "elite culture," which may otherwise have been useful in setting apart nationalism as a mass configuration from elite conceptions, is cancelled by his less critical remark that "nationalism is a product of imperialism."

Second, there is the problem of essentialism. Insofar as Europe is seen as the original "home" of all nationalist philosophies, which are thereby inapplicable to the rest of the world, critics of anti-nationalism tend to essentialise both the identity of the West and the difference of other cultures. The theorist of "traveling theory" and "overlapping territories and intertwined histories," reminds us that it is an "ahistorical," "confused and limiting notion" which "allows that only the original proponents of an idea can understand and use it (Said, 1993: 261)." However, insofar as it essentialises Europe as the home of all nationalist doctrines, the critique of anti-colonial nationalism in these terms ironically leads to a "nativist" or "indigenist" conclusion: the specifically Western category of nation does not serve best the interest of the colonised formations, and in any case its "imposition" is never without concomitant violence. Thus, one might say, a simplistic opposition to Eurocentrism can lead back to Spivak's and Young's "pious guilt," which is after all a mark of nativism for them.

Third, critics of nationalism in the West or the Third World fail to consider the productive drama of nationalism's identity and difference. It is curious that those who criticise nationalism for its homogenisation and repression of particularities forget that nationalism is also a claim for cultural difference, and, in the colonial context, cultural difference from one's colonisers. The nationalism of the Enlightenment is at once particular and universalist. For Herder, for instance, "the ultimate objective was the fullest development of humanity as a whole. Yet, this goal was attainable not through the transcendence of nationality, but through its cultivation (MacFarlane, 1985: 11)." For Terry Eagleton (1998: 134), the nation-state was modernity's attempt to

reconcile politics (universal autonomy and equality) with culture (the local, the provincial, the particular). In other words, the nation-state was thought of as a sort of mediation between universality and particularity, although Eagleton contends, this mediation often lapsed into an abstract universalism or a myopic form of particularism. "The noble, doomed dream of Enlightenment," writes Eagleton, "was that a universal justice and reason could become instantiated in a particular place, and the hinge between them was known as the nation-state." This doomed dream of the Enlightenment is also echoed by Fanon (1967) in his own utopian dream of final synthesis between the national and the universal. For his new universal humanism is nothing but the apotheosis of the particular national consciousness, as he conceives it. National consciousness, he writes, "must now be enriched and deepened by a very rapid transformation into a consciousness of social and political needs, in other words, into humanism (p. 165)." Elsewhere, Fanon (1969), though speaking in the specific context of the Algerian war of national liberation, states that national liberation must lead to universal liberation and a 'humanism … built to the dimensions of the universe (p. 114)." In sum, the attainment of nationhood, imperative though it is, is not in itself the *telos* of the national anti-colonial struggle. For Fanon (1967: 199) "the building of a nation is of necessity accompanied by the discovery and encouragement of universalizing values… It is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness lives and grows."

This "global" or, better, universal orientation of nationalism is generally overlooked by its critics. It has to be pointed out that nationalism is among other things an "exoteric" phenomenon; it demands to be allowed to deal with and relate to other nations on equivalent terms. Thus, although it is an ideology that claims difference - the right to differ from one's coloniser – anti-colonial nationalism is also a claim for identity - the right to share the coloniser's right to self-determination. This is an extremely important dynamic that enabled further anti-colonial resistance. From this perspective, Tom Nairn (1981: 331), despite his reservations about nationalism's "Janus-facedness" and ambivalence, argues that nationalism in the colonial world has been "a good thing, a morally and politically positive force in modern history. It has been the ideology of the weaker, less developed countries struggling to free themselves from alien

oppression." It is this aspect of nationalism that Fanon (1967) emphasises on several occasions. "National consciousness," he argues in one place, "is the only thing that will give us an international dimension;" "it is the national liberation which leads the nation to play its part on the stage of history (p. 199)."

This perspective allows us to see further why it is politically negative and morally dangerous to demand that non-Western societies trying to acquire national independence and self-determination must not deploy an ideology "foreign" to their ethos or ethnos. It is so because such a thesis problematically essentialises both identity and difference, as we have just demonstrated. Moreover, it was historically harnessed to a broadly Eurocentric, colonialist opposition to the proposition that the formerly subject peoples were entitled to the same kind of nationalism (with its concomitant notions of autonomy and sovereignty) as the more developed Europeans (Said, 1993: 261). This is one of the ideological justifications for the colonial "civilising mission." There has been an insistence (which still exists in the imperialist ideologies of the West at the present) that the white man's "civilising mission" is indispensable to the colonial world to such an extent that the latter "after the white man left … seems to have become little more than a nasty mix of tribal chieftains, despotic barbarians, and mindless fundamentalists (Said, 1993: 333)." It is anti-colonial nationalism which enabled the colonised native formations to counter these colonial self-justifications and to struggle for independence. Despite the problems that emanate from Mowitt's critique (1992) of Fanon's anti-colonial, nationalist politics (I have already discussed some of them above), Mowitt's argument provides an interesting explanation of Fanon's need to privilege the category of the nation in the Algerian context, in the terms I have stated above. He argues that Fanon, observing the debate over the colonial question of Algeria between the French intellectual left and the right, deliberately shaped his argument so as to intervene effectively on behalf of Algeria and advance its case for independence. The demand for the right for Algerian national sovereignty had been diffused by the French colonial designation of Algeria as "barbaric," "irrational" and therefore incapable of self-government. Fanon, according to Mowitt, appealed to an Andersonian political imaginary of the nation to put the demand for Algerian nationhood in terms shared by the French experience (p. 172). As such, "the imaginary structure of

the nation is exploited to co-ordinate anti-colonial insurgency in Algeria with an immanent attack on the sources of intellectual legitimation for French colonialism (p. 176)."

Ethnicity, Imperialism and the Modern Nation-State

Now with respect to the socio-anthropological critique of nationalism, we can demonstrate that the argument of Miller, Caute and other critics like them is unacceptably overstated, and, moreover, it has far-reaching, dangerous implications. It cannot be accepted that Fanon and Cabral ethically fail to be attentive to ethnic or other differences within the constructed nation. In the context of the Guinean struggle for independence, Cabral (1973: 78) clearly states that "ten years ago, we were Fula, Mandjak, Mandinka, Balante, Pepel, and others. Now, we are a nation of Guineans." This is not only an acknowledgement of the diversity of the ethnic forces as multiple agents coalescing in the cause of national liberation and national construction; it is also an acknowledgement of the creatively invented category of the nation. Moreover, although both Miller and Caute foreground ethnicity (tribalism) as a fact bypassed or opposed by Fanon's nation formation project, both critics fail to consider the colonial "origins" of ethnic imagining. [On the (neo-) colonial and capitalist origins of ethnic imaginations, see Miyoshi, 1993; Zizek, 1997]. For colonialism has been an important factor in the formation of African ethnicities. It was the colonialist policy of "divide-and-rule" which created, propagated, and fostered internal divisions among the African peoples, divisions "founded," in Miller's own phrase, "on a fiction … and subject to forces of [colonial] politics." In fact, as Said (1993: 276) argues, these "racial, religious, and political divisions [were] imposed by imperialism itself." Fanon is fully aware of such colonial divisive policies. He points out that colonial authorities exploit social cleavages in the oppositional forces by encouraging chieftaincies, tribalism and regionalism. It is therefore in the best interest of the emerging nation, he insists, that tribal interests revived by colonial powers or colonially-backed native *caids* (leaders) be opposed. Otherwise, the "unity of the nation" would be jeopardised and the national liberation struggle would be abortive. Likewise, the regional tensions and the religious wars that were being fomented, as well as the narrow kinds of national interests that were being successfully played up, ought to

be avoided (Gendzier, 1973: 221-22). Hence, violence, insofar as it is directed towards liberating the whole nation "is closely involved in the liquidation of regionalism and tribalism … Their destruction is the preliminary to the unification of the people (Fanon, 1967: 74)."

Now it is true that, as Miller (1990: 48) argues, Fanon bypasses "the single most important fact of political existence in Black Africa, the artificiality of the national borders" and their repercussions on the plane of "cultural and linguistic" unity. Besides, as Caute (1970: 79) has also argued, "the actual structures of African society, and the actual structure of African pre-colonial political institutions, are extremely varied, and there can be no doubt that these variations and divisions played an important role in complicating African political development in the 1960s." Fanon does not consider, in any sustained fashion, these particularly pre-colonial socio-political or economic structures. On the whole, there is a kind of opacity in his use of the category of the nation. He seems to conflate nation (as culture) with state (as a political, geographical entity), a conflation that is typical of nationalist thought. Indeed for him, they mean one and the same thing. However, as Tzvetan Todorov (1994) writes, in the modern world the nation as culture "*partially coincides* with the nation as state, a country separated from others by political borders (p. 174)." "Culture is not necessarily *national* (it is even only exceptionally so) (my emphasis)." Culture, Todorov goes on to explain, is "the property of a region, or of an even smaller geographical entity; it may also belong to a given layer of the population, excluding other groups from the same country; finally it may also include a group of countries (p. 387)." In this respect, it is absurd to say that individual Arab countries constitute *different* nations in the sense of having different cultures. In Arab political discourse, there is a difference between country and nation, the latter being reserved only for the entirety of the Arab countries. It is only recently that the notion of "Arab people*s*" has been reluctantly introduced into Arab political discourse, and of course not without generating due controversy. The Syrians, for example, have never thought of themselves as a separate nation. This insistence on the oneness of Arab culture and Arab literature may be one of the ideological effects of Pan-Arab nationalism and the teachings of Nasserism and Ba'athism. But the historical fact is that, at a certain general level, all the Arabs read the same books, listen to the same music; and, recently with the introduction of mass communication technologies, all the Arabs have started to read the same papers and watch the same T. V. programmes.

However, both Caute and Miller seem to imply that only states that are coextensive with an ethnicity are valid. This is a highly problematic implication. Should the critique of nationalism in the colonial world privilege the right to statehood *only* on the basis of linguistic and ethnic identity? If Fanon is wrong to assume unproblematically the rigorous interdependence of state (political entity) and nation (culture) when this thesis is not universally true, and certainly not in the colonial context, the two critics are wrong to reinstate this very assumption. As Todorov (1994: 224) argues, "it is absurd to declare that each culturally homogeneous group [tribe, in the sense of Miller and Caute] has the *right* to a new State … To say that any culture has the right to become autonomous in its own State is meaningful only if one has established the appropriate size for a State in advance; the issue would then be decided on political rather than cultural grounds."

From another perspective, one needs to ask why ethnicity rather than the (nation-) state is to be privileged as the appropriate way of representing African and other non-Western social formations. If the contestation of the nation is carried out implicitly or explicitly on the assumption that the nations that emerged after decolonisation have no "natural" aura about them, there is certainly enough reason why one should dismiss this contestation. There is no nation, or for that matter nation-state, whether in the Third or in the First Worlds, which could count as "natural." Modern nation-states are cultural and political constructs, and almost none of them is co-extensive with a distinct ethnic grouping. The fact of colonisation certainly makes the constructed modern Third World nations all the more flagrantly so; this fact, however, is not a sufficient reason to say that they are absurd entities, as Miller and Caute would have it. The United States, whether as a former colony or a modern imperialist nation, has nothing natural about its borders or its multi-ethnicities, which does not thereby make it an absurd entity as such. Even in Europe, which is regrettably often essentialised as "the natural home" of all nationalist philosophies, the phenomenon of the nation is relatively a modern one, barely a couple of centuries old. The modern political and geographical map of Europe has only emerged after countless civil and regional

conflicts and two World Wars. With the rise of capitalism as a mode of production, the nation-states, which were "imposed" on a then-feudal Europe, were not necessarily tailored for pre-existent, distinct ethnicities; they in fact reflected economic and military expediency rather than endorsement of "cultural zones." Ernest Renan's famous essay (1990), "What is a Nation?," at once demystifies the supposedly "natural," national entities in the European context and amply demonstrates the dynamics as well as the effects of bringing such an imaginary construct as the nation into being.

Eurocentric, Western-based scholarship nevertheless takes European nationalisms for granted. However, those literary theorists alert to difference in the Third World are often egregiously blind to it in the context of the First. Their contestation of the category of the nation is motivated by 'the perception that, being both ontologically and culturally "other,"' non-Western 'realities demand the use of autochthonous categories (Esonwanne, 1993: 50; see also Miller, 1993a, and 1993b).' Seeking to represent the experience of the other in "otherly" authentic terms then justifies the rejection of European categories, especially that of the nation, and the plea of relativism. Miller (1990: 31), for one, views African difference in terms of ethnicity; and claims that from a relativistic and anthropologically-oriented stand, it is "ethical[ly] imperative to be attentive to difference … against blindly appropriative reading." However, glossing this difference only in terms of ethnicity, as Esonwanne (1993: 57) warns, reconstructs the latter as the only "authentically African imagined community." As such, Miller is not only implicated in Eurocentric anthropological discourse with its "conservationist, museumising" proclivities, but also the whole approach he pursues is fundamentally questionable. His perception that "disputes concerning ethnicity and ethics in fact constitute the central topos in the criticism of African literature; these theoretical categories are of course at the heart of politics in Africa as well (1990: 31-2)," which therefore justifies his penchant for the "ethnic model," is very problematic, to say the least. Indeed, it is no less problematic than Fredric Jameson's conceptually (1986: 69) questionable assumption that "all third-world texts are necessarily … allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as … national allegories."

Against the problematic hypothesis that an ethnicity-ethics antinomy constitutes the *central topos* in African literature and literary theory, Esonwanne (1993: 56)

argues that the "ethnic model is *often* employed as a currency or tool" in African literary theory. The extent to which ethnicity is foregrounded or projected as an impediment to nation-ness or as a source of authentic African aesthetic and political categories depends on the ideological posture of the creative writer and/or his literary critics. Moreover, ethnicity as a category of African self-understanding is a recent invention. Terence Ranger (1987: 314) observes that "ethnic consciousness in Africa is often a twentieth-century ideological innovation rather than the lingering effect of long established 'great' tradition." V. Y. Mudimbe (cited by Esonwanne, 1993: 55) also points out that 'at least in contemporary scholarly literature, the concept of "ethnicity" represents a recent current that (against the 1960s concept of a culturally unified Africa) emphasizes the alterity of some basic cultural entities defined by a language and a history.'

Nationalism and Imperialism: Intimate Enemies

From the foregoing argument we have seen that in most objections to nationalism it is implied or clearly stated that anti-colonial nationalism is the product of imperialism, in the sense that it is either totally irrelevant to the (post-) colonial world, or that it reproduces colonial structures and Western categories. Now I would like to argue here and further in due course that Third World anti-colonial nationalisms are indeed, for good and bad, the product of the Third World's encounter with Western imperialism and modernity, but *not* in the sense that our critics imply. Honesty and political understanding dictate that we acknowledge what imperialism has done to us, even if our final objective is the eradication of the imperial legacy and its consequences in the present. We have therefore to take into account the impact of Western power and knowledge as a historical dynamic that shaped our identities, histories and nations, rather than simply adopt a narrowly ethnocentric or highly moralistic attitude. As Fredric Jameson (1986: 78) has taught us, nationalism must be evaluated not 'from the standpoint of some dogmatic and placeless "ideological analysis,"' but from "a historical perspective." Now if one may take the nativist/essentialist case at its word for a second and allow for the fact that traditional native societies, in the course of a non-coercive development, might well have developed truly "otherly" ways of conceiving themselves and their relationship to the external world, different from those of modernity such as the modern nation-state, one

can safely argue that nationalism *is* now relevant to the Third World precisely because colonialism *is*. This relevance can be understood in the sense that imperialism has disrupted the history and identity of the colonised, and that the emergent new nations in the Third World owe their origins in part to the colonial experience to which the colonised were subjected. This is probably what Terry Eagleton (1998: 128) meant when he wrote that "colonialism helps to stop history form happening … just as much as it is itself the very history which is happening to you." Similarly Amilcar Cabral (1974: 56) accentuates the conditioning and determining influence of colonialism and imperialism on the very shape of African social formations. "We consider," he writes, "that when imperialism arrived in Guinea it made us leave history - our history… and enter another history… This gives a completely different aspect to *the historical evolution* of our country (my emphasis)." Indeed, the experience of colonialism as a dynamic of nation-formation in the colonial world has a truth to it, which cannot be lightly dismissed. In this regard, Aijaz Ahmad (1992: 11) has argued, against the post-structuralist mode of analysis, that "the historical reality of colonial sedimentations … do in fact give particular collectivities of people real civilisational identities." This is the dimension that David Lloyd (1995: 259) calls "the psychic impact of domination in the cultural and political dynamic through which the emergence and formation of nationalist movements take place." In this regard, Anderson (1983) seems to set so little store by the experience of colonialism sustained by the colonised peoples in the non- European world as an important factor in nation formation. In all his three "models" of nation - creole, linguistic, and official - Anderson traces back the emergence of the nationalist imaginations to "print-capitalism," especially the novel and the newspaper, and the shared experience of the "journeys" undertaken by the colonised intelligentsia flocking to imperial centres. As such, Anderson does not consider enough the impact of the colonial experience as a dynamic of assimilation and homogenisation that made it possible to formally bind together disparate elements over an imagined space of nationhood.

There is another sense in which nationalism is also relevant to the Third World. If nationalism in the Third World was the product of imperialism, paradoxically it remains a fundamental project in the fight against the lingering effects of colonialism and the neo-colonial re-

configuration of modern imperialism. The chronic socio-economic problems of dependency and uneven development created by colonialism are huge and can only be solved at the level of the nation (-state). In this regard, Timothy Brennan (1990: 58) argues that whereas the European nation "was a project of *unity* based on conquest and economic expediency," the Third World insurgent nation "is for the most part a project of consolidation following an act of *separation* from Europe." The (post-) colonial writer's task thus becomes that of "reclaiming community from within boundaries defined by the very power whose presence denied community." Whether supporting or rejecting the *de facto* political states in which they find themselves, (post-) colonial writers must have "a goal that can only be a collective political identity still incapable of being realized … in any other form than the nation-state." "It is not that the people, or the artists who speak for them, can imagine no other affiliations," Brennan adds, "but that the solutions to dependency [political, cultural, or economic] are only collective, and the territorial legacies of the last 200 years provide the collectivity no other basis upon which to fight dependency." Aijaz Ahmad (1992) further spells out this argument. "For human collectivities in the backward zone of capital," he argues, "all relationships with imperialism pass through their own nation-states, and there is simply no way of breaking out of that imperial dominance without struggling for different kinds of national projects and for a revolutionary restructuring of one's own nation-state." If one chooses to view anti-colonial nationalism as consolidating the colonial state as set up by the departing colonisers, Ahmad reminds us that "one struggles not against nations and states as such but for *different* articulations of class, nation and state (p. 11, my emphasis)." Fanon's call for the *re-establishment* of the nation and his searing critique of liberal (and state-) nationalisms must be understood in this manner.

Now if these are the historical circumstances which make nationalism relevant to Third World, anti-colonial struggles, we can see why post-nationalism, in the sense of declaring the bankruptcy of nationalism and the subsequent move to delegitimate the nation in *post-colonial* contexts, is premature at best. For example, in celebrating difference and post-coloniality, Simon Gikandi (1991: 129) hypothesises that "the old narratives of liberation, which assumed that the nation would be the fulfilment of human freedom, no longer have legitimacy." However, such poststructuralist unbridled celebration of

post-coloniality typically foregoes the question of whether "*post*-coloniality" really ushers the formerly colonised into an imperialism-free world after all, and of whether giving up the grand narratives of liberation is an option for neo-colonised, national communities outside the West. In doing so, this poststructuralist move not only fails to account for the present necessity of oppositional nationalism, but also unwittingly colludes with imperial forces. In a related context, Eagleton (1990: 23) maintains that "sheer irreducible difference *now*" is not possible to guarantee in such an imperially-hegemonised political conjuncture, and that therefore eschewing the nation leads to the worst form of "premature utopianism." "To wish class or nation away, to seek to live sheer irreducible difference *now* in the manner of some contemporary poststructuralist theory," Eagleton warns, "is to play straight into the hands of the oppressor." Taking in the demands of the political conjuncture of his time, Fanon (1967) similarly denounces the claims of "the nationalism-is-passé" advocates, and emphasises that perilous consequences loom behind giving up on the nation. "National claims, it is here and there stated," he writes, "are a phase that humanity has left behind. It is the day of great concerted actions and retarded nationalists ought in consequence to set their mistake aright. We, however, consider that the mistake, which may have very serious consequences, lies in *wishing to skip the national period* (p. 198, emphasis mine)." Now the political and historical conjuncture which made Fanon insist on the continued necessity of an emancipatory form of nationalism has not yet been surpassed. The political fact is that the neo-imperial project as manifested in advance, multinational capitalism does demand from the formerly colonised that they reconstruct rather than deconstruct their nations, identities and histories.

We have seen above some important aspects of the relationship between nationalism and imperialism. There remains yet another important fact about this relationship that needs to be discussed. If the origins of anti-colonial nationalism owe a great deal to the very imperialism that it wants to resist, so do the origins of all nationalism, Western and anti-colonial alike. There is now a growing conviction among many theorists that although the nation-state is a modern Western innovation, it is nevertheless one that has come about, whether in the West or the rest of the world, under the pressure of imperialism. Michael Sprinker (1993: 4) suggests that "over the past two centuries in world history, the existence and trajectory of virtually every nationalism have been significantly inflected by European imperialism's global system." This is in fact, adds Sprinker, "the core conviction shared" by Edward Said, Aijaz Ahmad and Fredric Jameson, "despite all that separates them politically and methodologically." Masao Miyoshi (1993: 731) goes even further to suggest that "the gradual ascendancy of the nation-state around 1800 in the West was a function of colonialism." However, the thesis that the "national idea" first flourished in colonial America and then was imported back to the centre seems to have been systematically argued first by Benedict Anderson (1983) and then by Timothy Brennan (1989). For the latter, the first nationalists were not Frenchmen, Englishmen or Spaniards, but "the Creole middle classes of the new world - people like Simon Bolivar, Toussaint L'Ouverture and Ben Franklin (pp. 20-1)." Europe was only able to formulate its own nationalist aspirations when these latter were motivated by the markets that imperial penetration had made possible. In other words, "European nationalism was possible only because of what Europe was doing in its far-flung dominions (p. 21)." The case against anti-colonial nationalism has come now full circle, but in a reversed form: if anti-colonial nationalism is in a way the product of imperialism and imitative of Western nationalist ideas, the very nationalism of the West, which anti-colonial nationalism is claimed to imitate, is also the product of imperialism.

Now, if nationalism in the Third World has come about under the pressure of Western imperialism, does this fact justify the claim that it slavishly imitates Western ideas without reworking them for its own purposes, or the claim that it unwittingly reproduces the colonial structures in the very attempt to subvert them? In fact, it is the failure to consider these questions sufficiently which has generated the uncritical equation, in terms of effect, of colonialism with anti-colonial nationalism, or has given way to the Eurocentric indifference to alternative dynamics of nation-formation in the Third World. Even Anderson (1983), who has argued that the nation is "an imagined political community (p. 6)" that can be read as a "cultural artefact" capable of travelling outside its Western provenance (p. 4), has not effectively dismantled Europe's monopoly on the national imagining. His intervention, crucial though it is, has not succeeded in shifting the conception of the nation from the Eurocentrism he has debunked. As observed earlier, his theory of the nation foregrounds the complicity of literary fiction and capitalism in the making of the nation. In the

final analysis, the emergence of the nation is contingent on the dynamics created by Western modernity. As such, his *Imagined Communities* could hardly be seen as diverging from "the categories of the West and its identifiable presence in/as the discourse of modernity (Varadharajan, 1995: 140)." In this regard, Partha Chatterjee (1992: 195) contends that "even the brilliance of Benedict Anderson's analysis of the modes of imagination of national communities seems not only to gloss over, but to refuse to recognise any cultural forms of imagining the nation that had not already been worked out in the West." In a later text (1993), he reformulates this contention as follows:

> If nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain "modular" forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine? History, it would seem, has declared that we in the postcolonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity. Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of our anti-colonial resistance and postcolonial misery. Even our imaginations must remain forever colonized (p. 5).

Contrary to Anderson (1983), Chatterjee (1986) advances the thesis that 'the most powerful as well as the most creative results of the nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa are posited not on an identity but rather on a *difference* with the "modular" forms of the national society propagated by the modern West (p. 5).' He nevertheless does not reject the whole of Anderson's thesis, pointing out that the difficulty of theorising nationalism arises because nationalism's claims to be a "political" movement have often been taken "much too literally and much too seriously." In his own reading, Chatterjee argues that well before it begins its political battle against the colonial order, anti-colonial nationalism "creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society." It does so, Chatterjee writes, by dividing the world of social institutions and practices into a material, "outside" domain which includes the economy, statecraft, science and technology, and a spiritual, "inner" domain of culture which subsumes, for example, religion, customs and the family. "Western superiority" is "acknowledged and its accomplishments carefully studied and replicated" in the first material

domain, whereas the spiritual domain is reclaimed as the "essential" mark of national culture that must be protected from the intervention of the colonial state. The more the colonised peoples succeed in imitating Western skills in the material domain, the greater is the need to preserve the distinctiveness of the native culture. Nevertheless, this so-called spiritual domain is not left unchanged. 'In fact,' argues Chatterjee, 'here nationalism launches its most powerful, creative, and historically significant project: to fashion a "modern" national culture that is nevertheless not Western. If the nation is an imagined community, then this is where it is brought into being. In this, its true and essential domain, the nation is already sovereign, even when the state is in the hands of the colonial power. The dynamics of this historical project is completely missed in conventional histories in which the story of nationalism begins with the contest for political power (p. 6).'

Moreover, Chatterjee argues, "the specificities of the colonial situation do not allow a simple transposition of European patterns of development." For the development of "print-capitalism" and the construction of modern national languages in the colonial world inflected and indeed deflected the "modular" (European) patterns of development that Anderson theorises. In India, for example, although English was the most powerful influence on the emerging Bengali intellectuals, they nevertheless reclaimed their native Bengali language, revived, modernised and standardised it, and established the appropriate institutions for its dissemination, *outside* the framework of the colonial state and the European missionaries. "The bilingual Bengali intelligentsia," Chatterjee writes, "came to think of its own language as belonging to that inner domain of cultural identity, from which the colonial intruder had to be kept out; language therefore became a zone over which the nation first had to declare its sovereignty and then had to transform in order to make it adequate for the modern world (p. 7)." Thus, despite their immersion in Western culture and despite their Anglicisation, Bengali intellectuals endeavoured to construct through drama, fiction and art an aesthetic that would be "modern and national" yet distinctively "Indian," that is, different from the "Western" patterns (p. 8).

Deconstruction Set Against Deconstruction

Now with respect to the deconstructionist case against nationalism, we have to concede to Young, Spivak and Appiah that, theoretically, anti-colonial nationalist

discourse necessarily engages the terms of its resisted colonial counterpart, albeit under conditions already set by the latter. As Richard Terdiman (1985: 36) remarked on discourse and counter-discourse, 'no discourse is ever a monologue, nor could it ever be adequately analyzed "intrinsically." Its assertions, its tone, its rhetoric - everything that constitutes it - always presupposes a horizon of competing, contrary utterances against which it asserts its own energies.' Nevertheless, the fact that anti-colonial nationalism engages colonial categories does not mean that colonial discourse thereby completely determines the objectives of the nationalist struggle. Nor does it mean that anti-colonial nationalism does not succeed in the end in displacing and subverting the terms and conditions imposed by colonial discourse, and finally establishing a different and independent discourse. Chatterjee's argument (1986) can also be illuminating here. According to Chatterjee, the difference anti-colonial nationalism achieved is marked on the terrain of politico-ideological discourse by a political struggle for power. In his schema, two moments of anti-colonial, nationalist, ideological struggle can be identified. The first is characterised by a process of resisting the West's conceptual framework from within. In other words, anti-colonial resistance takes place within the colonial discourse of the West. "Thus," Chatterjee argues, "nationalist thinking is necessarily a struggle with an entire body of systematic knowledge, a struggle that is political at the same time as it is intellectual. Its politics impels it to open up that framework of knowledge which presumes to dominate it, to displace that framework, to subvert its authority, to challenge its morality." The first moment of reversing and displacing the categories of colonial discourse paves the way for the second moment. This latter mandates a transformation in the nationalist discourse from being a mere discourse of negation and subversion to a "positive" one "which seeks to replace the structure of colonial power with a new order, that of national power (p. 42)."

Chatterjee's theorisation of anti-colonial nationalism in these terms invites comparison with the more sophisticated psychoanalytical and deconstructionist models that Homi Bhabha (1994) has proposed with reference to colonial resistance in general. The comparison between Bhabha's general models and Chatterjee's rather specific conception of anti-colonial nationalism can fruitfully put the colonial national question in the more positive terms of hybridity and translation, rather than in terms of passive imitation of

an idea that originated in Europe, or the even more elaborate thesis that colonial nationalism wholly reproduces the idioms and structures of colonial discourse. What warrants this comparison is that Chatterjee's account of the ambivalence and contradictoriness characteristic of anti-colonial nationalism's reasoning within the colonial framework of knowledge - a framework that mandates a structure of power and authority which nationalism seeks to subvert (p. 38) - is in many ways commensurable with Bhabha's own accounts of colonial mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity.

Bhabha defines colonial mimicry as "the desire for a reformed, recognizable other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*." However, mimicry as a colonial tool of native surveillance and control is necessarily ambivalent and self-defeating. For "in order to be effective," states Bhabha, "mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference (p. 86)." Wishing to transform the natives into mirror images of Westerns, but not quite enough to obliterate essential differences necessary for the exercise of effective colonial authority and control, colonial power finds itself producing native subjects whose "not-quite sameness" would come back to bug its operation and estrange the sources of its authority and legitimacy. In these terms, when the familiar Western colonial structures and "civilising" ideas are transported to the colonies, they become transformed since the native imitation of them subverts their Western identity, and consequently the mastery of colonial power and knowledge is undone. Thus, the outcome of the colonial knowledge or domination being imitated by the colonised does not imply a reproduction of colonial terms and structures. A similar process of subversion, with even greater loss of colonial discursive authority, occurs when colonial knowledge is hybridised, that is, mimed and repeated differently by the colonised in their own contexts. As Bhabha argues, "if the effect of colonial power is seen to be the production of hybridization… [this in turn] enables a form of subversion… that turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the ground of intervention (p. 112)." Benita Parry (1987: 42) acknowledges that Bhabha is able to render "visible those moments when colonial discourse already disturbed at its source by a doubleness of enunciation, is further subverted by the object of its address; when the scenario written by colonialism is given a performance by the native that estranges and undermines the colonial script."

Although Bhabha does not attribute the agency of mimicry, ambivalence or hybridity to a consciously resistant subject, but rather to the very conditions of the operation of colonial discourse, colonial knowledge and power are nevertheless undermined.

That nationalism involves a dynamic of mimicry and disavowal in the old-fashioned sense of these terms is well acknowledged and documented. Both Tom Nairn (1981) and John Plamenatz (1976), for example, concur in identifying an ambivalence that is seen as characteristic of colonial nationalism. For Nairn (1981), "uneven development has invariably generated an imperialism of the centre over the peripher[ies]." Consequently, these peripheries "have been forced into a profoundly ambivalent reaction against this dominance, seeking at once to resist it and to somehow take over its vital forces for their own use (pp. 340-1)." "In this sense," writes Nairn, "it is an exact (not a rhetorical) statement about nationalism to say that it is by nature ambivalent (p. 348)." In like fashion, Plamenatz (1976) argues that colonial nationalism is ambivalent in the sense that it simultaneously imitates and disavows Western nationalist thinking. This ambivalence was "the only way" for the colonial people "to assert themselves against the intruders." Ambivalence, moreover, involves "both acceptance (imitation) and rejection (the demand for independence and the claim to be innovating as well as imitating)." Nationalism has in fact involved "two rejections, both of them ambivalent: rejection of the alien intruder and dominator who is nevertheless to be imitated and surpassed by his own standards, and rejection of ancestral ways which are seen as obstacles to progress and yet also cherished as marks of identity (p. 34)."

For Chatterjee (1986), however, imitation gives way to an act of disavowal because of a built-in problematic within anti-colonial nationalism, which sets it apart from colonial discourse. As such, colonial nationalism derives its ideological underpinnings from Western colonial knowledges. Having assimilated them, however, it proceeds to disavow them precisely "because its problematic forces it relentlessly to demarcate itself from the discourse of colonialism (p. 42; cf. Bhabha, 1994: 86)." A shift occurs in Bhabha's account (1994), however, when mimicry itself becomes an act of disavowal. To read the performance of anti-colonial nationalism in his terms, the categories of colonial discourse would undergo an uncontrollable process of subversion and transformation when transported to the peripheries where they would be mimed and repeated by colonial nationalism. The strategies of mimicry, as explained above, and the ambivalent operation of colonial discourse, together with the hybridising effects of colonial power at the site of address, would make the repetition of Western categories, nationalist and otherwise, rife with slippage, excess and difference.

However, much as in the case of Chatterjee (1986), the difference or autonomy of anti-colonial nationalism would remain in terms of Bhabha's account very strictly qualified. Chatterjee allows for the emergence of a different, anti-colonial, nationalist discourse, relentlessly demarcated from the discourse of colonialism, although one that falls short of lifting once and for all the dominance of the latter (p. 42). Unlike Chatterjee, Bhabha (1994) in effect disallows even the possibility of any anti-colonial resistance, nationalist or otherwise, outside the framework of colonial discourse (cf. also Bhabha, 1986: 155). Thus, although Bhabha positively shatters the old-fashioned conception of mimicry which has made up much of the critique of anti-colonial nationalism, the "difference" that mimicry and hybridity create even more limited than Chatterjee allows. The initially promising undermining and subversion of the "colonialist script" will indeed be inadequate if the difference produced by resistance is virtually "almost the same," short of going beyond "the difference between being English and being Anglicized (Bhabha, 1994: 89-90)." However, if, as in Bhabha, the effects of mimicry, hybridity and ambivalence on the authority of colonial discourse are so "profound and disturbing" as to subvert "post-Enlightenment civility and liberty" and "to produce another knowledge of [Western] norms (p. 86)," surely anti-colonial nationalism's achieved difference cannot be reduced to an "almost sameness" within the parameters of colonial discourse of power and knowledge. This, we can assume, should conduce to establishing an autonomous status. By the same token, if anti-colonial nationalism, as Chatterjee argues, is able to transform itself from a discourse of negation, subversion and displacement, cannot it finally step off the discourse of colonialism and dispense with "the colonialist script" altogether.

Conclusion

To conclude, this essay has focused on some of the recent objections to anti-colonial nationalism and the post-colonial nation-state, especially in postcolonial

theory. I have argued that a critique of anti-colonial nationalism based on the insistence upon the European origin of the idea of the nation and thereby its inappropriateness to colonial social formations is invalid. It is so because such critique essentialises both the identity of the West and the difference of its "others," and can easily lend itself to imperial ideological self-justification. Likewise, the fact that nationalism is an artificially constructed concept is no case against it. So are all political concepts. Moreover, if it was "alien" to, and artificially imposed on, colonial societies, so was it to a pre-modern Europe emerging from medieval feudalism. As for anti-colonialism's relationship to the West, the essay acknowledges the "ironies" involved in articulating the politics of the (post-) colonial nation. In this respect, I have demonstrated that if nationalism was in some sense the product of colonialism, it was also *the* most

formidably successful form of opposition to colonialism in the modern epoch, and *remains* imperative in the struggle against the modern re-configurations of the classical colonialist project. Finally, I have shown that the claims that anti-colonial nationalism is wholly imitative of some Western nationalist discourse do not in fact withstand close historical and critical scrutiny. Nor do these claims made in some current forms of postcolonial literary theory that anti-colonial nationalism is guilty of replicating the idioms and structures of colonial discourse. For this perceivedly European idea has gone through a process of substantial reconception and redefinition within the colonial context. Moreover, although oppositional nationalism is intimately bound with the terms of colonialism, it has nevertheless to "re-function" Western categories in order to produce its difference and demarcate itself from colonial discourse.

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