Imagining Nations: An Anthropological Perspective

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Introduction:

The nation emerges as a powerful historical idea in the west. An idea whose cultural compulsion lies in the impossible unity of the nation as a symbolic force.

-Bhabha 1990a:1

Until recently, and with few exceptions, anthropologists have generally not undertaken studies of nations, nationalism, or nation-states. Largely, this has been due to the assumption that "nations and nationalist ideologies are definitely modern large-scale phenomena" (Eriksen 2003:97) – and thus too "Western" and macro for anthropological attention (Das and Poole 2004; Kelly and Kaplan 2001).[1] Of the anthropological studies that have been undertaken, most followed the 1983 publication of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, considered a benchmark in the study of nations and nationalism (Kelly and Kaplan 2001). By linking nationalism to kinship and religion (more traditionally anthropological interests), Anderson opened possibilities for anthropological studies of nationalism.

Veena Das and Deborah Poole argue that anthropologists' late attention to nations and nationalisms results from the discipline's "origins as the study of 'primitive' peoples… [so that] anthropology's subject, until recently, was

understood to be primitive or '*non-state*' societies" (2004:3, emphasis added). As Das and Poole recognize, evident in this argument is a taken-for-granted association between nations and states, wherein "nation" is synonymous with "nation-state." This assumed association, which they encourage anthropologists to rethink, runs through both popular and academic imaginaries of nations.

One attempt to undo the assumed nation-state link comes from Anthony Smith (1989), who offers his readers a binary, typological distinction between "ethnic" and "civic" nationalisms. Smith's ethnic nationalism is a "primordial," "non-Western" nationalism, which emphasizes familial relations, "community of birth," and "native culture" (i.e. kinship and descent). Smith constructs civic nationalism, on the other hand, as a more "inclusive" form of nationalism, associated with "modern," "Western" state forms, and held together by a degree of "rationality," law, and democracy. Civic nationalism's three main components are "historic territory, legal-political community, and common civic culture and ideology" (11). What emerges in Smith's writing is a teleology of nationalisms, represented as a rational, evolutionary progression through time, spatially projected as a binary distinction between Western (Euro-American) and non-Western nations (Eriksen 2002; Mackey 1999; Nixon 1997).

Absent from Smith's civic/ethnic binary is how "*Western liberal values* [such as "rationality"] can also be mobilized to construct difference and dominance" (Mackey 1999:156, emphasis original). In fact, Smith's representation of civic nationalism as inevitable, natural, and rational is but a thinly veiled ethnocentric evolutionary model, which has "lesser," "primitive" peoples striving to form desirable, "rational," Western-style nation-states. Moreover, the naturalness and desirability of civic nationalism is still based on the idea that each nation *ought* to have a single state and territory, and that for any individual, these three ought to be synonymous (Agamben 1996).

The assumption that congruence between nation, state, and territory is ideal (and objectively rational) is common in discussions of nationalism (for example, Breuilly 1985; Eriksen 2002; Gellner 1983; Hroch 1996). Although scholars of nationalism, like Benedict Anderson (1983), Ernest Gellner (1983), and Eric Hobsbawm (1990), are explicitly critical of the *naturalness* of nations, they nevertheless conceptualize the ideal nation as a homogenous, bounded entity, congruent with a specific territory, and associated with a single state, whose task it is to protect this congruence. Their theorizations of 'the nation' imply a *social* evolutionary model wherein nations and nationalisms are produced by necessary socio-cultural changes, and representative of 'modern' modes of socio-political and cultural organization.

Such theoretical paradigms, which represent the emergence of nationalism as a 'modern' phenomenon, have come under heavy criticism from feminist and (post)colonial scholars (Asad 1997; Arextaga 2001; Chatterjee 1993; Mackey 1999; McClintock 1997; Mufti and Shohat 1997; Nixon 1997; Yuval-Davis 1997). The main critique is that evolutionist paradigms of nations and nationalism are theoretically founded in eurocentric ur-narratives. Further, such ur-narratives imply a teleological, universalist history of hu(man)ity, overlook the gendered dynamic of national discourses, and lack a substantial theory of gender power. As Anne McClintock forcefully argues, within such paradigms, empirical "anomalies" or "inconvenient discontinuities" are managed by being "ranked and subordinated into a hierarchical structure of branching time – the progress of 'racially' different nations mapped against the tree's self-evident boughs, with 'lesser nations' destined, by nature, to perch on its lower branches" (1997:92; for similar critiques, see Arextaga 2003; Asad 1997; Bhabha 1990a; Chatterjee 1993; Das and Poole 2003; Hall 1999; Handler 1984; Mackey 1999).

In this paper, I review key academic theorizations of the emergence of nation-states and nationalism. I begin the

paper by reviewing the general arguments made by Benedict Anderson (1983), Ernest Gellner (1983), and Eric Hobsbawm (1990, 1997) about the rise of "the age of nationalism." Because anthropologists of nationalism have relied heavily on these authors' works, I spend some time discussing their writings to draw out the colonialist and masculinist knowledges and assumptions reproduced therein. These flaws in their work do not render it entirely useless, however. Thus, I spend a considerable part of the paper outlining the main convergences and divergences in their works. I go on to review the ways feminist and (post)colonial scholars of nationalism have (re)read the dominant understandings of nations and nationalism found in the works of Anderson, Gellner, and Hobsbawm. I conclude the paper with a general overview of recent suggestions for studies of nations and nationalism. The shift in the focus of study from the emergence of an "age of nationalism" to the everyday productions of nations and national discourse is important to anthropologists. In this context, I argue, anthropologists have much to contribute to understandings nations and nationalism.

Dominant Knowledge: Anderson, Gellner, and Hobsbawm's Age of Nationalism

A man [*sic.*] without a nation defies the recognized categories and provokes revulsion. (Gellner 1983:6)

Anderson begins *Imagined Communities* by noting that "since World War II every successful revolution has defined itself in *national* terms" (1983:15). For Anderson, people's willingness to die *for* their nations, both in general and in such revolutions, signals that nationalism is an important area of study. So too does the fact that "nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time" (12; see also, Agamben 1996; Arendt 1951; Arextaga 2003; Das and Poole 2004; Kofman 2005; McClintock 1997; Nixon 1997; Yuval-Davis 1997). Anderson also notes what he sees as the

failure of available theories and definitions of "the nation" to grasp that "nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are *cultural artefacts* of a particular kind" (1983:13, emphasis added). With this statement, Anderson places nations and nationalism firmly within the conceptual territory of anthropologists.

Unlike Gellner (1983) and Hobsbawm (1990, 1997), Anderson argues that nationalism is best approached "as if it belonged with 'kinship' and 'religion'" rather than as an ideology (1983:15). Anderson does not, however, advocate for an ethnic/civic binary. Instead, he sees *all* national sentiments as similar to those associated with kinship or religion. He maintains that because the rise of nationalism in Western Europe coincided temporally with the "dusk of religious modes of thought" (19), nationalism was able to replace disintegrating religious modes of thought and to provide a new sense of continuity, linking people to the past and future of their nation. For him, nations emerged in the late 18th century out of "the *spontaneous* distillation of a complex 'crossing' of discrete *historical forces*" (14, emphasis added), and thus became available for others to "pirate."

Following the above, and "in an anthropological spirit," Anderson defines a nation as "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (1983:15). He explains that nations are "imagined communities" because members of the same nation, while anonymous to one another, understand themselves as belonging to the same community. For Anderson, the implication of nations being understood as communities is that "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail ... the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (16). Anderson also clarifies that the community is "imagined as limited" because "no nation imagines itself as synonymous with mankind [*sic.*]" (16). Anderson's further insistence that nations are imagined as *sovereign* makes clear that he uses the term 'nation' to mean nation-state. In his view, nations are necessarily imagined as sovereign because of the time of their

emergence. He argues that during the Enlightenment and French Revolution, the notion of a divinely-ordained dynastic order had begun to lose its legitimacy, and "the gage and emblem of this freedom [from divinely-ordained dynasticism] is the sovereign state" (16; for an alternate view on the notion of sovereignty, see Kelly and Kaplan 2001).

Aware of Gellner's work, Anderson notes that Gellner "makes a comparable point [about nations being imagined] when he rules that 'Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it *invents* nations where they do not exist'" (1983:15). Yet, Anderson is critical that Gellner's formulation "assimilates 'invention' to 'fabrication' and 'falsity,' rather than to 'imagining' and 'creation'" (15). For Anderson, on the other hand, all communities are imagined; nations, and communities in general, "are to be distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (15). Despite this disagreement, Anderson's theorization of the rise of nations and nationalisms is generally compatible with that of Gellner (Chatterjee 1986; Eriksen 2002; Guibernau and Rex 1997; Kelly and Kaplan 2001): they both argue that certain changes in (especially Western) Europe necessarily led to the rise of nations and nationalisms, with history being the main agent of social change.

Anderson and Gellner emphasize *different* historical changes, however. For Anderson, the rise of print capitalism specifically allows not only for the emergence of nations, but for the very possibility of imagining the nation as such. Drawing on the writings of Walter Benjamin, Anderson argues that novels and newspapers facilitated a conception of simultaneity where movement in common time/space links people up in an imagined community. The advent of print capitalism also meant a new emphasis on print languages, which in turn meant that similar vernaculars eventually gave way to a common print language, a medium through which national communities could be imagined.

For Anderson, as for Gellner, the focus on a community whose members share a common language and the loss of notions of divinely ordained dynastic realms are key social changes that allowed for the emergence of nationalism. Each author points to a different source of the social changes which gave rise to nationalism, however. Gellner argues that *industrialism* brought about these changes: for all peoples and at all times industrialisation necessitates the kinds of changes which lead to the rise of nationalism, in turn generating nations (see below). For Anderson, on the other hand, it is specifically the rise of print capitalism that matters most in helping to facilitate the historical advent of the nation as a specific kind of imagined community.

An important distinction in Anderson's work is that between popular and official nationalism (1983:102). Anderson posits that popular nationalisms occur spontaneously. In contrast, official nationalisms "pirate" the spontaneous, popular nationalisms made available as models through print capitalism. Official nationalisms are conscious efforts on the part of elites, and they mask "a discrepancy between nation and dynastic realm" (103); they seem more ideologically driven and linked to official policies aimed at the creation of nation-states than their 'popular' counterparts. Anderson argues that with the advent of the League of Nations at the end of World War I, nation-states became "the legitimate international norm" (104). Following this, "in the 'nation-building' policies of the new states one sees *both a genuine, popular nationalist enthusiasm* and a systematic, even *Machiavellian, instilling of nationalist ideology* through the mass media, the education system, administrative regulation" (104-105, emphasis added). Thus, despite insisting that nations are not differentiated based on real-ness, Anderson constructs popular nationalisms as "genuine," while official ones, which pirate these models, emerge as replicas relying heavily on the desires of "the state" (and specifically, its elites).

For Ernst Gellner (1983), too, there are two ways of

understanding national affiliation: through cultural contingency – i.e. those sharing "the same culture" are members of the same nation – or voluntary affiliation and mutual recognition *as* members of the same nation. He contends that both "the cultural and the voluntaristic [definition] ... singles out an element which is of real importance in the understanding of nationalism. But neither is adequate" (7). While Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism* was published the same year as Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, anthropologists have not enthusiastically taken up his work.

No doubt, part of anthropologists' discomfort with Gellner's work comes from his treatment of "culture." For example, throughout his book, Gellner continuously speaks of "culture, in the anthropological sense." Aside from differentiating this from "culture in the normative sense" (which seems to refer to literary and artistic work), Gellner maintains that "culture, an elusive concept, was deliberately left undefined" (44). Despite his refusal to define "culture," a touchstone of his understanding of the terms nation and nationalism, Gellner (50) does distinguish between "savage and cultivated varieties" of culture:

> The savage kinds are produced and reproduce themselves *spontaneously*, as parts of the life of men [*sic.*]. No community is without some shared system of communication and norms, and the wild systems of this kind (in other words, cultures) reproduce themselves from generation to generation without conscious design, supervision, surveillance or special nutrition. Cultivated or garden cultures are different, though *they have developed from the wild varieties*. They possess a complexity and richness, most usually sustained by literacy and by special personnel, and *would perish if deprived of their distinctive nourishment in the form of specialized institutions of learning* with

> reasonably numerous, full-time and dedicated personnel. (50, emphasis added)

Thus, we are left to surmise that Gellner understands cultures as "shared systems of communication and norms." "Cultivated" cultures emerge as literate ones, sharing a common written, *standardized* language of communication, and a nation-state.

In Gellner's distinction between "savage" and "cultivated" varieties of cultures, we can see the outline of his theory of nationalism. His main argument is that "modern" nations are "cultivated" by states. Here, "cultivation" involves investment in a national education system aiming to produce a literate population which shares a common language and provides an anonymous, interchangeable labour force. Indeed, in direct opposition to Weber's well-known definition of the state as having a monopoly over legitimate violence, Gellner argues that states have a monopoly over legitimate education. It is important to point out, however, that Gellner sees the state as having a general function of maintaining "rational order." He insists that "when this is understood, then the imperative of nationalism, its roots, not in human nature as such, but in a certain kind of now pervasive *social order*, can be understood" (34, emphasis added).

For Gellner, nationalism "is *a theory of political legitimacy*, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones" (1983:1, emphasis added). He maintains that nationalism requires nation (and here he sometimes substitutes the word culture), state, and territory to coincide: "as a character in *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* observed, every girl ought to have a husband, preferably her own; and every high culture now wants a state, and preferably its own" (51). Thus, Gellner's "nation" and "state" are, if not synonymous, at least ideally congruent, and he insists that "the age of nationalism" only comes about when "the existence of the state is already very much taken for granted" (4).

Gellner's theory of the rise of nationalism is a straightforward social evolutionary model. He proposes three

distinct stages of human history (pre-agrarian, agrarian, and industrial), which *necessarily* move peoples towards the formation of states. Writing against Marxism, Gellner insists that the key to understanding "the modern" nation is not capitalism. Instead, he posits industrialism's reliance on rationality as the main driving force of nationalism, and he goes so far as to refute Marx's theorization of the industrial age as characterized by social inequality (1983:96-97). As in Marx's work, however, Gellner represents history itself as a seemingly natural agent of social change. Thus, Gellner claims, "it is the *objective need* for homogeneity which is reflected in nationalism," a need which results *directly* from industrialization (43, emphasis added). In his words,

> when general social conditions make for standardized, homogeneous, centrally sustained high cultures, pervading entire populations and not just elite minorities, a situation arises in which well-defined *educationally sanctioned and unified* cultures constitute very nearly the only kind of unit with which men [*sic.*] willingly and often ardently identify. The cultures now seem to be the *natural repositories of political legitimacy.* (55, emphasis added)

He even imagines that people must now choose industrialisation or starvation (34-40). Here, the state figures prominently for Gellner: "nationalism is ... in reality the consequence of a new form of social organization, based on deeply internalized, education-dependent high cultures, *each protected by its own state*" (48, emphasis added). In other words, the state is necessary to ensure the linguistic and educational homogeneity of the nation.

With his emphasis on shared language, Gellner, like Anderson, seems to recognize the importance of communication, and specifically of communication technology.

There is a key difference, however, in the role each thinker gives to media and communication technology. For Gellner, the media's core message is not in their content. Rather, what they communicate is "that only he [*sic.*] who can understand [the style and language of the transmission], or can acquire such comprehension, is included in a moral and economic community, and that he who does not and cannot, is excluded" (1983:126-127). In this way, media (such as the Gutenberg press, television, or radio broadcasts) matter only in that they help create a sense of a shared moral and economic community. To a certain degree, this is in keeping with Anderson. Recall, however, that for Anderson, *official nationalisms* pirate the model of popular nationalisms and can consciously make use of available media to help perpetuate their national principles. In such instances, content *does* matter. For Gellner, on the other hand, all nationalisms are official; they are products of the state's monopoly on education (in its attempt to make polity and culture congruent with one another), and result from "rational" and "objective" needs (for a common language and culture) brought about by industrialization.

Similarly, Eric Hobsbawm's nation is invariably linked to a state form. He defines the nation as being "a social entity only insofar as it relates to a certain kind of modern territorial state, the 'nation-state'" (1990:9). This is in keeping with Hobsbawm's overall understanding of nations; following Gellner, he defines nationalism as "primarily a principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent" (1990:9). Ultimately, for Hobsbawm, nations are not static entities, but they *are* social constructions belonging "exclusively to a particular, and historically recent, period" (9). He further claims that with the decline of the welfare state, the move towards neoliberalization, and the rise of economic globalization, the end of the age of nationalism is in sight (1997:76).

Although Hobsbawm's work on nationalism is generally in keeping with that of Gellner, he breaks with

Gellner on one important point. As he explains, Gellner's "preferred perspective of modernization from above, makes it difficult to pay adequate attention to the view from below" (1990:10). Based on this break from Gellner, Hobsbawm makes three key points about the study of nationalism. First, he argues that any serious scholar cannot rely solely on states' self-representations if s/he is to understand individual members' feelings and ideas about that state. Second, he reminds scholars that they cannot simply assume that national identity takes precedence over people's other social identities. (This point is especially important since, for many scholars, nationalisms attempt to make the nation *the* central site of identification.) Third, Hobsbawm insists that the content of national identification can change. As he argues elsewhere (1983), traditions – including national ones – are *invented*. Thus, it is possible for new "traditions" to emerge and become incorporated into national identities.

Despite his recognition of the constructedness of nationalisms, Hobsbawm dismisses the post-World War II rise of nation-states as inauthentic, since "the principle of state-creation since the Second World War, unlike after the First, had nothing to do with Wilsonian national self-determination. It reflected three forces: decolonization, revolution and, of course, the intervention of outside powers" (1997:74). Hobsbawm thus insists on an exclusively Western European and North American rationalization of nationalism as the only valid defining characteristic of genuine nation-states. As Anne McClintock succinctly puts it, "Hobsbawm nominated Europe as nationalism's 'original home,' while 'all the anti-imperial movements of any significance' are unceremoniously dumped into three categories: mimicry of Europe, anti-Western xenophobia, and the 'natural high spirit' of national tribes" (1997:93). In the end, Hobsbawm (1997:69) locates *real* nationalism spatially in Western Europe and North America and temporally between 1830 and 1945.

Anderson, Gellner, and Hobsbawm all represent nationalism as a "modern" phenomenon. John Kelly and Martha Kaplan (2001) argue that although most anthropologists tend to reproduce this idea, nationalism is a *recent* phenomenon. As they point out, in the early 20th century, the world was made up of European empires, not nation-states. In their argument, it is not the age of nationalism, but rather the Imperial order which saw its end with the conclusion of the Second World War. The end of the age of Empires, they suggest, was a consequence of both economic pressure from the United States and the rise of anti-colonial movements. They conclude, "it is no mere wonder, and *no mere matter of social evolution*, that things fell apart for the British and other European empires" (427, emphasis added). Anderson's theorization of the rise of nation-states elides these factors. Noting the attention Anderson's work receives in anthropology, Kelly and Kaplan (421) warn that his argument (like Gellner's and Hobsbawm's) reproduces "an unexamined evolutionarism, a vague sense of necessity and inevitability to nation-states... and an unfortunate peripheralization of colonial and political dynamics." Thus, they argue, when anthropologists follow Anderson's time-line, they are complicit in the reproduction of colonialist knowledge.

Eurocentric Masculinist Dreams? Racialized and Gendered Nationalism

Nations are not simply phantasmagoria ... [T]hey are historical practices through which social difference is both invented and performed. Nationalism becomes ... constitutive of people's identities through social contests that are frequently violent and always gendered. (McClintock 1997:89)

Anderson, Gellner, and Hobsbawm's inattention to the gendered dynamics of nationalism and nation-states leaves their theoretical paradigms incomplete, to say the least. The problematic absence of any gender analysis in their work is

most evident in their discussions of Tom Nairn's depiction of the nation as Janus-faced (i.e. nations are both historically and futuristically oriented). As Nairn had done before them, all three scholars construct this as the "paradox" of nationalism. That is to say, they follow Nairn in concluding that although nations are "modern" phenomenon, they *paradoxically* represent themselves as arising out of an immemorial past. For Anderson, this paradox has to do with nationalism's "cultural roots" and its relation to religious systems of meaning and signification. Indeed, as discussed above, Anderson argues that nations replaced religious systems of meaning in providing people with a sense of continuity through time (1983:18-19). For Gellner and Hobsbawm, on the other hand, people come to accept their nations' narratives of mythic origins because livelihood depends on full incorporation into national culture and language, which appear primordial and natural.

Feminist theorists interpret the Janus-faced nation differently. For example, in the work of Anne McClintock, Nairn's paradox emerges as a failure to apply a theory of gender power to analyses of nationalism.[2] McClintock argues that to understand "the paradox" of national time, one must recognize that nationalism is "constituted from the very beginning as a gendered discourse" (1997:90). From this perspective, nations are most usefully understood as "contested systems of cultural representation that limit and legitimize people's access to the resources of the nation-state" (89). Importantly for anthropologists of nationalism, McClintock points out that although nationalists tend to represent the nation as (spatially and temporally) *unified*, nations actually institutionalize forms of *difference* (89). Thus, contrary to Gellner's claim that nationalism eventually leads to social equality and national unity, or that it necessitates and achieves cultural homogeneity, McClintock represents nationalism as instilling and reifying gendered and racialized differences and inequalities, both locally and globally.

For McClintock, dominant theories of nationalism problematically overlook the gendered (and racialized) distinctions which make nationalism work (1997). What they reproduce as the *paradox* of national time is, as McClintock explains, resolved in secular time as a gendered division. Anderson had contended that the move away from religious or Messianic time simply meant that the nation could now be imagined as "a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time" (1983:31). Reading the emergence of calendrical, empty time from a feminist and (post)colonial perspective, McClintock reveals its implications for Eurocentric perceptions of gendered and racialized social relations (1997). She explains that notions of calendrical movement through globally historical time combined with ideas of "progress" to produce the concept of social evolution. Accordingly, she argues, the "social order" of humans came to be seen as "progressing" through secular time: "the axis of time was projected on to the axis of space, and history became global" (92). McClintock further notes that "natural time" is "not only *secularized* but also *domesticated*" (92). Incisively, McClintock reminds readers that "evolutionary progress was represented as a series of anatomically distinct family types, organized into a linear procession, from the 'childhood' of the 'primitive' races to the enlightened 'adulthood' of European imperial nationalism" (92).

What becomes clear in McClintock's analysis is that once the Janus-face of the nation is gendered, the paradox is resolved. In other words, in nationalist imaginaries, women take on the backward-looking face of the nation, preserving and reproducing national history and "invented traditions" (Hobsbawm 1983) by being presently frozen in the past. From this point of view, "national progress (conventionally the invented domain of male, public space) was figured as familial, while the family itself (conventionally the domain of private, female space) was figured as beyond history" (McClintock 1997:93; see also Yuval-Davis 1997). McClintock thus

concludes, "there is no single narrative of the nation" (93). While women and men are necessarily caught up in the gendered dynamics of national relations, different women and men are caught up in these dynamics differently, often on the basis of class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability, age, etc. (see also Arextaga 2003; Asad 1997; Das and Poole 2004; Frankenburg and Mani 1996; Hall 1999; Honig 2001; Kofman 2005; Linke 2006; Mackey 1999; McClintock 1997; Mufti and Shohat 1997; Nixon 1997; Rancière 2004; Werbner 2005; Yuval-Davis 1997).

Another point of divergence between dominant theories of nationalism and those feminist scholars tend to offer is in interpreting the use of familial tropes in nationalist discourses. For example, Anderson represents the use of the idioms of home or family in imagining the nation as evidence of the kind of "political love" nations can inspire (1983:131). Anderson is right to point out that, for many people, "both idioms [kinship and home] denote something to which one is naturally tied" (131). He also makes a strong argument that "precisely because such ties are not chosen, they have about them a halo of disinterestedness" (131; for similar argument see Hall 1999). Nevertheless, Anderson pays little attention to the gendered meanings of home and family. Again, in McClintock's work, there is a greater appreciation of the implications of these idioms for gendering national relations. McClintock (1997) points to the ways in which images of the nation as family or home not only act to "naturalize" national relations, but also reify and reinforce the binary distinction between male/public/ official and female/private/domestic. As Rob Nixon (1997) argues, the consequence is that women serve as representatives and guarantors of the nation's biology, culture, *and* territory.

The use of the family trope also serves as a reminder that nationalists have often constructed women as *secondarily* related to the nation through their relations to men, as wives, mothers, and daughters (McClintock 1997; Mufti and Shohat 1997; Yuval-Davis 1997). Nira Yuval-Davis (1997) insists that

this is *not* accidental. Despite what evolutionary models of citizenship may suggest, women "were not excluded from the public sphere incidentally" (12). Instead, as Yuval-Davis shows, women's "exclusion was part and parcel of the construction of the entitlement of men, not only as individuals but also as 'representatives of a family'" (12). This is evident for Yuval-Davis (13, emphasis added) in the fact that British women, for example, actually "*lost their citizenship* during Victorian times *when they got married.*"

Feminist analyses of nationalist discourses tend to make clear that the use of familial (and domesticated) tropes is not merely an innocent reflection of the "political love" nations can inspire. On the contrary, such tropes have serious consequences for women and for those excluded from the 'European family' of 'civilized nations.' Images of "the 'national family,' the global 'family of nations,' the colony as a 'family of black children ruled over by a white father'" are all enabled by the "the metaphoric depiction of social hierarchy as natural and familial" (McClintock 1997:91). What anthropologists of nationalism can learn by turning to feminist and (post)colonial studies of nationalism is the importance of subtle analyses which take into account the specific social relations, interactions, and imaginaries that make up the nation. Such analyses may produce a "more theoretically complex ... genealogy of nationalisms" (McClintock 1997:99) than is available in dominant theories of nationalism, such as those of Anderson, Gellner and Hobsbawm. In part, this is because it is important to recognize that "power relations operate within primary social relations as well as within the more impersonal secondary social relations of the civil and political domains" (Yuval-Davis 1997:13). What emerges out of such analyses, then, is the sense that a rigorous and responsible theoretical paradigm of nations and nationalism must be able to take into account *both* of these types of relations, and to recognize the multiplicity of ways a nation may be experienced.

Conclusion: The Everydayness of the Nation

The discourse of national culture is thus not as modern as it appears to be. It constructs identities which are ambiguously placed between past and future. It straddles the temptation to return to former glories and the drive to go forward ever deeper into modernity. (Hall 1999:628)

Nations, nationalisms, and states form an increasingly important area of study in anthropology, which can "highlight the problems (and problematics) of the nation *as a lived form*" (Mufti and Shohat 1997:3 emphasis added). Anthropological literature on nations and nationalism continues to be greatly influenced by the works of scholars such as Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, and Eric Hobsbawm. Like these scholars, anthropologists of nationalism today understand nations not as "natural" embodiments of specific peoples, but as "historically produced, unfinished, and contested terrain[s]" (Mufti and Shohat 1997:4; see also Arextaga 2003; Asad 1997; Bhabha 1990a, 1990b; Corse 1997; Hall 1999; Handler 1984; Linke 2006; Mackey 1999; McClintock 1997; Mufti and Shohat 1997; Nixon 1997; Yuval Davis 1997).

In reviewing the works of Anderson, Gellner, and Hobsbawm, my aim has been to show that taking the nation's historical production as a point of departure is not enough for critical anthropological analysis. As discussed above, feminist and (post)colonial studies of nationalism remind us that we must also be critical of eurocentric, evolutionary paradigms, wherein Western European nations are the ideal form and where history is represented as *the* natural agent of change (i.e. where *people's* agency and subjectivity become irrelevant). As Eva Mackey (1999:11) points out, eurocentric theorizations of nationalism have emerged from and take for granted "historically constructed conceptualizations of personhood ... in particular the Enlightenment concepts of individual sovereignty and autonomy." In such notions of nation-hood, the nation emerges as a collective individual with a specific

national character, shared by members of the nation (Hall 1999; Handler 1994; Mackey 1999; Yuval-Davis 1997).

Between the early 1940s and 1960s, the idea of nations as macro-persons formed the basis of anthropologists' studies of "national character," some of which received funding from the American Office of Naval Research during World War II to aid in morale (Embree 1950; Henry 1951; Hoebel 1967; Mandelbaum 1953; Mead 1951, 1961; Wallace and Fogelson 1961). Margaret Mead, one of the key anthropologists associated with the study of national character, admits that "developed during World War II, [these academic studies] were wartime efforts to obtain rapid information about the expected behavior of enemies and allies" (1951:9). This made national character studies controversial, to say the least. For example, Jules Henry vehemently opposed such studies: "it must have been comforting to us during and immediately after the war to know that our enemies were subject to 'mass megalomania,' were 'rigid,' 'hypochondriacal,' 'paranoid' or just 'neurotic.' Nevertheless one cannot ... teach such things to one's students" (1951:134).

A subset of Culture and Personality studies, national character studies combined the insights of developmental psychology with applied anthropological methods. Mead explains that such studies involved "concomitant analyses of the character structure of individuals of different ages who embody a culture and of the child rearing, educational, and initiatory practices of the culture within which these individuals have been reared" (1954:9). Anthropologists who undertook studies of national character understood themselves as uncovering the predominance of specific personality characteristics in certain nations, explaining these through the cultural practices, and using these insights to predict behaviour in specific situations based on national affiliation (Mandlebaum 1953). In this way, such studies aimed to create scientific, typological personality profiles based on national affiliation.

Again, Mead (1954:397) explains that national character studies began "by making sure that each individual being studied is actually representative of the culture of a given society." How such representativeness was determined, however, is not a question Mead answers. It is important to note that such work was groundbreaking in anthropology. National character studies attempted to apply anthropological insights and analyses to large-scale, 'modern' nation-states, and to study 'non-primitive' societies. Despite these contributions to anthropology, the idea of 'national character' reproduced (sometimes racist) stereotypes as academic explanation.

As Richard Handler (1984) shows, the notion of a "national character" is complicit with the nationalist world views we aim to deconstruct. Handler argues that three main concepts structure "the nationalist world view:" (a) that nations are "real" or "natural" things, which exist objectively, (b) that each nation has a unique identity, differentiating it from all others, and (c) that the boundaries of each nation must be protected so as to prevent the destruction or contamination of its unique identity (60). For Handler, these three concepts, and especially the third, culminate in making nations and nationalisms intense sites of cultural, social, and political contestation. Moreover, these concepts often serve to justify conservative, Othering discourses and anti-immigration policies (Asad 1997; Handler 1994; Mackey 1999). In such instances, it is claimed that those who are 'uncharacteristic' may reshape the character of the nation, and thus, pose a threat to its very foundation.

Rather than understanding a nation as an actual bounded entity, with a homogeneous character, most anthropologists now understand the idea of "national character" and the emphasis often placed on "core" national values as discursive constructions which have emerged in battles over the right to define national identity (Asad 1997; Corse 1997; Hall 1999; Handler 1984; Mackey 1999). According to Stuart Hall, "national cultures construct identities by producing meanings

about 'the nation' which we can *identify*" (1999:626). From this perspective, nationalism or, as Hall calls it, national discourse, attempts to unify the members of a nation under one common identity (Hall 1999:629). Hall (629, emphasis original) concludes that scholars ought to think of national cultures as "*discursive device*[s]... 'unified' only through the exercise of different forms of cultural power." The key point to take from Hall's argument is that the discursive strategies used to produce images of the nation as a unified, coherent entity always involve power-plays over the right to narrate, and thus to define, the nation (see also, Arextaga 2003; Asad 1997; Chatterjee 1993; Honig 2001; Kofman 2005; Mackey 1999; McClintock 1997; Nixon 1997; Werbner 2005; Yuval-Davis 1997).

Part of the nation's discursive power, and its ability to arouse intense affect, has to do with the fact that access to such things as capital, mobility, and even Human Rights, for example, often relies on having a (legitimate) relationship to a (legitimate) nation-state (Agamben 1996; Arendt 1951; Rancière 2004). Accordingly, Nixon (1997:80-81) warns that "the ethereal idiom of national imaginings [which anthropologists have taken from Anderson's work] can distract us from the institutional solidity of their effects." Nations may be imagined, historically constituted, and discursively narrated, but their effects on people's everyday lives are quite real (Billig 1995; Frankenburg and Mani 1996). Moreover, as anthropologists, we need to be aware that, although nation-states are often powerfully represented by their institutions and bureaucracies, there is much to be learned by paying close attention to the "banality" of nations (Billig 1995), their manifestation in everyday encounters (Arextaga 2003; Linke 2006), and across axes of social difference and inequity (Asad 1997; Hall 1999; Handler 1999; Kofman 2005; Mackey 1999; McClintock 1997; Yuval-Davis 1997).

Finally, I think it is important to produce ethnographic analyses of nations and nationalism. Ethnography has much to

contribute to studies of nationalism. Given much of the work on nations, nationalism, and nation-states discussed above, we cannot understand the state as a single, coherent, centre of power (Arextaga 2003). Thus, Begoña Arextaga (2003:395) argues, anthropologists must ask how the state becomes "a social subject in everyday life." This is why it is necessary to examine how people come into contact with, and experience nation-states – and themselves – as social subjects through the course of their everyday lives. Vigorous ethnographic research may allow us to understand how people's senses of themselves are formed in relation to one another, to national narratives, *and* to their state. Indeed, as George Marcus (1995:98) has argued, ethnography's "always local, close-up perspective" allows us "to discover new paths of connection and association by which traditional ethnographic concerns with agency, symbols, and everyday practices can continue to be expressed on a differently configured spatial canvas." Perhaps, in undertaking ethnographic studies of nations and nationalism, we may gain a better perspective on the precise ways national discourses *and* practices become sites for the production of national subject(ivitie)s and borders. We may also begin to understand the precise moments at which people have a sense of coming into contact with and experiencing 'the nation-state.'

Notes

1. National Character Studies, which lasted between the mid-1930s and 1960s and was provided funding by the American Naval Office during World War Two, is a notable exception. I briefly discuss National Character Studies in my conclusion. Suffice it to say here that the kind of anthropological attention to nations and nationalism I am advocating in this paper is not related to the study of Culture and Personality (the wider anthropological area which covered National Character Studies).

2. In my discussion of feminist theorizations of nations and nationalism, I rely heavily on the work of Anne McClintock. Clearly, McClintock is not the only feminist who has engaged issues of nationalism. Others, such as Begoña Arextaga (2003), Uli Linke (2006), Eva Mackey (1999), Pnina Werbner (2005), and Nira Yuval-Davis (1997) have also provided insightful and thought-provoking feminist analyses of nationalism. However, McClintock's discussions of "national time" and the role of familial imagery in nationalist imaginaries are both considered important in feminist analyses of nationalism. These two aspects of her work are also especially interesting when juxtaposed against the works of Anderson, Gellner, and Hobsbawm. For these reasons, I use her work extensively in what follows.

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