

Socialism and Nationalism

British Marxists and the National Question after 1945

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Abstract

1989, it is commonly suggested, marked the final victory of nationalism over socialism - a victory, it is further argued, with which Marxism was inherently unable to contend. Has Marxism failed to properly understand nationalism? The thesis will explore the nexus between socialism and nationalism in the work of a number of influential British Marxist intellectuals in the period after 1945. Eric Hobsbawm, E.P. Thompson, Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn – all these important Marxist thinkers were concerned with the national question and how it impacted on the advance of socialism. Against conventional historiographical opinion which has argued that Marxism ignored and misunderstood nationalism, the thesis will argue that British Marxism consistently engaged with questions of nation and nationalism both in the terms of (Marxist) theory and from the perspective of (socialist) practice. The thesis will break new ground by considering the collective British Marxist engagement with the national question.

The thesis will consider the British Marxist encounter with the national question in a number of historical, social and political contexts. From Thompson's attempt to appropriate nationhood for socialism in the nineteen fifties and during the period of the first New Left to Hobsbawm's critique of separatist nationalisms in the late nineteen seventies, from Williams's engagement with Welsh nationalist politics in the context of the rise of peripheral nationalisms in Britain to Anderson's understanding of the relationship between the nation state and capitalism in modern history, from Hall's understanding of Thatcherism as a form of national hegemony to Nairn's analysis of the British Left's nationalism in the context of Britain's entry into Europe – these and many other instances of the British Marxist engagement will be explored in the thesis. The thesis will conclude by suggesting that the British Marxist encounter with nationalism was marked by both illumination and antinomy.

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Introduction

1989 is said to have marked both the 'death of Marxism' and the return of nationalism.¹ The relationship between these two world-historical events was anything but contingent. The cause of Marxism's death, initial autopsy reports concluded, was a revived nationalism.² Not only had ethnic conflict brought about the end of actually existing socialism in Eastern Europe, but the velvet revolutions confirmed the national principle as the legitimating ideology of nearly all modern political communities. Few scholars would disagree with the suggestion that, following the fall of the Berlin Wall, 'nationalism and ethnic conflict appeared as the primary issues in the realignment of Eastern European politics and identity.'³ Eastern Europeans, like almost every one everywhere, were all nationalists now.⁴ Thus for most commentators, both Marxist and anti-Marxist, it was clear that during the last century's fin de siècle national identity had finally trumped class consciousness, and nationalism had decisively defeated socialism in the battle for the allegiance of the wretched of the earth.⁵ As Eric Hobsbawm lamented following the most recent round of nationalist insurgency: 'What holds humanity together today is the denial of what the human race has in common.'⁶

This was a conjuncture fundamentally antithetical to the end of history envisaged by Marxism.⁷ The end-point of historical development imagined by Marx and Engels was a socialist commonwealth where the free development of each was

¹ R. Pearson, 'The Making of 1989: Nationalism and the Dissolution of Communist Eastern Europe,' *Nation and Nationalism*, 1, 1, 1995, pp. 69-79. B. Anderson, 'Introduction,' in G. Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation* (London and New York, 1996), p. 6 provides a check, at least in relation to nationalism, to this common perception.

² A view summed in the title of the chapter by P.F. Sugar, 'Nationalism: The Victorious Ideology,' in P.F. Sugar, ed., *Eastern European Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Mass., 1995), pp. 413-427. For a sophisticated analysis of the relationship between socialism and nationalism in post-capitalist states, see K. Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania* (Berkeley, 1991), with her conclusions summarized on pp. 314-315.

³ C. Calhoun, 'Nationalism and Ethnicity,' *Annual Review of Sociology*, 19, 1993, p. 213.

⁴ J. Dunn, 'Nationalism,' in R. Beiner, ed., *Theorizing Nationalism* (Albany, 1999), p. 28.

⁵ J. Schwarzmantel, *The Age of Ideology: Political Ideologies from the American Revolution to Postmodern Times* (New York, 1998), p. 133.

⁶ E. Hobsbawm, 'Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today,' *Anthropology Today*, 8, 1992, p. 8.

⁷ For an outline of that telos, see J. Petras, 'Marx and Engels on the National Question,' *Journal of Politics*, 33, 1971, pp. 797-824. Of course the *Communist Manifesto* had also touted the possibility of the 'common ruin of the contending classes,' a telos perhaps appropriate to an age characterized by seemingly irreparable ethnic conflict. See K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, org. 1848 (London, 1967), p. 79.

the condition for the free development of all. Such a society, the founders of scientific socialism considered, would transcend divisions between people, whether divisions of nationality, religion, gender, ethnicity or class. According to the *Communist Manifesto* the basis of the future World Socialist Republic would be prepared by capitalist modernity. 'National differences and antagonisms between peoples,' Marx and Engels alleged, 'are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto.'⁸ The world market also created a global proletariat which, they declared, owed allegiance neither to place nor country, which, like the bourgeoisie, considered nationality nothing 'but a guinea's stamp.'⁹ A universal class whose particular interests were commensurate with the general interest, the proletariat would construct a global socialist society characterized by the absence of alienation and dissension. Solidarity rather than particularity, the realization of a common humanity rather than enduring ethnic divisions, the end of nations rather than the proliferation of nation states – this was the future for humanity proclaimed in the *Communist Manifesto*. If not before, then certainly by 1989, history had rendered Marx's vision of a world-wide socialist community unimaginable.

Thus the *Communist Manifesto's* global socialism has so far constituted a quixotic fantasy, as fantastical as liberalism's conception of a global market society.¹⁰ Capitalism might have captured the earth as Marx said it would, but national particularisms have not vanished and nation states have not withered away into the premodern past. Despite the hopes of generations of Marxist class warriors, the workers of the world have not united against capital.¹¹ Rather, when forced to decide, proletarians have most often put their nation before their class. How well have Marxists understood this history of nationalist triumph and their own defeat? In the opinion of most commentators, nationalism has represented Marxism's most striking

⁸ Ibid., p. 102.

⁹ K. Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (Chicago, 1904), p. 210, cited in Petras, 'Marx and Engels on the National Question,' p. 801.

¹⁰ For a comparison between socialist and liberal cosmopolitanism, see S. Avineri 'Toward a Socialist Theory of Nationalism,' *Dissent*, Fall 1996, p. 456. On the impossibility of cosmopolitanism, whether liberal or socialist, see A. Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (London, 1995), p. 22.

¹¹ G. Kitching, 'Nationalism: The Instrumentalist Passion,' *Capital and Class*, 29, 1985, p. 114, suggests this idea – the idea that the workers of the world would unite – constitutes the Marxist cheque that always bounces.

theoretical and practical failure. The roots of this failure, critics believe, can be found in the Master's own work. Marx's scattered writings about nationalism, according to A.W. Wright, did not amount to 'a developed theory of nationalism.'¹² Other commentators concur with this view. 'Of all the historical phenomena discussed by Marx,' Shlomo Avineri has alleged, 'his treatment of nationalism, nationalist movements and the emergence of the nation-state is the least satisfactory.'¹³ Indeed, in the view of some critics, Marx paid 'little attention to nationalism',¹⁴ his commitment to cosmopolitanism and Enlightenment values blinding him to the historical importance of nationalist movements and the ubiquity of national identity. Marx's twentieth century adherents' encounter with nationalism has also been portrayed in pejorative terms. Michael Walzer's conclusion carries with it the broad weight of scholarship on the nexus between Marxism and nationalism: 'The left,' he suggested, 'has never understood the tribes.'¹⁵ Economic determinism, class essentialism, the illusions of progress and an 'anti-nationalist' prejudice – on their own or in combination, it is these theoretical fallacies and biases which have corrupted Marxist engagement with the national question.¹⁶ Thus, it might be concluded, when the tribes returned in 1989, Marxists were unlikely to be in a position to understand that revival and Marxism's own defeat.

This has not only been the opinion of scholars hostile to a Marxist world-view. Criticism of Marxism's encounter with the national question from within the Marxist paradigm has been equally caustic. 'It is time to admit that as Marxists,' John Ehrenreich has concluded, 'we simply have no understanding of the phenomenon [of nationalism].'¹⁷ Other Marxist scholars have joined in this self-flagellation. Redolent of a general insensitivity to non-economic forms of oppression, Marxism, Michael

¹² A.W. Wright, 'Socialism and Nationalism,' in L. Tivey, ed., *The Nation State* (Oxford, 1981), p. 150. In addition, see M.V. Kryukov, 'Self-Determination from Marx to Mao,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 19, 2, 1996, p. 355.

¹³ S. Avineri, 'Marxism and Nationalism,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 26, 3/4, 1991, p. 638.

¹⁴ M. Guibernau, 'Marx and Durkheim on Nationalism,' in H.R. Wicker, ed., *Rethinking Nationalism and Ethnicity: The Struggle for Meaning and Order in Europe* (Oxford and New York, 1997), p. 73.

¹⁵ M. Walzer, 'The New Tribalism: Notes on a Difficult Problem,' in Beiner, ed., *Theorizing Nationalism*, p. 205.

¹⁶ See E. Nimni, *Marxism and Nationalism: Theoretical Origins of a Political Crisis* (London, 1991), which stresses Marxism's supposedly disabling commitment to economic determinism and class essentialism.

¹⁷ J. Ehrenreich, 'The Theory of Nationalism: A Case of Underdevelopment,' *Monthly Review*, 27, 1, 1977, p. 67. See also his 'Socialism, Nationalism and Capitalist development,' *Review of Radical Political Economists*, 15, 1, 1983, p. 1.

Löwy has suggested, 'underestimated the importance of the national question, the decisive significance of national liberation for the dominated people.'¹⁸ Trevor Purvis's more recent opinion is equally critical. 'For Marxism,' he has suggested, "'the national question" has long been a point of theoretical weakness.'¹⁹ Whether described as 'evasive,' 'naïve', or, more dramatically, as the site of a 'black hole', Marxism's encounter with the national question has been considered by some Marxists to have been wholly lamentable.²⁰ Indeed Marxist scholars have perhaps been more sensitive to the failings of Marxist theory in this respect than in any other. If they are to be believed, it was not just in 1989 but at other moments of nationalism's hegemony - Europe in 1914 or Germany and Italy in the inter-war period - that Marxism's theoretical and practical acuity failed it.

This dominant view of Marx's and Marxism's engagement with nationalism has been contested. According to Joan Cocks, Marx provided an analysis of the national question that 'we would be wrong to call ... passé.'²¹ Confirming this claim, a recent book has systematically uncovered the value of Marx and Engels's insights on nationalism, concluding that 'we can learn a great deal by taking a second look at their efforts to grapple with [national] questions that are back, once again, at the epicenter of politics.'²² Indeed there is a rich seam of analysis within the texts of Marx and Engels on the national question that later Marxists have mined with great success.²³ A wealth of literature on the engagement between Marxists and the national question confirms this view.²⁴ Scholars have revealed the prescience of Otto Bauer's assessment of the relationship between state and nation, the value of Rosa

¹⁸ M. Löwy, 'Fatherland or Mother Earth? Nationalism and Internationalism From a Socialist Perspective,' *Socialist Register* 1989, p. 217.

¹⁹ T. Purvis, 'Marxism and Nationalism,' in A. Gamble, et al., eds., *Marxism and Social Science* (London, 1999), p. 217.

²⁰ For 'evasion,' see B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1990, orig. 1983), p. 3. For Marxism's supposed 'naivety,' see Löwy, 'Fatherland or Mother Earth? Nationalism and Internationalism From a Socialist Perspective,' p. 217. For the reference to nationalism as the 'black hole' of Marxist theory, see R. Debray, 'Marxism and the National Question,' *New Left Review*, I/105, 1977, p. 31.

²¹ J. Cocks, *Passion and Paradox: Intellectuals Confront the National Question* (Princeton, 2002), p. 22.

²² E. Benner, *Really Existing Nationalism: A Post-Communist View of Marx and Engels* (Oxford, 1995), p. 10.

²³ Löwy, 'Fatherland or Mother Earth? Nationalism and Internationalism From a Socialist Perspective,' p. 45.

²⁴ For general accounts, see A.W. Wright, 'Socialism and Nationalism,' pp. 148-170 and M. Löwy, 'Marxism and the National Question,' in R. Blackburn, ed., *Revolution and Class Struggle: A Reader in Marxist Politics* (New Jersey, 1978).

Luxemburg's conception of the nexus between the world market and territorial particularism, and the wide-ranging influence of Lenin's assessment of the nationalities question.²⁵ Lenin, Bauer, Luxembourg – all these figures have received due attention in scholarly works on Marxism's engagement with ethnicity.²⁶ For the most part, however, British Marxists – especially in the period after 1945 – have received little attention from scholars concerned with Marxist interpretations of nationhood and nationalism.²⁷ This oversight is surprising. In the context of the significant contribution made by the tradition of British Marxist thought to the analysis of nationhood, and the tradition's enduring concern with nationalism, this lack of attention is undeserved. The thesis aims to repair that neglect.

The figures under discussion in the thesis – Eric Hobsbawm, E.P. Thompson, Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn – constitute the core of what might be called a discursive collectivity.²⁸ But is it appropriate to name this discursive collectivity 'British Marxism'? Each term of the classification would be renounced by individual figures included under this denomination. For instance, Nairn would immediately reject the national appellation. Likewise, Williams, at least from the nineteen seventies onwards, would have repudiated any association with a political community he derisively termed the 'Yookay'. The 'British' portion of the description, however, is not intended in an ethnic or nationalist sense. Rather it refers to the fact that Britain has constituted the focus and object of the work of these figures, in particular their political work. On the overwhelming majority of occasions

²⁵ The value of Bauer's contribution to analysis of the national question is considered in E. Nimni, 'Introduction for the English Language Audience,' in O. Bauer, *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy* (Minn., 2000). For a positive account of Luxemburg's encounter with nationalism, see J. Cocks, 'From Politics to Paralysis: Critical Intellectuals Answer the National Question,' *Political Theory*, 24, 3, 1996, pp. 518-537. And for the influence of Lenin's understanding of the question of national minorities, consult W. Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy* (Princeton, 1984).

²⁶ French Marxists have also received attention. See R. Stuart, *Marxism and National Identity: Socialism, Nationalism, and National Socialism during the French Fin de Siècle* (Albany, 2005).

²⁷ For the period before 1945, see P. Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack: Englishness, Patriotism and the British Left* (Woodbridge, 1998). For a later period, see the brief outline provided in M. Taylor, 'Patriotism, History and the Left in Twentieth-Century Britain,' *The Historical Journal*, 33, 1990, pp. 971-987. Also, consider S. Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire 1918-1964* (Oxford, 1993).

²⁸ Discursive collectivity denotes a group of thinkers who are connected by common concerns and who refer to and address each others work. In this thesis, that common concern is the national question. Reference to each others work can sometimes be oblique but is most often direct.

when these thinkers wrote, they wrote from Britain and with a British audience in mind. In this sense, the national designation is not wholly inappropriate.

But what about the political appellation? Perhaps only Anderson and Hobsbawm would at no time have balked at 'Marxist' as a description of their world-view. However, Williams did not self-consciously associate himself with the Marxist tradition until the late nineteen sixties, although he had been a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) in the nineteen forties; Thompson increasingly distanced himself from any sort of Marxism following the publication of *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* in 1978; and from the late-nineteen eighties onwards, both Hall and Nairn, although for different reasons, snapped any remaining link they had with a Marxist paradigm. Nonetheless, the thinkers discussed in this thesis did constitute a discursive collectivity whose political and theoretical affiliation is best captured under the umbrella 'British Marxism'.²⁹ The thesis will, of course, remain alert to those moments when an individual thinker repudiated Marxism. But when, for example, Hall or Nairn shifted toward a 'post-Marxist' position, that shift was determined in large part by their assessment of the nexus between nationalism and Marxism. Accordingly, the thesis will chart a crucial effect that engagement with the national tradition had on this discursive collectivity, that is, how a commitment to 'identity politics' was disintegrative of its central animating purpose. Indeed, considered together, these thinkers prove the veracity of Geoff Eley and Rigor Suny's claim that 'the conversation about nationalism has [primarily] been a dialogue with, within, or against the Marxist tradition.'³⁰

²⁹ In the end no other description perhaps suffices. Dennis Dworkin has considered each of these thinkers under the label of 'cultural Marxism'. For his explanation of this designation, see D. Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies* (Durham and London, 1997), pp. 1-9. However, this description is perhaps not appropriate in relation to Anderson, Hobsbawm and Nairn, and it is even doubtful in the case of Thompson. Other scholars have used the appellation 'New Left,' but this signifier is both too broad and too narrow and forgets Hobsbawm's membership of the CPGB. 'English Marxism,' a description utilized by Perry Anderson to discuss Thompson's, Nairn's and his own work in 1980, is even less satisfactory than 'British Marxism'. Anglo-Marxism, another designation of Anderson's, is inappropriate because of the association of 'Anglo' with England.

³⁰ G. Eley and R. Suny, 'Introduction: From the Moment of Social History to the Work of Cultural Representation,' in G. Eley and R. Suny, eds., *Becoming National* (Oxford, 1996), p. 8.

The work of the British Marxist tradition is now the subject of a substantial amount of scholarly literature.³¹ This scholarship has revealed the centrality of British Marxism's contribution to a range of debates within contemporary social theory.³² There has, however, been no systematic study of the British Marxist tradition's encounter with the national question. Accounts of the conception of nationhood and nationalism in the work of individual British Marxists has been undertaken.³³ It could hardly be otherwise given the prominence of Eric Hobsbawm, Tom Nairn and Stuart Hall in present-day nationalism studies. Nonetheless other thinkers in this tradition have been accorded less substantial attention. E.P. Thompson, Raymond Williams and Perry Anderson, their engagement with nationalism remains largely unexplored in histories of the relationship between Marxism and ethnicity. Most importantly, we lack a study that considers this discursive collectivity's engagement with the national question as a whole, investigating each thinker's particular engagement with nationalism in the context of the discourse of British Marxism. Thus the thesis will provide an account of the debate over nationalism in the British Marxist tradition – here represented by Hobsbawm, Thompson, Williams, Hall, Anderson and Nairn - in the era after 1945.³⁴ In doing so, it hopes both to uncover the significant contribution each thinker has made to our understanding of national identity and to assess their understanding of the nexus between Marxism and nationalism. The thesis, hence, will offer a new perspective on a group of thinkers who by common consent have had an extraordinary impact on the development of social theory.

British Marxist engagement with the national question after 1945 should be no cause for surprise. Despite the contemporary belief that nationalism 'returned' in

³¹ It is impossible here to list the studies that have illuminated our understanding of the post-World War II tradition of British Marxist thought. Reference will be made throughout the thesis to this literature, however.

³² For a general illumination of that influence, consider L. Chun, *The British New Left* (Edinburgh, 1993), Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain*, and M. Kenny, *The First New Left: British Intellectuals after Stalin* (London, 1995).

³³ Consider, for example, R. Beiner, '1989: Nationalism, Internationalism, and the Nairn-Hobsbawm Debate,' *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, 40, 1999, pp. 171-184.

³⁴ This thesis can not claim to be comprehensive. Unfortunately, I have not been able to consider a number of thinkers in this tradition of Marxist thought. Most regrettably, I have not been able to take into account the contributions of Victor Kiernan, Raphael Samuel, Terry Eagleton and Tariq Ali among others. Consideration of these thinkers work would have richly embroidered the account found here of the encounter between the British tradition of Marxist thought and the national question. However because of constraints on length, the contributions of these figures could not be analyzed here.

1989, in reality the politics of national identity never went away – particularly not in Britain and particularly not for Marxists. The national question was perhaps even more immediate for Marxism than other ideologies after 1945 precisely because of socialism's perceived anti-nationalism. Consequently, the Communist Party of Great Britain, in the context of the Cold War, sought to portray itself as the genuine inheritor of the national tradition following Hitler's defeat.³⁵ Appropriation of the 'national interest' was crucial to the prospective hegemony of all political ideologies, including Marxism – surely a sign of nationalism's persisting strength. Linking the national tradition to socialism consequently constituted an important project of the early New Left, while the New Left's alleged nationalism constituted one strand of a Marxist critique of the fledgling movement's politics. In addition, British Marxists were also concerned with movements for national liberation in the Tricontinental³⁶ world, that is Africa, Asia and South America.³⁷ Situated in the Imperial homeland, British Marxists could not ignore this epoch-defining process, especially as decolonization was often connected with socialist revolution. Indeed decolonization was immediately visible in the metropolis in the form of a growing Black diaspora. An integral nationalism - 'Powellism' – surfaced in Britain as one response to this 'politics of recognition'. The emergence of both forms of 'national identity' demanded a response from British Marxists.

However, perhaps of greatest moment for Marxists in relation to the national question in this period, was the growing strength of separatist movements in Scotland and Wales. 'The break-up of Britain' was the occasion for intense political dispute among Marxists. As nationalist movements on Britain's periphery maneuvered to undermine the state, Marxists were forced to examine nationalism's character and reassess their understanding of its function in the historical process. The global struggle for hegemony between capitalism and communism during this period constituted an additional context for Marxist scrutiny of the character of nationalism, particularly as it forced socialists to come to terms with the nature of their own

³⁵ For a consideration of this question, see B. Schwarz, "'The People' in History: The Communist Party Historians' Group, 1946-1956,' in R. Johnson, et al., *Making Histories: Studies in History-Writing and Politics* (London, 1982), pp. 45-95.

³⁶ I use 'Tricontinental' in preference to 'Third World' throughout the thesis. By doing so, I follow the lead of R.J.C. Young in his *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 4-5.

³⁷ For a brief account of this conjuncture, see A. Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literature* (London and New York, 1992), pp. 9-34.

political project. Likewise the process of European integration and the Falklands War forced Marxists to confront the spectre of the national question and reconsider the relationship between nationalism and socialism. Just as these issues split other political groupings in Britain, so they were the occasion for dissension within the ranks of Marxism. Finally, the concluding decades of the twentieth century saw the intensification of a process that scholars have subsequently termed 'globalization'. Its effects on nationalism and the nation-state also constituted a site of Marxist interest, particularly as the anti-national effects of globalization appeared to hit Britain hardest in the form of economic decline and cultural homogenization. All these national moments after 1945 required a response from British Marxists...and respond they did.

It is against the backdrop of these historical, political and economic contexts that British Marxists were forced to engage the national question. Yet despite the importance of historical context to British Marxism's confrontation with the national question, this thesis will not attempt to elucidate that confrontation through a narrative, where narrative is understood as 'the organization of material in a chronologically sequential order.'³⁸ Rather the thesis will constitute an 'anatomizing narrative of [the] character'³⁹ of Marxism. That 'anatomy' will proceed by devoting a separate chapter to each significant thinker within the British Marxist tradition and their engagement with nationhood and ethnicity.⁴⁰ Thus the thesis rather than plotting a narrative of the encounter between the British Marxist tradition and nationalism will systematically analyze that engagement. In doing so, it will illuminate a crucial source of dissent among British Marxists.⁴¹ Indeed, as will

³⁸ L. Stone, 'The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History,' *Past and Present*, 85, 1979, p. 3. It was once supposed that without 'narrative' there could be no 'history'. This erroneous view is disputed in W.H. Dray, 'On the Nature and Role of Narrative in Historiography,' *History and Theory*, 10, 2, 1971, pp. 153-171.

³⁹ A. Megill, 'Recounting the Past: "Description," Explanation, and Narrative in Historiography,' *American Historical Review*, 94, 1989, p. 646.

⁴⁰ For the distinction between 'anatomy' and 'narrative,' consult H. White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, (Baltimore and London, 1987), p. 3.

⁴¹ Bryan Palmer has suggested, in relation to the group known as 'the British Marxist historians', that it is 'time to acknowledge...that a tradition of lumping carries with it some vexing inabilities, and that an inclination to differentiate may bring us, at certain points in time, particular benefits.' See B.D. Palmer, 'Reasoning Rebellion: E.P. Thompson, British Marxist Historians, and the Making of Dissident Political Mobilization,' *Labour/Le Travail*, 50, 2002, p. 189. The intention in this thesis is not to 'lump' the thinkers under consideration into a school – far from it. Having established that these thinkers were connected by a concern with Marxist politics and theory and the national question, that is, having constructed them into what I have called a 'discursive collectivity,' the thesis's primary object is to draw out what differentiates them from each other, and how what differentiates them largely circles around the question of nationalism.

become clear in the course of the thesis, the national question constituted a battleground on which figures within the British Marxist tradition increasingly confronted each other.

Chapter 1 provides an account of the nexus between Marxism and nationalism in the work of the great Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm. Following a brief discussion of Hobsbawm's biography, the chapter will investigate issues central to his encounter with the national question – the relationship between class and nation, the political effect of socialist engagement with nationalist movements, and the nexus between capitalist development and nationhood. In doing so, the chapter will analyze both Hobsbawm's historical work and his contributions to political debate.

Chapter 2 focuses upon E.P. Thompson's engagement with the national question. Biography is important to any thinker's engagement with the world, particularly if that engagement is with particularism. Thus the chapter will begin with a description of Thompson's 'social being,' probing personal and biographical pressures relevant to his conception of nationhood and nationalism. Following this biographical section, the chapter will move on to consider Thompson's 'socialist nationalism,' equally evident, it will be argued, in his Communist as it was in his New Left politics. The chapter will consider Thompson's 'socialist nationalism' in the context of his long-standing debate with Perry Anderson. It will also mine the depths of Thompson's encounter with the national question in his Marxist history-writing, before moving on to investigate the nature of his internationalism, evidenced in both his socialist humanism and his anti-nuclear politics.

Chapter 3 details Raymond Williams's encounter with issues central to the study of nationhood and nationalism. Williams's 'social being' is central to any adequate account of this encounter. Following exploration of Williams's biography, the chapter will investigate the role of place and community in his socialist politics, his engagement with Wales and Welsh nationalism, and the nature of his socialist internationalism, manifest in three different moments of activist affiliation – all the while considering critiques of Williams's understanding of nation and nationalism from other figures under consideration in this thesis. In probing the intricacies of Williams's understanding of the relationship between socialism and nationhood, the chapter will provide an investigation of a central critic of Marx's cosmopolitanism.

Chapter 4 explores Stuart Hall's encounter with our 'nationalist' modernity. Like preceding chapters, the chapter will first strike a biographical note, probing aspects of Hall's life-course relevant to an investigation of his conception of nation and nationalism. It will then move on to analyze his understanding of three issues central to the study of nationalism: race, nationhood and ethnicity. Unlike chapters one to three, this chapter will follow a broadly chronological approach – that is, it will begin with Hall's encounter with the race issue in the nineteen seventies, proceed to a consideration of his understanding of the relationship between socialism and nationalism during the Thatcher era, and finish with an assessment of his understanding of ethnicity in our own 'New Times'. This approach will allow investigation of Hall's encounter with the national question from the perspective both of his Marxism and his recent post-Marxism.

Chapter 5 charts Perry Anderson's long-standing engagement with nationalism. Uniquely, Anderson was the only figure considered in this thesis who consistently defined his socialist politics in cosmopolitan terms. The chapter will begin with a brief account of the biographical pressures that inflected Anderson's encounter with the national question. It will then proceed to investigate substantive instances of that encounter, beginning with the place of nationhood and nationalism in his 'total' history of British state and society, then moving on to consider Anderson's understanding of the historicity of nation in his account of the *longue durée* of capitalist development, and finishing with an exploration of his most recent contributions to the national question. In doing so the chapter will engage with Marxist debates over national liberation, the nature of nationhood, and the relationship between globalization and nationalism.

Chapter 6 maps Tom Nairn's encounter with nationhood and nationalism. Among the most important contemporary theorists of nationalism, Nairn's contribution to nationalism studies has been often recognized. Unfortunately it has been less often situated in the broader context of the British Marxist engagement with nationalism. The chapter will attempt to repair this oversight by placing Nairn's encounter with nationalism in the context of the contribution of other thinkers' in the tradition of British Marxist thought. Following a brief account of Nairn's biography, the chapter will concentrate on three instances of Nairn's engagement with the

national question represented in three major texts of his oeuvre – the 'cosmopolitan socialism' of 'The Left Against Europe,' which initially was published as a single edition of *New Left Review*, the 'socialist nationalism' of *The Break-Up of Britain*, and the 'anti-Marxist nationalism' of *Faces of Nationalism*, his response to the revival of nationalism after 1989. In doing so, the chapter will map important conceptual moments in the history of the nexus between Marxism and nationalism in Britain.

Finally, to anticipate a conclusion, the thesis will argue that the work of the British Marxists offered a series of stunning illuminations of the nature of nationhood and nationalism. However, their encounter with the national question was also characterized by contradiction, particularly when it came to dealing with the question of nationalism in practice. British Marxists oscillated between the appropriation of the national tradition and a rejection of nationalism. Thus illumination and antinomy, it will be argued, marked the encounter between Marxists in Britain and the national question. In this sense, British Marxism's engagement with nationalism, like that of Marxism more generally, might be said to have constituted an 'erratic unity of opposites.'⁴²

⁴² Petras, 'Marx and Engels on the National Question,' p. 797.

Chapter 1

Class, Nation and Capitalist Globalization

Eric Hobsbawm on Marxism and Nationalism

Marx's primary contribution to political economy was the powerful contention that capitalism was both historical and revolutionary; in other words that, according to a certain conception of the evolution of social organisation, capitalism had a beginning, middle, and (so a scientific socialism predicted) an end.¹ In a similar manoeuvre, Eric Hobsbawm's primary contribution to nationalism studies has been the equally controversial contention that nations are both novel and historical. Just as Marx sought to undermine the ahistorical claim that capitalism was both eternal and a product of human nature, a claim widespread since the late eighteenth century, so Hobsbawm has disputed the equally ahistorical claim, common since the late nineteenth century, that nations are both perennial and primordial. Nations, according to Hobsbawm, are artificial not natural; ephemeral not immutable; transient not ageless; the product of states and political elites not ancient gods and national heroes. It is the substantiation and exposition of these assertions – what has been called the modernist interpretation of nation and nationalism – that has governed Hobsbawm's analysis of the national question, from his embryonic attempts to explore nation and nationalism in such early works as *The Age of Revolution* (1962) to his later, more extended and polemically directed, expositions of the historicity of nationhood in works such as *Nations and Nationalism* (1990). Nationhood, for Hobsbawm, like capitalism for Marx, must be understood as temporal and finite, only fully comprehensible from the perspective of its necessary end.

¹ Hobsbawm himself made this general point about the historicity of Marx's method. See E. Hobsbawm, 'What do Historians owe Karl Marx,' in E. Hobsbawm, *On History* (London, 1997), p. 204. This article originally appeared in *Diogenes*, 64, 1968. Also see E. Hobsbawm, 'Introduction,' in K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London, 1998), p. 16.

Hobsbawm is 'the premier Marxist historian working today.'² It is not just the range of his historical expertise that impresses, although in an age when specialization is a necessity among historians this remains paramount in any assessment of his contribution to historical studies. Rather it is the way he has been able to incorporate 'theory' and 'history' into his historical practice which stands out at a time when one is often sacrificed to the other. This dialectic of theory and history was nowhere more apparent than in his analysis of the national question. Perhaps more than any thinker in the tradition of British Marxism, Hobsbawm has been consistently concerned with issues of nation and nationalism, and concerned with them from the angle of their effect on a specifically Marxist interpretation of history.³ For Hobsbawm, nationalism, contrary to Marxist logic, has been the most truculent, dominant and persistent element in the determination of twentieth century politics and society; it has contributed more than any other political and social ideology to the making of the 'age of extremes' and our present 'age of barbarism'.⁴ Even in Britain, as Hobsbawm revealed in an early investigation of British politics, nationalism constituted the main (actual and potential) disruptive force to the dominance of the political establishment, the main (actual and potential) solvent of the integrity of the British state.⁵ Against Marxist expectation, as Hobsbawm suggested, it was nation not class that had acted the dominant role in the development of world history since the French Revolution, nationalism not socialism that had, for the most part, captured the imagination of the wretched of the earth.⁶

² This assessment was made as long ago as 1978; it remains even truer today. For the citation, see H. Kaye, *The British Marxist Historians: An Introductory Analysis* (New York, 1985), p. 131. For the earlier assessment, see J. Cronin, 'Creating a Marxist Historiography: The Contribution of Hobsbawm,' *Radical History Review*, 19 (Winter 1978-9) p. 88; and 'Editorial Statement,' *Marxist Perspectives*, 1, Spring 1978, p. 9.

³ This is not, in my opinion, a contentious point. Yet in a recent summary of Hobsbawm's intellectual thought in a dictionary of contemporary critical theory, the author, somewhat surprisingly, fails to mention Hobsbawm's concern with the national question. For this extraordinary oversight, in an otherwise overwhelmingly valuable contribution to contemporary critical theory, see D. Macey, *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory* (London, 2000), p. 187.

⁴ Hobsbawm, 'Some Reflections on Nationalism,' p. 386.

⁵ This was apparent to Hobsbawm well before 'the break-up of Britain' in the nineteen seventies. See E. Hobsbawm, 'Twentieth Century British Politics,' *Past and Present*, 11, 1957, pp. 100-108.

⁶ See, in particular, E. Hobsbawm, 'What is the Workers' Country?,' in E. Hobsbawm, *Worlds of Labour* (London, 1984), p. 59. For the role of nationalism in (state) Marxism's downfall, see R.G. Suny, 'Incomplete Revolution: National Movements and the Collapse of the Soviet Empire,' *New Left Review*, 1/187, 1991, pp. 111-125.

Marxism's defeat required explanation. This is the task that Hobsbawm set himself from the early nineteen seventies, a task that became increasingly urgent as initial setbacks were transformed into what looked like permanent defeat.⁷ As a result, the national question has assumed an even more important place in his overall historical and theoretical concerns, becoming by the end of the twentieth century a *fin de siècle* obsession akin to despair.⁸ Since the early nineteen nineties, and as an effect of the death of Marxism, the national question has increasingly displaced other concerns in his work – the bandits of Serbian and Croatian nationalism replacing the bandits of Spanish and Italian anarchism; the revolutionaries of Scottish and Welsh nationalism replacing internationalist revolutionaries who claimed global socialism as their home; the 'world of labour' replaced by the 'world of nations'.⁹ Now, on the cusp of a new century, the national question assumes what could be considered the most vital problematic of his thinking.

Hobsbawm's explanation of Marxism's historical defeat became one of the most thoroughgoing investigations of nation and nationalism. This chapter will provide an analysis of that explanation. The chapter will open with a brief investigation into Hobsbawm's own 'social being,' a sketch of the conditions, not of his own making, which pushed his thinking on nation and nationalism in certain directions.¹⁰ In addition it will also provide a cursory summation of the historical

⁷ Indicative of this shift in Hobsbawm's increasing awareness is provided by two excellent summations of his work – one produced in 1979, the other in 1985 – which barely mention his interest in nation and nationalism. See Cronin, 'Creating a Marxist Historiography: The Contribution of Hobsbawm,' and Kaye, *The British Marxist Historians*, pp. 131-166.

⁸ The despair is most visible in his assessment of the rise of barbarism. See E. Hobsbawm, 'Barbarism: A Users' Guide,' *New Left Review*, I/206, 1994, pp. 44-54. This article was first given as a lecture on 24 February 1994 in the series of Oxford Amnesty Lectures. See also E. Hobsbawm, 'The Crisis of Today's Ideologies,' *New Left Review*, I/192, 1992, pp. 55-64 and E. Hobsbawm, 'History and Illusion,' *New Left Review*, I/220, 1996, pp. 116-125. For another instance of Hobsbawm's profound pessimism (by no means misplaced), see his *Age of Extremes* (London, 1991), pp. 558-586 and his 'Introduction' to Verso's 150th anniversary edition of the *Communist Manifesto*, pp. 3-29.

⁹ For his early work on 'primitive rebels' and 'bandits,' see E. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels* (London, 1959) and E. Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (London, 1969). For his work on labour history, see E. Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour* (London, 1964); E. Hobsbawm (with George Rude), *Captain Swing* (London, 1969) and Hobsbawm, *Worlds of Labour* (London, 1984). For his contribution to the history of communist revolutionaries, see Hobsbawm, *Revolutionaries* (London, 1973).

¹⁰ This task has been made much easier by the recent publication of Hobsbawm's political, academic and personal memoirs. See E. Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times* (London, 2003). Other information on Hobsbawm's biography can be found in the numerous interviews he has given in the last decade or so. In particular, see 'Eric Hobsbawm: A Historian Living Through History (Radio Interview),' in W. Thompson et al. eds., *Historiography and the British Marxist Historians, Socialist History*, 8 (London, 1995); S. Paterson (interviewer), 'The Age of Extremes: An Interview with Eric Hobsbawm,' *Queens*

context which made his account of the nexus between Marxism and nationalism so urgent. The substance of the chapter will provide an analysis of Hobsbawm's understanding of the national question, grouped around three issues central to the nexus between Marxism and nationalism: 1) are socialism and nationalism incompatible? 2) do the workers have a country? and 3) are nations historical? The chapter will conclude with a brief examination of Hobsbawm's assessment of the role of nationalism in our own time.

What is Hobsbawm's Country? The Making of a Cosmopolitan

What is Hobsbawm's country? Egypt, where his English-born father of Russian-Polish Jewish heritage worked in the service of the British Empire, and where he was born in the year of the Bolshevik seizure of power?¹¹ Austria, where his mother was born and educated, and where he spent most of his childhood?¹² Germany, whose language he first spoke, and where he spent his early teenage years before the death of his parents?¹³ England, where his uncle moved in the wake of Hitler's rise to power, and where Hobsbawm who joined him went to university? Great Britain, whose Communist Party he joined in the nineteen thirties, whose army he served during the years of the Second World War, and whose integrity he defended

Quarterly, 102, 2, 1995, pp. 269-273; D. Snowman (interviewer), 'Eric Hobsbawm,' *History Today*, 49, 1, 1999, pp. 16-18; E. Hobsbawm (in conversation with Antonio Polito), *The New Century*, trans., by Allan Cameron (London, 2000); and 'Man of the Extreme Century – (An Interview with Eric Hobsbawm),' *The Observer*, September 22, 2002.

¹¹ This seems unlikely. As he suggested in *The Age of Empire*, Alexandria, where he was born, 'was both a living museum, suitable for cultural self-improvement, and a sophisticated cosmopolitan community of the European middle class.' In this sense the community into which he was born was not unlike any other major European city. The lingua franca – as it was for other important sections of the European middle class – was French; and the community had little to do with the Arabs, just as in other European cities they had little to do with their own 'native' working class. For a brief account of his parents' years in Alexandria, see E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914* (London, 1987), pp. 1-3. The quote relating to the make-up of the community into which he was born appears on p. 2.

¹² When Hobsbawm was born Austria, of course, was not a nation-state but the heart of the soon-to-be-dismantled Austro-Hungarian Empire. The identity 'Austrian,' in any case, made no sense during the time Hobsbawm lived in Vienna as most 'Austrians' considered themselves German. Indeed, most Austrians, with the exception, somewhat ironically, of the communists, did not consider Austria a viable nation-state. It was this widespread feeling which allowed the relatively peaceful *Anschluss* between Austria and Germany to take place in 1938.

¹³ This would perhaps be the most likely candidate (at least for linguistic nationalists) given that it was Hobsbawm's first language, except, of course, that when Hobsbawm lived in Berlin in the early nineteen thirties, there was a significant anti-Semitic consciousness (not just Nazi) which did not consider Jews part of the German nation. This did not mean that some German Jews did not consider themselves German at the time of Hitler's rise to power. See Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, pp. 43-77 for his own recollection of Berlin and also note 21 below.

against the rise of fissiparous nationalisms in the nineteen seventies?¹⁴ Italy, whose language he learned and enjoyed to write, where he did some of his earliest 'field work' as a historian, and in whose Communist Party he felt most at home, politically?¹⁵ None fit. Hobsbawm has no *patria*.¹⁶ He is a nationalists' nightmare, that most hated alien, the 'rootless cosmopolitan'. Hobsbawm is a Marxist historian who speaks and writes in at least four different languages (German, Italian, French and English), who rejected the religion of his birth (Judaism) in favour of a secular ideology (socialism), and who throughout his life has lived in at least four countries (Austria, Germany, England and the United States), felt at home in at least two others (France and Italy) but refers to none as his *Vaterland*.

But it is not just his ancestry, the circumstances of his birth, and the involuntary geographical mobility of his early years that left him without a country – after all there have been plenty of central Europeans with similar backgrounds who have easily enough fashioned themselves as nationalists. Rather, Hobsbawm's cosmopolitan identity was a direct consequence of his commitment to that nation-less ideology *par excellence*, Marxism, a commitment that first manifested itself in the Berlin of the nineteen thirties.¹⁷ This was not an unlikely place for such a commitment to develop, especially not for a Jew.¹⁸ As the liberalism and social democracy of the Weimar Republic was undermined by the ultra-nationalist and anti-Semitic politics of Hitlerite fascism, Jews increasingly found themselves figured as Germany's foundational 'Other,' the cause of everything from the failure of German capitalism to the rise of European Bolshevism. Far from being an 'opiate of the

¹⁴ Some people have made this claim, forgetting that Britain is not a nation-state, because Hobsbawm defended the integrity of the British state against the rise of separatist nationalisms and their supporters. But this is not appropriate, for reasons which will be described below. What cannot be doubted, however, is that Hobsbawm felt most comfortable in a multi-national state.

¹⁵ On his relationship with Italy, see J. Cronin, 'Memoir, Social History and Commitment: Eric Hobsbawm's *Interesting Times*,' *Journal of Social History*, 37, 1 (Fall 2003), pp. 219-231 and Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, pp. 346-361.

¹⁶ As Hobsbawm himself suggested in *Interesting Times*, 'the Hobsbawm household lived, not in Berlin, but in a transnational world, where people like us still – though the 1930s were to make it much more difficult – moved from country to country in search of a living. We might have roots in England or Vienna, but Berlin was merely one stop on the complicated route that might take us almost anywhere in Europe west of the USSR.' See Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, p. 51.

¹⁷ Hobsbawm later characterised his initial encounter with Marxism as 'liberating'. See Hobsbawm, 'What do Historians owe Karl Marx,' p. 194.

¹⁸ Later Hobsbawm recalled that 'The second political event [the first had been the burning of the Palace of Justice by Viennese workers in 1927] I recall as such, at the age of thirteen, was the German general election of 1930, when the Nazis won 107 seats.' As Hobsbawm went on to suggest: 'We [the Jews] knew what that meant.' See Hobsbawm, 'Intellectuals and the Class Struggle,' p. 299.

intellectuals,' in Raymond Aron's acerbic phrase, Marxism, for (some) German Jews, appeared a political necessity. A Marxist 'identity' was not a matter of the development of productive forces, or a consequence of subjective choice, but a matter and consequence of the life and death struggle in a society which increasingly sought to render German Jews, like Hobsbawm, not just nation-less but state-less. It was only international communism that foresaw the terrible *reductio ad absurdum* of Hitler's rise to power, only international communism, at this time, that appeared to offer any sane alternative to the pathological excesses of German nationalism. Where were Jews to find a home in such circumstances? In many ways, as Hobsbawm himself suggested, there was no alternative.¹⁹ For Jews the choice was a simple one: either barbarism or socialism. As Hobsbawm later recalled: 'We simply choose *a* future, rather than *no* future, which meant revolution. But it meant revolution not in a negative sense but in a positive sense: a new world rather than no world.'²⁰

When Hobsbawm's family escaped Nazi Germany for England in 1933, Hobsbawm was, despite his tender years, already a veteran of the communist struggle against, and alive to the malignant dangers that lay dormant within, the fascist beast.²¹ But the struggle and the danger were not just confined to Germany; the struggle and the danger were just as evident in the East End of London as they were on the streets of Berlin or Rome.²² Hobsbawm's new home, despite 'the peculiarities of the English,' was no less susceptible to the nationalist appeal, no more resistant to the waving of national flags.²³ Hindsight might assure us that the fascist menace was a minority phenomenon in England, but this was something that was not at all clear in the early nineteen thirties when Hobsbawm arrived. Beyond the seemingly irresistible rise of the Europe-wide phenomenon of fascism, other factors provided *raison d'etre* for Hobsbawm's deepening attachment to revolution, to the idea that worldwide socialism was the only possible alternative to fascist barbarism. None were more

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 300. See also Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, pp. 56-8.

²⁰ Hobsbawm, 'Intellectuals and the Class Struggle,' p. 300. Italics appear in the original.

²¹ Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, pp. 62-77.

²² See L. Ceplair, *Under the Shadow of War: Fascism, Anti-Fascism, and the Marxists, 1918-1939* (New York, 1987), for an excellent account of the conflicts between fascists and communists in the inter-war period.

²³ For the phenomenon of British fascism, see R. Benewick, *The Fascist Movement in Britain* (London, 1972); J. Fyrth, ed., *Britain, Fascism and the Popular Front* (London, 1985); and R. Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: From Oswald Moseley's Blackshirts to the National Front* (New York and London, 1998).

immediate than the capitalist crisis of the nineteen thirties.²⁴ No less apparent in England than it had been in Germany, the Great Slump appeared to make manifest Marxism's belief in capitalism's contradictions. Amid hunger marches, declining rates of profit, and capital overaccumulation, it was hard for anyone to imagine that the world would emerge unchanged from the twin crises of liberal politics and liberal economics. An alternative to both capitalism and fascism was required. For many, including Hobsbawm at this time, salvation resided precisely in imminent socialist revolution, with, that is, the global transformation of relations of production which had produced both deepening poverty and fascism. In the early nineteen thirties this was not merely a quixotic Marxist fancy. The solution, for most Marxists, was already to hand.²⁵

In *Age of Extremes*, Hobsbawm claimed that the 'Short Twentieth Century cannot be understood without the Russian revolution and its direct and indirect effects.'²⁶ A similar claim might be made about Hobsbawm himself. For it was socialism in Russia – at this time already considered an outstanding success by friends and foes alike²⁷ – which acted as a ready contrast to the all too visible problems of liberal capitalism. To many observers, not only had the Soviet Union avoided the human misery associated with the Great Slump but it also appeared as an impenetrable bulwark against European barbarism. In short, the Soviet Union seemed to offer the only already existing alternative to capitalism and fascism, to an old order which events seemed to prove was no longer viable. For many Marxists, where Nazism offered national socialism as a salve to capitalism's ills, the Soviet Union

²⁴ 'The collapse of the world economy,' according to Hobsbawm, 'was up to a point something young persons of the middle class [like Hobsbawm himself] read about, rather than experienced directly. But the world economic crisis was like a volcano, generating political eruptions. That is what we could not escape, because it dominated our skyline ... Since 1930 its symbol was familiar: the black swastika in a white circle on a red ground.' See Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, p. 46.

²⁵ 'The great October revolution and Soviet Russia,' according to Hobsbawm, 'proved to us that such a new world was possible, perhaps that it was already functioning.' See Hobsbawm, 'Intellectuals and the Class Struggle,' p. 300. Other Marxists of the time confirm this view. As John Saville has suggested, 'when the Bolsheviks took power in October 1917 it seemed to the socialists of Europe and in other continents that a beacon of light was now shining through the gloom of death and destruction.' See J. Saville, 'The Communist Experience: A Personal Appraisal,' in R. Miliband and J. Saville, eds., *The Socialist Register 1991* (London, 1991), p. 3. According to Raphael Samuel, 'The Soviet Union was, of course, our [communists'] promised land, "the embodiment of Socialism in action".' See R. Samuel, 'The Lost World of British Communism,' *New Left Review*, I/154, 1985, p. 38.

²⁶ E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London, 1994), p. 84.

²⁷ See D. Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism: the West European Left in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1996), p. 62.

offered the socialist Cosmopolis free from poverty and want; where Nazism promised eternal war between races the Soviet Union offered universal peace; and where Nazism exalted the supremacy of the German people and the irrational the Soviet Union exalted universal equality and reason. If the world was to be saved, so the Marxist argument went, the proletariat must proclaim social revolution their only *heimat*, must put aside the factitious nations of the bourgeois hucksters and establish worldwide socialist government. It was an appealing thesis. For Marxists like Hobsbawm, it was overwhelming: there was only one means to overcome the seemingly interlaced absurdities of capitalism and fascism – the establishment of international communism. Developments in the nineteen thirties strengthened this conviction. Who was it that principally fought the rise of fascism in Spain?²⁸ Who was it that sought to organise all the opponents of fascism into a 'popular front' in France? The answer to each question was the same: the communists.²⁹ When Hobsbawm joined the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) in 1936,³⁰ beginning an association which would persist until the demise of the Soviet Union in the early nineteen nineties, he was not only endorsing the view that communism offered a universal alternative to economic catastrophe and fascism. He was also proclaiming that socialist revolution was his homeland and that the sole community worth imagining or belonging to was one that included all the peoples of the world.³¹

Active in the communist milieu at Cambridge, where he studied history, in the late nineteen thirties, Hobsbawm spent the war years fulfilling a number of banal duties in the British Army, perhaps barred from more active and important

²⁸ And not just in Spain. For the communist struggle against fascism in Britain, see N. Barrett, 'A Bright Shining Star: The CPGB and Anti-Fascist Activism in the 1930s,' *Science and Society*, 61, 1, 1997, pp. 10-25.

²⁹ Edward Upward described this well when he suggested that in the nineteen thirties communism 'was the only force which was uncompromisingly on the side of the doomed and against those who wanted to keep them doomed.' See E. Upward, *In the Thirties* (London, 1978), cited (but page not specified) in J.K. Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire: The British in the Spanish Civil War* (Stanford, 1998), p. 40.

³⁰ For the history of the CPGB during this period, see A. Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow, 1920-1943* (London, 2001); and M. Worley, *Class against Class: The Communist Party in Britain between the Wars* (London, 2002), both excellent new contributions to the history of communism in Britain.

³¹ As Raphael Samuel has suggested about Communists at this time: 'The mental horizons were international, and the images of injustice were as likely to draw from the experience of American Negroes as from the memory of British dole queues.' As he goes on: 'To be a Communist was to have a complete social identity, one which transcended the limits of class, gender and nationality.' See R. Samuel, 'The Lost World of British Communism,' p. 10 and 11.

involvement by his openly Marxist politics.³² The experience of the popular front and the 'people's war' against fascism, however, constituted crucial moments in Hobsbawm's political development, moments which would in part determine not just the character of his Marxist politics but also his understanding of the potential value of national patriotism to international socialism. Allowing reconciliation between international communists, national social democrats and patriots, the popular front against fascism provided Hobsbawm with crucial insights into the way the socialist cause could be advanced in conditions where revolution was not imminent.³³ It was this experience which partly explains his later interest in the work and politics of Antonio Gramsci and his close political association with the Communist Party of Italy (CPI).³⁴ Indeed the popular resistance to fascism was central to the political and intellectual development of all the members of the Communist Party Historians' Group (CPHG), of which Hobsbawm was a prominent member throughout the nineteen forties and fifties.³⁵ Developments in British communism in the immediate period after 1945 – the 'British road to socialism' – were also important in this respect.³⁶ Not only did this period constitute a self-conscious attempt by the CPGB to extend the strategy of the popular front into the immediate post-war years, aligning the cause of national reconstruction to international socialism, but it also provided a relatively congenial atmosphere for the development of the British tradition of Marxist historiography, a tradition which would have a disproportionate influence on

³² The later suggestion is Hobsbawm's own. See Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, p. 154. On university communism in the 1930s, see N. Wood, *Communism and the British Intellectuals* (New York, 1959); G. Werskey, *The Visible College: A Collective Biography of British Scientists and Socialists of the 1930s* (London, 1978); and E. Roberts, *The Anglo-Marxists: A Study in Ideology and Culture* (Oxford, 1997). On Hobsbawm's own experience of communism at Cambridge, see the 'Interview with E.J. Hobsbawm,' in *Radical History Review*, 19, 1978-1979, pp. 111-131 and P. Keunemann, 'Eric Hobsbawm: A Cambridge Profile, 1939,' in R. Samuel and G.S. Jones, eds., *Culture, Ideology and Politics: Essays for Eric Hobsbawm* (London, 1983). The latter piece is a reprint of an article that first appeared in *Granta*, 7 June 1939.

³³ E. Hobsbawm, 'Fifty-years of People's Fronts,' in E. Hobsbawm, *Politics for a Rational Left: Political Writing 1977-1988* (London, 1989), p. 107.

³⁴ See E. Hobsbawm, 'Gramsci and Political Theory,' *Marxism Today*, 11, 7, 1977, pp. 205-213.

³⁵ On the Communist Party Historians Group, see E. Hobsbawm, 'The Historians' Group of the Communist Party,' in M. Cornforth, ed., *Rebels and their Causes* (London, 1978); and B. Schwarz, "'The People" in History: The Communist Party Historians' Group, 1946-1956,' in R. Johnson et al., *Making Histories: Studies in History-Writing and Politics* (London, 1982).

³⁶ On this period in CPGB history, see D. Childs, 'The Cold War and the "British Road," 1946-53,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 23, 1988, pp. 551-572.

the development of British intellectual thought in the last half of the twentieth century.³⁷

After the war, Hobsbawm remained committed to the cause of international socialism.³⁸ This is unsurprising - 1945 did not constitute year zero for international communism but rather its high-water mark.³⁹ What is surprising was his decision to remain faithful to this belief, and to the official international communist movement as its vehicle, following Khrushchev's revelation of Stalinist crimes and the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956. His decision is surprising because so many of his friends and comrades, including E.P. Thompson, John Saville and, eventually, Christopher Hill and Victor Kiernan, believed it necessary, for the good of international socialism, to leave.⁴⁰ Whatever his individual reasoning, Hobsbawm's resolution that the cause of international socialism was best served within the Communist party rather than outside it should not be given undue influence when considering his later intellectual and political development.⁴¹ For Hobsbawm was not constrained by the sort of ideological imperatives that Marxist thinkers laboured under in socialist societies (one thinks here of someone like Georg Lukács), and the relative political impotence of the CPGB after 1945 ensured that he would not be

³⁷ On the tradition of British Marxist historiography, see H. Kaye, *The British Marxist Historians: An Introduction* (New York, 1984); and H. Kaye, *The Education of Desire: British Marxists and the Writing of History* (London and New York, 1992).

³⁸ According to Samuel, 'Internationalism was not an option but a necessity of our political being, a touchstone of honour and worth.' See Samuel, 'The Lost World of British Communism,' p. 39.

³⁹ Hobsbawm himself makes this point: 'at the end of World War II the Left,' according to him, 'almost everywhere in Europe, represented the nation in the most literal sense, because it represented resistance to, and victory over, Hitler and his allies. Hence the remarkable marriage of patriotism and social transformation which dominated European politics immediately after 1945.' See E. Hobsbawm, 'Identity Politics and the Left,' *New Left Review*, I/217, 1996, p. 40.

⁴⁰ This should not imply that Hobsbawm was unsympathetic to the purpose of the communist rebels in 1956. He contributed to the dissident communist press, including Thompson and Saville's *The New Reasoner*, and to a dissident letter that appeared in *Tribune* and the *New Statesman* in 1956. As he remarked of the relationship between himself and the 1956 dissidents: 'Those of us who stayed stood for the same things, were fighting for the same things.' See E. Hobsbawm, '1956,' *Marxism Today*, November 1986, p. 21. Hobsbawm was also active in the establishment of a New Left in the late 1950s. For more on 1956 and the CPGB, see J. Saville, 'The XXth Congress of the British Communist Party,' *Socialist Register 1976* (London, 1976), pp. 1-23; and J. Saville, 'E.P. Thompson, The Communist Party and 1956,' in *Socialist Register: Between Globalism and Nationalism* (London, 1994), pp. 20-31.

⁴¹ This point needs to be made because others have argued that Hobsbawm's continuing association with the CPGB did have an influence on the direction of his later thought. In particular, see Cronin, 'Creating a Marxist Historiography: The Contribution of Hobsbawm,' pp. 105-106. Cronin does not suggest that it had a baneful influence on his history writing, but he does speculate that it may have determined its focus. See also Kaye, *The British Marxist Historians*, pp. 134-135 and more recently Cronin, 'Memoir, Social History and Commitment,' pp. 229-230.

forced to reconcile his theoretical positions with the 'party line' like Marxists in France and Italy (one thinks here of someone like Louis Althusser). In short, Hobsbawm could do and say what he liked without fear of being reprimanded by King Street; his position as a historian, first at Birkbeck College (1947-1982), and later at the New School for Social Research in New York, remained relatively unaffected by his attachment to Bolshevism.⁴² His CPGB membership also did not prevent him from actively participating in the projects of the New Left, although he always remained a friendly critic of its politics – he contributed to both the *New Reasoner* and *New Left Review* in the nineteen fifties and sixties.⁴³ This is not to underestimate the importance he placed on a continuing attachment to the historic break announced by the Russian revolution (which he believed was best maintained within the CPGB), a connection he sustained until it was severed by the demise of the Soviet Union. It is to suggest, rather, that his Marxism was no less 'independent' than those who remained Marxists but left the CPGB in 1956 or sometime shortly thereafter.⁴⁴

But there is another reason. Quite simply, by the late nineteen sixties it didn't matter anymore. By this time the terminal crisis of that Marxism which counted October as its founding moment was already apparent to (some) Marxists. Its own prophecies had failed it. Revolution spread to the East not the West; capitalism was booming not collapsing; it was students, peasants, nationalists and women who were at the forefront of revolutions after 1945 not workers; and far from creating a world characterised by universal peace the Soviet Union was engaged in a nuclear weapons race that threatened to destroy it.⁴⁵ Hobsbawm's awareness of Marxism's historic

⁴² On Hobsbawm's institutional history see the brief remarks in Kaye, *The British Marxist Historians*, p. 133. The CPGB may not have paid his academic career any heed, but Hobsbawm's membership of the CPGB was paid heed by academia. As he suggests in *Interesting Times*, his academic career was affected by his communism. See *Interesting Times*, p. 182.

⁴³ See Hobsbawm, '1956,' p. 21.

⁴⁴ As he suggested in an interview with *Marxism Today*: 'Those of us who stayed stood for the same things, were fighting for the same things. And it was absolutely essential to maintain, if you like, a common ground between people who were left-wing, marxists even, marxist historians in fact in this specific case, and to refuse to allow this temporary question to come between us.' See Hobsbawm, '1956,' p. 21.

⁴⁵ The Soviet Union was not just involved in a cold war with the capitalist West after 1945; it was also involved in a number of cold wars with other socialist states, not just Yugoslavia, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, states which it had in most cases helped to create, but also China. Although the Soviet Union's cold war with the West could not be characterized as nationalist in any conventional sense, it is possible to characterize at least some of its cold wars with other socialist states in this way. See G. Stern, *The Rise and Decline of International Socialism* (Aldershot, 1990), pp. 196-233.

crisis, what he called 'the forward march of labour halted,' came relatively early.⁴⁶ Strangely enough, although not from the perspective of classical Marxism, the terminal crisis, for Hobsbawm, appeared most clearly in the capitalist West not in the communist East. Of course socialism's crises east of the Elbe, manifest not just in 1956 and 1968 but also in the wretched condition of state-planned economies, had raised Hobsbawm's scepticism about the progress of international socialism, but while socialist states existed they provided an image, however inadequate, of a post-capitalist world.⁴⁷ But once it became clear that the working class under conditions of capitalist relations of production had not just deserted revolution *en masse* but were structurally incapable of perpetrating it, all hope for a precipitate transition to socialism had to be given up. Beyond transformations internal to capitalism and the working class, Hobsbawm also caught early sight of yet another inauspicious trend – not unconnected to capitalism's persistent strength – portentous for global socialism's future.⁴⁸ In the late nineteen sixties appeared a force that socialists had claimed to have already reckoned with: nationalism. In a historical irony not lost on Marxists, least of all Hobsbawm, it would be nationalism that would precipitate the immediate break-up of both the Eastern European socialist states and the Soviet Union.⁴⁹ Marxism was dead - it was nationalism, it could be argued, that threw the final handfuls of soil on its grave.

⁴⁶ See E. Hobsbawm, 'The Forward March of Labour Halted?,' *Marxism Today*, 12, 9, 1978, pp. 279-286. It should be pointed out that Hobsbawm marked the decline in the labour movement's fortunes not in 1978 but 1948. In addition, see E. Hobsbawm, 'Response to the Original Debate in *MT*,' *Marxism Today*, 13, 9, 1979; and E. Hobsbawm, 'Farewell to the Classic Labour Movement?,' in Hobsbawm, *Politics for a Rational Left*. Compare Hobsbawm's account with L. Althusser, 'The Crisis of Marxism,' *Marxism Today*, July 1978, pp. 215-220 and 227. This is one of Althusser's more accessible pieces, but it shows that Althusser was completely unaware of the challenge that Marxism faced from nationalism.

⁴⁷ See Hobsbawm, '1956,' p. 22.

⁴⁸ Hobsbawm was alive to both dimensions of Marxism's crisis and its relationship to nationalism: on the one hand the fact that in the battle for workers' identity nation was trumping class; and on the other the disturbing trend of some Marxists, most notably Tom Nairn, to paint nationalism red.

⁴⁹ See R.G. Suny, 'The Revenge of History: Socialism and Ethnic Conflict in Transcaucasia,' *New Left Review*, I/184, 1990, pp. 5-34; E. Gellner, 'Nationalism and Politics in Eastern Europe,' *New Left Review*, I/189, 1991, pp. 127-134; and M. Kaldor, 'Yugoslavia and the New Nationalism,' *New Left Review*, I/197, 1993, pp. 96-112.

Despite the optimism of Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*, the nineteenth-century did not give way to global socialism but to a world-system of nation-states. Thus although they would have preferred to ignore the national question, Marxists in the twentieth century were compelled to admit the 'objective' reality of capitalism's 'world of nations' and to recognise the political strength of nationalism, despite the fact that Marx and Engels argued that nations were fated to disappear and particularisms to wither away. As such, Marxists were forced then to deal with nationalism, not just in theory but in practice. In terms of practice, Marxists proposed a number of solutions to the national question. In one view (associated above all with the name Rosa Luxemburg) it was argued that Marxists should have nothing to do with nationalism because it undermined class consciousness and diverted proletarians from their 'real' interests.⁵⁰ In another view (associated with Leninism), it was argued that Marxists could marry social and national liberation to the benefit of world socialism.⁵¹ For other Marxists however, nationalism was a necessary detour on the journey toward socialism. This contention was advanced by the Marxist Tom Nairn in the context of the rise of what he called 'neo-nationalism' in Britain.⁵² Indeed in his view Marxists must use nationalist struggles for socialist ends because nationalism was the central motor of social change. It was Nairn's argument in favour of separatism for those 'nations' on Britain's periphery that prompted Hobsbawm's reflections (published in 1977) on the problem of nationalism for socialist politics in the late nineteen seventies. Those reflections constitute an important chapter in the long story of Marxism's encounter with nationhood.

⁵⁰ On Luxemburg's proletarian internationalism, see A.K. Shelton, 'Rosa Luxemburg and the National Question,' *East European Quarterly*, 21, 1987, pp. 300-302 and J-H. Lun, 'Rosa Luxemburg and the Dialectics of Proletarian Internationalism and Social Patriotism,' *Science and Society*, 59, 4, 1995-6, pp. 498-530.

⁵¹ For the Leninist view on the relationship between socialism and nationalism, see W. Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy* (Princeton, 1984). Other assessment of this question were no less important, particularly that of the Austrian Marxist Otto Bauer. For his contribution, see E. Nimni, 'Introduction for the English Reading Audience,' in O. Bauer, *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy* (Minn., 2000). For a general overview of debates among Marxists on the national question in practice, see M. Löwy, 'Marxism and the National Question,' in R. Blackburn, ed., *Revolution and Class Struggle: A Reader in Marxist Politics* (New Jersey, 1978).

⁵² T. Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London, 1977). Nairn's views in this book, and his later response to Hobsbawm's view on the national question, will be considered in a later chapter of the thesis.

Could Marxists become nationalists as socialists like Nairn suggested they must? Not according to Hobsbawm. For him, Marxists could neither be nationalists in theory nor in practice.⁵³ They could not be in theory because nationalist theory, he argued, was irrational and sustained by a set of myths which Marxists should refuse because they bore no relation to historical reality – the myth that nations must always have states, the myth that nations are eternal and unchanging, and the myth that nations constitute the 'a priori eternal data of human society.'⁵⁴ These myths, Hobsbawm argued, promoted the view that state independence was the only 'mode of satisfying the demands of any group with some claim to a territorial base' and obfuscated the almost universal problem 'of how to organize the actual co-existence of different ethnic, racial, linguistic and other groups in areas which are practically indivisible.'⁵⁵ As in theory, so in practice. Marxists could not be nationalist in practice, Hobsbawm argued, because 'nationalism by definition subordinates all other interests to those of its specific nation.'⁵⁶ In his view, nationalism undermined two central axioms of Marxist politics: first, that nation-states were always divided by class and, second, that ideologies of class collaboration like nationalism were inimical to socialism.⁵⁷ Nationalism was also antithetical, he contended, to the Marxian vision of 'some form of association or organizational union of nations, possibly preceding...the eventual dissolution of national into global or generally human culture.'⁵⁸ Marxists could not be nationalists because their homeland was a universal socialist culture; or alternatively, they must repudiate particularism because they were committed to internationalism or cosmopolitanism.⁵⁹ Thus reflecting on Nairn's *The*

⁵³ Marxists....and historians, according to Hobsbawm, could not be nationalists. For his argument that historians could not be nationalists, see E. Hobsbawm, 'The Historian between the Quest for the University and the Quest for Identity,' *Diogenes*, 168, 42/2, 1994, pp. 51-63.

⁵⁴ E. Hobsbawm, 'Reflections on "The Break-up of Britain",' *New Left Review*, 1/105, 1977, p. 10. The argument that nationalist theory is 'irrational' has been made more recently. For this view, see A. Vincent, 'Power and Vacuity: Nationalist Ideology in the Twentieth Century,' in M. Freeden, ed., *Reassessing Political Ideologies: The Durability of Dissent* (London and New York, 2001), pp. 139-140.

⁵⁵ Hobsbawm, 'Reflections on "The Break-up of Britain",' p. 8.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4. For a similar view, consult R.N. Berki, 'On Marxian Thought and the Problem of International Relations,' *World Politics*, 24, 1, 1971, pp. 97-99.

⁵⁸ Hobsbawm, 'Reflections on "The Break-up of Britain",' p. 10.

⁵⁹ The vision of an 'association or organizational union' is internationalist; the 'dissolution of national into global or general culture' is cosmopolitan. *Ibid.* On the difference between internationalism and cosmopolitanism, see C. Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Buckingham, 1997), p. 26.

Break-Up of Britain, Hobsbawm felt obliged to remind his readers of 'the basic fact that Marxists as such are not nationalists.'⁶⁰

For Hobsbawm, this view did not imply that Marxist patronage should be withheld from all nationalist movements. Indeed he supposed that Marxists could be proud of their own nations and that they could or should sponsor specific nationalisms in certain circumstances. However, given that Marxism rightly viewed nations as historical phenomena, in his opinion the correct Marxist attitude towards nationalism in practice was 'not unsympathetic, but contingent and not absolute.'⁶¹ 'The fundamental criterion of Marxist pragmatic judgment,' he declared, 'has always been whether nationalism as such, or any specific case of it, advances the cause of socialism; or conversely, how to prevent it from inhibiting its progress; or alternatively, how to mobilize it as a force to assist its progress.'⁶² It was from this Archimedian point that Hobsbawm damned Nairn's political prescriptions in *The Break-Up of Britain* – national separatism, Hobsbawm contended, would not dig capitalism's grave. Hence although Marxists were 'neither for nor against independent statehood for any nation'⁶³ in principle, and did not maintain the *a priori* view that big nations were to be preferred to small ones, or unitary states to federal ones, there was no good reason, in Hobsbawm's opinion, for supposing that the break-up of Britain (or any other state) would promote international socialism. To his mind, the establishment of national states as such could not be transformed into a mechanism for producing socialist change either in addition to or as a replacement for the 'Marxian historic mechanism' - which, he argued, 'includes the formation of *some* nation-states as an essential part of capitalist development, and a crucial strategic role for *some* national movements; but not what nationalism requires, namely a charter for *any* such state or movement.'⁶⁴ To suggest otherwise, he maintained, was to except nationalism not as fact and a contingent aspect of socialist struggle but to 'welcome (it) as ideology and programme.'⁶⁵ Painting nationalism red, he proposed, would

⁶⁰ Hobsbawm, 'Reflections on "The Break-up of Britain",' p. 8.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 10.

⁶² Ibid. According to some, any support for 'national liberation' always ends up conflicting with Marxism's ostensible cosmopolitanism. See M. Löwy, *Fatherland or Mother Earth? Essays on the National Question* (London, 1998), pp. 58-60.

⁶³ Hobsbawm, 'Reflections on "The Break-up of Britain",' p. 9.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 12.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 14.

'change the ideology and undermine the "science"'⁶⁶ of the Marxian world-view. With those socialist political artists like Nairn who suggested painting nationalism this colour, the detour, Hobsbawm concluded, had become the journey.

According to Hobsbawm under what circumstances then might Marxists support nationalism in his own present? It was clear, he argued, why Marxists had championed nationalism in the past. For instance Marx's advocacy of nationhood for certain states in the nineteenth century was an example of legitimate Marxist support for nationalism. The criteria here was the development of bourgeois society, that is, Marxists would champion nationalism to the degree that it could be understood as facilitating the full development of the capitalist mode of production.⁶⁷ This 'nationalism' was not nationalist in the current sense of that term, Hobsbawm suggested, because 'it did not envisage a world of nation-states irrespective of size and resources' – it maintained that only a limited number states were viable on certain economic and political criteria – and because it '*de facto* abandoned the national homogeneity of most accepted "nation-states".'⁶⁸ Hobsbawm also recognised the importance and value of the Leninist strategy of marrying national and social liberation in the anti-fascist period and in the context of 'imperialist exploitation'.⁶⁹ In both cases, he believed, nationalism was understood as a progressive force facilitating rather than inhibiting socialist advance. More generally, Hobsbawm proudly pointed to a past of Marxists sponsorship of nations other than their own, whether it be English communist support for Scottish and Welsh nationhood or European communist support for anti-colonial nationalisms - something, he indicated, which was an indication of Marxism's fundamental non-nationalism. But what about in the present? What contemporary nationalisms, according to Hobsbawm, would Marxists support?

⁶⁶ Ibid., 22.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 4. For more on Marx's support for certain nations in the nineteenth century, see M. Forman, *Nationalism and the International Labor Movement: The Idea of the Nation in Socialist and Anarchist Theory* (University Park, Penn. 1998), pp. 48-51. Engels, of course, established the insensitive criteria of 'historic' and 'non-historic' nations. For his idea, see C. Herod, *The Nation in the History of Marxian Thought: the Concept of Nations with History and Nations without History* (The Hague, 1976).

⁶⁸ Hobsbawm, 'Reflections on "The Break-up of Britain",' p. 4. For Hobsbawm's own understanding of these distinctions in the nineteenth century, see his *The Age of Capital*, pp. 103-121.

⁶⁹ Hobsbawm, 'Reflections on "The Break-up of Britain",' p. 10. For more on Marxism's reconciliation with nationalism in the anti-fascist period in Britain, see M. Heinemann, 'The People's Front and the Intellectuals,' in J. Fyrth, ed., *Britain, Fascism and the Popular Front* (Labour, 1985), pp. 157-186. Also consult S. Howe, 'Labour Patriotism, 1939-83,' in R. Samuel, ed., *Patriotism and the Making and Unmaking of British National Identity, vol. 1 History and Politics* (London, 1989).

In fact in his critique of *The Break-Up of Britain* Hobsbawm offered no contemporary examples of nationalist movements which Marxists might champion. In this sense his conception of how Marxists might deal with the national question in practice was general and unspecific. Hobsbawm proved far more adept at pointing to those nationalist movements from which Marxists should withhold their fraternal support. Separatist nationalisms in Britain and Europe, Irish nationalisms in Ulster, little-nation chauvinism and big-nation chauvinism – none of these examples of the phenomenon were to be welcomed by Marxists.⁷⁰ Indeed Hobsbawm argued that even in those situations where socialists had supported national movements in the past such a strategy was not beyond critique. Indeed there were few cases, he argued, where 'Marxists succeeded in establishing or maintaining themselves as the leading force in their national movement.'⁷¹ More often 'they [Marxists] have either become subordinate to, or been absorbed by, or pushed aside by non-Marxist or anti-Marxist nationalism.'⁷² In the great majority of cases, Hobsbawm contended, nationalism had eventually swamped Marxism, recouping the nation for itself. The history of the attempt to marry socialism and nationalism in Ireland provided a poignant example: James Connolly was remembered as a nationalist martyr not a Marxist class warrior.⁷³ In the end there appeared no amicable marriage between Marxism and nationalism – the relationship always ended in divorce, Hobsbawm seemed to suggest, with nationalism most often running away with the family property. Surveying the history of the relationship between nationalism and socialism, Hobsbawm concluded that 'the Luxemburgist case is not entirely unrealistic.'⁷⁴

To further strengthen his position, Hobsbawm argued that conditions where Marxists might have supported nationalism in the past were no longer operative in the present. Not only, following the process of decolonization, were there few examples of existing colonial states, hence snapping any Leninist link 'between anti-imperialism

⁷⁰ Hobsbawm, 'Reflections on 'The Break-up of Britain'', pp. 11 and 22.

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 10-11. For a more recent elucidation of this argument, see M. Cox, 'Historical Materialism after the War,' in M. Rupert and H. Smith, eds., *Historical Materialism and Globalization* (London and New York, 2002), p. 71. Also see S. Makdisi et al., 'Introduction: Marxism, Communism and History,' in Makdisi et al., eds., *Marxism beyond Marxism* (New York, 1996), pp. 1-13 and F. Jameson, 'Globalization and Strategy,' *New Left Review*, II/4, 2000, pp. 49-68.

⁷² Hobsbawm, 'Reflections on 'The Break-up of Britain'', p. 11.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 13.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 11.

and the slogan of national self-determination,⁷⁵ but there was now a transformed relationship between global capitalist development and nationhood – effectively, he contended, a transnational mode of production had facilitated the decline of the medium-to-large nation state, rendering national independence a historical anachronism. So although Marxists were not in principle against national independence for any particular nation there appeared no case where such independence was possible; and although Marxism was not in principle opposed to nationalism, there was no good reason for Marxists to support nationalist movements in present circumstances. Hence, given that most contemporary nationalisms were separatist rather than unitary, and that capitalism was now transnational rather than national, and therefore unlikely to serve the purpose of developing bourgeois society, it was hard to imagine, from Hobsbawm's perspective, how Marxists could support any form of nationalism at all. In this view Marxists were likely not just to repudiate nationalism but to be anti-nationalist.

However, in an article published (1983) shortly after Hobsbawm's reflections on *The Break-Up of Britain*, he did provide a series of reasons for why socialists might support patriotism in contemporary conditions.⁷⁶ Indeed he suggested that it was not just of paramount importance for socialists to engage with patriotism, to take note of its strength and appeal, but to reconcile socialism with it. In this mind Hobsbawm believed that Marxism should appropriate nationhood for socialist ends. Along with E.P. Thompson and Stuart Hall, Hobsbawm argued, in the context of the Falklands conflict, that it was important for socialists to agitate for a vision of the nation that was not incompatible with the tenets of international socialism. Marxists, Hobsbawm argued, might be right to be wary of patriotism because it undermined class consciousness and was traditionally associated with and better suited to conservative or right-wing politics. However, he suggested, it was precisely because 'patriotism...conflicts with class consciousness' and 'ruling and hegemonic classes

⁷⁵ Hobsbawm, 'Reflections on "The Break-up of Britain",' p. 11.

⁷⁶ E. Hobsbawm, 'Falklands Fallout,' in Hobsbawm, *Politics for a Rational Left*, pp. 51-62. The article originally appeared in *Marxism Today* in January 1983. At this time Hobsbawm was on the editorial board of the Communist Party periodical. See Kaye, *The British Marxist Historians*, p. 164.

have an enormous advantage in mobilizing it for their purposes' that Marxists needed to reconcile their class politics with what he called national patriotism.⁷⁷

Indeed, according to him, patriotism was not necessarily a barrier to socialist advance. The proof of the pudding, he insisted, had been in the eating. In the Chartist period a 'militant class consciousness' had co-existed with national chauvinism among Britain's working class. In the popular-front period Marxists had successfully allied patriotism to socialism's anti-fascist cause. And following the end of the war international communists in Italy and France had effectively mobilized the national tradition for socialist ends.⁷⁸ Each case had met with some success, and part of that success, Hobsbawm contended, rested on the ability of socialists to 'wrest away national traditions from the bourgeoisie, to capture the national flag so long waved by the right...'.⁷⁹ None of this success, Hobsbawm suggested, proved that patriotism was any less susceptible 'to ruling-class jingoism, to anti-foreign nationalism and...to racism'⁸⁰ than socialists had traditionally supposed. But when socialism and patriotism were harnessed together, as they had been during the popular front period, they multiplied not only 'the force of the working-class but [also] its capacity to place itself at the head of a broad coalition for social change, and they even give it possibility of wresting hegemony from the class enemy.'⁸¹ Patriotism, in this view, was not just a contested discourse, but crucial to the Left's chances of securing political ascendancy. For Hobsbawm in this mind Marxism could not be anti-nationalist. Rather it must appropriate national patriotism for its own purpose.⁸²

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 58. Hobsbawm did not make a distinction here between 'patriotism' and 'nationalism'. Indeed in his formulation 'national patriotism' he appeared to conflate the two. For an argument that nationalism and patriotism should be distinguished, see M. Viroli, *For Love of Country: An Essay on patriotism and Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 1-17. Viroli used Hobsbawm as an interesting example of a scholar who used patriotism as a synonym for nationalism (see Ibid., p. 1, n. 1). He took his examples from E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1870* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 46 and 75.

⁷⁸ The examples are outlined in Hobsbawm, 'Falklands Fallout,' pp. 58-59. Also see Hobsbawm, 'Fifty Years of Peoples' Fronts,' in Hobsbawm, *Politics for a Rational Left*, pp. 103-117.

⁷⁹ Hobsbawm, 'Falklands Fallout,' p. 60. This manoeuvre had a long history in British socialism. See P. Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack: Englishness, Patriotism and the British Left, 1881-1924* (Woodbridge, 1998). For an overview of the attempt to make patriotism synonymous with socialism in the twentieth century, see M. Taylor, 'Patriotism, History and the Left in Twentieth-Century Britain,' *The Historical Journal*, 33, 1990, pp. 971-987.

⁸⁰ Hobsbawm, 'Falklands Fallout,' p. 60.

⁸¹ Ibid. For his historical demonstration of this point, see Hobsbawm, 'Fifty Years of Peoples' Fronts,' pp. 103-117. For a dissenting view, see P. Anderson, *Spectrum* (London and New York, 2005), p. 290.

⁸² In this mind Hobsbawm would find himself in company with a lot of non-Marxist socialists – including, according to Paul Ward, Hugh Dalton, Ramsay MacDonald and Richard Crossman. See P.

In this mind Hobsbawm overturned his earlier view that socialism was likely to end up subordinate to nationalism in any marriage of the two. Indeed, from the perspective of 'Reflections on "The Break-up of Britain",' Hobsbawm's radical patriotism was likely to undermine what he considered the central animating purpose of Marxist politics: that nations were divided by class and that ideologies of national patriotism represented a means to divert the proletariat from an awareness of its true interests. In addition, it seemed to undermine the internationalism or cosmopolitanism which he argued was the ultimate horizon of Marxist politics. In his earlier mind it was dangerous for Marxists to be patriots, in his latter mind it was 'dangerous to leave patriotism exclusively to the right.'⁸³ In the earlier, Marxists should not paint nationalism red, in the latter he recommended that socialist political artists get out their paint brushes.⁸⁴ There was no good reason for supposing that in his radical patriot register Hobsbawm was not widening 'the already evident gap between Marxism as the analysis of what is, or is coming into being, and Marxism as the formulation of what we want to happen'⁸⁵ as he argued that Nairn's separatist nationalism did. More dangerously, his (British or English) patriotism and his dismissal of Scottish separatist nationalism left him open to the charge that his internationalism was a disguise for his preference for large states at the expense of smaller states. The charge is perhaps not justified but his ambiguity concerning Marxism's relationship to nationalism invited it.⁸⁶

Thus when it came to the nexus between socialism and nationalism, Hobsbawm seemed caught in two minds. In one mind, in his reflections on *The Break-up of Britain*, he argued that Marxists could not be nationalists, suggesting that given the relationship between nationhood and globalization that Marxists should resist the temptation to paint nationalism red. Endorsing a 'Luxemburgist'

Ward, 'Preparing for the People's War: Labour and Patriotism in the 1930s,' *Labour History Review*, 67, 2, 2002, p. 172. For a more recent example of this position, see J. Schwarzmantel, *Socialism and the Idea of the Nation* (New York, 1991), p. 1.

⁸³ Hobsbawm, 'Falklands Fallout,' p. 60.

⁸⁴ This point was also made in A. Barnett, 'After Nationalism,' in Samuel, ed., *Patriotism and the Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*, p. 147.

⁸⁵ Hobsbawm, 'Reflections on "The Break-up of Britain",' p. 13.

⁸⁶ Although Anderson speculates that it can be justified. See P. Anderson, *Spectrum* (London and New York, 2004), p. 292. The charge is not justified from the perspective of his earlier writings on the break-up of Britain.

interpretation of the relationship between socialism and nationalism, he argued not only that in many cases Marxists could not 'avoid swimming dead against the stream of local patriotism,'⁸⁷ but also that the majority of socialist movements 'have tended to become national not only in form but in substance i.e., nationalist.'⁸⁸ The latter development, he suggested, should be lamented. In another mind, in the context of the Falklands conflict, he suggested not only that socialists should attempt to define the nation in socialist ways but that the success of socialism was dependent on its ability to reconcile itself with patriotism. Now he argued that socialists could not legitimise their political discourse unless it was reconciled to what Gramsci called the 'national-popular'. These two minds, perhaps, were a reflection of Hobsbawm's biography, that is, his anti-nationalism was a consequence of his formation as a communist in Berlin in 1932 and his later attempt to reconcile socialism with patriotism was an effect of having actually joined the Communist Party during the popular front period when such a reconciliation seemed possible. Hobsbawm pointed to this dissonance in *Interesting Times*: 'Politically, having actually joined a Communist Party in 1936, I belong to the era of anti-fascist unity and the Popular Front. It continues to determine my strategic thinking in politics to this day. But emotionally, as one converted as a teenager in the Berlin of 1932, I belonged to the generation tied by an almost unbreakable umbilical cord to hope of the world revolution, and of its original home, the October Revolution, however sceptical or critical of the USSR.'⁸⁹ The dichotomy, as Perry Anderson suggested, had an important impact on his thought⁹⁰ - no more so, it might be argued, than on his thinking about the nexus between socialism and nationalism.

⁸⁷ Hobsbawm, 'Reflections on "The Break-up of Britain",' p. 13.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, p. 218.

⁹⁰ Anderson, *Spectrum*, p. 285.

Do the Workers have a Country? Class Consciousness and National Identity

Does the proletariat have a fatherland? When clothed in their best cosmopolitan dress, Marx and Engels answered this question with thundering clarity: 'The nationality of the worker is neither French, nor English, nor German, it is labour, free slavery, self-huckersting. His government is neither French, nor English, nor German, it is capital,'⁹¹ 'modern industrial labour, modern subjection to capital ... has stripped [the worker] of every trace of national character.'⁹² Capitalist relations of production, according to the analysis in the *Communist Manifesto*, allowed 'no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment"'.⁹³ It rendered superfluous not just the 'heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour' and 'the motley feudal ties that bound man to his "natural superiors,"' but also the adhesive of nationality.⁹⁴ According to Engels, 'the proletarians in all countries have one and the same interest, one and the same enemy, and one and the same struggle.'⁹⁵ The modern working class could have no interest in those particularisms, especially national particularisms, which had been rendered fatuous in a world where exploitation was cosmopolitan. Like justice and morality, nationality was 'a bourgeois prejudice,' an instance of bourgeois sophistry behind which lurked in ambush 'bourgeois interests.'⁹⁶ Working-class consciousness, according to Marx and Engels, necessarily transcended contingent national borders; the proletariat's commitment to reason necessarily repudiated 'irrational' commitments like those of nationalists to their national *Gemeinschaft*. The modern working class was the historical negation of capitalism's 'world of nations.' It was a universal, and therefore

⁹¹ K. Marx, 'Draft of an Article on Friedrich List's Book *Das Nationale System Der Politischen Oekonomie* (1845),' in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 4 (New York, 1975-) p. 280 cited in M. Löwy, *Fatherland or Mother Earth? Marxists on the National Question* (London, 1998), p. 7. For a critique of the view expressed, see M. Löwy, 'Fatherland or Mother Earth? Nationalism and Internationalism from a Socialist Perspective,' in *Socialist Register 1989* (London, 1989), p. 216.

⁹² K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, org. 1848 (London, 1967), p. 92. For Marx's argument that the bourgeoisie universalised capitalist relations of production, see S. Avineri, *The Political and Social Thought of Karl Marx* (New York, 1969), pp. 162-174.

⁹³ Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 82.

⁹⁴ Ibid. It was clear that most workers did not have a country when Marx and Engels wrote the *Manifesto*. Nowhere did the working class have the vote, nowhere was there a welfare state, nowhere was there a system of public elementary education, and nowhere were there 'national' trade union movements or 'national' socialist parties. On this point, see Forman, *Internationalism and the Labour Movement*, p. 47.

⁹⁵ F. Engels, 'The Festival of Nations in London,' *Rheinische Jahrbucher zur gesellschaftlichen Reform*, II (1946), cited (without page number) in M. Johnstone, 'Internationalism,' in T. Bottomore et al., eds., *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, Second Edition (London, 1991), p. 260.

⁹⁶ Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 92.

cosmopolitan, class, 'an international historical subject' with an 'international historical aim': the establishment of planetary socialism.⁹⁷ 'The working men,' in short, 'have no country.'⁹⁸

It is a well-known, by-now almost well worn, Marxist mode of argument.⁹⁹ It has seemed persuasive to generations of Marxist class warriors who have sought to '[bring] to the forefront the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality.'¹⁰⁰ In their most cosmopolitan temper, Marxists unambiguously repudiated the very notion of a 'national' working class. For them, in Rosa Luxemburg's words, 'The International was the fatherland of the Proletariat.'¹⁰¹ Not that Marxists ignored the spectre of working-class nationalism. Generations of Marxists had been made all too aware of the national question and its effect on the development of working-class consciousness.¹⁰² They did not deny that nationalism existed, but they did argue that working-class nationalism was senseless.¹⁰³ The proletariat's interest was world-historical not national, its purpose universal not

⁹⁷ See Löwy, 'Fatherland or Mother Earth? Nationalism and Internationalism from a Socialist Perspective,' p. 214. For a critique of this perspective, see K. Neilsen, 'Socialism and Nationalism,' *Imprints*, 2 (1998), p. 215.

⁹⁸ Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 95. This thesis has prompted a very interesting debate among Marxists about what Marx actually meant by this statement. For contributions to this debate see, S. Bloom, *The World of Nations: A Study of the National Implications in the Works of Karl Marx* (New York, 1941), p. 26; R. Rosdolsky, 'Worker and Fatherland: A Note on a Passage in *The Communist Manifesto*,' *Science and Society*, 29, 3, 1965, p. 335; B. Ollman, 'Marx's Vision of Communism: A Reconstruction,' *Critique*, 8 (Summer 1977), p. 22; M. Löwy, *Fatherland or Mother Earth? Essays on Marxism and the National Question* (London, 1998), pp. 12-13; and Forman, *Internationalism and the Labour Movement*, pp. 43-44.

⁹⁹ Of course this does not constitute the only Marxist interpretation of nation and nationalism. The (almost) full range of Marxist positions on nation and nationalism can be found in E. Nimni, *Marxism and Nationalism: Theoretical Origins of a Political Crisis* (London, 1991); Löwy, *Fatherland or Mother Earth?*; and Forman, *Internationalism and the Labour Movement*.

¹⁰⁰ Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 234. According to Alan Gilbert internationalism was central to Marx's political practice. See A. Gilbert, 'Marx on Internationalism and War,' in M. Cohen et al., *Marx, Justice, and History: A 'Philosophy and Public Affairs' Reader* (New Jersey, 1980), pp. 185-208.

¹⁰¹ Rosa Luxemburg cited (but citation unspecified) in S.E. Bronner, *Rosa Luxemburg: A Revolutionary For Our Times* (New York, 1987), p. 23. For further elucidation of Luxemburg's interpretation of internationalism, see Forman, *Internationalism and the Labour Movement*, pp. 83-94.

¹⁰² Against what now appears like an orthodoxy, even amongst Marxists, Hobsbawm always stressed this point. See E. Hobsbawm, 'Some Reflections on Nationalism,' in T.J. Nossiter, A.H. Hanson and S. Rokkan, eds., *Imagination and precision in the Social Sciences: Essays in Memory of Peter Nettl* (London, 1972), p. 386.

¹⁰³ On the necessarily cosmopolitan intent of working class action see Forman, *Internationalism and the Labour Movement*, p. 47. For a critique of Marxist cosmopolitanism see S. Avineri, 'Marxism and Nationalism,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 26 (1991), pp. 654-55.

particular. As the only truly universal class, the future of socialist enlightenment was guaranteed them. What was Hobsbawm's assessment of this argument?

His assessment was blunt. Not only was 'it wrong to assume that workers have no country,' but class-consciousness 'neither excludes nor, usually, dominates national sentiments.'¹⁰⁴ In brief, the assessment of Marx at his most cosmopolitan, and his followers at their most a-national, had been seriously flawed: 'working-class consciousness,' Hobsbawm suggested, 'is probably politically secondary to other kinds of consciousness,'¹⁰⁵ including, most importantly, national consciousness. Yet this conclusion left a number of important questions unanswered. For Hobsbawm the argument that 'the workers have a country' was no more satisfactory than its opposite. A more nuanced interpretation of the relationship between proletariat and nation, he consistently argued, was required. Did the fact that national identity most often trumps working-class consciousness imply that class did not exist? Did it imply that national identity is *the* primary form of human identity? If the workers had a country now and in the past did this fact exclude the possibility that international socialist consciousness might one day subdue national consciousness? Satisfied with proving the existence of working class nationalism, or with explicating the determinative value of nation over class in world history, and from there the invalidity of Marxist analyses of nation and nationalism, most students of the national question have left these questions unanswered. Hobsbawm did not. As we shall see, if Hobsbawm could agree with nationalists that the workers do indeed (at certain historical moments) have a country, this did not imply for him the need to either overthrow the Marxist theory of class or a Marxist analysis of nation and nationalism.¹⁰⁶ In his

¹⁰⁴ E. Hobsbawm, 'What is the Workers' Country?,' pp. 58 and 49. This did not lead to the conclusion that workers were necessarily and always nationalist. For the distinction between 'national identity' and 'nationalism' see Löwy, *Fatherland or Mother Earth?*, p. 213-214.

¹⁰⁵ Hobsbawm, 'What is the Workers' Country?,' p. 60.

¹⁰⁶ Students of the national question in the Habsburg Empire and the Russian Empire before 1918 will recognise this point as the touchstone of both Lenin's and Bauer's understanding of the relationship between class and nation. It has been argued that it also constituted the starting point of Marx's assessments of national liberation movements in Poland and Ireland. On Lenin's understanding of the national question, see W. Connor, 'Leninist Nationality Policy: Solution to the "National Question",' *Hungarian Studies Review*, 16, 1-2, 1989, pp. 23-46 and B. Williams, 'Lenin and the Problem of Nationalities,' *History of European Ideas*, 15, 4-6, 1992, pp. 611-617; on Bauer's understanding of the national question, see A.D. Low, 'Otto Bauer, Socialist Theoretician of Nationalism, and his Critics,' *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*, 222, 1-2, 1995, pp. 103-110; and on Marx's interpretation of events in Poland and Ireland, see E. Benner, *Really Existing Nationalisms: A Post-Communist View from Marx and Engels* (Oxford, 1997) and J.H. Lim, 'Marx's Theory of Imperialism and the Irish National Question,' *Science and Society*, 56, 2, 1992, pp. 163-178.

analysis of the national question he did neither. For him, the nexus between Marxism and nationalism – including the question of what was the workers' country - was best explicated using the tools of Marxist analysis.

Hobsbawm's assessment of the relationship between class and nation began from a perceived need to problematise the notion of proletarian identity. The tendency, he argued, to advance an either/or conception of the relationship between working class and nation – either the working class was nationalist or internationalist – was likely to end in a series of blind alleys, with the problem obscured not elucidated. For Hobsbawm, if it was clear that the workers did have a country, it did not necessarily follow 'that they have only one, and that we know what it is.'¹⁰⁷ It was not just that a 'national' working class never anywhere constituted a homogenous national body.¹⁰⁸ It was not only that it was divisions other than nationality – like those of religion - which were most likely to fracture any 'national' working class.¹⁰⁹ It was not just that it was wrong to conclude that any particular working class's identification with a specific nation was 'eternal and unchanging.'¹¹⁰ And it was not just that most 'national' working classes were composed of individual workers with multiple identifications.¹¹¹ It was that in most cases a working class's national identity did not necessarily conflict with its identity as a class. Indeed, no matter how strong any particular working class's attachment to its nation, no matter how virulent proletarian nationalism, it did not prevent the rise of what Hobsbawm, following Lenin, called a 'trade union consciousness,' that is 'the recognition that workers as such need to organize effectively against employers in order to defend and improve their conditions as hired hands.'¹¹² It was only when a commitment to class conflicted

¹⁰⁷ Hobsbawm, 'What is the Workers' Country?,' p. 49.

¹⁰⁸ See Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, pp. 118-124 for the reasons why. In addition consult Hobsbawm, 'What is the Workers' Country?,' p. 49 and E. Hobsbawm, 'Working Class Internationalism,' in F. van Holthoon and M. van der Linden, eds., *Internationalism in the Labour Movement* (New York, 1988), pp. 12-13.

¹⁰⁹ Hobsbawm, 'What is the Workers' Country?,' p. 49. On the importance of religion as a solvent of working-class unity, see A.C. Hepburn, 'Work, Class, and Religion in Belfast, 1871-1911,' *Irish Economic and Social History*, 10, 1983, pp. 33-50 and D. Geary, 'Working-Class Identities in Europe, 1850s-1930s,' *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 45, 1, 1995, pp. 20-34.

¹¹⁰ See Hobsbawm, 'Some Reflections on "The Break-Up of Britain",' p. 4 and Hobsbawm, 'What is the Workers' Country?,' p. 49.

¹¹¹ Hobsbawm, 'Working Class Internationalism,' p. 13; and Hobsbawm, 'What is the Workers' Country?,' p. 49.

¹¹² Hobsbawm, 'What is the Workers' Country?,' p. 57-58; Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, p. 121; and Hobsbawm, 'Working Class Internationalism,' pp. 9-10. For Lenin's conception of trade union consciousness, see J.A. Debrizzi, 'Marx and Lenin: Class, Party and Democracy,' *Studies in Soviet*

with a worker's national identity, or where a national movement existed prior to the formation of a working class, that something like a national problem arose within any particular proletariat, that national consciousness proved a solvent of working-class unity. It was in these situations – most often precipitated by migration or immigration, by the rise of 'outside' nationalist movements, or by rapid changes in the composition of national proletariats - that nation trumped class among workers.¹¹³ National identity, Hobsbawm argued, did not always and everywhere suppress class, at least not in the objective sense of 'trade union consciousness,' and national consciousness, as opposed to nationalism, was not automatically irreconcilable with class politics. What national identity did tend to obliterate was something he called 'socialist consciousness,' an awareness of the cosmopolitan character of proletarian interest and intent.¹¹⁴ It was this form of class-consciousness, Hobsbawm concluded, that had been comprehensively routed by both a national identity, and where they came into contact, by nationalism.

This argument would provide mostly cold comfort for those class warriors who would seek to construct a proletarian identity that repudiated national particularisms. Where it did provide comfort for socialists was in its ability to explode many of the convenient myths of nationalism, myths notoriously deaf to nuance. It was precisely attention to paradox, however, that was absolutely necessary, Hobsbawm argued, when considering the relationship of class to nation in any particular 'national' working class, and when considering the potential solidarity of workers across national borders. How else could one explain the genuinely 'internationalist' character of 'trade union consciousness' in places such as Budapest or

Thought, 24, 1982, pp. 95-112; A. Shandro, "'Consciousness from Without": Marxism, Lenin and the Proletariat,' *Science and Society*, 59, 3, 1995, pp. 268-297; and R. Mayer, 'Plekhanov, Lenin and Working-Class Consciousness,' *Studies in East European Thought*, 49, 1997, pp. 159-185.

¹¹³ Hobsbawm, 'What is the Workers' Country?', p. 53-55. But Hobsbawm provided an important caveat here. Nationalist movements, although appealing to the working class, did not often originate in working classes. On the sociology of nationalism, see E. Balibar, 'The Nation Form: History and Ideology,' *Review*, 13, 3, 1990, pp. 329-361 and M. Hroch, 'From Nationalist Movements to the Fully-Formed Nation,' *New Left Review*, I/198, 1993, pp. 3-20. The most searching analyses of the sociology of nationalism have taken place in relation to inter-war fascist movements. For an overview of these analyses, see T. Mason, *Nazism, Fascism and the Working Class* (London, 1992).

¹¹⁴ See Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, p. 121. Once again Hobsbawm's distinction between 'trade union consciousness' (an objective sense of class) and 'socialist consciousness' (the marriage of an objective and subjective sense of class) owed much to the Leninist tradition. For an overview of this distinction in Marxism, see A. Przeworski, 'Proletariat into a Class: The Process of Class Formation from Karl Kautsky's *The Class Struggle* to Recent Controversies,' *Politics and Society*, 7, 4, 1977, pp. 343-401.

Rhondda?¹¹⁵ How else could one explain those situations, like that prevalent in pre-1914 Vienna, where communal and national differences did *not* prevent a social democratic party from organising workers on a class basis?¹¹⁶ How else could one explain why it had once been possible to organise an all-Belgium or an all-British working class? It was not only specific instances where 'objective' class interest had proved resistant to fragmentation along communal or national lines within 'national' working classes that advised caution when considering the relationship between class and nation. There were also concrete instances of genuine working-class internationalism, where class interest did span national boundaries and communal divisions, where, as Hobsbawm argued, workers experienced internationalism as a genuine reality of their class situation.¹¹⁷ Despite this, Hobsbawm lamented, class identity, in the sense of an objective sense of classness, did not prevent other forms of identity emerging within any particular working class, especially national identity; and objective class consciousness, far from guaranteeing the rise of a socialist consciousness, most often succumbed to other forms of identity when they came into conflict.¹¹⁸ But could a properly materialist analysis account for this? Hobsbawm argued that it could.

Armed with a conception of class-consciousness based on what we might call the 'territorial logic of economic development,'¹¹⁹ Hobsbawm argued that a proletarian cosmopolitan class interest was structurally impossible in a capitalist world-system composed of nation-states. Although class, in its objective sense, was a feature of both pre-capitalist and capitalist societies, the span and depth of class-consciousness, he argued, was determined by the size of the economy in which subaltern classes

¹¹⁵ Hobsbawm, 'Working Class Internationalism,' p. 9 and Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, p. 120.

¹¹⁶ Ibid and Hobsbawm, 'What is the Workers' Country?,' p. 54. On the pre-war Austrian Social Democratic Party, see G. Strong, 'German-Austrian Social Democracy and the Nation State Idea: 1889-1918,' *History of European Ideas*, 15, 4-6, 1992, 583-588 and M. Steger, 'Victor Adler and Austrian Social Democracy, 1889-1914' and N. Leser, 'The Austro-Marxists and the Nationalities Question,' both in S.E. Bronner and P.F. Wagner, eds., *Vienna: The World of Yesterday, 1889-1914* (New Jersey, 1997).

¹¹⁷ For examples of this, see 'Working Class Internationalism,' pp. 8-9. As Hobsbawm explained, 'the appeal to internationalism or, what was almost the same in large countries, to inter-regionalism, was not entirely ineffective. Differences of language, nationality and religion did not by themselves make the formation of a unified class consciousness impossible, especially when national groups of workers did not compete, for each had their niche in the labour market.' See Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, p. 120.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 120.

¹¹⁹ I borrow this phrase from the exciting work of the Marxist geographer David Harvey. See D. Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (London, 1999), pp. 23-31. The idea is implicit in Hobsbawm's work.

subsisted, by the experienced scale of economic reality in which they lived, laboured and struggled. Pre-capitalist societies, based on parcelized, essentially local, economic units, were characterised by low 'classness' among subaltern strata; class and class conflict still existed but class consciousness was typically fragmented and bounded by the economic scale of production and distribution.¹²⁰ Capitalist societies, on the other hand, coterminous with 'territorial states,' were typified by an expanded 'classness,' that is, characterised by what Hobsbawm called 'national' class-consciousness. In the modern economy, based on the inter-relationship between national economies, the 'real and effective classes are national.'¹²¹ The effective reality for the working class was the 'national' economy; the 'scale of class consciousness' was "'national" and not global.'¹²² 'In this sense our situation,' Hobsbawm argued, 'is still analogous to that of pre-capitalist societies though on a higher level.'¹²³ In a capitalist world-system made up of nation-states, cosmopolitan class-consciousness was structurally impossible – the experienced economic reality for the working class was still that of the nation-state. Global class consciousness remained an unrealised possibility, whose transposition into an existential reality awaited the genuine transnationalization of the world economy. Hence, if nation trumped class, Hobsbawm argued, then a territorial logic of economic development could explain why this was so.

For Hobsbawm there were material factors, alongside the territorial logic of capitalist development, which explained the necessarily national form of proletarian consciousness in the modern period. Not only had 'the national economy of the state'

¹²⁰ E. Hobsbawm, 'Class Consciousness in History,' in I. Mezaros, ed., *Class Consciousness and History* (London, 1972) p. 10. See also E. Hobsbawm, 'The Development of the World Economy,' *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 3, 1979, pp. 313-314 and Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, pp. 128-129.

¹²¹ Hobsbawm, 'Class Consciousness in History,' , p. 11. On class and the economy in pre-capitalist societies, see the comments in E.M. Wood, 'Global Capital, National States,' in Rupert and Smith, eds., *Historical Materialism and Globalization*, p. 21. For a fuller treatment of this issue, see E.M. Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View* (London, 2002).

¹²² Hobsbawm, 'Class Consciousness in History,' p. 11. For a recent treatment of this issue, see S. Clarke, 'The Global Accumulation of Capital and the Periodisation of the Capitalist State Form,' in W. Bonefeld, R. Gunn and K. Psychopedis, eds., *Open Marxism*, vol. 1 (London, 1992).

¹²³ Hobsbawm, 'Class Consciousness in History.' p. 11. For an assessment of the 'national integration' of working classes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, see M. van der Linden, 'The National Integration of European Working Classes (1971-1914): Explaining the Casual Connection,' *International Review of Social History*, 33, 3, 1988, pp. 288-311.

been the most important defining force in workers lives.¹²⁴ Not only had the working class been nationalized from above through public education, through the extension of citizenship and democracy, and through the national homogenizing tendencies of 'national' mass media and 'national' culture.¹²⁵ But working-class organization itself - 'national' trade union movements, 'national' social democratic or labour parties – had effectively nationalized the masses from below. Indeed it was the mass movements of the working class in the nineteenth century which had exerted pressure on states to deliver democracy, education and early forms of 'national' welfare, effectively making workers into citizens. In the twentieth century there were more cogent reasons for workers to associate primarily with their nation-state, reasons fully struggled for and endorsed by 'international' class parties.¹²⁶ The welfare state, national labour laws and positive trade union legislation, the re-distribution of national income through taxation, and the nationalization of key industries – all the historic achievements of Western labour movements had further precipitated and deepened the 'nationalization of the masses'.¹²⁷ 'It was through internationalist movements which operated on a nation-wide or state-wide scale,' Hobsbawm argued, 'that national consciousness first developed for many a proletarian.'¹²⁸

For Hobsbawm, the nation-state and the national economy 'unified the class, since increasingly any social group had to pursue its political aims by exerting pressure on the *national* government, in favour of or against the legislation and administration of *national* laws.'¹²⁹ Nation-states at once nationalized the proletariat, making 'peasants into Frenchmen,'¹³⁰ and united geographically and (sometimes) linguistically and culturally dispersed groups of workers into a unified 'national' working class. From the late nineteenth century onwards, labour movements looked

¹²⁴ Hobsbawm, 'What is the Workers' Country?', p. 49. See also Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, p. 128.

¹²⁵ See Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, pp. 149-151. Here he sets out clearly how states made nations in the late nineteenth century. Even already established nation-states were forced into this process due to the democratisation of politics.

¹²⁶ See Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, pp. 126-129. See also Th. Van Tijn, 'Nationalism and the Socialist Workers' Movement,' in van Holthoon and van der Linden, eds., *Internationalism in the Labour Movement*, pp. 611-623.

¹²⁷ G.L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (New York, 1975).

¹²⁸ Hobsbawm, 'Working Class Internationalism,' p. 14.

¹²⁹ Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, p. 129. Italics in the original.

¹³⁰ See E. Weber, *Peasants into Frenchman: The Modernisation of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford, 1976).

to national governments to establish national laws which would regulate different aspects of workers' lives – from the length of the working day to the standard of working-class housing. By directing political pressure to the state, Hobsbawm contended, labour movements sought to secure laws which would be 'universally applicable to *all* workers'.¹³¹ These demands did not just have universal intent, they were not meant just to apply to all workers within a geographical space; they also had international implications. But as Hobsbawm concluded, 'the force of working-class unification within each nation inevitably replaced the hopes and theoretical assertions of working-class internationalism, except for a noble minority of militants and activists.'¹³² The logic of Hobsbawm's argument was clear: national identity has been as necessary and natural a form of consciousness among the working class as class identity, nationalism no less an authentic response to a capitalist world system based on nation-states than socialism. How could it have been otherwise? 'The reason why the most famous internationalist injunction of all calls upon the workers of all countries to unite,' Hobsbawm argued, 'was because they operate in different countries.'¹³³

What, according to Hobsbawm, did the intimate relationship between the working class and nationhood reveal about nationalism? It showed, first, that 'national consciousness' was a function of history not nature; and, second, Hobsbawm's argument implied that 'national consciousness' was potentially vulnerable to dissolution once its sustaining functions no longer operated.¹³⁴ Mass national consciousness was a product of the late nineteenth century – Hobsbawm would never tire of pointing this out – and was dependent on the existence of 'national economies,' on the nation-state as a vehicle of modernization.¹³⁵ It was also based on the historic nation state's ability to provide the only possible solution to the practical problems of everyday life: the ability to defend its citizens, to maintain their material and social conditions and to guarantee their further improvement. But as Hobsbawm

¹³¹ Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, p. 129. Italics in the original.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Hobsbawm, 'Working Class Internationalism,' p. 7.

¹³⁴ See 'Reflections on Nationalism,' *passim*, for Hobsbawm's earliest adumbration of this position; and *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, org. 1985 (Cambridge, 1990) particularly the first chapter, for his latest.

¹³⁵ For the relationship between nation-states and modernization see, of course, E. Gellner, *Nation and Nationalism* (London, 1983).

had been suggesting from the late nineteen seventies onwards, the nation state's ability to provide all these functions had been seriously called into question.¹³⁶ It was not just the increasing transnationalization of a now properly global capitalist economy. It was not just the growing threat of violence against which states could not protect their citizens. And it was not just that all sorts of communication technology made nonsense of 'national culture'. It was also that the nation state no longer appeared to provide any answers to the central problems that faced the world at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century, problems of ecological sustainability, of the proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, and of the widening gap between rich and poor.¹³⁷ If it was not able to guarantee the security, indeed the long-term survival of its citizens, might we expect to see the end of nationalism as a legitimate or even possible political programme, and the 'de-linking' of working classes from nation-states? Hobsbawm speculated that this process had already begun, that the nation state – in its nineteenth century progressive sense – was fast becoming no longer either adequate or viable. For the nation-state and nationalism, the writing, he argued, was on history's wall.

Hobsbawm's analysis of the nexus between national identity and class consciousness called into question most of the long-held beliefs of Marxist socialists. He suggested that class consciousness, although objective, in the sense that capitalism would always generate collective proletarian action against its operation in the form of trade-union struggle, was most often trumped by national identity when the two came into conflict. Although he contended that the two could co-exist easily enough when not in competition, this was cold comfort to most Marxists who had long argued that class identity would ultimately prevail over national identity. In many cases, as Hobsbawm pointed out, it did. However increasingly it did not and this seemed more true as the twentieth-century progressed. In addition, if a trade union consciousness

¹³⁶ See Hobsbawm, 'The Development of the World Economy,' passim, for an early intimation of this now distinctively Hobsbawmian argument. The argument has, of course, generated an intense debate among Marxists. For some of the more recent contributions to this debate, see L. Panitch, 'Globalization and the State,' in *Socialist Register 1997* (London, 1997); the various essays in W. Bonefeld and J. Holloway, eds., *Global Capital, National State and the Politics of Money* (London, 1996); J. Hirsch, 'Globalization of Capital, Nation-States and Democracy,' *Studies in Political Economy*, 54, 1997; W. Bonefeld, 'The Spectre of Globalization: On the Form and Content of the World Market,' in W. Bonefeld and K. Psychopedis, eds., *The Politics of Change: Globalization, Ideology and Critique* (Hampshire and New York, 2000); and Wood, 'Global Capital, National States' and the other contributions to Rupert and Smith, eds., *Historical Materialism and Globalization*.

¹³⁷ See, in particular, Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, pp. 403-432.

had often prevailed against national identity, this was certainly not true of socialist consciousness. Cosmopolitanism, Hobsbawm argued, was more likely to be found among a small group of socialist activist-intellectuals than among the workers of the world. But, as Hobsbawm explained, there were material reasons why workers had most often chosen their nation over their class. For much of capitalism's history, a cosmopolitan consciousness was impossible. It was from this perspective of political economy, Hobsbawm speculated, that some of Marx's prophecies might yet be proved right. A globalized capitalism was in the process, he contended, of undermining both nationalism and the nation-state, providing the material ground for the construction of a genuinely global proletarian consciousness. However, there was little evidence of such a consciousness in a world characterised by a bewildering mix of anti-nationalist and nationalist tendencies. Even if it did exist, it was still probable, he regretted, that it would prove unable to wrest the workers away from their commitment to particularism.

Nationalism and Capitalist Development: the End of Nations or Nations as the End of History?

Nations, according to Marx and Engels, were historical products of capitalist globalization, not the natural products of 'blood and soil'. Capitalism's accumulation imperative necessarily doomed nation-states, destroying national economies by creating an integrated global economy, disrupting national markets and establishing a global market, making exploitation of natural resources and labour international.¹³⁸ The accumulation imperative respected no limit, particularly national limits.¹³⁹ Staring into the belly of the capitalist beast, Marx and Engels had spied its nature, and discerned the logical consequence for nations of its international rule. What did Hobsbawm make of this vision? Essentially he agreed. If Marx and Engels had erred

¹³⁸ For the argument that capitalism from its birth was inherently transnational see S. Clarke, *Keynesianism, Monetarism and the Crisis of the State* (Aldershot, 1988), p. 178.

¹³⁹ It was not only Marx who made this argument. It is been made in the past, and it is made today, by capitalist globalizers. See W. Bonefeld, 'The Spectre of Globalization: On the Form and Content of the World Market,' in W. Bonefeld and K. Psychopedis, eds., *The Politics of Change: Globalization, Ideology and Critique* (Hampshire and New York, 2000), pp. 31-68. and P. Anderson, *Zone of Engagement* (London, 1992), p. 366.

in proclaiming the end of nations and nationalism in the middle of the nineteenth century, by the end of the twentieth century, Hobsbawm claimed, the process they had delineated over one hundred years before was increasingly apparent. For him, following Marx and Engels, capitalist globalization did doom nation-states and nationalism.

Building on the dialectic between the territorial and economic logics of power which had been central to his understanding of the development of class consciousness, Hobsbawm maintained that the history of the capitalist world economy could be broken up into three phases, each of which corresponded to a certain territorial ordering of the world. Beginning in the late medieval period, the first phase was characterised by the emergence of an essentially trans-national world economy, which existed independently of 'territorial states'. Between the sixteenth and sometime in the twentieth century, the capitalist world economy went through its second phase defined by an increasing dependence on 'a number of "developed" national economies whose boundaries were politically defined.'¹⁴⁰ During this epoch the development of nation states was crucial to the expansion of the capitalist world economy. Not only did the establishment of a series of rival, but interdependent, 'national economies' provide the necessary legal, political and administrative apparatus for internal capital accumulation, it also provided the basis for the establishment of 'a set of economic flows between the national economies of the core'¹⁴¹ and a touchstone for the expansion of capital into the non-capitalist world. The most important feature of the world economy during this (second) phase of its development was not the fact that its various sectors were territorially demarcated, but that 'this separation largely determined the so-called international division of labour.'¹⁴² In this phase of capitalist globalization, Hobsbawm argued, the 'transnational element in the world economy, though still visible in such activities as

¹⁴⁰ Hobsbawm, 'The Development of the World Economy,' p. 312.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 313. This era of capitalism generated a fascinating debate between Kautsky and Lenin on the nature of capitalism. On this debate, see C. Parrini, 'Imperialism Theories,' in L. Gardner, ed., *Redefining the Past: Essays in Diplomatic History in Honor of William Appleman Williams* (Corvallis, 1986), pp. 66-72 and 75-76.

¹⁴² Hobsbawm, 'The Development of the World Economy,' p. 313. The relationship between territorial states and capitalist development has become a feature of 'world systems theory'. See I. Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism* (London, 1983).

international trade, shipping and finance, was clearly much more tied to national bases.¹⁴³

By the late twentieth century, according to Hobsbawm, the capitalist world-economy had entered a third phase of development characterised 'by a notable re-emergence of the transnational or supranational elements in the world economy.'¹⁴⁴ With the increasing globalization of the world economy, national production had given way to transnational forms of production, the national division of labour to a properly international division of labour, regulated flows of finance between developed national economies to 'free-floating reservoirs beyond national control.'¹⁴⁵ Where once the capitalist world economy worked to reinforce the nation-state's powers it now worked to subvert them. As transnational corporations increasingly came to constitute the 'basic units of the world economy,' the nation state lost control of all sorts of historic functions. The globalization of the capitalist world economy impelled by the almost world-wide hegemony of neo-liberalism left nation states 'at the mercy of an uncontrollable "world market."¹⁴⁶ It exposed 'domestic wages' to 'foreign competition,' it reduced the ability of nation-states to regulate fiscal policy, extend social welfare or other forms of public services, like health and education, and, perhaps most importantly, it increased the authority of various supra-national institutions, such as the IMF and the World Bank. As Hobsbawm concluded, 'The national economy is no longer the basic building block of the world economy, but has a rival in the immediately global market which can be supplied directly by firms capable of organising their production and distribution in principle without reference to state boundaries.'¹⁴⁷ As he had suggested as early as 1972, 'the prediction that nationalism will decline may prove to be no more unrealistic than other mid-nineteenth-century predictions (e.g. the disappearance of the peasantry), which looked

¹⁴³ Hobsbawm, 'The Development of the World Economy,' p. 312. On the effects of this 'national' division of labour, see K. Haynes, 'Capitalism and the Periodization of International Relations: Colonialism, Imperialism, Ultraimperialism, and Postimperialism,' *Radical History Review*, 57, 1993, pp. 21-32.

¹⁴⁴ Hobsbawm, 'The Development of the World Economy,' p. 314. On this general argument, see D. Held, 'Democracy: From City States to a Cosmopolitan Order?,' *Political Studies*, XL, Special Issue, 1992, pp. 32-33.

¹⁴⁵ Hobsbawm, 'The Development of the World Economy,' p. 315.

¹⁴⁶ Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, p. 411.

¹⁴⁷ Hobsbawm, 'The Development of the World Economy,' p. 315.

implausible enough a century after they were made, but are far from implausible today.¹⁴⁸

Hobsbawm did not leave his argument at this high level of abstraction. Indeed, his four-volume history of the modern world – *The Age of Revolution*, *The Age of Capital*, *The Age of Empire* and *Age of Extremes* - can be read as an account of the process by which capitalist globalization first worked through and then against its own world of nations. Structured by the ever-shifting dialectic between liberalism and nationalism, his tetralogy describes the rise and fall of the nation-state as both a means of organizing the world economy and as a form of social and political organisation. *The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848* charts the genesis of nationalism and the 'revolutionary-democratic' nation in France in the late eighteenth century.¹⁴⁹ At its birth nationalism was both revolutionary and universalist, *La Grande Nation* and the 'rights of man' were one, the destiny of the French nation and universal freedom and general equality were tied together. The most outstanding outcome of the revolutionary wars of the early nineteenth century, in this sense, was the 'characteristic modern state [as] a coherent and unbroken area with sharply defined frontiers, governed by a single sovereign authority and according to a single fundamental system of administration and law.'¹⁵⁰ It was the fight for the establishment of such states – the linking of nations with states – which lay at the heart of the later revolutionary upheavals of 1830 and 1848. National aspirations would now dominate European history for the rest of the century. But it was not just political factors which explained this development. Capitalism also sought the territorial nation-state for its own modernizing purposes. Progress tied the nation-state and capitalism together.¹⁵¹

The marriage between nationhood and economic development constituted the central story of *The Age of Capital, 1848-1875*. This period marked the emergence of capitalism as both a world of nations and a single interacting economy. The establishment of what Hobsbawm called 'the world system of capitalism'¹⁵² in the age

¹⁴⁸ Hobsbawm, 'Some Reflections on Nationalism,' p. 406.

¹⁴⁹ Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution* (London, 1965). See also *Nation and Nationalism*, pp. 18-21.

¹⁵⁰ Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution*, p. 113.

¹⁵¹ See Hobsbawm, *Nation and Nationalism*, pp. 39-42.

¹⁵² Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital*, p. 84.

of capital took place through the medium of the formation of 'rival national economies.'¹⁵³ During this period nationhood became not just the building block of world capitalism, but also 'the "natural" unit of the development of the modern, liberal, progressive and de facto bourgeois society.'¹⁵⁴ There was no contradiction between the widely held aspiration to transform nations into sovereign nation-states and the appearance of the economic world 'as a single interlocking complex'.¹⁵⁵ As Hobsbawm put it: 'The unity of the world implied division.'¹⁵⁶ Liberalism and nationalism, for the time being, existed in harmony. 'A world of nations would,' Hobsbawm remarked, 'be a liberal world, and a liberal world would consist of nations.'¹⁵⁷ This relationship, however, would not last.

The divorce between liberalism and nationalism constituted an important theme of the third volume of his tetralogy, *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914*. The disharmony was far from complete. Although in theory capitalism had no place for nations, in practice the capitalist world economy was still constituted by 'a collection of solid blocs,'¹⁵⁸ by national economies. Not just this – it was also becoming increasingly geographically dispersed. Again there was no necessary contradiction. Capitalist globalization, the spread of capitalism to parts of the non-capitalist world, still required the apparatus of the nation-state. But capitalism in this period became increasingly less liberal and more nationalist than it had been in the age of capital. Protectionism, state interventionism, capitalist concentration and imperialism all radically changed the nature of capitalism, signalling 'the retreat of the free competitive market.'¹⁵⁹ The tight fit between 'organized capitalism' and nationalism would be unclenched in the twentieth century.

Other developments, however, pointed to a growing disharmony between nationalism and liberalism. Already in the previous volume Hobsbawm had noted the emergence of an important split in the conception of nationalism - between a revolutionary type based on a universalist ideology of liberty, equality and fraternity

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 86.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 82.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 84.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 121.

¹⁵⁸ Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, p. 41.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 52.

and a counter-revolutionary type based on culture, language and ethnicity, between one that respected the principle of viability and one that did not, between 'the movement to found nation-states and nationalism.'¹⁶⁰ It was during the age of empire that the later type of movement gained predominance in both already existing nation-states and those nations which sought states. Nationalism, through a process of the 'invention of tradition,'¹⁶¹ now became an ideology of the state and not of the people. States needed to take note of the masses and they did so by becoming nationalist. As they did so the notion of nationalism was radically transformed. It was in the age of empire, Hobsbawm suggested, that the word nationalism itself came 'to describe groups of right-wing ideologists in France and Italy keen to brandish the nation flag's against foreigners, liberals and socialists and in favour of that aggressive expansion of their own state which became so characteristic of such movements.'¹⁶² For the first time – and the growth of mass nationalism was not its only signal – contradictions emerged in bourgeois liberal society which it could not contain. It was at this point that nationalism became a definitively regressive force. With bourgeois liberalism no longer able to keep a lid on the Pandora's Box of nationalism, the idea of the nation was usurped by the radical Right, and came to be closely associated with an emotional appeal to those whom modernity was fast leaving behind. In this way, Hobsbawm argued, nationalism became the political crutch of the lower middle classes, who found themselves increasingly squeezed from above and below.

This process became important to an understanding of nationalism's later pathological mutation into fascism, a mutation which constituted an important part of the final volume of his tetralogy, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991*. Although fascism was soundly defeated in the final act of Europe's thirty-year war, nationalism was given an extended life in its aftermath in the Third World.¹⁶³ The revolutionary-democratic conception of nation found a new life in the Third World, Hobsbawm argued, as the process of decolonisation set about establishing nation-states on the French model. But capitalist globalization was fast rendering *all* nation-states obsolescent. Although through the period of its 'golden

¹⁶⁰ Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital*, p. 110.

¹⁶¹ E. Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions' and 'Mass Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914' both in Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983).

¹⁶² Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, p. 142.

¹⁶³ Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, pp. 433-460.

age' capitalism appeared even more nationalist than it had in the late nineteenth century – manifest in systems of national welfare, the nationalization of industries, and increasing government control of fiscal and monetary policy – by the late twentieth century the cosy relationship between nationalism and capitalism had been definitively sundered. The crisis of what some rather optimistically called 'late capitalism' in the early nineteen seventies constituted a crisis not of capitalism but of a particular type of capitalism, specifically national (or Keynesian) capitalism.¹⁶⁴ The resolution of this crisis saw capitalism and nationalism definitively part ways. Capitalist globalization in the late twentieth century denationalised national economies, it wrenched from national governments all sorts of economic powers, it internationalised production and consumption, and it increasingly served global markets and interests, not national ones. As Hobsbawm concluded without either surprise or ceremony: 'As the transnational economy established its grip over the world, it undermined a major, and since 1945, virtually universal, institution: the territorial nation-state, since such a state could no longer control more than a diminishing part of its affairs.'¹⁶⁵ Liberalism, by the end of the twentieth century, had almost completely obliterated the idea of the sovereign, independent nation-state, consigning it to humanity's past.

It was not just the nation-state, according to Hobsbawm, which was vulnerable to Hegel's Owl of Minerva. Nationalism as a programme for reorganising the modern world was also entering the dusk of its influence. Paradoxically, this could be most clearly seen in the rise of ethnic nationalisms, and identity politics more generally, in the twentieth century's final years. 'Identity politics and *fin-de-siecle* nationalism were,' Hobsbawm argued, 'not so much programmes, still less effective programmes for dealing with the problems of the late twentieth century, but rather emotional reactions to these problems.'¹⁶⁶ This argument – that 'nationalism as vector of historical change'¹⁶⁷ was now in decline – constituted the most controversial claim of Hobsbawm's mature analyses of nation and nationalism – it was the central argument of *Nations and Nationalism: Programme, Myth, Reality* - although it was prefigured

¹⁶⁴ E. Mandel, *Late Capitalism* (London, 1973). For Hobsbawm's account of this process see *Age of Extremes*, pp. 403-432.

¹⁶⁵ Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, p. 424.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 430.

¹⁶⁷ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, p. 150.

in his earlier work.¹⁶⁸ Hobsbawm insistently maintained, despite, but also because of, the emergence of separatist nationalisms in traditional nation-states and the re-emergence of militant ethnic nationalisms in post-communist states, that nationalism no longer constituted a major historical force in the same way that it had 'in the era between the French Revolution and the end of imperialist colonialism after World War II.'¹⁶⁹ The claim was controversial for it seemed to run against the grain of the facts. The very objective conditions – nationalist explosions in the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union among others – appeared to make Hobsbawm's contemporary interpretation of nationalism's fortunes absurd.

For Hobsbawm, nationalism's latest manifestations were nothing new but simply a matter of 'the old chickens of Versailles once again coming home to roost.'¹⁷⁰ Nationalism in the late twentieth century had little or nothing to do with that form of nationalism that had transformed the world between the French Revolution and the era of Bandung. It sought to break-up existing nation-states, it based its claims on appeals to ethnicity and language, and it repudiated the legacy of the eighteenth century Enlightenment. The revolutionary and liberal nationalism which prompted the nation-building process begun in the revolutionary era in the late eighteenth century 'was the opposite of the nationalism which seeks to bond together those deemed to have common ethnicity, language, culture, historical past, and the rest.'¹⁷¹ It was a political programme that grew out of the Enlightenment; the nationalisms of today, Hobsbawm argued, ran actively counter to that project. Ethnic and separatist nationalisms fell back on the concept of the nation precisely because they had no means to deal with problems induced by the crisis of modernity. They were manifestations not solutions to that crisis. Like identity politics more generally, and the rise of xenophobia and racism in established capitalist nation-states, ethnic-linguistic nationalism was evidence not of nationalism's revitalization but manifestations of the prevalence of 'distress and fury' in late twentieth century

¹⁶⁸ See, in particular, Hobsbawm, 'Some Reflections on Nationalism,' p. 406.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 169.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 165. See also Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, p. 31 and Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 165.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 179. See also his 'Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today,' in *Anthropology Today*, 8, 1, 1992, p. 4.

society.¹⁷² With the disintegration of the 'material framework' of people's lives and the destruction of 'routines of everyday life and traditional values, the nation, understood in terms of ethnicity and language, was all that was left. Ethnicity filled nationalism's 'empty containers,' but it did not provide a programme for the future. It was a manifestation of 'social disorientation, of the fraying, and sometimes the snapping, of the threads of what used to be the network that bound people together in society.'¹⁷³

Has capitalist globalization doomed the nation-state and nationalism? The scholarship is divided. On the one hand, a raft of analyses has argued that capitalist globalization has radically undermined the ability of nations to control their own destiny - the record of socialist governments in Britain and France during the nineteen seventies and eighties is prove enough, it is suggested, of the diminishing control that national governments have over their own economies.¹⁷⁴ Powered by a transnational capitalist class which no longer has any respect for national traditions,¹⁷⁵ capital invests where profits are greatest, where production costs are lowest, and where increasingly deregulated 'market states' offer what are called good business environments.¹⁷⁶ On the other hand, scholars have argued that the nation-state still constitutes a force of great magnitude in our contemporary world, despite the process of globalization. Marxism has been no less perplexed by this question. Some Marxists, employing what is called the 'strong globalization thesis,' contend that the development of a transnational capitalist mode of production signifies the death of the

¹⁷² Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, p. 170. See also Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, pp. 424-425.

¹⁷³ Hobsbawm, 'Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today,' p. 7.

¹⁷⁴ On this point see Halliday, 'The Pertinence of Imperialism,' p. 76; Burnham, 'Class, States, Global Circuits of Capital,' p. 115 and J. Holloway, 'Global Capital and the National State,' in Bonefeld and Holloway, eds., *Global Capital National State and the Politics of Money*. There is, of course, a large debate on this question. For opposing views to Hobsbawm, see L. Panitch, 'Globalization and the State,' in R. Miliband and L. Panitch, eds., *Socialist Register 1994* (London, 1994), pp. 60-93; P. Hirst and G. Thompson, *Globalization in Question* (Oxford, 1996); L. Weiss, 'Globalization and the Myth of the Powerless State,' *New Left Review*, I/225, 197, pp. 3-37; and B. Sutcliffe and A. Glyn, 'Still Underwhelmed: Measures of Globalization and Their Misinterpretation,' *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 31, 1, 1999.

¹⁷⁵ On the growth of a transnational capitalist class, see R. Sklar, 'Postimperialism: A Class Analysis of Multinational Corporate Expansion,' *Comparative Politics*, (October 1976), pp. 75-92 and more recently W. Robinson and J. Harris, 'Toward a Global Ruling Class?: Globalization and the Transnational Capitalist Class,' *Science and Society*, 64, 1, 2000, pp. 11-54.

¹⁷⁶ As David Harvey suggests, 'Structural adjustment and fiscal austerity have become the name of the game and the state has to some degree been reduced to the role of finding ways to provide a favourable business climate.' See Harvey *Spaces of Hope*, p. 65.

nation-state.¹⁷⁷ Other Marxists argue that it is precisely the nation-state which is the vehicle of capitalist globalization.¹⁷⁸ Indeed Hobsbawm himself appeared divided over the question of the relationship between nationhood and globalization. Having argued that an increasingly extra-national mode of production doomed nations, he later maintained that the 'nation-state [was an] indispensable'¹⁷⁹ instrument in the amelioration of the worst excesses of capitalism, implying that the nation-state had a future both beyond globalization and nationalism's death. In *The New Century* he argued that there was a 'conflict between the forces, which are in favour of removing all obstacles, and political forces, which basically operate through nation-states and either obliged or deliberately choose to regulate these procedures.'¹⁸⁰ Thus a form of political organisation which Hobsbawm had consistently argued was in decline he now considered the only bulwark against the total victory of neo-liberalism! In his analysis of the relationship between capitalist globalization and the nation Hobsbawm seemed to want it both ways. The ambiguity in Hobsbawm's analysis was in many respects a reflection of the contradictory features of our contemporary reality – a contemporary reality constituted by a bewildering mix of cosmopolitan and nationalist reflexes.

A similar ambiguity attended Hobsbawm's reflections on nationalism's future. It should be clear that Hobsbawm did not predict the decline of nationalism *tout court*. He suggested that nationalism, as a programme for re-making the world, was no longer feasible, that it no longer constituted a progressive historical force as it had done in the aftermath of the French Revolution right up to the era of decolonisation. But this thesis did not imply that we would see less of other types of nationalism around, or that they would necessarily play a less influential role in humanity's future than other forms of nationalism had in the past. He did argue that nationalism – the sort that was based on a 'body of citizens of a territorial state,' which 'extended the scale of human society'¹⁸¹ – was a vector of historical force in decline; but he also

¹⁷⁷ This thesis is reviewed in C. Bartolovich, 'Global Capital and Transnationalism,' in H. Schwarz and S. Ray, eds., *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (Malden, 2000), p. 128.

¹⁷⁸ See E. Meiksins Wood, 'Unhappy Families: Global capitalism in a World of Nation-States,' *Monthly Review*, 51, 3, 1999, pp. 1-12.

¹⁷⁹ Hobsbawm, *The New Century*, p. 88.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 77. This view conflicts with the argument set out in I. Meszaros, 'The Uncontrollability of Globalizing Capital,' *Monthly Review*, 49, 9, 1998, pp. 27-37.

¹⁸¹ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, pp. 163 and 169.

pointed to the rise of ethnic nationalism in the post Cold War period as an intimation of general ruin. However, having suggested that nationalism no longer had any purchase on the world, he then went onto argue that 'citizen nationalism' or patriotism was the only defence against barbarism.¹⁸² The contradiction astounds – on the one hand nationalism as a progressive force is in decline; on the other hand it is precisely this form of nationalism which stands against a general future of mutual ruin. When it came to assessing the future of nationalism, then, Hobsbawm waxed contradictory.

After nations and nationalism: socialism or barbarism?

The decline of the nation-state coupled with the rise of ethnic nationalisms; the death of nationalism as a progressive force coupled with the proliferation of all sorts of identity politics; the victory of capitalist globalization coupled with the absence of a social movement capable of critiquing and transcending it – these are just some of the objective features of our own time that Hobsbawm has wrestled with in his most recent work. In a moment of illumination Hobsbawm concluded *Age of Extremes* by suggesting that the events in Bosnia and Somalia in the nineteen nineties,

throw light on what looked like becoming perhaps the major cause of international tension in the new millennium, namely that which arose out of the rapidly widening gap between the rich and the poor parts of the world. Each resented the other. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism was patently a movement not only against the ideology of modernization by Westernization, but against the "West" itself. ... Conversely, the most jagged edges of popular xenophobia in the rich countries was directed

¹⁸² Hobsbawm, 'Identity Politics and the Left,' p. 45. Here he suggests that 'there is one form of identity politics which is actually comprehensive enough, inasmuch as it is based on a common appeal, at least within the confines of a single state: citizen nationalism. Seen in the global perspective this may be the opposite of a universal appeal, but seen in the perspective of the national state, which is where most of us still live, and are likely to go on living, it provides a common identity....'. Whatever happened to capitalist globalization and the end of nationalism? Hobsbawm's great nemesis of the nineteen seventies in the debate over socialism and nationalism in Britain – is now making much the same arguments. See T. Nairn, 'Post-2001 and the Third Coming of Nationalism,' *Arena Journal*, 21, 2003, pp. 81-97.

against foreigners from the Third World, and the EU dammed its borders against the flood of the Third World's labour-seeking poor.¹⁸³

For Hobsbawm only one conclusion could be drawn: 'global disorder whose nature was unclear, and without an obvious mechanism for either ending it or keeping it under control.'¹⁸⁴ What response could a Marxist historian, born in the year of the October Revolution, offer in such a situation?

The first thing that Hobsbawm concluded was that the great ideologies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had no 'lasting solutions to the problems of a world in crisis'.¹⁸⁵ Liberalism, nationalism, socialism – none of those offered coherent solutions to our global problems, their failure had laid the foundation for our current ruin. In the absence of any solution, Hobsbawm contended, barbarism reigned. What was worse was this: barbarism had no systemic alternative. Our age of barbarism was characterised by the absence of any politics, based on the Enlightenment project, which could offer a vision of the world fit for all humanity.¹⁸⁶ In providing an understanding of our times Hobsbawm went back to Marx. Not to Marx's vision of a future classless society, to socialism as the end of history. But to the Marx who had envisioned 'mutual ruin'. If humanity would ultimately be faced with a choice between socialism and barbarity, as Marx had argued, then it was clear to Hobsbawm what choice humanity had so far made. He saw no reason for supposing that humanity would not go on choosing barbarity over socialism. This is a world populated by ethnic nationalism, xenophobia, racism, religious fundamentalism and all sorts of identity politics. This is our world. The only coherent solution to the problems of our age of barbarism, Hobsbawm contended, could be found in the values of the eighteenth century Enlightenment. But Hobsbawm's political hopes, as he well knew, were offered in the expectation that they would not be fulfilled. Things still needed to be said, and Hobsbawm still felt the need to say them – but he didn't honestly believe that they would be recognised and acted upon as he would have wished. At the end of the century, with which his life had been so closely bound up, he only had vigilant stoicism to offer as a tonic against barbarism.

¹⁸³ Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, p. 561.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 562.

¹⁸⁵ Hobsbawm, 'Barbarism: A Users' Guide,' p. 44.

¹⁸⁶ See Hobsbawm, 'Identity Politics and the Left.'

In conclusion, Hobsbawm had provided an illuminating account of the relationship between class and nation in the context of the formation of the working class in the nineteenth century, and he did offer an instructive analysis of the relationship between the process of capitalist globalization and the rise of the nation-state. His assessment of the relationship between socialism and nationalism was more ambiguous. In one register he offered a strong argument for why Marxists could not be nationalists, excoriating Nairn for (separatist) nationalist deviation. Yet in another register he argued that socialists must be good patriots and civic nationalists, even suggesting that only citizen nationalism stood between civilization and barbarism. The split in Hobsbawm's assessment of the relationship between socialism and nationalism was perhaps a result of his own political biography, the fact that he became a communist on the streets of Berlin in 1932 amid the battle against fascism but that he actually joined the CPGB in 1936 when communists were making common cause with national patriots.¹⁸⁷ The contradiction between Hobsbawm's international socialism and his socialist patriotism was also reflected in his narrative of capitalist development. It led to a sometimes-painful divergence of argument – that the nation-state was dead but that it was the only effective bulwark against the wrongs of capitalist globalization. But ambiguity is never wholly unproductive. This has certainly been the case with Hobsbawm, who has provided us with an intellectually decisive encounter between a Marxist and his nationalist world.

¹⁸⁷ Anderson, *Spectrum*, p. 285.

Chapter 2

Englishness and Internationalism

E.P. Thompson and the National Tradition

E.P. Thompson was arguably the most influential Marxist historian of his generation.¹ As Robin Blackburn, one time editor of *New Left Review* (NLR), suggested, Thompson was 'a historian who transformed his craft.'² Historical practice did not constitute his only contribution to the Marxist tradition. The author of *The Making of the English Working Class* and *Whigs and Hunters* was also central to that massive labour which has been the reconstruction of Marxist socialism, a labour left unfinished at his death but rendered less formidable by his living. A consistent critic of 'dogmatic' or 'official' socialisms following his resignation from the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), Thompson's voice constituted a critical moment in the construction of a new socialist vision, one that broke out of the stultifying antinomies of communism and social democracy, reform and revolution. 'Edward Thompson is our finest socialist writer today – certainly in England, possibly in Europe' – is how Perry Anderson characterised his contribution in the early nineteen eighties.³ Social consciousness, however, does not exhaust the extent of his contribution to the making of late twentieth-century Marxism. Thompson played a crucial role in the establishment of the New Left in the nineteen sixties, forerunner of the social movement politics of today, and the necessary starting point of a reconstruction for any future socialist vision.⁴ Thus his revision of Marxism was chased by his socialist

¹ See H.Kaye, *The British Marxist Historians: An Introductory Analysis* (London, 1984), pp. 167-8; B.D. Palmer, 'The Eclipse of Materialism: Marxism and the Writing of Social History in the 1980s,' *Socialist Register 1990* (London, 1990), p. 113; and M.W. Steinberg, 'The Re-Making of the English Working Class?,' *Theory and Society*, 20, 1991, p. 173.

² R. Blackburn, 'E.P. Thompson and the New Left,' *New Left Review*, I/201, 1993, p. 3. Despite the huge influence Thompson has had on the direction of historical practice in the last forty years, he spent very little time employed as an academic historian. For a brief overview of Thompson's institutional affiliations, see Kaye, *The British Marxist Historians*, p. 170.

³ P. Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism* (London 1980), p. 1.

⁴ This was something recognized at 'The British Marxist Historians and the Study of Social Movements' conference at the Edge Hill College of Higher Education, Ormskirk, Lancashire in June 2002.

practice which in turn chased his Marxist revisionism: the dog of praxis trying to bite its own tale.

Thompson's impact, however, is revealed as much by the continuing interest in his work as by the evidence of that work itself. From analyses of popular culture and of class formation to relations between agency and structure and the complexities of the nexus between social being and social consciousness – Thompson is central to much contemporary discussion on issues central to social theory.⁵ However, despite the wealth of material on the intricacies of Thompson's work, certain issues have been consistently neglected. One of the more obvious gaps in the existing historiography is the nexus between nationalism and Thompson's Marxist thought.⁶ It is into this largely uncharted territory that this chapter heads.

How did E.P. Thompson negotiate the traffic of his nationalist (and internationalist) world? This chapter will provide an answer to this question. It will begin with a brief overview of his biography: brief because his life has before now filled the covers of books, special issues of journals, and countless postgraduate dissertations, thus making any claim to extensive coverage or originality redundant. The main body of the chapter will analyse Thompson's negotiation of his nationalist world, putting that negotiation into critical dialogue with his Marxism. It will first explore his conception of the 'freeborn Englishmen' and 'the people' and their relationship to socialism; second, it will provide a critical reading of the dominant conception of state and nation in both his historical work and his political writings; and, finally, it will excavate the nature of Thompson's internationalism. The chapter will conclude with a brief overview of the relevance and value of Thompson's

⁵ For the centrality of Thompson's legacy to recent debates among social historians, see D. Mayfield, 'Language and Social History,' *Social History*, 16, 3, 1991, pp. 353-58; D. Mayfield and S. Thorne, 'Social History and its Discontents: Gareth Stedman Jones and the Politics of Language,' *Social History*, 17, 2, 1992, pp. 165-88; J. Vernon, 'Who's Afraid of the "Linguistic Turn"? The Politics of Social History and its Discontents,' *Social History*, 19, 1, 1994, pp. 81-97; G. Eley and K. Nield, 'Starting Over: The Present, the Post-Modern and the Moment of Social History,' *Social History*, 20, 3, 1995, pp. 355-64; and P. Joyce, 'The End of Social History,' *Social History*, 20, 1, 1995, pp. 73-91.

⁶ There have been some analyses which have pointed toward this topic. See B. Schwarz, "'The People' in History: The Communist Party Historians' Group, 1946-1956,' in R. Johnson, et al., eds., *Making Histories: Studies in History-Writing and Politics* (London, 1982), pp. 44-95 and, more recently, D. Renton, 'English Experiences: Was There a Problem of Nationalism in the British Marxist Historians' Group?,' at <http://www.dkrenton.co.uk/research/cphg.html>, which was also given as a paper at the conference cited in note 4.

negotiation of the nexus between nationalism and Marxism for an understanding of our own nationalist world.

Dialectics of Place and World: The Making of E.P. Thompson

Born in Oxford in 1924, Edward Palmer (E.P.) Thompson was the youngest son of Edward John (E.J.) Thompson and Theodosia Jessup, both Methodist missionaries, whose own family trees were situated at the interface between empire and colony, and culture and politics.⁷ E.J. Thompson, poet, literary critic, and historian, was born and raised in England, served in Mesopotamia and Palestine in the chaplain service during the Great War, and spent a number of years (1910-22) in India teaching English at Bankura College, Bengal.⁸ Having established relations with important figures of twentieth century Indian political and literary history, relations which continued, deepened and expanded after he left South Asia for England, he accepted a post as Lecturer in Bengali at Oxford University, following his marriage to Theodosia, and the birth of their first son, Frank.⁹ Described by Benita Parry as a man 'dedicated to humanizing an inhuman situation,' E.J. Thompson assumed a position on the relationship between England and India that eventually led him 'to question and reject totally the fact and concept of Empire.'¹⁰ Throughout his fictional accounts of the interface between England and Bengal, his writings on Rabindranath

⁷ Edward John Thompson's parents were Wesleyan missionaries who worked in southern India, while Theodosia Jessup's family had established the American Mission in Lebanon. For E.J. Thompson's background, see the brief comments in B. Parry, *Delusions and Discoveries: Studies on India and the British Imagination, 1880-1930* (London, 1972), p. 165, and, for Theodosia Jessup's background, see B.D. Palmer, *E.P. Thompson: Objections and Oppositions* (London and New York, 1994) pp. 13-14. According to Eric Hobsbawm, E.P. Thompson's mother came from a 'New England family rich in jurists and public servants.' See E. Hobsbawm, 'Edward Palmer Thompson,' *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 90, 1995, p. 521.

⁸ On Thompson's teaching in India, see E.P. Thompson, *Alien Homage: Edward Thompson and Rabindrinath Tagore* (New Delhi, 1993), pp. 1-10.

⁹ The best overview of E.J. Thompson's biography and its relationship to his future Marxist historian son can be found in Palmer, *E.P. Thompson*, pp. 11-51. Facts about E.J. Thompson presented here are drawn from Palmer's superb illumination of this relationship. There is now a full-scale biography of E.J. Thompson - M. Lago, *"India's Prisoner": A Biography of Edward John Thompson, 1886-1946* (Columbia, 2001).

¹⁰ Parry *Delusions and Discoveries*, p. 166. See also Palmer, *E.P. Thompson*, p. 38. E.J. Thompson's negotiation of the England/India relationship has attracted much interest. It begins, perhaps, with people like Tagore and Gandhi themselves. But more recently, see A.J Greenberger, *The British Image of India: A Study in the Literature of Imperialism, 1880-1960* (London, 1969), pp. 83-110; Parry, *Delusions and Discoveries*, pp. 164-202; and E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, 1994), pp. 206-7 and 209.

Tagore, and his short histories of India, E.J. Thompson attempted to '[balance] an ostensibly uncomplicated view of "truth" against an always precarious appreciation of power.'¹¹ Much like any attempt to ameliorate a system inherently resistant to reform, this got the elder Thompson caught up in all sorts of entanglements, misunderstandings and displacements but should do nothing to diminish the stubborn humaneness which characterised his negotiation of the colonial relationship.¹²

Born in America, Theodosia Jessup, about whom we know much less, spent the majority of her childhood in the Middle East where her family worked in the American Mission in Lebanon.¹³ It was here that she met E.J. Thompson. In much the same way as her future husband, she seems to have been a 'very tough liberal,'¹⁴ who, according to Bryan Palmer, 'was not likely to have been one of those itinerant Christians bent on a simple-minded Westernizing of "the natives".'¹⁵ An idiosyncratic product of that great sociological muddle, the English middle class, E.P. Thompson, then, was born into a family that lived at the nexus between different nations and cultures, that existed on the border of religion and politics, and that lived the problems of the relationship between place and world.

The familial influence on Thompson's later development, if unquestionable (what other historian has devoted three books to members of his family!), is deep and complex, something he himself admitted when he turned toward the end of his life to investigate the relationship between his father and the Bengali poet, Rabindranath Tagore.¹⁶ The key inheritance here obviously descends from E.J. Thompson - his

¹¹ Palmer, *E.P. Thompson*, p. 16.

¹² A brilliant example – both of the entanglements and the stubborn humaneness - of this point can be found in Thompson's *The Other Side of the Medal* (1925) where he suggests that the English should acknowledge that Indians 'want their self-respect given back to them. Make them free again, and enable them to look us and everyone in the eyes, and they will behave like free people and cease to lie.' See E. Thompson, *The Other Side of the Medal* (1926; rpt. Westport, 1974), p. 36, cited in Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 206. In addition see A. Chaudhuri, 'Bankura's Englishman,' *London Review of Books*, 23 September 1993, p. 10.

¹³ Even Edward John Thompson's biographer, Mary Lago, has overlooked Theodosia in her biography of her husband according to a reviewer of "*India's Prisoner*". See J.W. Bicknell, 'Mary Lago, "*India's Prisoner*": A Biography of Edward John Thompson, 1886-1946,' *Albion*, 34, 3, 2002, p. 556.

¹⁴ M. Merrill, 'Interview with E.P. Thompson,' *Radical History Review*, 3, 1976, p. 10.

¹⁵ Palmer, *E.P. Thompson*, p. 14.

¹⁶ E.P. Thompson, *Alien Homage*. The other books Thompson composed on his family are E.J. Thompson and E.P. Thompson, eds., *There is a Spirit in Europe: A Memoir of Frank Thompson* (London, 1947) and E.P. Thompson, *Beyond the Frontier: The Politics of a Failed Mission, Bulgaria, 1944* (Stanford, 1994).

Methodism with its 'sense of duty,' its notions of commitment and mission, and its tradition of 'liberal dissent';¹⁷ his internationalism and respect for particularity; and, finally, his morality, the 'Dissenter's suspicion of central authority' and the 'Protestant hatred of dogma'.¹⁸ How much did Edward the son take from Edward the father, the latter, according to Palmer, a man both of 'cosmopolitan reach' and 'passionate Englishness'?¹⁹ Whatever the extent of the exchange, we can assent when Palmer suggests that the son's assimilation of the father was anything but 'straightforward'.²⁰ The first indication of this came when E.P. Thompson, following his brother Frank, joined the CPGB in 1942. On the one hand Thompson's communism can be seen as an extension of his father's own internationalism;²¹ on the other hand Thompson's commitment 'to a serious and deeply rooted, rational revolutionary tradition'²² can be seen as an explicit transcendence of his father's liberal internationalism. Whether extension or transcendence, Thompson's internationalism was bred in the bone.

The inheritance of 'Englishness' was no more easily negotiated.²³ E.P. Thompson's 'Englishness' was far more complex than is traditionally supposed or unproblematically assumed.²⁴ Like his father's, Thompson's Englishness was wrapped up in perceptions of the common people but unlike E.J. Thompson's was forcefully overlaid with a clear socialist meaning. Important here was Thompson's construction of links with both a distinctively English revolutionary tradition (pursued

¹⁷ For Thompson's own acknowledgement of this influence, see Thompson, *Beyond the Frontier*, p. 52. On Methodism and its influence on the members of the tradition of British Marxist historiography, see R. Samuel, 'The British Marxist Historians: Part One,' *New Left Review*, 1/120, 1980, pp. 52-55 and S. Rowbotham, 'E.P. Thompson: A Life of Radical Dissent,' *New Statesman and Society*, Sep. 3, 1993, p. 15. In addition see R. Hilton, 'Christopher Hill: Some Reminiscences,' in D. Pennington and K. Thomas, eds., *Puritans and Revolutionaries: Essays in Seventeenth-Century History Presented to Christopher Hill* (Oxford, 1977), p. 7.

¹⁸ Samuel, 'The British Marxist Historians,' p. 54. On the conceptualisation of Thompson as a 'dissenter' see Eastwood, 'History, Politics and Reputation: E.P. Thompson,' *History*, 85, 2000, pp. 640-641. Eastwood notes here – correctly in my view – the secular nature of his dissent.

¹⁹ Palmer, *E.P. Thompson*, p. 25. See also Parry, *Delusions and Discoveries*, pp. 164, 165 and 166.

²⁰ Palmer, *E.P. Thompson*, p. 25.

²¹ Merrill, 'An Interview with E.P. Thompson,' p. 11. As Thompson suggested in the 'Foreword' to *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (London, 1978), p. iii: 'My political consciousness cut its teeth on the causes of Spain and Indian independence.'

²² Merrill, 'An Interview with E.P. Thompson,' p. 9.

²³ E.J. Thompson's biography reveals not just an adherence to 'Englishness' but an adherence to particularity of all kinds according to Chaudhuri, 'Bankura's Englishman,' p. 11.

²⁴ For examples, see R. Chandavarkur, 'The Making of the Indian Working Class: E.P. Thompson and Indian History,' *History Workshop Journal*, 43, 1997, p. 117 and D. Eastwood, 'E.P. Thompson, Britain, and the French Revolution,' *History Workshop Journal*, 39, 1995, p. 80. For the problem of defining Englishness, with specific reference to Thompson, see M. Butler, 'Thompson's Second Front,' *History Workshop Journal*, 47, 1999, p. 72.

throughout his adult education teaching and his history-writing) and with the specifically English tradition of romanticism.²⁵ Blake, Wordsworth, and Morris – all were important figures in Thompson's interpretation of conflicts within English culture, just as crucial as the revolutionary traditions of the English common people.²⁶ Both products of his family tree, Englishness and internationalism, then, constituted a contradictory complex which Thompson would compulsively draw upon in future political and theoretical struggle.

When Thompson joined the CPGB during his first period at Cambridge (where he studied literature) the international communist movement had already thrown over the politics of 'class against class' for the politics of a 'popular front.' Thus Thompson became a communist at a time when the communist movement itself saw no conflict between particularism and socialist internationalism.²⁷ Not that Thompson's decision to hoist his political sail to the communist mast was determined by his 'Englishness' or the defence of the hegemonic national culture, which he always, in any case, considered 'hostile'.²⁸ Already sensitised to internationalist impulses by his family, Thompson's decision was overdetermined by a conjuncture characterized by fascist triumph and liberal passivity.²⁹ For Thompson, communist commitment was rooted in 'internationalist anti-fascist contestation'.³⁰ Capitalist crisis, bourgeois complicity with fascism and racism, and the almost global attempt to

²⁵ On Thompson's link to the romantic tradition see chapter five of M. Löwy and R. Sayre, *Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity*, trans. by C. Porter (Durham, 2001). See also M. Kenny, 'Socialism and the Romantic "Self": The Case of Edward Thompson,' *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 5, 1, 2000, pp. 105-27.

²⁶ On the importance of the romantic tradition to Thompson's political formation see Palmer, *E.P. Thompson*, p. 60; M.F. McShane, "'History and Hope": E.P. Thompson and *The Making of the English Working Class*,' PhD Thesis (McMaster University, 1990), pp. 1-29; and G. McCann, *Theory and History: The Political Thought of E.P. Thompson* (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 42-51.

²⁷ Here is Dimitrov, head of the Comintern, on what this meant: 'By the very fact of building at the present time its class organization, by the very fact of defending democratic rights and liberties against fascism, by the very fact of fighting for the overthrow of capitalism, the working class is fighting for the future of the nation.' See G. Dimitrov, 'The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International,' *Selected Speeches and Articles* (London, 1951), cited in E. Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism-Fascism-Populism* (London, 1977), p. 140. For a good account of the transition from 'class against class' to popular front,' see N.N. Kozlov and E.D. Weitz, 'Reflections on the Origins of the "Third Period": Bukharin, the Comintern and the Political Economy of Weimar Germany,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 24, 3 (1989), pp. 387-410 and M. Worley, 'The Communist International: The Communist Party of Great Britain, and the 'Third Period,' 1928-1932,' *European History Quarterly*, 30, 2 (2000), pp. 185-208.

²⁸ E.P. Thompson, 'An Open Letter to Leszek Kolakowski,' in Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (London, 1978), p. 109.

²⁹ See Merrill, 'An Interview with E.P. Thompson,' p. 11.

³⁰ Thompson, *Beyond the Frontier*, p. 56.

undermine working-class self-rule were the negative set of coordinates which impelled communist allegiance; democratic defence in Spain, support for the Soviet Union, and fraternity with all oppressed peoples, were the obverse positive set of coordinates determining that commitment. Whether negative or positive the internationalist impulse of each coordinate was clear. The struggle for Indian self-determination rather than the poetry of Wordsworth fired communist allegiance in the young Thompson.

Internationalist allegiance, however, cannot have been the only influence on Thompson's decision to salute the Red Flag rather than the Union Jack. Intellectual culture no doubt played its part too.³¹ Not only did Thompson join the CPGB at a time when 'almost the only subject of discussion [was] contemporary politics and [when] a very large majority of the more intelligent undergraduates [were] communists.'³² He joined at a time when the CPGB's immediate heritage was characterised by cultural and intellectual achievement rather than political and industrial triumph.³³ Important in generating this asymmetry were the forward leaps in cultural and intellectual work characteristic of British Marxism in the nineteen thirties, not just the science of J.D. Bernal, the poetry of W.H. Auden, the literary criticism of Christopher Caudwell and Ralph Fox, the economic history of Maurice Dobb, and the histories of A.L. Morton and Donna Torr, but the collective contributions of radical journals, like *Left Review*, and the Left Book Club.³⁴ Indeed, in a later interview Thompson would remark on the vital place that Christopher Hill's histories and Caudwell's literary criticism had in his own movement toward

³¹ See Palmer, *E.P. Thompson*, p.40.

³² Julian Bell cited (without specification) in J. Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire: British in the Spanish Civil War* (Stanford, 1994), p. 22.

³³ According to Dennis Dworkin, 'During the era of the Great Depression and fascist expansion, English intellectual culture for the first time became dominated by leftist ideas.' See D. Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies* (Durham and London, 1997), p. 10.

³⁴ On Bernal and Haldane, see G. Werskey, *The Visible College* (London, 1978), pp. 52-59 and 67-76; J. Ree, *Proletarian Philosophers: Problems in Socialist Culture, 1900-1940* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 79-105, and E.A. Roberts, *The Anglo-Marxists: A Study in Ideology and Culture* (Lanham and Oxford, 1997), pp. 146-208; on Dobb, see S. Macintyre, *A Proletarian Science: Marxism in Britain 1917-1933* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 169-171; on Caudwell, see E.P. Thompson, 'Caudwell,' in *Socialist Register 1977* (London, 1977); on the work of Spender, see J. Coombes, 'British Intellectuals and the Popular Front,' in F. Gloversmith, ed., *Class, Culture and Social Change: A New View of the 1930s* (Sussex, 1980), pp. 70-100; on *Left Review*, see E.P. Thompson, 'Organizing the Left,' *Times Literary Supplement*, 19, 2, 1971, pp. 203-4 and D. Margolies, ed., *Writing the Revolution: Cultural Criticism from Left Review* (London, 1998); and on the Left Book Club, see S. Samuels, 'The Left Book Club,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 1, 2, 1966, pp. 65-86.

Marxism.³⁵ For a member of the middle class, largely cut off from direct access to proletarian culture and the capitalist labour process, the only road into Marxism resided at the intersection between culture and aesthetics. Yet this intersection was not peripheral to communist (popular front) politics in the nineteen thirties, and it would become increasingly more important during and immediately after the war, when the CPGB figured itself as a bulwark against the infiltration of foreign culture and the defender of 'all that is good and vital in [the] national tradition.'³⁶ As it became imperative for the CPGB to ground Marxism in the context of national traditions, culture became an increasing concern of communist polemics. But if partly moved by Marxian advances within the cultural sphere, Thompson's communism did not stop when the pen was laid down. Thompson joined a communist movement that believed it was 'making history.'³⁷ With this conception of human agency at their backs how could Marxists avoid the military struggle against fascism?³⁸

They couldn't. Like many other Marxists of his generation, Thompson's university studies were interrupted by war against Nazi Germany. Called up in 1942, Thompson's experience of anti-fascist struggle during the Second World War had a critical influence on his political consciousness, a consciousness overdetermined by his brother's own wartime experience in the Balkans.³⁹ Fighting alongside communist partisans in Bulgaria, Frank Thompson was captured, interrogated and shot by Bulgarian state forces in 1944.⁴⁰ The effect on Thompson was profound. For the younger Thompson, the 'people's war' against fascism became not just a military struggle – he would serve mainly in Italy during the war⁴¹ – but a political struggle between barbarism and what Frank had called the 'spirit of Europe.'⁴² This spirit for Thompson was simultaneously national and international. As he explained, 'one

³⁵ See E.P. Thompson, 'Agenda for Radical History,' in E.P. Thompson, *Making History: Writings on History and Culture* (New York, 1994), p. 359.

³⁶ See 'Note,' *Arena*, 2, 1950, p. 2.

³⁷ E.P. Thompson, 'The Poverty of Theory: Or An Orrery of Errors,' in *The Poverty of Theory*, p. 264.

³⁸ Of course between the Nazi-Soviet Pact in 1939 and the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 many did. But just as many didn't. Thompson's brother was one of the latter.

³⁹ 'It was,' Hobsbawm believed, 'a complex relation of admiration for and competition against a brother who, in life, had appeared as the more favoured and brilliant, and who by his death acquired the status of a hero and martyr of the war of anti-fascist resistance.' See Hobsbawm, 'Edward Palmer Thompson,' p. 522. See also Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism*, p. 142 and W.L. Webb, 'A Thoroughly English Dissident,' *Radical History Review*, 58, 1994, p. 162. For Thompson's own understanding of his relationship with his brother, see Thompson, *Beyond the Frontier*, pp. 79-86.

⁴⁰ See Thompson, *Beyond the Frontier*, p. 103.

⁴¹ See E.P. Thompson, 'Overture to Cassino,' in *Double Exposure* (Suffolk, 1985), pp. 185-6.

⁴² Frank Thompson, 'December 25, 1943,' in *There is a Spirit in Europe*, p. 169.

didn't feel a sense of being isolated in any way from the peoples of Europe or the peoples of Britain.⁴³ Collective purpose, however, had political consequences that transcended not just national boundaries but also the war.⁴⁴ The war against fascism, Thompson later argued, was 'a very critical moment in human civilisation,' and the victory of the 'heroic will' in 1945, he further claimed, seemed to affirm the possibility of a (international) socialist consciousness.⁴⁵ After the war this consciousness would be concretely transformed throughout Europe into votes for social change, even in a Britain spared invasion and ruin.⁴⁶ But hope for a general European transformation in socialist directions was soon sunk by Cold War. Yet 1945,⁴⁷ Thompson argued, was still (in Frank's words) 'Cornford's victory, Ralph Fox's victory, the victory of the Carritts and the Garratts, of the Asturian miners and the Barcelona workingmen.'⁴⁸ It was also Frank Thompson's victory. Defending the values and aspirations which had moved men and women to put their 'bodies between fascism and freedom'⁴⁹ would constitute a key political purpose of Thompson's future work.

If Thompson's communism was part product of his family tree, part product of his own experience of war and anti-fascism, then these parts fused in the immediate years after 1945. In this period Thompson not only embarked on a journey tracing his brother's final footsteps in Bulgaria but also on a project that sought to put his and Frank's international socialist values into practice. Along with his future wife, Dorothy Towers, Thompson was involved in a multinational mission to build a railway in Yugoslavia from Samac to Sarajevo, a project characterised by 'a great sense of international cooperation and ... an enormous sense of hope.'⁵⁰ Consistently maintaining the internationalist and socialist virtue of this exercise, Thompson would

⁴³ Merrill, 'Interview with E.P. Thompson,' p. 10.

⁴⁴ See Palmer, *E.P. Thompson: Objections and Oppositions*, pp. 46-7.

⁴⁵ See E.P. Thompson, 'The Secret State,' *New Statesman*, 10 November, 1975, p. 618. There has, of course, been a large debate within the historiography of 1945 about the question of whether Labour's victory was due to a 'socialist' (class politics) or a 'nationalist' (consensus politics) consciousness. For overviews of this debate, see S. Burgess, '1945 Observed – A History of the Histories,' *Contemporary Record*, 5, 1, 1991, pp. 155-70.

⁴⁶ Thompson, 'The Poverty of Theory,' p. 265 and 'Open Letter to Leszek Kolakowski,' p. 144-5, both in *The Poverty of Theory*.

⁴⁷ But see Thompson, 'The Secret State,' p. 616.

⁴⁸ Frank Thompson cited in E.P. Thompson, *Beyond the Frontier*, p. 71.

⁴⁹ Adapted from E.P. Thompson, cited (without exact specification) in Palmer, *E.P. Thompson*, p. 50.

⁵⁰ D. Thompson (interviewed by S. Rowbotham), 'The Personal is Political,' *New Left Review*, I/200, 1993, p. 94. For a brief overview of Thompson's experiences during these years, see S. Woodhams, *History in the Making: Raymond Williams, Edward Thompson and Radical Intellectuals 1936-1956* (London, 2001), pp. 65-7.

look back on the railway project as an extension of the values and comradeship he had found in war, the concrete realisation of his brother's 'vision of the common people of Europe building, upon their old inheritance, a new creative society of comradeship....'⁵¹ Like welfare services, rent agreements and nationalizations in Britain, the railway project in Yugoslavia represented the victory of the ridden over those who rode them, a concrete manifestation of the 'spirit of Europe'. Yet there was also a clear nationalist dimension to this project that Thompson recalled at the time, 'the pride of ownership by the ordinary man of his own country, its sources of wealth and means of production.'⁵² In many ways it was this moment – what he would later characterise as a 'political-front type political moment'⁵³ – and its values that Thompson would attempt to recreate (or rescue) in 1956 in Britain through a 'new' Left and in the early nineteen eighties through European Nuclear Disarmament (END). Alive for such a short time – Thompson measured its peak in 1943-6 – it would nonetheless outweigh any other moment in the determination of Thompson's politics; its almost complete destruction in the glacial waste years of the Cold War encouraged in Thompson not resignation but its impassioned defence, even at moments of great disillusion. Maintaining a constant vigil against (mostly Marxist) opponents of this moment, Thompson consistently and vigorously defended its values until his own death in 1993.

Thompson remained a communist throughout the war years (even if his official membership of the party lapsed) and his association with the CPGB was strengthened once he returned from the war to finish his studies at Cambridge in 1945. Following his marriage to Dorothy Thompson (future historian of Chartism and gender), he moved to Halifax where he took up a tutorship in adult education and became active in the West Yorkshire branch of the CPGB. This period of Thompson's biography is often neglected by historians, seen either as a period that prepared his withdrawal from the CPGB or reduced solely to his experience of the

⁵¹ E.P. Thompson, introduction to *There is a Spirit in Europe: A Memoir of Frank Thompson*, ed. E.P. Thompson and T.J. Thompson (London, 1948), p. 20, cited in Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain*, p. 17. Later he claimed that *Nasha* (our) had reigned supreme on the railway scheme, 'the *nasha* of socialist consciousness, and ... the *nasha* of the nation.' See Thompson, 'Open Letter to Leszek Kolakowski,' in *The Poverty of Theory*, p. 160.

⁵² E.P. Thompson, 'Omladinska Pruga,' in E.P. Thompson, ed., *The Railway: An Adventure in Construction* (London, 1948), p. 2 cited in Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain*, p. 18.

⁵³ Merrill, 'Interview with E.P. Thompson,' p. 11.

Communist Party Historians Group (CPGH).⁵⁴ It did, of course, prepare Thompson's 1956 resignation and he did take part in discussions within the CPHG.⁵⁵ Yet it should not be discussed with reference to these things alone. Although others have supposed that he 'was never the "pure and simple" communist',⁵⁶ we should not sweep this period, along with its Stalinist pieties, under the historical carpet in an effort to prove the fundamental continuity of Thompson's wartime experience and his later critique of Stalinism. There is a connection between these things but we might miss the connection – to say nothing of the potential damage wrought to an understanding of Thompson's negotiation of the national question - if we paper over Thompson's communism.⁵⁷

Governed by the victory of the popular front in the anti-fascist war, British communists were engaged in a sustained battle of ideas over the meaning of 'the people' and 'the nation' throughout the early years of Cold War.⁵⁸ Already a feature of communist rhetoric in the later nineteen thirties, the language of 'the people' and 'the nation' was crucial to the (simultaneously nationalist and internationalist) post-war strategy of the CPGB and its (eventual) adoption of the 'British Road to Socialism' in 1951.⁵⁹ The CPGB's object was hegemonic: not just to make the nation compatible

⁵⁴ Michael Bess avoids both these options but still manages to draw a sharp distinction between Thompson's communist and post-communist periods. See M.D. Bess, 'E.P. Thompson: The Historian as Activist,' *American Historical Review*, 98, 1, 1993, pp. 20-21. David Eastwood simply avoids the issue. See Eastwood, 'E.P. Thompson Reconsidered,' pp. 637-8.

⁵⁵ On the CPGH see E. Hobsbawm, 'The Communist Party Historians' Group,' in M. Cornforth, ed., *Rebels and Their Causes: Essays in Honour of A.L. Morton* (London, 1978), pp. 21-48; B. Schwarz and C. Mercer, 'Popular Politics and Marxist Theory in Britain: The History Men,' in G. Bridges and R. Brunt, eds., *Silver Linings* (London, 1980); D. Parker, 'The Communist Party and Its Historians,' *Socialist History*, 12, 1997, pp. 33-58 and S. Ashman, 'The Communist Party Historians' Group,' in J. Rees, ed., *Essays on Historical Materialism* (London, 1998), pp. 145-60. For specific reference to Thompson's limited involvement, see P.J. Walker, 'Interview with Dorothy Thompson,' *Radical History Review*, 77, 200, pp. 5-6.

⁵⁶ The quote is taken from Palmer, *E.P. Thompson: Objections and Oppositions*, p. 57.

⁵⁷ For Thompson's own understanding of the continuity of his thought from the early nineteen fifties onwards, see his 'PostScript, 1976' to the revised edition of *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (London, 1976, orig. 1955), p. 810. This was previously published as 'Romanticism, Moralism and Utopianism: The Case of William Morris,' *New Left Review*, 1/99, 1976, pp. 83-111. Perry Anderson hasn't overlooked this period in Thompson's intellectual biography. See his *Arguments within English Marxism*, pp. 143-4.

⁵⁸ For an institutional overview, see D. Childs, 'The Cold War and the "British Road", 1946-53,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 23, 1988, pp. 551-72. For the immediate pre-history of the CPGB's attempt to make communism compatible with the nation, see G. Roberts, 'Limits of Popular Radicalism: British Communism and the People's War, 1941-45,' *Chronicon*, 1, 3, 1997, pp. 1-19 available at <http://www.ucc.ie/chronicon/roberts.htm>.

⁵⁹ This story still awaits its historian. But see, in addition to works cited in note 59 above, B. Schwarz, "'The People" in History: the Communist Party Historians' Group, 1946-56,' particularly pp. 53-82.

with communism but to render the CPGB the 'natural' telos of the national tradition.⁶⁰ The object was to win the battle to define terms crucial to the capture of national hegemony by rewriting Britain's past. Socialism became the objective of the common people not the working class, the nation was no longer a contingent and temporary feature of capitalist political economy but the ultimate objective of socialism. Thompson played his own role in this battle of ideas - not just as a contributor to the political project of the CPGB but also in adult education (where he sought to 'make socialists'⁶¹) and in his reinterpretation of William Morris's political purpose and its value to the CPGB's newly found cultural heritage. Moving the terms of the battle, Thompson would continue the cultural politics of the 'British Road to Socialism' – the attempt to make socialism compatible with Englishness - after 1956 outside the CPGB.

A communist by conviction, experience, and familial loyalty, what set of circumstances pressured Thompson toward resignation from the CPGB in 1956? The Marx/Morris encounter, his experiences of adult education, the hardening of Marxist arteries in a climate of Cold War,⁶² and the moral critique of capitalism associated with the poetry of the English romantic tradition – all these played their part in Thompson's openness to dissent in 1956.⁶³ But what drew all these disparate experiences together into a decision to leave a cause his brother had died fighting for? The common thread was an interpretation of the English socialist tradition which stressed its moral strength, its values of community, its commitment to a revolution in man, and its belief in the agency of the common people. Morris had taught

⁶⁰ See Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain*, pp. 42-43. See also A. Croft, 'Authors Take Sides: Writers and the Communist Party 1920-1956,' in G. Andrews et al., eds., *Opening the Books: Essays on the Social and Cultural History of British Communism* (London, 1995), pp. 83-101 and H. Behrand, 'An Intellectual Irrelevance? Marxist Literary Criticism in the 1930s,' in A. Croft, ed., *A Weapon in the Struggle: A Cultural History of the Communist Party in Britain* (London, 1998), pp. 106-22. For incidence of this outside the cultural arena, see D. Renton, 'Not Just Politics but Economics as Well: Trade Unions, Labour Movement Activists and Anti-Fascist Protests, 1945-51,' *Labour History Review*, 65, 2, 2000, pp. 166-180.

⁶¹ According to Palmer, 'at an early staff meeting, the young Marxist tutor [Thompson] announced that his aim in adult teaching was "to create revolutionaries".' See Palmer, *E.P. Thompson: Objections and Oppositions*, p. 64.

⁶² For Thompson's own appreciation of these 'hardenings,' see E.P. Thompson, 'Edgell Rickwood,' in Thompson, *Making History*, p. 235.

⁶³ For the best account of Thompson's 'exit from King Street,' see Palmer, *E.P. Thompson*, pp. 69-86. See also J. Saville, 'The XXth Congress and the British Communist Party,' *Socialist Register 1976* (London, 1976), pp. 1-23; B. Palmer, *The Making of E.P. Thompson: Marxism, Humanism, and History* (Toronto, 1981), pp. 55-63; and J. Saville, 'Edward Thompson, the Communist party and 1956,' *Socialist Register, 1994* (London, 1994), pp. 20-31.

Thompson that socialism and the national tradition were not irreconcilable; adult education had provided him with access to the common people's struggle against the noxious effects of the Industrial Revolution; and the romantics taught him that socialism could not simply be reduced to a revolution in relations of production. Yet these were all aspects of Thompson's work that he had learnt from *within* the CPGB, resources that he carried with him on his journey out of the party. After 1956 Morris would be claimed for an English tradition against the 'fake' Englishness of the CPGB; the romantic tradition of poetry would be employed to bring into relief the poverty of communist morality; and the history of the English common people would be rendered at odds with the political purpose of British communism. When Thompson asserted that the CPGB had renounced its role as gatekeeper of the values which his brother and so many others had died for, this conception of a distinctively English radical tradition was the measure.⁶⁴ Particularity, then, constituted an important companion on Thompson's journey out of the inferno-like circles of international Communism in the nineteen fifties.⁶⁵ But if Thompson used particularism as leverage in his flight from the moral restrictions and political constrictions of Stalinism, this did not imply anything like Orwell's notion of 'my country right or wrong'. For Thompson, 'a socialist internationalist [who spoke] in an English tongue,'⁶⁶ there was no irreconcilable conflict between particularism and internationalism.

By the late nineteen fifties – and in some important senses before he left the CPGB – the two poles of Thompson's socialism were in place.⁶⁷ At one pole stood a resolute internationalism, a commitment to brotherhood and fraternity between peoples; at the other stood a conception of Englishness, an 'invented' English

⁶⁴ 'When, in 1956, my disagreements with orthodox Marxism became fully articulate, I fell back on modes of perception which I'd learned in those years of close company with Morris' is how Thompson later characterized this moment. See Thompson, 'Postscript, 1976,' p. 810.

⁶⁵ In *The Reasoner* (a revisionist communist journal that Thompson edited with John Saville from within the CPGB) Thompson wrote that 'I would ask whether we are fully satisfied that our policy can be truthfully called *The British Road to Socialism*: or whether certain passages in its might not better be entitled *The Russian Road to Socialism, Done into English?...'* See E.P. Thompson, 'Reply to George Mathews,' *The Reasoner*, 1, July 1956, p. 13, cited in Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism*, p. 188, fn. 22. For more on *The Reasoner* see S. Woodhams, *History in the Making: Raymond Williams, Edward Thompson and Radical Intellectuals 1936-1956* (London, 2001), pp. 124-143 and J. Saville, *Memoirs from the Left* (London, 2003), pp. 105-110.

⁶⁶ E.P. Thompson 'Foreword,' to *The Poverty of Theory*, p. iv.

⁶⁷ For accounts of Thompson's socialist humanism, see J. Ree, 'Socialist Humanism,' *Radical Philosophy*, 9 (Winter 1974), pp. 33-36; K. Soper, 'Socialist Humanism,' in H.J. Kaye and K. McClelland, eds., *E.P. Thompson: Critical Perspectives* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 204-232; and McCann, *Theory and History*, pp. 51-56.

revolutionary tradition that reached back to the Levellers and forward through the English Jacobins right up to Morris and the Marxists of the nineteen thirties. Over the succeeding decades the two poles remained in place, Thompson oscillating between the two, context acting as the magnet that would draw him closer to one and then the other. The Second World War, 1956, the New Left, conflicts over Marxism in the nineteen sixties and seventies, the politics of nuclear disarmament, and the encounter with English history and his own history – each important moment in Thompson's biography contained elements of each alternative. Internationalism and Englishness were the determining poles of Thompson's politics and history writing. But were these two poles consistently reconciled in his socialism?

Contesting National Hegemonies: The Freeborn Englishman and the People

A contradiction stalked the pages of the *Communist Manifesto* that was not the result of inadequate conceptualisation or apprehension of empirical reality but which was the product of objective conditions: on the one hand Marx and Engels argued that the inherently cosmopolitan character of bourgeois production undermined national diversity and national antagonisms;⁶⁸ on the other they argued that the working class must 'constitute itself the nation'⁶⁹ if it was to 'acquire political supremacy.'⁷⁰ How could a nation-less proletariat become 'the leading class of the nation'? The contradiction was manifest in the coexistence of an international economic system and a world of nation-states.⁷¹ Marxists have attempted to overcome this seemingly perpetual disjuncture between their (transnational) economic and (national) political world in two principal ways.⁷² In one register they rejected nationalism *tout court*; in another register they embraced national communities and national identities, no

⁶⁸ 'National differences and antagonisms between peoples,' Marx and Engels asserted, 'are daily more and more vanishing owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding to them.' See K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* 1848 (London, 1967), p.102.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ For a recent elucidation of this point, see E.M. Wood, *Empire of Capital* (London and New York, 2002), pp. 14-25. The classic elucidation of this point can be found in I. Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy* (Cambridge, 1979), especially pp. 1-36 and 222-30.

⁷² Hobsbawm has put this disjuncture most succinctly. See his *The New Century* (London, 2000), pp. 43-4.

matter how imaginary, combating their nationalist foes on national battlegrounds.⁷³

How did E.P. Thompson attempt to solve this dilemma?

In line with the cultural strategy of the CPGB, E.P. Thompson bent his pen to the 'counter-struggle to present [British] traditions and popularise all that is progressive to-day.'⁷⁴ In a paper delivered at the 1952 conference of the CPGB's Cultural Committee, 'The American Threat to British Culture,' Thompson revealed both the 'seriousness of the threat to our culture'⁷⁵ and the need to expel the 'American substitute...by a development of the living British tradition.'⁷⁶ Summoning up a concealed English radical tradition associated with William Morris, Thompson urged communists to 'pay even more attention to our own history and cultural achievements...by bringing our almost forgotten revolutionary traditions once again before the people.'⁷⁷ Thompson hoped to appropriate 'Englishness' for a communist future. In the context of Cold War, English McCarthyism, and the British ruling class's appropriation of patriotism, Thompson's text fitted well the CPGB's cultural strategy to marry communism and Englishness. For Thompson, the CPGB's 'British Road to Socialism' not only meshed nicely with his experience of war but also with his post-war experience of adult education.

Thompson's communist Englishness was also reflective his participation of in the CPGB's regional offensive to '[recreate] the dynamic role which the "people" had

⁷³ See J. Schwarzmantel, 'Nation versus Class: Nationalism and Socialism in Theory and Practice,' in M. Keating, ed., *The Social Origins of Nationalist Movements: The Contemporary West European Experience* (London, 1992), p. 56.

⁷⁴ S. Aaronovitch, 'The American Threat to British Culture,' *Arena*, 2, 1951, p. 18. Thompson's major contribution to this project was his revision of William Morris. See Thompson, 'The Murder of William Morris,'; E.P. Thompson, 'William Morris and the Moral Issues To-Day,'; and E.P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*. For a (largely negative) assessment of Thompson's appropriation of Morris see, chapters 6 and 7 of Anderson's *Arguments within English Marxism*.

⁷⁵ Thompson, 'William Morris and the Moral Issues To-Day,' p. 25. For a reading of this essay in the context of the wider communist attempt to 'claim' Morris for the CPGB, see Weinroth, *Reclaiming William Morris*, pp. 206-227. Whatever is gained in Weinroth's reading of this essay is obscured by her employment of the jargon common to much contemporary literary theory and cultural studies.

⁷⁶ Thompson, 'William Morris and the Moral Issues To-Day,' p. 29. This argument was later replicated in the *May Day Manifesto*, which Thompson played a part in editing.

⁷⁷ Thompson, 'William Morris and the Moral Issues To-Day,' p. 27. No doubt Thompson saw his adult education teaching as part of this process. For Thompson's adult education work, see P. Searby, R.W. Malcomson and J. Rule, 'Edward Thompson as a Teacher: Yorkshire and Warwick in Malcomson and Rule, eds., *Protest and Survival: The Historical Experience: Essays for E.P. Thompson* (London and New York, 1993), pp. 1-17. For Thompson's own views, see E.P. Thompson, 'Education and Experience,' in E.P. Thompson, *The Romantics: England in a Revolutionary Age* (London, 1997), pp. 4-33. This essay was originally presented as the fifth Albert Mansbridge Memorial Lecture in Leeds in 1968.

played in the making of British history.⁷⁸ Confronting the English establishment's conception of nationhood, the Communist historians sought to empirically verify the CPGB's claim to be the living embodiment of English radicalism's past. In the words of the editors of *Democracy and the Labour Movement* (a collection of essays produced by the communist historians), the objective of Marxist historiography was to show that 'History was the sweat, blood, tears and triumph of the common people, *our people*.'⁷⁹ The purpose was fulfilled: from Hill's evacuation of the Norman Yoke theory to Rodney Hilton's elucidation of fourteenth century English peasant revolt through to Donna Torr's celebration of Tom Mann. In another register, the CPGB historians could see themselves as the vanguard of an imagined community whose leaders stretched back to John Ball, Milton and Winstanley and through to Paine, Cobbett, Jones, Marx and Morris.⁸⁰ Thompson's appropriation of Morris for a distinctively English Marxism, his reassessment of the English romantic tradition, and his attempt to appropriate the language of 'nation' and 'people' for socialist purposes – all these can be seen as crucial products of the wider communist project to reconcile Englishness with revolutionary socialism.⁸¹

Within the CPGB, then, Thompson's answer to the problem of the disjuncture between a transnational economic order and a territorial political order could be described as 'socialist nationalism' – a position, as we have seen, that Hobsbawm would assume in the nineteen eighties.⁸² Socialist nationalism represents, in concert with what John Breuilly has called 'an integration of class and national loyalty,'⁸³ an appeal for national hegemony based on the radical traditions of 'the people'. Although it constitutes a clear repudiation of socialist cosmopolitanism – the idea that class conflict transcends national boundaries, hence, displacing national conflicts – socialist

⁷⁸ M. Taylor, 'Patriotism, History and the Left in Twentieth-Century Britain,' *Historical Journal*, 33, 4, 1990, p. 984. In addition see Schwarz, "'The People" in History,' p. 66.

⁷⁹ J. Saville, *Democracy and the Labour Movement* (London, 1954), p. 8 (emphasis added) cited in Schwarz, "'The People" in History,' p. 68. The editors suggest that this is what the younger communist historians had learnt from Donna Torr, who had an important influence on Thompson.

⁸⁰ See H. Kaye, 'E.P. Thompson, the British Marxist Historian Tradition and the Contemporary Crisis,' in H.J. Kaye and K. McClelland, eds., *E.P. Thompson: Critical Perspectives* (Oxford, 1990), p. 255.

⁸¹ See R. Gray, 'History, Marxism and Theory,' p. 155 and K. Soper, 'Socialist Humanism,' p. 208 both in Kaye and McClelland, eds., *E.P. Thompson*.

⁸² J.J. Schwarzmantel, 'Class and Nation: Problems of Socialist Nationalism,' *Political Studies*, 35, 1987, p. 239. For an historical assessment of 'socialist nationalism' in Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see P. Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack: Englishness, Patriotism and the British Left, 1881-1924* (Woodbridge, 1998).

⁸³ J. Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (London, 1982), p. 321.

nationalism does not necessarily constitute a repudiation of internationalism.⁸⁴ Not some kind of socialist cosmopolis but a world of socialist nation-states, sovereign, independent and fraternal constitutes the utopia of socialist nationalism. Internationalism is manifest in fraternal support for socialist (or nationalist) movements labouring under imperial or super-national subjugation, in co-operation between different national labour movements, and in a rejection of distinctions based on irrationalisms associated with blood and soil definitions of nationhood. It is alienated, consequently, from the homogenisation commonly associated with cosmopolitanism (a bourgeois idea *par excellence* socialist nationalism would argue), and repudiates the cultural death implied in the subversion of national difference.⁸⁵ Socialist nationalism is the 'true' nationalism, it is argued, because only it guarantees that the nation is equated with the common people. If undeniably socialist, socialist nationalism is also founded on the recognition that the nation-state constitutes a legitimate reality – a recognition that nations are not merely imagined communities; that proletariats have national identities; and that socialist movements must always struggle within national contexts.⁸⁶

An advocate of what Stephen Yeo has called 'oppositional Englishness,'⁸⁷ Thompson fully subscribed to this solution to the national question in his communist period. His speeches and writings are suffused with the language of 'the people,' just as they are concerned to establish a popular democratic tradition in the English past.⁸⁸ Class conflict is present, but its transcendence is imagined within 'one country,' its boundaries circumscribed by nations. Reminiscent of the marriage of national and international impulses during the war years, Thompson's socialist nationalism is nonetheless unashamedly internationalist. Support and sympathy with peasants in

⁸⁴ The point is made in Schwarzmantel, 'Class and Nation,' p. 239.

⁸⁵ As Schwarzmantel suggests of socialist nationalism: 'The patriotism of the property-owning classes will always take second place to their class economic interests, and they will always be prepared to betray their compatriots when it is in their class interest to do so.' See *ibid.*, p. 249. Effectively, then, socialist nationalism throws back the contradiction, which gave rise to its own emergence, on the bourgeoisie.

⁸⁶ See Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy*, p. 291 and J. Ehrenreich, 'Socialism, Nationalism, and Capitalist Development,' *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 15, 1983, p. 8.

⁸⁷ S. Yeo, 'Socialism, the State and Some Oppositional Englishness,' in R. Colls and P. Dodd, eds., *Englishness: Politics and Culture, 1880-1920* (London, 1986), pp. 308-369.

⁸⁸ See H. Kaye, 'E.P. Thompson, the British Marxist Historical Tradition and Contemporary Crisis,' in *E.P. Thompson*, p. 255.

Korea, images of 'the burnt earth and steaming sea of a devastated planet,'⁸⁹ the moral outcry against 'the butchers of Syngman Rhee,'⁹⁰ solidarity with trade unionists in Greece and Spain, and a concern with 'the common people of every land'⁹¹ are a feature of his early communist writings. Correspondingly, Thompson is contemptuous of jingoism, racism and imperialism, of what has been called the 'nationalism of the Right'.⁹² Yet alongside this internationalism stands a distinctive conception of *our* history, *our* culture, and *our* people. Morris's appeal to the Workers of the World unproblematically coexists with the celebration of the national traditions of the English common people.⁹³ Morris's argument that socialism could only be coherently established by world-wide social revolution provides no threat to the vision of a peculiarly English socialism. Morris's understanding of the capitalist system as a totality instigates no reflection on the national nature of 'society'.⁹⁴ Yet Thompson's socialist nationalism offered no analysis of how 'the people of a threatened world'⁹⁵ are to benefit from 'the promise of British culture,'⁹⁶ and no intimation of why 'the healthy moral feelings of the [English] people'⁹⁷ are going to be recognisable to the Scottish people, let alone Korean peasants.⁹⁸

Soviet tanks in Budapest might have induced dismissal of Stalinism, but 1956 did not stimulate a total revision of Thompson's socialist nationalism. In one sense, of course, it did. Thompson's decision to resign from the CPGB and repudiate what he considered 'orthodox Marxism' did involve a rejection of Soviet nationalism, a

⁸⁹ Thompson, 'William Morris and the Moral Issues To-Day,' p. 27.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 28.

⁹² Schwarzmantel, 'Class and Nation,' p. 243. On Thompson's rejection of jingoism, imperialism and racism, see Thompson, 'The Peculiarities of the English,' p. 67. Positive evaluations of Morris's rejection of the nationalism of the right can be found throughout Thompson's *William Morris*, for example, pp. 259-260 and 382-89.

⁹³ This is how Morris put it: 'our aim, to be always steadily kept in view, is, to obtain for the whole people, duly organized, the possession and control of all the means of production and exchange, destroying at the same time all national rivalries.' See W. Morris, *Letters*, p. 207, cited in Thompson, *William Morris*, p. 334.

⁹⁴ See Ibid., p. 313. The Manifesto of Morris's Socialist League began: 'We come before you as a body advocating the principles of Revolutionary International Socialism, that is we seek a change in the basis of Society – a change which would destroy the distinctions of classes and nationalities.' Cited in Thompson, *William Morris*, p. 366.

⁹⁵ Thompson, 'William Morris and the Moral Issues To-day,' p. 25.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 26.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 28.

⁹⁸ Morris himself was well aware of this point. See his 'The Development of Modern Society,' published in instalments in *Commonweal* in July and August 1870, summarised in Thompson, *William Morris*, pp. 547-9.

'perverse internationalism,'⁹⁹ as Perry Anderson has termed it, which coexisted uneasily alongside the CPGB's British nationalism. If there was some truth to the communist claim that the bourgeoisie would always put class before nation, there was also truth to the Right's counter claim that in the final analysis the CPGB would put Soviet ahead of English interests.¹⁰⁰ This is what Thompson implicitly claimed when he first criticised English communism following the revelation of Stalinist crimes in 1956.¹⁰¹ For Thompson, there was a radical and final disjuncture between a popular democratic past and the reality of Stalinist theory and practice. As the CPGB silenced all discussion following Khrushchev's speech, Thompson's distance from the 'orthodoxies' of British communism, evidenced by his editorship (with John Saville) of *The Reasoner*, continued to grow. After the Soviet invasion of Hungary there was no going back. If the British road to socialism was to be accessed, Thompson argued, it would need a vehicle other than the CPGB. Its entry ramp lay with a new Left properly committed to the attempt to found a socialism reconcilable with particularism.

Thompson's vision of a new Left did not imply, then, a new conception of the national question.¹⁰² His 'Revolution' and 'Revolution Again!,' founding documents of New Left theory and politics, are suffused with the discourse of socialist nationalism. It is the 'maturity and activity of the people'¹⁰³ who will decide the nature of revolution; it is 'the people' who 'will be forced by events to exert their whole political and industrial strength';¹⁰⁴ it is the people's 'common democratic consciousness'¹⁰⁵ which must be mobilised 'against the oligarchs and (eventually) *the system*;¹⁰⁶ and it

⁹⁹ P. Anderson, 'Internationalism: A Breviary,' *New Left Review*, II/14, 2002, p. 15.

¹⁰⁰ On the phenomenon of 'Soviet nationalism,' see I. Wallerstein, 'Antisystemic Movements: History and Dilemmas,' in S. Amin, G. Arrighi, A.G. Frank and I. Wallerstein, eds., *Transforming the Revolution: Social Movements and the World System* (New York, 1990), pp. 35-6.

¹⁰¹ For Thompson's early assaults against Stalinism, see 'Winter Wheat in Omsk,' *World News*, 30 June 1956; 'Through the Smoke of Budapest,' *The Reasoner*, 3, November, 1956, reproduced in D. Widgery, ed., *The Left in Britain, 1956-1968* (London, 1970), pp. 66-72 and 'Socialist Humanism,' *The New Reasoner*, I, 1957, pp. 105-43.

¹⁰² This point is also made by Miles Taylor in 'Patriotism, History, and the Left in Twentieth-Century Britain,' p. 984.

¹⁰³ E.P. Thompson, 'Revolution,' *New Left Review*, I/3, 1960, p. 7.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8. For a critique of the socialist strategy of 'Revolution,' see Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism*, pp. 190-3 and my 'The Poverty of Strategy: E.P. Thompson, Perry Anderson and the Transition to Socialism,' *Labour/Le Travail*, 50, 2002, pp. 217-241.

¹⁰⁵ E.P. Thompson, 'Revolution Again!,' *New Left Review*, I/6, 1960, p. 31; and see Thompson, 'Revolution,' p. 8.

¹⁰⁶ Thompson, 'Revolution Again!,' p. 31.

is 'the long and tenacious revolutionary tradition of the British commoner'¹⁰⁷ which will 'leaven the socialist world.'¹⁰⁸ Beyond the similarity of rhetoric, Thompson reaffirmed the nation-state (and at least some of its institutions) as the most appropriate form of political organisation for socialist advance; he reiterated a socialist commitment to the British people's past traditions of resistance and revolution;¹⁰⁹ and he reasserted the indelibly national framework and identity of any socialist movement. Once again internationalism was unproblematically positioned alongside a nationalization of socialism. An important animating purpose of his editorship of the *New Reasoner*, internationalism was manifest in Thompson's definitively New Left concern with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), with visions of 'new human possibilities'¹¹⁰ and values common to humanity.¹¹¹

Once again, however, the marriage between socialist nationalism and internationalism affected by Thompson's early New Left writings is anything but unproblematic. The 'profit-motive,' it might be argued, was not just the 'core of our social order'¹¹² but the core of a transnational social and economic order; the values of British dissent were not necessarily coterminous with human values; the conflicts engendered by an international system of nation-states could not be successfully resolved within the political borders of a national state; and the 'Society of Equals'¹¹³ (what is the geographical nature of society?¹¹⁴) could not be unproblematically sustained outside of 'the system'.¹¹⁵ Indeed Thompson himself pointed to some of these problems – the obvious contradiction between nuclear weapons and notions of national defence; the need to deconstruct NATO to achieve socialist transformation;

¹⁰⁷ Thompson, 'Revolution,' p. 9. See also Thompson, 'Socialist Humanism,' pp. 122 and 140.

¹⁰⁸ Thompson, 'Revolution,' p. 9.

¹⁰⁹ See A.W. Wright, 'Socialism and Nationalism,' in L. Tivey, ed., *The Nation State* (Oxford, 1981), p. 166.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹¹¹ On the internationalism of the *New Reasoner* see B.D. Palmer, 'Reasoning Rebellion,' pp. 195-199. For a critique of CND see P. Anderson, 'The Left in the Fifties,' *New Left Review*, 1/29, 1965, pp. 10-13.

¹¹² Thompson, 'Revolution,' p. 4.

¹¹³ A phrase Thompson borrows from Morris throughout 'Revolution' and 'Revolution Again!'

¹¹⁴ On the way that conceptions of 'society' are often undergirded by nationalist assumptions, see C. Calhoun, 'Nationalism, Political Community, and the Representation of Society: Or, Why Feeling at Home Is Not a Substitute for Public Space,' *European Journal of Social Theory*, 2, 2, 1999, pp. 217-31 and C. Calhoun, 'The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travelers: Towards a Critique of Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism,' in D. Archibugi, ed., *Debating Cosmopolitanism* (London and New York, 2003), p. 94.

¹¹⁵ Thompson, 'Revolution Again!,' p. 31.

and inconsistencies between labourist reformism and socialist relations of production. In his conception of the nexus between socialism and nationalism, Thompson, like Hobsbawm, was torn between contradictory (nationalist and internationalist) impulses.

This should be a matter for no great surprise, however. If Thompson was unable to transcend the ambiguities inherent in his solution to the national question this is because he inhabited a world constituted by them. Socialist movements remained embedded in nation-states, relying on them not only to provide a framework for political action but also to fulfil socialism's historic objectives: welfare provisions, labour regulations and the nationalization of the means of production. No coherent strategy was on offer to overcome the obvious limitations of socialism's nationalization. Coherent strategies – the Fourth International's marriage of total revolution with world government was perhaps one – resulted in political isolation.¹¹⁶ Happy to exist simultaneously nowhere and everywhere, cosmopolitan socialists had been most often forced to the fringes of labour movements, their theoretical coherence exacting a cost of political irrelevance. Yet the obverse strategy had proved no more effective. 'Socialism in one country,' whether in its social democratic or communist guise, had proved, as Thompson showed, a miserable failure from the perspective of international socialism.¹¹⁷ Thompson's solution attempted to avoid the irrelevance involved in cosmopolitan socialism and the inherent socialist limitations implied by the reality of communism and social democracy. Rather than ignore the political efficacy of national identity, he attempted to make national identity commensurate with international socialism.

In the absence of any other solution, Thompson continued to explicate the national origins of his own socialism, to uncover the revolutionary traditions of the English people in the attempt to create socialist revolution in the present. This was the supreme political motive of *The Making of the English Working Class* (hereafter

¹¹⁶ On Trotsky's internationalism, see E. Mandel, *Trotsky as Alternative* (London, 1996), pp. 13 -31 and B.D. Palmer, 'Leon Trotsky: Planet without a Visa,' *Left History*, 9, 1, 2003/4, pp. 79-96.

¹¹⁷ The critique of actually existing social democracy and actually existing socialism was at the core of the New Left. See Thompson, 'Revolution,' pp. 3-6.

The Making).¹¹⁸ A product of his immersion in adult education, and his critique of 'orthodox Marxism', *The Making* uncovered the 'lost' traditions of 'the freeborn Englishman'¹¹⁹ and revealed the importance of this tradition to the making of working-class politics in the nineteenth century. If a history of popular radicalism and plebeian culture, Thompson's account of English working class formation was equally a political intervention in the present. It sought to provide a reinvigorated English socialism, one shorn of its association with the Soviet Union and labourism, with a vision of how a radical consciousness was made. Against what he considered 'mechanical' conceptions of the evolution of working-class consciousness, Thompson argued that 'the changing productive relations and working conditions of the Industrial Revolution were imposed, not upon raw material, but upon the free-born Englishman – and the free-born Englishman as Paine had left him or the Methodists had moulded him.'¹²⁰ Working-class consciousness in the nineteenth century was not the product of the steam engine and the factory system but the product of the people's own traditions of dissent and protest. Anti-absolutist, grounded in the right to resist oppression and unjust government, fuelled by notions of free speech and civil liberties, the myth of the freeborn Englishman constituted a crucial tradition the people called upon to make their own history.¹²¹ For Thompson, then, working-class consciousness was also necessarily a consciousness of national identity that stretched back to the theory of the 'Norman Yoke' and 'Alfred's free constitution.'¹²² The historical lesson for contemporary socialism contained in *The Making* was clear: 'If the tree of Liberty was to grow, it must be grafted to English stock.'¹²³

¹¹⁸ Thompson's history has generated a huge historiography. For an early overview, see F.K. Donnelly, 'Ideology and Early English Working-Class History,' *Social History*, 2, 1976, pp. 219-38. For two famous critiques, see R. Johnson, 'Edward Thompson, Eugene Genovese, and Socialist-Humanist History,' *History Workshop Journal*, 6, 1978, pp. 79-100 and J. Scott, 'Women in *The Making of the English Working Class*,' in J. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, 1986), pp. 68-92.

¹¹⁹ The importance of this 'ideology' or 'myth' to Thompson's social history of working class formation is revealed by the fact that Thompson published 'The Freeborn Englishman' chapter of *The Making* in the *New Left Review* prior to the book's publication. See E.P. Thompson, 'The Freeborn Englishman,' *New Left Review*, I 15, 1962, pp. 43-57.

¹²⁰ Thompson, *The Making*, p. 213.

¹²¹ For an early explication of Thompson's conception of 'the myth of the free born Englishman,' see E.P. Thompson, 'The Segregation of Dissent,' in E.P. Thompson, *Writing by Candlelight* (London, 1980), p. 8. This essay was first published in *New University* in May 1961.

¹²² Thompson, *The Making*, pp. 836-37.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 495.

Sensitive to 'active contraries,'¹²⁴ 'the alternative meanings, values, traditions and potentials'¹²⁵ within any political discourse, Thompson maintained that the ideology of the freeborn Englishman was a contested tradition open to hermeneutic manipulation, a rare treasure whose hegemonic definition could empower political ascendancy. Called upon by Church and King rioters *and* radical reformers,¹²⁶ the ideology of the freeborn Englishman, he maintained, constituted the key context of political conflict in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.¹²⁷ Reform sought to appropriate the meaning of the freeborn Englishman, to provide a vision of the English past that would suit its political objectives by closing off opposing meanings of freedom and liberty. Just as Old Corruption had appropriated the language of patriotism during the Napoleonic wars against the radical patriotism of English Jacobinism, so in the debates over the free press and the vote the reform movement used the same language against Old Corruption.¹²⁸ Reform was dependent on a radical interpretation of national identity. An impressively 'English agitation' for 'English democracy,'¹²⁹ the reform movement had no other choice but to appeal to the people's sense of 'lost rights,' rights inextricably tied to ethnicity, to their embeddedness in a society (supposedly) founded upon ancient customs and constitutional precedents.¹³⁰ It was the 'working-class movement of later years,' according to Thompson, which would 'continue and enrich the traditions of fraternity and liberty.'¹³¹ The logical terminus of the ideology of the freeborn Englishman, then, was modern day socialism: 'the champion defending his individual rights passed imperceptibly into the free-born citizen challenging King and Ministers and claiming rights for which there was no precedent.'¹³²

¹²⁴ E.P. Thompson, *Witness against the Beast: William Blake and the Moral Law* (New York, 1993), p. 46.

¹²⁵ E.P. Thompson, 'Open Letter to Leszek Kolakowski,' in *The Poverty of Theory*, p. 96.

¹²⁶ Thompson, *The Making*, p. 85.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 84. On this point, see H. Cunningham, 'The Language of Patriotism,' in R. Samuel, ed., *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity Vol. I: History and Politics* (London, 1989), p. 61.

¹²⁸ 'In 1795 Pitt could represent himself as defending the Constitution against French invasion,' Thompson argued, but in '1819 Liverpool, Sidmouth, Eldon and Castelreagh were seen as men intent upon displacing constitutional rights by despotic "continental" rule.' Thompson, *The Making*, p. 717.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* For the place of a conception of 'lost rights' in English radicalism from an earlier period see C. Hill, 'The English Revolution and Patriotism,' in Samuel, ed., *Patriotism: Vol. I History and Politics*, pp. 159-170.

¹³¹ Thompson, *The Making*, p. 200.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 91. See J. Epstein's *Radical Expression: Political Language, Ritual and Symbol in England, 1790-1850* (New York, 1994) for the argument that constitutionalism could often contain a revolutionary message.

How could the discourse of the freeborn Englishman, founded on 'security of property'¹³³ and respect for 'sturdy individualism and independence,'¹³⁴ be unproblematically reconciled with socialism? Throughout *The Making* Thompson supplied the case for the negative. After 1815, he argued, the rhetoric of the freeborn Englishman appealed above all to the 'small farmer who resented the great estate of the brewer or absentee landlord; the small clothier who petitioned against the growth of the factory system; the small tailor or bootmaker who found that the middle-men were receiving Government contracts or creaming the market.'¹³⁵ In this 'petty bourgeois' register, the language of the freeborn Englishman could not be reconciled with the rhetorical contention that 'if capital was largely parasitic upon labour, might not labour simply dispense with it or replace it by a new system?'¹³⁶ Radicalism, Thompson argued, had to move from an immanent to a transcendent critique of society, a critique which promised to overturn existing conditions, to do away with 'respect for the institution of monarchy...the hereditary principle...the traditional rights of the great landowners and the Established Church, and ... the representation ... of property rights.'¹³⁷ Examples of such transcendence abounded in Thompson's text. In their struggle against the imposition of the factory system the Luddites had shown little regard for property. The late eighteenth century English Jacobins ignored the inherent rights of the Englishman in their appeals to the 'rights of man' and international fraternity. And the cooperative mood that Owenism fed had little time for the Freeborn Englishman's notion of sturdy individualism. The ideology of the freeborn Englishman, as Thompson was forced to admit at one point in *The Making*, was bound to stand opposed to the 'long traditions of mutualism – the benefit society, the trades club, and chapel, the reading or social club, the Corresponding society.'¹³⁸ In this register Thompson may well have agreed with Christopher Hill's suggestion that 'The acceptance of wage-labour as a permanent system was accompanied by the abandonment of the backward-looking idea of the birthright, and even of the concept of the free-born Englishman.'¹³⁹

¹³³ Thompson, *The Making*, p. 68.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 843.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 834.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 857.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 874.

¹³⁹ C. Hill, *Change and Continuity in Seventeenth Century England* (London, 1974), p. 238.

Why was it so important, then, for Thompson to show that proletarian consciousness was intimately wrapped up with the ideology of the freeborn Englishman, that the modern day English labour movement was linked to the radical patriotism of the nineteenth century, and beyond that, to the 'artisan culture' of Tudor times?¹⁴⁰ In short, Thompson sought to render the national past consistent with his own brand of socialist humanism, that form of socialism shorn of 'Stalinist pieties' but reconciled to both Englishness and internationalism. Yet there is a deeper point to Thompson's narrative. It allowed him to ground his own socialism – his own self – in contemporary political struggle. Here, then, was the essence of Thompson's Englishness, his conception of national identity. Englishness, for Thompson, resolved into the awareness that if 'a future was to be made' it would have to be made from within a cultural inheritance 'with its own particular pressures, resilience and idiom.'¹⁴¹ Any politics, he maintained, which did not ground itself in the language of the national past was bound to get entangled in 'doctrinaire notions and shallow moral experimentalism,'¹⁴² just as English Jacobinism had been in the late eighteenth century. The same problem, Thompson contended, haunted contemporary English Marxism. Lacking an appropriate historical consciousness, it imagined, like Paine had at one time, that people were not attached to particularistic traditions, that the world could be turned upside down by importing language from an alien idiom. To simply give national identity up to the other side, Thompson believed, was to exit the political stage: 'to deny altogether the appeal to "our ancestors" was actively dangerous.'¹⁴³ Socialist internationalism, if it was to succeed, would have to be translated into an English idiom.

Thus Thompson celebrated the tradition of the freeborn Englishman because he believed this was the firmest ground on which socialism in England could be built. Consequently, he did not just track this tradition's history but employed it in contemporary political debate. The history and the language are employed against

¹⁴⁰ See Thompson, *The Making*, pp. 913-14.

¹⁴¹ Thompson, 'Foreword,' p. iv. Thompson's insights here are mirrored in the lives and work of Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall in particular. Their absence in the work of Perry Anderson is perhaps primary cause of Anderson's misinterpretation of Thompson's purpose in the early nineteen sixties.

¹⁴² Thompson, *The Making*, p. 109.

¹⁴³ Thompson, *The Making*, p. 95.

Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn in 'The Peculiarities of the English,' their thesis on English history and socialism, perfect contemporary examples, he maintained, of the traditional vices of the Left he had exposed in *The Making*.¹⁴⁴ And it is there in his assault on Althusser and the structuralist Marxist tradition in the nineteen seventies, Englishness here ranged against abstract continental universalism.¹⁴⁵ But Thompson did not just call upon the tradition of the freeborn Englishman in debates about the character of English Marxism. He also 'hailed' it in wider polemics. The tradition informed both Thompson's understanding of the 'Business University' and the 'secret state' in the nineteen seventies.¹⁴⁶ Attempting to tap into the political unconscious of the English people, Thompson argued that just as in the past 'the common people [had] insisted that the civil rights of the "free-born Englishman" were not the privileges of the elite but were the common inheritance of all,'¹⁴⁷ so the people in the present must make common cause against the assault on their liberties represented by the ever-growing power of a secret and authoritarian state. In this way 'the very ancient cultural tradition in Britain of bloody-mindedness towards the intrusion of authority'¹⁴⁸ could be given vent for liberty against the state and elite surveillance. By making libertarianism socialism's core, by seizing the language of rights and liberties for the Left, Thompson attempted to explode a conjuncture – the Cold War - where liberty was consonant with socialism's enemies. Like the miners in their struggle against the Heath government, Thompson was asking, 'who is "the nation" anyway?'¹⁴⁹

But weren't the tradition of the free-born Englishman and the language of 'the people' perfect grist for the nationalist mill? In basing his account of English

¹⁴⁴ See E.P. Thompson, 'The Peculiarities of the English,' *Socialist Register, 1965* (London, 1965), pp. 311-362. The chapter will quote from this essay as it appeared in *The Poverty of Theory*.

¹⁴⁵ E.P. Thompson, 'The Poverty of Theory,' in Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*, pp. 193-397.

¹⁴⁶ See E.P. Thompson, 'The Business University,' *New Society*, 19 February 1970; E.P. Thompson, 'The State versus its "Enemies",' *New Society*, 19 October 1978; E.P. Thompson, 'The State within the State,' *New Statesman*, 10 November 1978; E.P. Thompson, 'Trial by Jury,' *New Society*, 29 November 1979; and Thompson, 'The Secret State.'

¹⁴⁷ Thompson, 'The Secret State,' p. 153. See also Taylor, 'History, Patriotism and the Left in the Twentieth Century,' p. 986.

¹⁴⁸ Thompson, 'The State within the State,' p. 178.

¹⁴⁹ E.P. Thompson, 'A Special Case,' in Thompson, *Writing by Candlelight*, p. 74. This essay was originally published in *New Society* in February 1972.

radicalism on ethnicity,¹⁵⁰ didn't Thompson risk reducing socialism to nationalism? Some argued that it did. Indeed this was the position that Hobsbawm assumed in his reflections on *The Break-Up of Britain*. Thompson himself was well aware of this problem, the fact that nationalism could constitute an anti-socialist force. *The Making* itself had probed the depths of anti-radical nationalism during the Napoleonic wars.¹⁵¹ Although Thompson's history of working class agency may have elided the 'flag-saluting, foreigner-hating, peer-respecting side of the plebeian mind,'¹⁵² *The Making* did reveal examples where the language of the freeborn Englishman, patriotism, was mobilised against 'the people' and reform. With Thompson's emphasis on social conflict and struggle, how could this be otherwise? Patriotism, for Thompson, was not a univocal structure of feeling.¹⁵³ Although open to appropriation by groups opposed to political radicalism, the language of patriotism could also constitute a resource for socialist struggle, 'a vast reserve of unrealised, or only partly achieved, possibilities – a part that gives us glimpses of other possibilities of human nature, other ways of living.'¹⁵⁴

It might still be objected that the tradition of the freeborn Englishman was a myth, redolent of the 'golden ages' common to all forms of reactionary nationalism. Thompson was in no doubt about the tradition's status as a myth, its constitution as a currency that dealt in the coin of 'Anglo-Saxon "tythings", the Witenagemot, and legends of Alfred's reign.'¹⁵⁵ His argument was that this myth could (in fact, according to him, did) become an integral part of working-class consciousness and anti-capitalist politics. Ethnicity, for Thompson, was a historically constructed sense

¹⁵⁰ I follow the broad definition of 'ethnicity' provided by A.W. Doane Jr. He suggests that ethnicity constitutes 'a group identity grounded in a sense of peoplehood [presumed common ancestry, shared history, and joint destiny] and expressed vis-à-vis other such groups within a society and state)...'. See A.W. Doane Jr., 'Rethinking the National Question: Toward a Theory of Ethnicity and Nationality in the New World Order,' in C. Polychroniou and H.R. Targ, eds., *Marxism Today: Essays on Capitalism, Socialism, and Strategies for Social Change* (London, 1996), p. 177. For more on 'ethnicity,' see C. Calhoun, 'Nationalism and Ethnicity,' *Annual Review of Sociology*, 19, 1993, pp. 211-293.

¹⁵¹ Thompson, *The Making*, p. 127. See also E.P. Thompson, 'Disenchantment or Default?,' in *The Romantics*, p. 63. This essay first appeared in C.C. O'Brien et al., eds., *Power and Consciousness* (New York, 1969).

¹⁵² G. Best, 'The Making of the English Working Class,' *Historical Journal*, 8, 1965, p. 278, cited in 'Postscript' to *The Making*, p. 916. For later elucidations of this argument, see Eastwood, 'E.P. Thompson, Britain, and the French Revolution,' p. 80 and M. Philip, 'Thompson, Godwin, and the French Revolution,' *History Workshop Journal*, 39, 1995, pp. 91 and 99.

¹⁵³ For a late expression of this point see E.P. Thompson, 'Which Britons?,' in *Making History*, p. 326.

¹⁵⁴ E.P. Thompson, 'The Country and the City,' in *Making History*, p. 252.

¹⁵⁵ Thompson, *The Making*, p. 94.

of peoplehood that was intimately bound to proletarian formation. Socialism was not imaginable, he argued, without the types of solidarities implied by a shared history of struggle and a common sense of ancestry. If ethnicity involved nostalgia this was not sufficient reason for condemning a socialist politics based on 'lost rights'¹⁵⁶ and a conception of the 'birthright' of the freeborn Englishman. As he suggested in a different context: 'The defence of threatened rights or usages is not necessarily retrospective in any nostalgic sense. Most radical criticism of society, and especially of capitalist society with its repeated rationalisations, starts from a sense of being threatened.'¹⁵⁷ All politics traded in the currency of nostalgia. To give up the currency, Thompson implied, was to absent yourself from the market. As Thompson asked in his review of Raymond Williams's *The Country and the City*: 'what form could a human protest take against an ongoing all-triumphant economic process unless as retrospect?'¹⁵⁸

Socialist nationalism, however, contradicts another register that can be found in Thompson's work. Socialist nationalism ignores the transnational character of its historic nemesis, a capitalist *system*; its nationalism negates what Thompson at one place called 'universal socialist aspirations';¹⁵⁹ and his commitment to the material reality of ethnicity and the nation-state undercuts his emphasise on the centrality of class struggle to the making of modern history. The contradictory registers in Thompson's Marxism can be calibrated another way. How can socialist nationalism be reconciled to his assessment that 'the night of Mafeking' involved the dissolution of 'the most sacred class distinctions...into nationalist hysteria'?¹⁶⁰ How can socialist nationalism be reconciled to his political assessment that the value of any socialism can be measured by its struggle against nationalism and imperialism? The ambiguities in Thompson's socialism, it might be argued, are constitutive of socialism's history.

¹⁵⁶ On the notion of 'lost rights,' see Thompson, *The Making*, pp. 89-90, 94, 448, 575, and 835; E.P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the Crowd,' in Thompson, *Customs in Common*, pp. 188, 193, 196, and 199-200; and E.P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origins of the Black Act* (London, 1975), pp. 99, 245, and 263-4.

¹⁵⁷ Thompson, 'The Country and the City,' p. 247. This was a feature of Thompson's understanding of radicalism in the eighteenth century, wonderfully evoked in *Customs in Common*.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

¹⁵⁹ Thompson, 'Open Letter to Leszek Kolakowski,' p. 187.

¹⁶⁰ Thompson, 'Peculiarities of the English,' in *The Poverty of Theory*, p. 67.

'The People' and 'The Thing': Nation and State in History and Politics

E.P. Thompson's historical and political work provides fertile ground to test the thesis, common to much twentieth-century Marxism, that there is a distinction between (the people's) nation and the (class) state. Not only were central arguments of *The Making* and his eighteenth century histories based upon a conception of the asymmetry between nation and state in British history but Thompson's socialist politics, as should be clear from the previous section, were underscored by the same distinction. There is, however, another feature of Thompson's biography that makes his work particularly appropriate to an exploration of the efficacy of the analytic division between class state and people's nation. Against a certain Marxist politics, Thompson was always at pains to stress the 'national' origins of his Marxism. Thompson's Marxism was not something he thought and felt against his cultural inheritance; it was something he thought and felt through it.¹⁶¹ More at home with English poets than European exemplars of High Theory, he described his 'most intimate pantheon [as] a provincial tea-party: a gathering of the English and Anglo-Irish.'¹⁶² In his 'Open Letter to Leszek Kolakowski' he figured himself a bustard, that most English of birds, assimilated his historical practice to an 'English intellectual idiom,'¹⁶³ and unflatteringly contrasted European traditions of universalism to English traditions of intellectual Protestantism.¹⁶⁴ But what was the nature of Thompson's national tradition? English? British? If English traditions constituted Thompson's national tradition, what was the relationship between this national tradition and the British state?

A distinction between state and nation in Britain was central to the historical and theoretical argument registered in *The Making*. Thompson elucidated the 'nationless' context of the English working class in the early nineteenth century, argued that the central conflict in this period revolved around representation, and presented this

¹⁶¹ Thompson, 'Foreword,' in *The Poverty of Theory*, p. iv and Thompson, 'Open Letter to Leszek Kolakowski,' p. 105.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 109.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 123. See also Thompson, 'The Peculiarities of the English,' p. 57.

¹⁶⁴ The 'Herderian' record was played again in 'The Poverty of Theory.' Here Thompson appeared on stage as the baffled English jester defending history, humanism and particular truth against the ahistorical, anti-humanist and abstract European universalism of Althusser.

conflict as a struggle for national liberation, the people's attempt to make their nation coterminous with a state.¹⁶⁵ Figured in Cobbett's terms as 'Old Corruption,' the state appeared in *The Making* as a 'parasitic complex'¹⁶⁶ reliant upon the 'continental spy system' and the exercise of violence to maintain its rule. Social order, Thompson maintained, was ultimately secured through coercion rather than consent.¹⁶⁷ The imprisonment of reformers, the events of Peterloo, the Combination Acts and the censorship of the radical press assured a radical incongruity between state and people's nation.¹⁶⁸ Against this class state, Thompson argued, the people mobilized constitutional argument, organized patriotic societies, wrote and read radical pamphlets, generated mass meetings for reform, and sometimes took up arms; a parasitic state which alternately allied itself to capital and privilege could hardly expect deference from the nation as it was understood by radicals like Paine. Indeed, it was in figures like Paine, Cobbett and Hardy that the people found 'those images of independence in which the free-born Englishman delighted: a firm and dignified commoner, defying the powers of the state.'¹⁶⁹ Drawing on the resources of a cultural heritage that stretched back to the time before the Norman Yoke,¹⁷⁰ the people marshaled a democratic conception of the nation, undergirded by constitutional precedent, in their struggle against the oppressions, tyrannies and arbitrary powers of that most corrupt corporation of them all, the state. This narrative was central to the argument of *The Making*, in particular to Thompson's contention that the industrial revolution was experienced by the common people as a catastrophic social process.¹⁷¹ Thompson made the link between the violence of industrialization and its effect on the relationship between nation and state explicit: 'The process of industrialization,' he argued, 'was carried through with exceptional violence in Britain. It was unrelieved by a sense of national participation in communal effort, such as is found in countries

¹⁶⁵ This is how radicals themselves figured their battle. See John Thewall's representation of 'the social compact between the English Nation and their Governors' cited by Thompson, *The Making*, p. 143. Its clearest reference in Thompson's work can be found in 'The Peculiarities of the English,' p. 50.

¹⁶⁶ The reference comes from *ibid.*, pp. 49-50. But also see Thompson, *The Making*, pp. 85 and 781.

¹⁶⁷ By 1816, according to Thompson, 'the English people were held down by force.' See Thompson, *The Making*, p. 661. For a superb overview of 'consent' and 'coercion' in Gramsci's conception of hegemony, see T. Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (London, 1995), pp. 27-103.

¹⁶⁸ This division was common to 'oppositions' since the time of Bolingbroke right through to the time of the Chartists. For a compressed history of patriotism from the early eighteenth century to the nineteenth fifties, see H. Cunningham, 'The Language of Patriotism,' in Samuel, ed., *Patriotism*, pp. 57-89.

¹⁶⁹ Thompson, *The Making*, p. 148.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 91-94 and 837.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 347-384.

undergoing a national revolution.¹⁷² Industrialization was imposed on the English people (*the nation*) by an exploitative state and divested of any conception of protection. Alienation, manifest in Luddism, at Peterloo, and in countless failed popular uprisings, was the result. Conjoined, however, to the political ideologies of reform, alienation did not find its terminus in passive submission; rather, it provided a template for the making of the English working class, the process by which the people themselves, if not forging a new society, forged a redrawing of the boundary between nation and state.

It was a compelling story told compellingly. Rooted in a conception of the asymmetry between nation and state, *The Making* echoed contemporaneous struggles for national liberation in the post-colonial world.¹⁷³ The conjunction of social and national liberation in the anti-colonial struggles of various peoples in the mid-twentieth century offered itself as a politically engaging model for Thompson's reconstruction of English working class history.¹⁷⁴ Just as the cause of national and social liberation was being won against imperial states in the present, so in the past, Thompson argued, had the English people grasped the prize of freedom, liberty and equality from a state no less corrupt and oppressive.¹⁷⁵ Given the potency of the discourse of national liberation, and its dominance over the Left at this time, it is little wonder that Thompson read nineteenth-century history this way. Indeed so compelling did Thompson find his reconstructed narrative of working class formation that he employed the rhetoric of early English reformers in the context of struggles for socialist change within Britain in the nineteen sixties.¹⁷⁶ Exhorting socialists to

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 487. See also in this context Thompson's fabulous essay 'Time, Work Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism,' reprinted in E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London, 1991), pp. 352-403.

¹⁷³ Thompson makes this explicit in the 'Preface' to *The Making* where he suggests that 'the greater part of the world today is still undergoing problems of industrialization, and of the formation of democratic institutions, analogous in many ways to our own experience during the Industrial Revolution. Causes which were lost in England might, in Asia or Africa, yet be won.' Thompson, *The Making*, p. 12. To this context must be added the national struggles of the Polish, the Hungarians and the East Germans against Soviet Imperialism.

¹⁷⁴ Thompson had been interested in the cause of national liberation, as we have seen, well before the nineteen sixties. It was present in his understanding of British imperialism, especially with regard to Indian independence, in his characterization of the war against Nazism, in his support for the anti-war movement in the nineteen fifties, in his support for communist revisionists in Eastern Europe in the late nineteen fifties, and in his arguments against Soviet nationalism.

¹⁷⁵ In Thompson's wonderful history of the Black Acts, *Whigs and Hunters*, he shows how the 'Blacks' often thought of the Hanoverian interest as a 'foreign government.' See E.P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters*, pp. 99-100. Also see E.P. Thompson, 'The Patricians and the Plebs,' in Thompson, *Customs in Common*, p. 23.

¹⁷⁶ See in particular 'Revolution' and 'Revolution Again!'

'awaken the political consciousness of the nation,' he urged that the New Left dispense with a sociology based upon class divisions.¹⁷⁷ Recalling the rhetoric of Paine and Hardy, it was in the cleavage between 'the people' and 'the Thing' that Thompson located the conflict within English society in his early New Left writings.¹⁷⁸

What enabled Thompson to translate the language of nineteenth-century reform into twentieth century socialist discourse? Mediation was found in the nature of the British state and in the nature of patriotism.¹⁷⁹ On the one hand the British state was neither unproblematically coterminous with a nation nor with a national people; on the other radical patriotism had been a crucial discourse of opposition to the state.¹⁸⁰ Their conjunction allowed Thompson to translate the language of reform into the language of socialism. In both cases, the nation could be figured as a revolutionary force potentially disintegrative of the state's integrity. The continuing asymmetry between nation and state in British history, Thompson implied, was the most effective trope the New Left could employ in its arguments for socialism. Causes lost in the past could be won in the present.

It was a trope that Thompson would employ even more forcefully in his defence of English institutions in the nineteen seventies and in his arguments for nuclear disarmament in the nineteen eighties.¹⁸¹ In opposition to the 'mythic virtues of an authoritarian Right which [was] now, supposedly, the proper inheritor and

¹⁷⁷ This is made explicit in 'The Peculiarities of the English,' p. 330 where Thompson argued that 'Old Corruption has passed away but a new, and entirely different, predatory complex occupies the state. It is surely to this new complex, with its interpenetration of private industry and the State (Government contracts, especially for war materials, of an unprecedented size, subsidies, municipal indebtedness to private finance, etc.), its control over major media of communication, its blackmail by the City, its reduction of the public sector to subordinate roles, and its capacity to dictate the conditions within which a Labour Government must operate – it is surely this new Thing, with its vast influence reaching into the Civil Service, the professions, and into the trade union and labour movement itself, rather than to the hunting of an aristocratic snark, that an analysis of the political formation of our time should be addressed.'

¹⁷⁸ Thompson, 'Revolution'.

¹⁷⁹ For patriotism, see M. Viroli, *For Love of Country: An Essay on Patriotism and Nationalism* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 1-17.

¹⁸⁰ See Cunningham, 'The Language of Patriotism,' p. 58.

¹⁸¹ Thompson, 'The State versus its Enemies,' 'The Secret State,' and 'The State of the Nation,' all in Thompson, *Writing by Candlelight* (London, 1980). 'The State versus its "Enemies"' first appeared in *New Society*, 19 October 1978; 'The Secret State,' was first published as 'Introduction' to the *Review of Security and the State* (London, 1978); and 'The State of the Nation' first appeared in *New Society* between 8 November and 13 December 1979.

guardian of the present nation's interests,¹⁸² Thompson in these essays outlined a vision of an 'oppositional Englishness,' an 'alternative nation'¹⁸³ as he once phrased it, based upon civil liberties, the rule and equality of the law, and independence. This was a conception of nationhood, Thompson argued, which the people themselves had created against the authority of the state in the past and must be recreated in the present against a new 'Thing'.¹⁸⁴ According to Thompson the nineteen seventies version of Old Corruption put itself at odds with the traditions of the freeborn Englishmen in the service of bureaucracy, rationalization and what he called 'statism'. Conjuring up the spirits of the past,¹⁸⁵ Thompson, like Hardy and Paine before him, was once again calling upon 'the people' to make good the traditions of the freeborn Englishman against a new parasitism. Conceived this way, the struggle over the jury system, the battle against increased police powers, and resistance to state bureaucratism and secrecy could be figured as 'national liberation,' 'the people' once again wresting 'liberty from authority.'¹⁸⁶

However, cheek by jowl with Thompson's suggestion that there was a disjunction between parasitic state and the people, an unbridgeable ravine between the interests of Old Corruption and what Paine called 'the nation,' sat his recognition of the way that the law acted as an instrument of integration. As Thompson argued, 'from the 1688 settlement onwards there existed a paradox – "a bloody legal code" alongside a liberal and, at times, meticulous administration and interpretation of the laws. ... The poor man might often feel little protection when caught up in the law's toils. But the jury system did afford a measure of protection.'¹⁸⁷ Coercion, after all, was not alone in securing Old Corruption's rule. The legal system – the very foundation, according to Thompson, of the Englishman's birthright – was crucial in

¹⁸² E.P. Thompson, 'A Statement of Blackmail,' in *Writing by Candlelight*, p. 131. This essay originally appeared in *New Society*, 24 February 1972.

¹⁸³ E.P. Thompson, 'A Special Case,' in *Writing by Candlelight*, p. 76.

¹⁸⁴ Thompson, 'The Secret State,' p. 153.

¹⁸⁵ See K. Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works* (London, 1968), p. 97. According to Thompson, 'The workers had appropriated the democratic precedents and practices of past generations for their own; the ancestors were not "theirs" but "ours".' Thompson, 'The Secret State,' p. 154.

¹⁸⁶ Thompson, 'The State of the Nation,' p. 205.

¹⁸⁷ Thompson, *The Making*, p. 87. Although Thompson notes that Scottish law differed from English law, he does not go on to suggest what the traditions of the freeborn Englishman could possibly have meant to the Scots. Thompson argues that 'national prejudice helped the cause of reformers. The guilt felt by the moderate "free-born Englishman" was allayed by the thought that such things might happen in Scotland but could not happen "here".' See *The Making*, p. 141.

gaining the consent of 'the people'.¹⁸⁸ When Thompson turned to the eighteenth century the place of cultural hegemony in the maintenance of Old Corruption's rule was made explicit: 'ruling class control in the eighteenth century was located primarily in a cultural hegemony, and only secondarily in an expression of economic or physical (military) power.'¹⁸⁹ Thompson gave some intimation of the nature of this pervasive form of cultural hegemony in *The Making* when he argued that freedoms attached to the tradition of the free-born Englishman embodied a 'moral consensus in which authority at times shared, and of which at all times it was bound to take account.'¹⁹⁰ 'Moral consensus' does not only establish boundaries beyond which authority dares not tread; it also ensures that resistance does not escape its limits. Here, then, we find the source of Thompson's ambiguity over the nature of the state in the nineteenth century.¹⁹¹ An important argument of *The Making* was the contention that pre-1832 radicalism constituted a 'revolutionary challenge' to Old Corruption. This argument necessarily called up a certain conception of the state, a view where the state is seen to maintain its rule primarily by force. In locating the cultural inheritance of the free-born Englishman as the source of that challenge, however, Thompson implied that the reform movement provided an immanent rather than a transcendent challenge to Old Corruption's authority. It might be dangerous to overthrow precedent but that is the point.

The common law was not the only instance of the state's ability to impose its spiritual authority on 'the people'; war against the French, as Perry Anderson has reminded us, in what is perhaps still the best critique of *The Making*, also functioned as a bond attaching the people to Old Corruption's rule. 'The prime weapon in [the English *ancien regime's*] arsenal, after twenty years of victorious fighting against the French Revolution and its successor regimes,' Anderson argued, 'was a counter-revolutionary nationalism.'¹⁹² It was a 'sense of national community, systematically orchestrated and instilled by the state,' according to him, which constituted one of the

¹⁸⁸ On 'the law' as a key mechanism of hegemony see Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p. 38.

¹⁸⁹ E.P. Thompson, 'Patricians and Plebs,' in *Customs in Common*, p. 43.

¹⁹⁰ Thompson, *The Making*, p. 87.

¹⁹¹ This had been at the center of the debate over 'the Peculiarities of the English' between Thompson and Anderson/Nairn.

¹⁹² Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism*, p. 35.

primary 'ideological bonds subordinating the immediate producers to their rulers.'¹⁹³ Anderson points to an important absence in *The Making*.¹⁹⁴ Yet it conceals as much as it reveals. Anderson overlooked Thompson's point that nationalism – like all ideological discourse – was not univocal. Submitted to what Thompson elsewhere called 'dialectical examination,'¹⁹⁵ nationalism could, he believed, be viewed as open to contestation, national identity acquiescent to alternative meanings; and this contestation and these meanings, as *The Making* showed, could take class forms. This need not imply that the English working class was a revolutionary force capable of overturning the ruling structures of authority. Nor need it imply that authority was maintained by something other than a combination of coercion and consent. Against recent historiographical trends, it might be argued that the 'making of the English working class' is not explicable without consideration of the way that nation and class interacted.¹⁹⁶

If Thompson's construction of the relationship between 'the people' and 'the Thing' in his historical work was haunted by the ghost of the national question, the same ghost could be found creeping around his New Left writings in the nineteen sixties and his interventions into the politics of law in the nineteen seventies. Wasn't the rule of law still a supreme means by which 'the people' were reconciled to the state? Wasn't national identity still an exemplary ideological bond subordinating the people to their rulers? Didn't 'moral consensus' still act to undermine any attempt to

¹⁹³ Ibid. And victory, of course. London not Paris, might have been the focus of revolution if France had have won the 1792-1815 war. See L. Stone, ed., *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815* (London, 1994), p. 11. For more on the question of proletarian nationalism during the French wars, see the contributions to both H. T. Dickinson, ed., *Britain and the French Revolution 1789-1815* (London, 1989); and M. Philip, ed., *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics* (Cambridge, 1991). For an earlier analysis along the same lines as Anderson's, see H. Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society* (London, 1969), p. 208.

¹⁹⁴ Partly this absence was a function of Thompson's reduction of class to consciousness: if the working class was not consciousness of itself as a class (i.e. was nationalist) then, for Thompson, it could not be a class. For a critique of Thompson's conception of class, see G.A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence* (Oxford, 1978), p. 144.

¹⁹⁵ Thompson, 'Patricians and Plebs,' p. 72. Stephen Yeo provides a superb illumination of this point when he suggests that 'dialectic' or 'articulated contradiction' refers to an understanding of history based on 'not-only-but-also' rather than 'either/or.' See Yeo, 'Oppositional Englishness,' p. 326.

¹⁹⁶ Post-revisionist historians are now beginning to illuminate the making of the working class in this way. In particular, see J.A. Epstein, 'The Constitutional Idiom: Radical Reasoning, Rhetoric and Action in Early Nineteenth-Century England,' *Journal of Social History*, 23, 1990, pp. 553-574 and M. Finn, "'A Vent Which Has Conveyed Our Principles': English Radical Patriotism in the Aftermath of 1848,' *Journal of Modern History*, 64, 1992, pp. 637-659. See also E. Yeo, 'Language and Contestation: the Case of "The People", 1832 to the Present,' in J. Belchem and N. Kirk, eds., *Languages of Labour* (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 42-62.

institute radical change? Once again Thompson posed contradictory views of the state in his New Left writings. At one moment the state is ripe for socialist change,¹⁹⁷ at other moments secure within the bounds of a pervasive cultural hegemony.¹⁹⁸ In 'Revolution' and 'Revolution Again' the state is sculptured as supple enough to be molded in socialist ways, while in 'The Secret State' and 'The State of the Nation' it is figured as rock-hard. Thompson's conception of national identity is similarly ambivalent - at one moment posed as a key site of class struggle, at other moments completely overlooked as a force of proletarian integration. National identity is figured as a force capable of leading in socialist directions, but the extent of 'the people's' nationalization is minimized, as if popular culture and politics could be understood without reference to national integration. Even the labour movement, through its demands for redistribution of wealth and nationalization, as Hobsbawm suggested, constituted an important instrument of national integration - perhaps the most chilling ideological state apparatus of all. By underestimating the degree to which the working class been integrated into the national state Thompson overlooked one of the key obstacles to the making of British socialism.

The ghost of the national question haunted Thompson's historical and political work in other ways. Although little noted by others, Thompson narrated the making of the *English* working class but this making took place within a *British* state.¹⁹⁹ *The Making* paid little specific regard to this incongruity located in the disjuncture between a 'national class' and a 'multinational state'. If history is one, according to some the most important, way of 'creating a consciousness of national unity,'²⁰⁰ then Thompson's histories undermined anything that might be called 'Britishness'. His eighteenth century studies, for example, focused on the conflict between English law and English customary rights, the relationship between the English poor and the

¹⁹⁷ See Thompson, 'Revolution' and his 'Introduction' to *Out of Apathy* (London, 1960).

¹⁹⁸ According to Marcuse *One Dimensional Man* will vacillate throughout between two contradictory hypotheses: (1) that advanced industrial society is capable of containing qualitative change for the foreseeable future (2) that forces and tendencies exist which may break this containment and explode this society. I do not think that a clear answer can be given. Both tendencies are there, side by side - and even the one in the other.' H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (London, 1964), p. xv.

¹⁹⁹ Even the description *British state* appears unsatisfactory, as J.G.A. Pocock has pointed out: 'on the one hand it points to a model of class dominance; on the other it is not necessarily the most effective way to refer to that class dominance'. See J.G.A. Pocock, 'The Limits and Divisions of British History: In Search of the Unknown Subject,' *American Historical Review*, 87, 2, 1982, pp. 315-316.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 315. See also A.D. Smith, 'Nationalism and the Historians,' *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 33, 1-2, 1992, pp. 58-80.

English gentry.²⁰¹ This is not simply a matter of focus. Like much conventional English historiography, *The Making*, and Thompson's other historical works, construct an 'English history' while obscuring a larger British history. Largely insensitive to the national status of Scotland and Wales, Thompson's historical discourse, most often simply equates England with Britain, an English people narrated making British history. The complications, of course, descend from the peculiarities of the state in the Atlantic archipelago.²⁰² It is not possible here to explore this issue further but we might note how far Thompson's historical discourse fell short of a British dimension, a dimension constituted by a diversity of societies, nationalities and forms of political organization, a dimension that is incomplete without consideration of the mutual determinations of English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish histories, a dimension that can neither be reduced to one part nor to the contingent forms of association between parts which constituted it at various times.²⁰³

Similar problems can be found at the nexus of Thompson's understandings of English/British history and the British Empire.²⁰⁴ If Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries cannot be seen as characteristic of the traditional European nation-state, then it did more fully fit the criteria of an Imperial state. Not just fit, it appeared as the prime exemplar of this form of social and political organization well into the twentieth century. How did Thompson persist in writing English history with the Empire left out, and why did he persist in his support for a national tradition that had at least been complicit with British imperialism? On one level Thompson, like most British Marxists, was explicitly anti-imperialist. He had consistently combined his socialism with a fierce hatred of imperialism of all stripes, whether Nazi, Soviet or British. After all, he cut his communist teeth on anti-fascist and anti-imperialist struggles in the nineteen forties, forged his socialist revisionism against Soviet

²⁰¹ See, for Thompson's eighteenth century studies, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,' *Past and Present*, 50, 1971, pp. 76-131; 'Patrician Society, Plebian Culture,' *Journal of Social History*, 7, 1973-4, pp. 382-405; and 'Eighteenth-Century English Society: Class Struggle without Class?,' *Social History*, 3, 1978, pp. 133-166. These essays have either been reproduced in whole or in part in *Customs in Common*.

²⁰² See J.G.A. Pocock, 'British History: A Plea for a New Subject,' *Journal of Modern History*, 4, 1975, pp. 601-624; K. Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain* (London and Rio Grande, 1993), pp. 227-237. See also the various contributions to A. Grant and K. Stringer, *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History* (London and New York, 1995).

²⁰³ See Pocock, 'The Limits and Divisions of British History: In Search of an Unknown Subject,' *American Historical Review*, 87, 2, 1982, p. 320.

²⁰⁴ Compare my comments below on this with those of R. Gregg, 'Class, Culture and Empire: E.P. Thompson and the Making of Social History,' *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 11, 4 (1998), p. 425.

imperialism in Hungary in the nineteen fifties, and hammered out his anti-nuclear internationalism on the rock of both American and Russian imperialisms in the nineteen eighties.²⁰⁵ His anti-imperialist record is beyond dispute. Then how do we explain the systematic neglect of Empire in his historical work (it would take a fine tooth comb to discover from *The Making* that Britain was colonial power of some magnitude)? The answer can be found at the birth of his Marxism in a conjuncture where communists could argue that decolonization would liberate both the colonized and the colonizers, where 'what [was seen to be] at stake in the destruction of the Empire was a dual struggle for national liberation – of both British and colonial peoples from both American and British imperialism.'²⁰⁶ Far from being constitutive of Englishness, the Empire could be characterized as a mechanism supremely designed to frustrate national liberation in both the metropole and the periphery. In this way, the Marxist emphasis on national traditions could be unproblematically combined with anti-imperialism. Freed of imperial entanglements, Englishness could redeem its promise and English historians could write the history of the people's nation with the Empire left mostly out. This suited the purpose of both Thompson's social histories and his Marxist politics.

From one angle Thompson's reduction of Britain to England in his political and historical discourse appears, if careless, then hardly unique;²⁰⁷ after all the imperialism of English historiography and politics has, until recent times, represented something like a 'dominant discourse,' even among the Scottish and the Welsh (the writings of the early Williams and the early Nairn are particular cases in point). From another angle, however, Thompson's neglect of British nationalisms appears peculiar. In his socialist writings of the nineteen sixties and in the period of his attack on the 'secret state' in the nineteen seventies, there were a number of nations that were

²⁰⁵ Thompson, 'Foreword,' in *The Poverty of Theory*, p. iii.

²⁰⁶ S. Howe, 'Labour Patriotism, 1939-83,' in Samuel, ed., *Patriotism*, p. 133. See also, P.B. Rich, 'British Imperial Decline and the Forging of English Patriotic Memory, c. 1918-1968,' *History of European Ideas*, 9, 1988, pp. 659-80. Andrew Vincent's suggestion that 'liberal, Marxist and social democratic theories in this same period (particularly post-1945), self-consciously developed more internationalist or cosmopolitan stances' should be contested. See A. Vincent, 'Power and Vacuity: Nationalist Ideology in the Twentieth Century,' in M. Freeden, ed., *Reassessing Political Ideologies: The Durability of Dissent* (London and New York, 2001), p. 133.

²⁰⁷ See V. Geoghegan, 'Edward Carpenter's England Revisited,' *History of Political Thought*, 24, 3, 2003, pp. 510-11 for this point.

seeking to undermine the integrity of the British state.²⁰⁸ Increasingly throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, reinvigorated nationalist movements in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were voicing their discontent with the constitutional framework of the United Kingdom. In addition there was growing numbers of 'ethnicities' (later to be characterized as Black Britons) who were also frustrated with the 'state of the nation'.²⁰⁹ In light of Thompson's own attempt to affect a cleavage between state and nation, what did he make of these nationalist and ethnic movements?

Not much. Given his own increasingly virulent critique of the ruling order in the nineteen seventies, it is surprising that he didn't attempt to link national and ethnic discontent with the state to his own conception of popular (socialist) anti-statism. If Thompson was looking for a subject for his politics, then he might have found that subject among discontented national minorities on Britain's periphery, tired of a centralizing state's neglect, exhausted by deindustrialization, and sick of Anglicization, or among peripheral peoples in the metropole subject to systematic racism, marginalization and ghettoization. After all, as Tom Nairn and Stuart Hall were arguing from the nineteen seventies, the best hope of undermining the British state lay with ethnic rather than socialist movements.²¹⁰ In light of Thompson's socialist nationalism, the alliance of discontented nationalities, English, Scottish, Welsh, Irish and Black British all, might have appeared an attractive agent of social change.²¹¹ But it was precisely Thompson's socialist nationalism that constituted the problem. Who was the nation of his socialist nationalism? Who were 'the people'? Was it possible that Thompson's 'us' appeared to other socialists as part of the 'them'? This, as we shall see, was precisely the view of both Tom Nairn and Stuart Hall.

²⁰⁸ For an overview of these nationalisms see M. Keating, 'Do the Workers Really Have No Country? Peripheral Nationalism and Socialism in the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Spain,' in *The Social Origins of Nationalist Movements*, pp. 62-80 and Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain*, pp. 227-237.

²⁰⁹ For these movements and theorizing about them, see the chapter on Stuart Hall below.

²¹⁰ T. Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain* (London, 1977). See also B. Jenkins and G. Minnerup, *Citizens and Comrades: Socialism in a World of Nation States* (London, 1984).

²¹¹ He did recognize the effectiveness of such coalitions in the nineteenth century. In a review of Linda Colley's *Britons*, one of the last pieces he wrote, Thompson argued that 'After all, English, Scottish and Welsh reformers and Chartists managed to work together, and the most prominent British Chartist leader, Feargus O'Connor, was an Irishman. There are times when the patriot must also be a revolutionary.' See Thompson, 'Which Britons?,' in Thompson, *Making History: Writings on History and Culture*, p. 329.

Thompson never solved the ambiguities present in the nexus between state, nation and class in British history. He never fully probed the relationship between British nationalisms and the British state, never adequately explored the implications of Empire for Englishness, and never properly asked to what degree dominant conceptions of Englishness submerged other sectional identities in the British Isles. Systematically neglectful of both internal and external colonialisms in his historical work, his socialism often mirrored the insensitivities of dominant non-socialist conceptions of the national tradition. Although his Marxist politics had been consistently characterized by its anti-imperialism, Thompson seemed strangely unaware of the degree to which the foundations of his national Marxism were complicit with the very imperialisms he otherwise derided. Similarly his socialism was at times strangely unaware of the means by which Englishness could undermine rather than facilitate any radical transformation of capitalist society. Yet his contribution to an understanding of the relationship between state and nation was far from being universally invalid. His conception of the asymmetry between Old Corruption and the people in English history not only produced the most wonderful social history of the working class in English historiography, one that could be learnt from and applied to other nation's histories by other historians,²¹² it also provided socialism in England with a persuasive, if ultimately unsuccessful, reconciliation between Marxism and the national tradition. Although his dialectical methodology sometimes betrayed his socialist politics, it nonetheless provided a precociously sensitive understanding of the hermeutic openness of nationalist politics. If historians have now woken up to find that the study of nationalism actually 'enhance[s] the study of class structures and social antagonism,'²¹³ then it could justly be said that Thompson had wiped the sleep from his eyes a long time ago.

²¹² P. Linebaugh, 'Commonists of the World Unite!', *Radical History Review*, 56, 1992, pp. 59-67; R. Wells, 'E.P. Thompson, "Customs in Common" and Moral Economy,' *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 21, 2, 1994, pp. 263-307; F. Cooper, 'Work, Class, and Empire: An African Historian's Retrospective on E.P. Thompson,' *Social History*, 20, 2, 1995, pp.235-41; and R. Chandavarkar, 'The Making of the Working Class: E.P. Thompson and Indian History,' pp. 177-196.

²¹³ G. Newman, 'Nationalism Revisited,' *Journal of British Studies*, 35, 1, 1996, p. 119.

First expounded in the late nineteen fifties in the wake of the twin crises of Hungary and Suez, socialist humanism constituted 'the conceptual framework,' according to Kate Soper, 'within which [Thompson's] thinking has always been cast.'²¹⁴ Although specific to a particular conjuncture, socialist humanism²¹⁵ defined the nature and purpose of Thompson's politics throughout the later half of the twentieth century. Because of this centrality, the way in which it transcended its genesis to become definitional of his later politics and history, socialist humanism has constituted a key area of analysis for those interested in Thompson's legacy. Yet despite the vital role that arguments over socialist humanism have played in assessments of Thompson, despite the wealth of analysis devoted to its meaning, nature and purpose as a form of politics in connection with Thompson's own intellectual biography, we lack an analysis which has explored the nexus between it and internationalism/cosmopolitanism.

The question, of course, has not been completely neglected. When it has been broached, however, Thompson's socialist humanism has mostly been unproblematically associated with internationalism. Others have found contrary impulses behind his socialist humanism. Indeed Tom Nairn and Perry Anderson in their controversy with Thompson in the early nineteen sixties decided that his socialist humanism veiled either a '*messianic nationalism*'²¹⁶ (in Anderson's words) or a '*cultural nationalism*'²¹⁷ (in Nairn's words). Divergence of judgment, however, has been matched by universally superficial analysis: if his socialist humanism was seen to embrace a concern with other peoples then it was reckoned internationalist; if it was shown to have been consonant with a concern with specifically English national traditions then it was deemed nationalist. But fraternity with other peoples is neither

²¹⁴ Soper, 'Socialist Humanism,' p. 204.

²¹⁵ According to Thompson, socialist humanism 'is humanist because it places once again real men and women at the centre of the socialist theory and aspiration, instead of the resounding abstractions – the Party, Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism, the Two Camps, the Vanguard of the Working Class – so dear to Stalinism. It is socialist because it reaffirms the revolutionary perspectives of Communism, faith in the revolutionary potentialities not only of the Human Race or of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat but of real men and women.' E.P. Thompson, 'Socialist Humanism,' *New Reasoner*, 1, 1957, p. 109.

²¹⁶ P. Anderson, 'Socialism or Pseudo-Empiricism,' *New Left Review*, 1/35, 1966, pp. 2-42. For Thompson's own response to these suggestions see his 'Foreword,' to *The Poverty of Theory*, p. iii.

²¹⁷ See T. Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain*, pp. 303-4. See also J. Ree, 'E.P. Thompson and the Drama of Authority,' *History Workshop Journal*, 47, 1999, p. 216, note 6.

constitutive of internationalism nor its absence definitional of nationalism. It should not, moreover, be supposed that internationalism or cosmopolitanism is either peculiarly socialist or synonymous. Socialist internationalism and cosmopolitan socialism should not be elided – one is built upon a system of nation-states (socialist internationalism); the other based upon the transcendence of the nation-state (cosmopolitan socialism).²¹⁸ With these premises in mind, it remains now to tease out, in the limited space below, the nexus between Thompson's socialist humanism and internationalism/cosmopolitanism.

Alongside a commitment to human agency and reason, and the related emphasis on the centrality of the 'moral imagination'²¹⁹ to the making of history, socialist humanism, according to Thompson, constituted a 'revolt against the ideology of Stalinism, and a struggle to make explicit the true, humanist content of "real" Communism.'²²⁰ If it had roots in the real movement of things – and it did - then those roots were to be found in movements within already existing socialist societies and within actually existing capitalist societies which sought, against the logic of Cold War binarisms, to call into being a more humanized socialism. For Thompson, liberation from Stalinism and liberation from capitalist democracy were different sides of the same coin.²²¹ Socialist humanism, Thompson maintained, 'arose simultaneously in a hundred places, and on ten thousands of lips. It was voiced by poets in Poland, Russia, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia; by factory delegates in Budapest; by Communist militants at the eighth plenum of the Polish party, by a Communist premier (Imre Nagy) who was murdered for his pains. It was on the lips of women and men coming out of goal and of the relatives and friends of those who never came out.'²²² This voice was echoed in the West, on the lips of CND marches

²¹⁸ For the distinction between internationalism and cosmopolitanism (often used as synonyms) see T. Brennan, 'Cosmopolitanism and Internationalism' in *Debating Cosmopolitics*, pp. 41-42. The distinction here is succinctly put: 'The cosmopolitan ideal envisages less a federation or coalition of states than an all-encompassing representative structure in which delegates can deliberate on a global scale. By contrast, internationalism seeks to establish global relations of respect and cooperation, based on acceptance of differences in polity as well as culture. ... Internationalism does not quarrel with the principle of national sovereignty, for there is no other way under modern conditions to secure respect for weaker societies or peoples.'

²¹⁹ E.P. Thompson, 'Agency and Choice,' *New Reasoner*, 5, 1958, p. 91.

²²⁰ Thompson, 'Socialist Humanism,' p. 107.

²²¹ See Soper, 'Socialist Humanism,' pp. 207-8.

²²² Thompson, 'The Poverty of Theory,' p. 322. On manifestations of socialist humanism in actually existing socialist societies, see J.H. Satterwhite, *Varieties of Marxist Humanism: Philosophical Revisionism in Postwar Eastern Europe* (Pittsburgh, 1992).

and dissident communists.²²³ Dealing a blow to both capitalism and communism, socialist humanism, according to Thompson, had the potential to transform existing modes of production, instituting a mode of human organization that would finally put use value before exchange value, humanity before class, and peace before war in the service of humankind as a whole.

The internationalist impulse behind Thompson's socialist humanism in the immediate period after 1956 is incontrovertible.²²⁴ It received material embodiment in the pages of *New Reasoner*, journal of communist dissent, edited by Thompson in conjunction with John Saville in the wake of their resignation from the CPGB. Prefiguring the kind of community that socialist humanism aspired, *New Reasoner* opened its pages to socialists of all nationalities, from the short stories of the Hungarian Tibor Dery to the poetry of the American Tom McGrath, from the poetry of the Turkish communist dissident Nazam Hikmet to the anti-imperialist analyses of the French existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre. Its subject matter matched the multinationalism of its contributors, extending from the communist east to capitalist Britain, from Nigeria to Japan.²²⁵ In its time, *New Reasoner* had no equal on any measure of socialist internationalism.²²⁶ It was the concrete manifestation of 'a sizable and influential political and intellectual grouping...within the Communist world and in the Socialist movements of the West,'²²⁷ a grouping united by their repulsion at the threat to human existence. *New Reasoner* established, then, a transnational discourse which allowed communist dissidents in the Soviet bloc and socialists in France, Britain and the United States to talk to each other.

Socialist humanism's internationalism, however, was not simply dialogic. *New Reasoner* expressed its solidarity with communist dissent within actually existing socialist societies, with the struggle against nuclear weapons in capitalist society, and with those peoples undergoing 'colonial awakening' in the Tricontinental world.²²⁸ The

²²³ On the importance of 'youth' to socialist humanism, see Palmer, 'Reasoning Rebellion,' p. 210.

²²⁴ See Palmer, 'Reasoning Rebellion,' p. 195.

²²⁵ A full accounting of *New Reasoner's* record on these matters has now been provided by Palmer in 'Reasoning Rebellion,' pp. 195-99.

²²⁶ E.P. Thompson, 'An Pessay in Ephology,' *New Reasoner*, 10, 1959, p. 4, cited *ibid.*, p. 199.

²²⁷ Thompson, 'Agency and Choice,' p. 105.

²²⁸ Ernest Mandel has suggested that one of the 'obvious failures of international solidarity' was 'the lack of solidarity with the Hungarians in 1956.' Mandel, *Trotsky as Alternative*, p. 20. Thompson (and *New Reasoner*) can not be taxed with this failure.

imagined community of socialist humanism attempted to unite dissidents not just across national boundaries and continental divides but also across modes of production and levels of economic development. Socialist humanism, then, did not interpellate the proletariat alone; its intended subject was humanity, a subject which, liberated from the disfigurements of Cold War, would institute a 'socialist community'.²²⁹ Humanist rhetoric breathed through every pore of Thompson's communist dissidence. Socialist humanism was a 'revolt against *inhumanity*,²³⁰ it constituted, in Sartrean terms, a '*return to man*.'²³¹ It stood against anti-intellectualism, and for intellectual initiative; against historical necessity, and for human agency; against reified conceptions of politics, and for the necessity of moral imagination in the construction of any social order; in the terms of Marx's famous false dichotomy, it stood against social being, and for social consciousness. Socialist humanism, according to Thompson, retaught the lessons of the early Marx.²³² Human need was the Archimedean point of this vision a new social order.

What social force underlay socialist humanism? In communist societies it was figured in communist dissent, in developed capitalist societies in protest against nuclear weapons and against ossified Stalinist political forms, and in the non-developed Tricontinental world in the struggle against both Soviet and American imperialisms. In the pages of *New Reasoner*, and in the vision of Thompson's socialist humanism, these movements were figured as a global New Left.²³³ Socialist humanism, in Thompson's vision of it, grew from the reflex of humanist values which had been crushed equally by democratic centralism and capitalist imperialism; to him it was manifest in a 'revolt of the human conscience against...warped and militant philistinism.'²³⁴ Socialist humanism was not an ideology determined by any particular position in any particular mode of production. In the end, the social force behind Thompson's socialist humanism was 'new men and women.' The terminus of a revolution in moral imagination, new men and women promised to institute a global

²²⁹ Thompson, 'Socialist Humanism,' p. 182.

²³⁰ Ibid., pp. 109 and 115. The phrase appears on both pages and the emphasis appears both times.

²³¹ Ibid., p. 109. Emphasis in the original.

²³² Ibid., p. 115.

²³³ Palmer, 'Reasoning Rebellion,' p. 210.

²³⁴ Thompson, 'Socialist Humanism,' p. 126.

socialist community where what constituted their morality would eventually constitute reality.²³⁵

Like other Marxist internationalisms before it, socialist humanism, then, claimed humanity as its home. Transcending the false universality of the bourgeoisie, socialist humanism, like the socialism of Marx from which it claimed descent, sought to create a society for all humankind. Yet socialist humanism should be sharply demarcated from Marx's vision of international socialism (by which he meant cosmopolitan socialism). Where Marx had imagined a global socialist society as the outcome of the contradictions of a capitalist mode of production, socialist humanism was premised upon the awakening of humanity's moral imagination; where Marx had imagined an a-national proletariat as the creator of this future socialist society, socialist humanism rested on the agency of the 'new man', product of a moral revolt against modes of production which coexisted with imperialism and the bomb. The basis of Marx's imagined community was necessarily objective, that is, it was to be found in the inherent mutations of the capitalist mode of production; Thompson's socialist humanism rested on the subjectivity of human beings, whose structural relation to existing modes of production bore no inherent relation to socialist humanism's imagined socialist community. That Thompson overlooked this crucial objective component of cosmopolitan socialism rendered his imagined socialist community totally dependent on moral developments. Socialist humanism's imagined socialist community would have to be willed into existence. Base was sacrificed to superstructure, social being to social consciousness, objective determinations to subjective will – these were the operations which allowed Thompson to imagine global socialism as the product of 'moral imagination'. Marx's cosmopolitanism was structural; Thompson's internationalism relied on 'moral conscience'. The separation between structural agency and moral imagination, however, should not be overplayed. No coherent conception of cosmopolitan socialism is possible that does not attend to both aspects of humanity's reality – on the one hand a vision of structural conditions which actually make cosmopolitanism something other than a quixotic fantasy; and on the other, a moral vision of why such cosmopolitanism is worth attaining. In this way a coherent conception of cosmopolitan socialism, it might be argued, needs to go

²³⁵Ibid., p. 143.

through both Marx and Thompson, avoiding neither Marx's analysis of the structural preconditions of global socialism nor Thompson's vision of why global socialism is a necessary medium for the expansion of the capacities and creativities of humanity.

Yet if socialist humanism echoed the 'conventional' political anthropology of Marxist cosmopolitanism, it did not replicate cosmopolitanism's aversion to what Raymond Williams called 'lived and worked and placeable social "identities"'.²³⁶ Wedded to Thompson's (and *New Reasoner's*) vision of socialized humanity was a conception of the necessarily embedded nature of socialism, the assertion that socialist humanism could only be built from specific places out of particular communities and national traditions, whether they be English, Hungarian or Russian. The 'best features of the labour movement,' according to Thompson, 'with its international outlook, its assertion of the brotherhood of man, its emphasis upon the dignity of labour,' in short, its morality, 'was rooted in the strong social ties of the pit, the union, common industrial struggles.'²³⁷ Unproblematically positioned alongside the conception of a socialized humanity, was a vision, then, of the irreducibly rooted nature of socialist humanism. The vision received almost unconscious expression in *New Reasoner*, in the debates about the relationship between socialism and the welfare state, in visions of a socialist wages plan for Britain, and in the reform of a range of British public services, such as health, housing and education. It was also manifest in space given over to the attempt to appropriate the national cultural tradition for socialist humanist ends. Here Blake, Shakespeare, and Wordsworth, among others, were pressed into socialist humanist service, their 'art' at once conveying an intimation of a potential humanity and an image of an authentic national tradition. It was from these places and traditions that a socialized humanity would (simultaneously?) grow, whether its soil was communities and locales in actually existing socialist societies or capitalist societies or indeed societies still labouring under two or more modes of production. A socialized humanity would not bypass

²³⁶ R. Williams, *Towards 2000* (London, 1983), p. 199.

²³⁷ Thompson, 'Socialist Humanism,' p. 127. Socialist humanism, as Thompson later explained, was an attempt to '[encourage] into being in Britain a movement of socialist thought and practice, purged of the old religious anti-Communism, founded experimentally upon British conditions, which was revolutionary, rational, democratic: which accentuated self-activity, which was sensitive to cultural forms of exploitation, which affirmed the value of égalité.' For a latter example of the same argument, see Thompson, 'The Poverty of Theory,' p. 376.

feelings of attachment to place. It would necessarily go through them, coming out the other side in a transformed consciousness of humanity.²³⁸

Still it might be supposed that some global problems are only amenable to solutions that transcend love of place, solidarities of national community, and commitments to national traditions.²³⁹ Here the solution to universality, it has been argued, must go around rather than through places, regions and nations. The issue of nuclear weapons has often been cited as precisely a problem not reducible to any particular community, to the love of any place, to the solidarities associated with any particular national identity. Thompson wrestled with the politics of nuclear weapons from the time the first bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the end of the Cold War, from the early CND Aldermaston marches to the huge demonstrations in Trafalgar Square associated with END.²⁴⁰ For Thompson in the early nineteen eighties, it was clear that 'humanity' was facing 'an accumulating logic of process'²⁴¹ that transcended national frontiers and boundaries between modes of production. 'Exterminism', as he named this process, was the collection of characteristics that tied each side of the Iron Curtain together – economic, ideological and political. The only movement that could defeat this process was a 'truly internationalist movement against the armourers of both blocs.'²⁴² In the terms of END (a movement of which Thompson had been a founder member): 'We must commence to act as if a united, neutral and pacific Europe already exists. We must learn to be loyal, not to "East" or "West", but to each other, and we must disregard the prohibitions and limitations of any national state.'²⁴³ Closely tied to his socialist humanism, Thompson's peace

²³⁸ Thompson, 'Socialist Humanism,' p. 126 .

²³⁹ Mandel, for example, in *Trotsky as Alternative*, p. 27, suggests that 'The central problems of our epoch can only be solved on a world scale.'

²⁴⁰ For an overview of Thompson's involvement in the peace movement in the nineteen eighties, see Bess, 'E.P. Thompson: The Historian as Activist,' pp. 33-36, Palmer, *E.P. Thompson*, pp. 126-142 and N. Stevenson, *Culture, Ideology and Socialism* (Aldershot, 1995), pp. 127-170. For Thompson's own reconstruction of END, see E. Thompson, 'Resurgence in Europe, and the Role of END,' in J. Minnion and P. Bolsover, eds., *The CND Story: The First Twenty-Five Years of CND in the Words of the People Involved* (London, 1983), pp. 80-4.

²⁴¹ E.P. Thompson, 'Notes on Exterminism, the Last Stage of Civilization,' in E.P. Thompson, *Zero Option* (London, 1982), p. 58.

²⁴² Thompson, 'Notes on Exterminism,' p. 69.

²⁴³ END appeal cited in E.P. Thompson, 'Ends and Histories,' in M. Kaldor, ed., *Europe from Below: An East-West Dialogue* (London, 1991) p. 8. See also Thompson, 'Notes on Exterminism,' pp. 74-75 and E.P. Thompson, 'Europe, the Weak Link in the Cold War,' in E.P. Thompson et al., eds., *Exterminism and the Cold War* (London, 1982), p. 332.

politics were imagined as a 'transcontinental discourse'²⁴⁴ and a 'movement of people for themselves'.²⁴⁵ The peace movement, in Thompson's vision of it, was precisely an attempt to unite dissent against actually existing socialism and actually existing capitalism. Indeed, Thompson saw the movement for peace within Europe as a reprise of the movement against fascism in which he and his brother had taken part during the nineteen forties.

Referring specifically to the problem of strategy, Thompson claimed that the politics of the peace movement would be simultaneously national and international.²⁴⁶ The goal was 'international détente;' the means to achieve it national – 'Let Poland be Polish and let Greece be Greek!'²⁴⁷ In many ways Thompson's vision of an end to the Cold War echoed his earlier estimation of the politics of resistance to fascism. Quickly the END appeal, with its rejection of the politics of national states, was forgotten. This was no momentary lapse of internationalist reason. When the question of European integration had concerned socialists in Britain in the early seventies, Thompson had imagined not a concert of neutralist European nations against nuclear weapons but an active Europe of nationalisms against the political, economic and ideological unification of Europe. Against the abstract cosmopolitanism of Marxists like Tom Nairn, Thompson had resolved that Britain's immersion in a supra-national European state had 'nothing whatsoever to do with internationalism.'²⁴⁸ A 'capitalist convenience,' European integration would constitute an irreparable 'democratic deficit'. It would take sovereignty away from those locations where it should be found: nation states. Thompson's vision of European integration here was distanced from both his vision of the 'spirit of Europe' in the nineteen forties and his vision of the reemergence of this same spirit in the struggle for European disarmament in the nineteen eighties. Thompson's dismissal of such a transcendent state failed to note dialectical opportunities offered by European

²⁴⁴ E. P. Thompson, *Beyond the Cold War* (London, 1982), cited (without page number) in Thompson, 'Ends and Histories,' p. 13. See also E. P. Thompson, 'Neutralism and Internationalism,' in *Zero Option*, pp. 113-7.

²⁴⁵ E. P. Thompson, 'A Letter to America,' in E. P. Thompson and D. Smith, eds., *Protest and Survive* (New York and London, 1981), p. 49. For a repeat of this argument, see Thompson, 'Europe, the Weak Link in the Cold War,' p. 340.

²⁴⁶ E. P. Thompson, 'Protest and Survive,' in E. P. Thompson and D. Smith, eds., *Protest and Survive* (London, 1983), p. 58.

²⁴⁷ Thompson, 'Beyond the Cold War,' p. 186.

²⁴⁸ See E. P. Thompson, 'Going into Europe,' in *Writing by Candlelight*, p. 87.

integration. European integration might have been undergirded by the needs of the European bourgeoisie but weren't those needs the precondition of any vision of cosmopolitan socialism? Never going beyond internationalism, Thompson's socialism had no place to imagine the dialectical opportunities afforded by capital's increasing cosmopolitanism.

In the context of the 'second' Cold War in the nineteen eighties Thompson maintained that internationalism demanded a rejection of both communism and capitalism. What was specifically socialist about such internationalism? For a long time the internationalism of the peace movement had been designated liberal, commonly associated with other forms of liberal internationalism, like the outcry against the Bulgarian atrocities in Victorian Britain. Indeed, reviewing the effect of CND in the nineteen sixties, Perry Anderson had made something like this argument, criticizing Thompson's association with a movement that both failed to involve any fundamental critique of capitalist relations of production and that was reliant on middle class forms of morality. END was similarly critiqued. According to Fred Halliday, 'one of the core ideas of liberal internationalism is to be seen in the peace movement, whose central belief is that a growing mobilization of individuals in a wide range of countries can by pressuring their own government and establishing international links bring about a reduction in military tension and a growing understanding between societies.'²⁴⁹ For Anderson and Halliday, what separated the liberal internationalism of formations like CND and END from what has been called a 'revolutionary internationalism' was the peace movement's failure to stress 'the transnational or international preconditions for stability and power within any one society,'²⁵⁰ that the fate of the world is 'bound up with international factors.'²⁵¹ Thompson's internationalism did at times lack this cosmopolitan structuralism, as we have already seen: the mode of exterminism was not a replacement for the capitalist mode of production. Yet to argue that there were limitations to Thompson's socialism should not involve an outright repudiation of his internationalism. For Thompson there was a socialist potential to the peace movement's internationalism; it did contain

²⁴⁹ F. Halliday, 'Three Concepts of Internationalism,' *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-), 64, 2, 1988, p. 193. See also Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism*, p. 141.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 196. See also Mandel, *Trotsky as Alternative*, p. 17-18.

²⁵¹ Halliday, 'Three Concepts of Internationalism,' p. 197.

the dialectical potential to be transformed into a really-existing movement for the construction of a socialist mode of production that transcended divisions entrenched by Cold War. To argue that the internationalism of the peace movement was simply *that* and not *this* was to miss the potential within the form, to overlook the consequences of consequences, and 'the change beyond the change,' the way, in short, that the aims of socialism could sometimes be sought under other names.

Thompson, in any case, was well aware of the definite international nature of those forces which promised to undermine a common human future. The issues, according to Thompson, that faced the late-twentieth century citizen went beyond nation-states; their accumulation certainly portended something very different to Fukuyama's end of history. Alongside the now ritual litany of global problems - the environment, the growing gap between North and South, consumer greed, the unequal distribution of the world's resources - Thompson also pointed to some of the global problems that took particular forms, like 'religious and nationalist fundamentalisms' whose intransigence promised to rush humanity back into the dark ages. To prevent the barbarians from winning Thompson pointed to the example of the peace movement and to the prospect of an alliance between socialists, greens and peaceniks: 'The citizens' search for a common project, bringing together widening constituencies in a direct discourse unmediated by Cold War agencies or media, is the urgent task of our time.'²⁵² In this way Thompson's vision of a 'new internationalism' prefigured the internationalism of today's anti-globalization movement. Yet given the 'nationalist' and 'anti-modernist' dimensions of that movement we would do well to recall this injunction from another internationalist: 'faced as we are with the complacency of national pride and the automatic loyalty claimed by the nation-state, the ever-recurrent waves of nationalism and the grip of institutions associated with it, an element of internationalist intransigence, intellectual and moral, may well be in order.'²⁵³ Thompson, in his internationalist register, would have agreed.

²⁵² Thompson, 'Ends and Histories,' p. 24. See also 'Beyond the Cold War,' p. 183.

²⁵³ Halliday, 'Three Concepts of Internationalism,' p. 196.

National traditions and internationalism have not proved compatible for socialism. Thompson's assertion that they could be so compatible was the product of his political formation as a Marxist at a time when national and international impulses could be unproblematically conjoined. Any reconstruction of international socialism in the new century, it might be argued, must transcend the limitations of socialism in one country, whether of the social democratic or communist kind, must figure itself as the uncompromising opponent of ethnic and nationalist visions of human organization. But any attempt to reconstruct cosmopolitan socialism must take into account Thompson's many insights – that solidarities of resistance are built in places, that socialism must take into account and build from national traditions of struggle, and that socialism needs to have a vision of what the struggle for socialism is for. For those who are attempting to construct such a vision there is much to be learned from Thompson's negotiation of his nationalist and internationalist world.

Chapter 3

Community, Nation and Socialism

Raymond Williams and the Politics of Place

'Raymond Williams occupies a unique position among socialist writers in the English speaking world today.'¹ That was the opinion of the editors of the *New Left Review* in the early nineteen eighties. His singularity, they believed, derived from the disciplinary range of his oeuvre. Williams's work traversed the fields of fiction, history of ideas, historical semantics, political theory, cultural studies, literary criticism, drama analysis and sociology - few other intellectuals in the late twentieth century could match this disciplinary breadth. Across this spectrum, Williams developed and sustained an undaunted commitment to socialism.² E.P. Thompson's view in the early nineteen sixties that he 'was our (the New Left's) best man,'³ an opinion echoed by Perry Anderson in the mid-nineteen seventies when describing Williams as 'the most distinguished socialist thinker to have so far come from the ranks of the Western working class,'⁴ was fulfilled by a life's work committed to both the analysis of the means and conditions of the production and reproduction of hegemonic modes of living and the problems of constructing socialism. In this view, then, Williams was the archetypal organic intellectual. Out of his early experience of working-class community and the lived tension between that beginning and his later displacements, Williams constructed a body of socialist work dedicated to 'the necessary battle for democracy and of economic victory for the organized working

¹ 'Introduction' to *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* (London, 1981), p. 7. The interviews were undertaken between 1978 and 1979.

² 'Thinker' was a description offered by Anthony Barnett. See A. Barnett, 'The Keywords of a Key Thinker,' *The Listener*, 4 February 1988, cited in J. Eldridge and L. Eldridge, *Raymond Williams: Making Connections* (London, 1994), p. 2. According to Dennis Dworkin, Williams 'was one of the most prolific and influential socialist thinkers since the Second World War, and the scope of his work is unparalleled in Anglo-American Left-wing culture.' See D. Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left and the Origins of Cultural Studies* (Durham and London, 1997), pp. 85-86.

³ E.P. Thompson, 'The Long Revolution,' *New Left Review*, 1/9, 1961, p. 24.

⁴ P. Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London, 1976), p. 105.

class'⁵ that many have argued is unequalled.⁶ 'The late Raymond Williams was...among this century's most significant socialist intellectuals'⁷ – this conclusion was the almost universal judgment of socialist writers at the time of his death in 1988.⁸

If the disciplinary span of Williams's work was identified as one source of its unique contribution to the socialist tradition, then equally impressive and singular was its geographical reach. From neighbourhood to community, nation to globe, Williams's work mapped the whole spectrum of different orders of geographical being. How these different lived geographies might act toward the creation or disablement of a human social order was the constant concern of his life's work. This, of course, was not just a matter of intellectual interest. For Williams, community, nation and world were matters of lived experience. He was shaped by a childhood spent in a socialist family in a working-class community, by the felt dislocation common to those who traverse classes and nations to live and to work, and by a felt connection to a cosmopolitan milieu of theory and politics. These different emplacements acted as process and pressure on his intellectual work. As Tony Pinkey has suggested, at 'every moment of his intellectual career he was prepared to return general theoretical issues back to immediate lived experience, to a deeply felt personal history and geography.'⁹ Thus Williams's experience of diverse geographies of living and thought was crucial to a personal history that informed his thinking on politics, society and culture – and on what Cornel West has described as a '*prospective* outlook that never loses sight of human struggle against transient yet formidable limits.'¹⁰

⁵ R. Williams, 'You're a Marxist Aren't You?', in R. Williams, *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy and Socialism* (London, 1989), p. 76. The essay first appeared in B. Parekh, ed., *The Concept of Socialism* (London, 1975). This chapter will quote from the essay as it appeared in *Resources of Hope*.

⁶ For an unusual negative assessment, see R.W. Johnson, 'Mooovement,' *London Review of Books*, 8 February, 1990, pp. 5-6. A more representative view can be found in M. Rustin, 'Raymond Williams (1921-1988),' *Radical Philosophy*, 49, 1988, pp. 46-7.

⁷ M. Sprinker, 'The Commitment to Socialism,' *Victorian Studies*, 37, 4, 1994, p. 559.

⁸ Non-Marxist writers have been no less effusive in their praise of Williams's work. For an example, see E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London, 1993), pp. 95-115. See also G. Snedeker, 'Between Humanism and Social Theory: The Cultural Criticism of Raymond Williams,' *Rethinking Marxism*, 6, 1993, p. 113.

⁹ T. Pinkey, *Raymond Williams* (Bridgend, 1991), p. 12.

¹⁰ C. West, 'In Memoriam: The Legacy of Raymond Williams,' in C. Prendergast, ed., *Cultural Materialism: On Raymond Williams* (London, 1995), p. x.

The local, the national and the global – these were the constant interacting geographies which shaped Williams's life and which he consistently explored throughout his intellectual work. The first section of the chapter will trace the influence of those geographies on Williams's 'social being'. In brief, it will investigate how each of these different levels of spatial experience was enmeshed in Williams's formation. The remaining sections of the chapter will explore the interaction of the local, the national and the global with Williams's negotiation of the nexus between the national question and Marxism. Community, which, as Stuart Hall has argued, took 'on a peculiarly resonant meaning in all of Williams's writing,'¹¹ will constitute the focus of the first of these sections. Related to other keywords of his work, such as place, culture, and communications, community was crucial to the values which suffused Williams's work from *Culture and Society* to *Towards 2000*. The second of these sections will investigate his relation to Wales. Initially registered through his fiction, Williams's 'Welshness' occupied an increasingly central place in his cultural analyses and his socialist politics from the nineteen-seventies onwards.¹² Concomitant with the ascendancy of identity politics, 'Welshness' has become the increasingly dominant prism through which Williams's work is interpreted today.¹³ The final section will concentrate on his life-long commitment to international socialism, a commitment equally present in his activist affiliations and in his intellectual work. In short, it will track the interaction and relationship between geography and socialism in Williams's vision of a human social order. The chapter will conclude with a brief overview of the problems that, for Williams, inhered in any version of socialist cosmopolitanism.

¹¹ S. Hall, 'Politics and Letters,' in T. Eagleton, ed., *Raymond Williams: Critical Perspectives* (Oxford, 1991), p. 56.

¹² For the place of Wales in Williams's fiction, see J.A. Davies, "'Not Going Back, But...Exile Ending": Raymond Williams's Fictional Wales,' in J.W. Morgan, ed., *Raymond Williams: Politics, Education, Letters* (New York, 1993), pp. 189-210. It is remarkable how often Williams's Welsh dimension is overlooked in assessments of his life's work. For two characteristic examples, see D. Simpson, 'Raymond Williams: Feeling for Structures, "Voicing" History,' *Social Text*, 30, 1992, pp. 9-26 and P. Filmer, 'Structures of Feeling and Socio-Cultural Formations: The Significance of Literature and Experience to Raymond Williams's Sociology of Culture,' *British Journal of Sociology*, 54, 2, 2003, pp. 199-219.

¹³ See, in particular, D. Williams, 'Introduction: The Return of the Native,' in R. Williams, *Who Speaks for Wales?: Culture, Identity, Nation*, ed., D. Williams (Cardiff, 1999), pp. xv-liii.

Where was the 'somewhere' in which Raymond Williams positioned himself 'in order to say anything at all?'¹⁴ 'English Marxist' was the 'somewhere' offered by Michael Merrill from across the Atlantic in the late nineteen seventies.¹⁵ Echoing this conviction, Raphael Samuel, writing soon after Williams's death, claimed that the founding father of cultural studies was an 'English socialist'.¹⁶ In another view, a combination of 'Britishness' and 'internationalism' constituted Williams's social being.¹⁷ The national, if not the political, portion of these descriptions has, of course, been much contested. 'That Williams was Welsh,' according to Dai Smith, 'was clear.'¹⁸ For Smith, it was the 'Welsh experience which [stood] out as the abiding preoccupation of [Williams's] life.'¹⁹ Endorsing this suggestion, but offering an alternative political appellation, Jan Gorak has suggested that Williams was a 'Welsh nationalist'.²⁰ Others, however, have zeroed in on his birthplace to explain the 'somewhere' from which Williams spoke – not Wales but Pandy, 'a rural working-class community'²¹ on the Welsh-English border. It was the values of this specific community, according to this widely-held view, that determined the rhythm of his life's work.²² Thus a diverse range of commentators have utilized the border as metaphor in the attempt to 'place' Williams. According to Terry Eagleton, Williams 'lived in border country the whole of his life,' the border country between the 'knowable community' he had been born into and 'the life of educated intelligence' he

¹⁴ S. Hall, 'Ethnicity: Identity and Difference,' in G. Eley and R. Suny, eds., *Becoming National: A Reader*, p. 347.

¹⁵ M. Merrill, 'Raymond Williams and the Theory of English Marxism,' *Radical History Review*, 19, 1978-1979, pp. 9-31, esp. p. 9. 'English Marxist' was also the description offered by Martin Jay in his *Marxism and Totality* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 9.

¹⁶ R. Samuel, "'Philosophy Teaching By Example": Past and Present in Raymond Williams,' *History Workshop Journal*, 27, 1989, p. 145. Samuel, however, goes on to note other aspects of Williams's identity that contradict this view.

¹⁷ F. Inglis, *Raymond Williams* (London, 1995), p. 2. Williams's 'Britishness' – here ethnically defined – has constituted the basis of a critique of his supposed insensitivity to colonialism and imperialism. See, in particular, P. Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (Chicago, 1987), pp. 49-50.

¹⁸ D. Smith, 'Relating to Wales,' in T. Eagleton, ed., *Raymond Williams: Critical Perspectives*, p. 34.

¹⁹ Ibid. Williams's relationship to Wales has also been tackled in J.P. Ward, *Raymond Williams* (Cardiff, 1981).

²⁰ J. Gorak, *The Alien Mind of Raymond Williams* (London, 1988), p. 1. According to Gorak, Williams was not just a 'Welsh nationalist' but also a 'Marxist'. Gorak does not explore the possible contradictions between these two 'identities'.

²¹ Eagleton, 'Introduction', in Eagleton, ed., *Raymond Williams: Critical Perspectives*, p. 1.

²² A. O'Connor, *Raymond Williams: Writing, Culture, Politics* (London, 1989), p. 6.

later inhabited.²³ Thus where some have emphasized his local or national roots others have stressed his rootlessness, his experience of exile and migration.²⁴ Not surprisingly, and perhaps with this sense of displacement in mind, some have described Williams as a 'revolutionary socialist,' implying that social transformation was his homeland.²⁵ Internationalist *and* nationalist, English/British *and* Welsh, enracinement *and* deracination – when it comes to placing Williams, commentators have waxed contradictory.

Raymond Williams was born in August 1921 in what his biographer has described as 'an ugly, unfinished-looking blackstone house,' situated 'a yard or two from Offa's Dyke path as it turned southwards from the little villages of Pandy and Crucorney towards the Holy Mountain.'²⁶ The intimacy of the biographer's description was an attempt to match the warmth typical of Williams's own portrayal of his birthplace.²⁷ 'I was born under the Black Mountains,' he characteristically recalled, 'on the Welsh border, where the meadows are bright green against the red earth of the ploughland, and the first trees, beyond the window, are oak and holly.'²⁸ So important was place to his formation that Williams later claimed that the Black Mountain village where he was born was the only landscape he saw in his dreams.²⁹ However the landscape of the border country was equally present in his waking life. 'When I go back to [the border country],' Williams remarked, 'I feel a recovery of a particular kind of life, which appears, at times, as an inescapable identity, a more

²³ Eagleton, 'Introduction,' p. 4. For a similar use of this metaphor in placing Williams, see L. Di Michele, 'Autobiography and the "Structure of Feeling" in *Border Country*,' in D. Dworkin and L.G. Roman, eds., *Views Beyond the Border Country: Raymond Williams and Cultural Politics* (London, 1993), p. 27.

²⁴ The reality of living in a society where 'all that is solid melts into air' was a constant preoccupation of Williams's work. Indeed, the concept of 'alienation' was the key around which Jan Gorak's interpretation of Williams's life work turned. See Gorak, *The Alien Mind of Raymond Williams*, pp. 1-14.

²⁵ See E.P. Thompson, 'Country and City,' in E.P. Thompson, *Making History: Writings on History and Culture* (New York, 1994), p. 243. The essay was first published in the *New York Review of Books*.

²⁶ Inglis, *Raymond Williams*, p. 18. Williams's birthplace is a central 'character' in his first novel, *Border Country* (London, 1960).

²⁷ For a critique of this intimacy, see R. Samuel, 'Making it Up,' *London Review of Books*, 18, 13-4, July 8, 1996, pp. 8-11.

²⁸ R. Williams, *The Country and the City* (London, 1973), p. 3. A multi-dimensional sense of place is wonderfully captured in his later novels, *The People of the Black Mountains: I The Beginning* (London, 1989) and *People of the Black Mountains: II The Eggs of the Eagle* (London, 1990). Both novels were published posthumously.

²⁹ Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 84.

positive connection than I have known elsewhere.³⁰ Understood as a site of work and life, and as a locus of community and politics, place inflected all of Williams's work. Indeed, an apprehension of place became more central to his thought with time, central not only to his understanding of community and culture but also to his conception of a viable socialist politics.

Born 'in a remote village, in a very old settled countryside, on the border between England and Wales,'³¹ Williams experienced place not just as physical reality, as a particular landscape shaped by centuries of human habitation. The rural Welsh village where he was born was also home to a 'customary way of life.'³² 'What it meant,' for him, 'was, first, the experience of a relatively stable community, which had acquired a certain specific identity in opposition to certain external forces mainly on the land issue, and then which practiced...within that scattered rural society, certain habits, which, [he] came to recognize when [he] moved away from it, could certainly not be taken for granted.'³³ A common identity, mutual responsibility, social obligation, and solidarity – these were the values that Williams imbibed in his childhood. Not consciously chosen, these values were unconsciously lived.³⁴ As a consequence, they constituted an important component of his formation – not just as someone who was acutely alive to the hold of place over social identity but also to someone who made a life-long commitment to socialism.³⁵ As Terry Eagleton has

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., p. 2.

³² For Williams 'the local' rather than 'the national' experience of community was always more important. As he suggested to his interlocutors from the *New Left Review*: 'I think the sense of a specific local identity was much stronger. There were good historical reasons for this. For Wales had never been a nation: it has always had a cultural rather than a national existence.' See Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 26.

³³ R. Williams, 'The Importance of Community,' in Williams, *Resources of Hope*, p. 113. This essay was first published in *Radical Wales*, 18, Summer, 1988. However, the text of the essay is based on a speech that Williams gave to the Plaid Cymru summer school in 1977. Reference throughout this chapter will be made to the essay as it appeared in *Resources of Hope*. On the importance of 'the land' to Williams's life and work, see R. Williams, 'Marxism, Poetry, Wales,' in Williams, ed., *Who Speaks for Wales?*, p. 92. This interview was first published in *Poetry Wales*, 13, 3, 1977, pp. 16-34. This chapter will refer to the interview as it appeared in *Who Speaks for Wales?*

³⁴ The sense of unconsciously imbibing values in childhood is evoked in R. Williams, *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (London, 1970), p. 98.

³⁵ And not just to socialism, according to Robin Blackburn. As Blackburn has argued, 'Williams drew values from his own background that gave him a deep sympathy with anti-colonial struggle and peasant resistance.' See R. Blackburn, 'Raymond Williams and the New Left,' *New Left Review*, I/168, 1988, p. 11.

suggested, 'the whole of his life long political project was secretly nurtured by a formative early experience of working-class solidarity and mutual support.'³⁶

Evocative of a particular landscape and representative of certain values, the rural Welsh village where Williams was born and grew up also constituted a past, actively present in his making. Exemplary of this past, and his kinship with his father,³⁷ who worked as a signalman on the railways, was the General Strike of 1926 – a moment, according to Raphael Samuel, which he 'return[ed] to again and again, as a living proof of the self-realizing capacities of the working class, as also of its limits, when confronted with the world of power.'³⁸ Stretching back to the world of his grandfather, a landless labourer in the border country, and beyond that to the deep past of the Norman conquest and the Ancient Celts, this living history, which was increasingly accentuated in Williams's life work, went beyond the time of his own birth.³⁹ Wholly removed from nostalgia, it was an active sense of the past, which partly explains what Stuart Hall has called Williams's 'double attachment to countryside and the world of the railway workers'.⁴⁰ It also partly accounts for those attachments that Williams made beyond the border country.

Reshaped by industrial capitalism with its roads, railways, and other networks of communication, the border country was a node that connected the mining valleys of south Wales to London and beyond. It connected Raymond Williams to those places as well. 'We were a dispersed family,' he later recalled, 'along the road, the railway, and now letters and print.'⁴¹ 'My own network,' he continued, 'is to Cambridge and London, and beyond them to the postmark places, the unfamiliar stamps and distant cities: Rome, Moscow, New York.'⁴² This sense of movement and displacement Williams tracked throughout his fiction. As David Harvey has

³⁶ Eagleton, 'Introduction,' p. 2.

³⁷ As Matthew explained in *Border Country*, p. 281, 'a father is more than a person, he's in fact a society.' The quote is here drawn from S. Yeo, 'Intellectuals versus Cultural Producers: Mainly from Raymond Williams's Fiction,' *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 2, 3, 1989, p. 277.

³⁸ Samuel, "'Philosophy Teaching By Example": Past and Present in Raymond Williams,' p. 148. For more on Williams's connection to the General Strike, see J. Brenkman, 'Raymond Williams and Marxism,' in Prendergast, ed., *Cultural Materialism*, pp. 237-267, particularly pp. 239-244.

³⁹ See Samuel, "'Philosophy Teaching By Example": Past and Present in Raymond Williams,' p. 149. See also R. Williams, *Towards 2000* (London, 1983), p. 201.

⁴⁰ Hall, 'Politics and Letters,' p. 56. See also Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 21.

⁴¹ Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 5.

⁴² *Ibid.*

suggested of his most 'Welsh' and 'historical' novel, *People of the Black Mountains*: the book 'records waves of migration and colonization which situate the history of the Black Mountains in a matrix of spatiality, constituted by the flows and movements pulsing across Europe and beyond.'⁴³ The socialist politics that Williams always claimed were bred in his bones and learned through his early experience of community connected him to a world beyond the border country. Just as the mining valleys and the railway had connected his father to a wider socialist consciousness, particularly during the General Strike of 1926, so Williams was connected to a trans-local consciousness through his youthful participation in labour politics and his membership of Pandy's Left Book Club and its campaigns of solidarity with China and Spain; in *Politics and Letters* he recalled being moved by Konni Zilliacus's internationalism and Edgar Snow's *Red Star over China*.⁴⁴ As Robin Blackburn suggested when referring to Williams's internationalist beginnings: 'One has a sense of a nascent "structure of feeling" – internationalism reinforced by local attachments and a discursive model of political culture – that was to endure.'⁴⁵

In *Fight for Manod*, the third novel of Williams's Welsh trilogy, Matthew Price, the book's central character, remarks that the history of Manod, a fictional Welsh village, 'is that the young go away.'⁴⁶ Pandy was no different. In Williams's case he won a scholarship and went to Cambridge to study English literature, beginning an association with that institution that would endure until the early nineteen eighties.⁴⁷ (He studied at Trinity College, Cambridge for two years before the Second World War, completed his degree there following the war, and returned as Fellow of Jesus College in 1961,⁴⁸ finally retiring as Professor of Drama in 1983.⁴⁹)

⁴³ Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford, 1995), p. 27.

⁴⁴ Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 31. In addition Williams went to Geneva to take part in a youth conference organized by the League of Nations, where he was first exposed to the work of Marx and Engels and the world of international communism. For his own account of these youthful political adventures, consult *Politics and Letters*, pp. 37-8. A second-hand account of these events in Williams's early years is provided in Inglis, *Raymond Williams*, pp. 43-69.

⁴⁵ Blackburn, 'Raymond Williams and the New Left,' p. 16. Compare this conclusion with Alan O'Connor's suggestion that in Williams's case 'the usual maps for the 1930s do not hold.' O'Connor, *Raymond Williams: Writing, Culture, Politics*, p. 6.

⁴⁶ R. Williams, *The Fight for Manod* (London, 1979), p. 27.

⁴⁷ For a discussion of how Williams conceptualized the relationship between his experience of working-class community and education, see R. Williams and R. Hoggart, 'Working Class Attitudes,' *New Left Review*, I/1, 1960, pp. 26-30, particularly, p. 27.

⁴⁸ Eagleton wonderfully evokes this return in his 'Introduction,' to *Raymond Williams: Critical Perspectives*, p. 2.

Already alienated from Welsh culture before his migration to the metropolis, Williams's 'exile' at Cambridge initially involved him in an international milieu of theory and politics, in what Tony Pinkey has described as a 'combative, cosmopolitan, experimental, eclectic, modernist and avant-garde'⁵⁰ culture. Alongside politics, but not in any sense divorced from political concerns, Williams became immersed in literary modernism, surrealist film and jazz through his involvement in the Cambridge University Socialist Club (CUSC).⁵¹ Belying his characterization as the 'British Lukacs', Williams later pointed out in *Politics and Letters* that 'in the late thirties admiration for *Dr Caligari* or *Metropolis* was virtually a condition of entry to the Socialist Club at Cambridge.'⁵² A member of the 'Aesthetes' group within the CUSC, the son of a Welsh railwayman from the border country was exposed to the full range of avant-garde culture in the late nineteen thirties. This connection to a modernist avant-garde was maintained after the war when he returned to Cambridge to finish his degree, and found expression in some of his earliest publications, including *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*.⁵³ Politics and Letters: it was these two related activities, both manifestly cosmopolitan, that claimed Williams after he migrated from the Welsh border country to Cambridge in 1939.

Love of place, warmth of community, and the sense of an active past – this is how Williams would later characterize his experience of growing up in the border country. Over time, Wales became an important component of Williams's sense of place, community, and history. Born in the Welsh village of Pandy, educated in a Welsh grammar school in Abergavenny, but later alienated from his Welsh roots through education in the metropolis, Williams increasingly worked through his national identity from the nineteen seventies onwards. 'Williams felt in his Welsh origins,' Jan Gorak has speculated, 'the strength of a lasting attachment to the kind of

⁴⁹ For more on Williams's time at Cambridge, see his 'My Cambridge,' in R. Williams, *What I Came to Say* (London, 1989), pp. 3-15, and his brief comments in *Politics and Letters*, p. 36.

⁵⁰ T. Pinkey, 'Raymond Williams and the "Two faces of Modernism",' in Eagleton, ed., *Raymond Williams: Critical Perspectives*, p. 18.

⁵¹ See Williams, *Politics and Letters*, pp. 45-6. For Williams's own analysis of modernism, see R. Williams, *The Politics of Modernism*, ed., Tony Pinkey (London, 1987).

⁵² Ibid., p. 232. The issue of Williams's modernism is given full treatment in Pinkey, 'Raymond Williams and the "Two Faces of Modernism",' pp. 12-33. But also see T. Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin, or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism* (London, 1981), pp. 64-68.

⁵³ R. Williams, *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* (London, 1953).

vividly realized social and moral order he called a "knowable community".⁵⁴ Indeed Wales increasingly claimed Williams, both in the narrow sense of a re-discovery of his roots and in a wider sense as an example of how social identities could be formed and reformed in an active history characterized by flux.⁵⁵ As he later suggested, a felt connection with Wales gave him 'a very strong sense of retracing a journey and finding that I'd come back to the same place but that place had changed.'⁵⁶ Mediated by his experience of 'education', Williams's return to Wales did not involve some sort of parochial retreat.⁵⁷ Rather it exposed Williams to forms of experience which he eventually came to see as part of a global history, a *longue durée* shot through with loss, movement and migration. In this sense, there was nothing necessarily 'nationalist' about the return of this native, although it did, at one point in the nineteen seventies, involve Williams's membership of the Welsh nationalist party, Plaid Cymru.⁵⁸ His reconnection with Wales was entangled with a conception of Welsh history characterized by division, change and mobility – a species of 'national' identity signified by ambivalence as much as by settlement.⁵⁹

Thus, in an expansive rather than narrow sense, Williams's return to his Welsh roots 'was associated with a broadening of his historical and social sympathies.'⁶⁰ It was also coincident with what Raphael Samuel has called a 'hardening of his radicalism.'⁶¹ Almost coincident with his membership of Plaid Cymru, Williams was describing himself in a seminal article as a revolutionary socialist.⁶² At that time

⁵⁴ Gorak, *The Alien Mind of Raymond Williams*, p. 6.

⁵⁵ See R. Williams, 'Wales and England,' in Williams, *Who Speaks For Wales?*, pp. 16-26, particularly, pp. 20-21. This essay was first published in *New Wales*, 1, 1983. Reference throughout this chapter will be made to the essay as it appeared in *Who Speaks for Wales?*.

⁵⁶ Williams, 'The Importance of Community,' p. 118. For a particularly vivid account of Williams's reconnection with Wales, see Smith, 'Relating to Wales,' particularly pp. 36-8.

⁵⁷ Some have interpreted it in this sense. See Inglis, *Raymond Williams*, p. 229 and P. Parrinder, *The Failure of Theory* (Brighton, 1987), p. 78.

⁵⁸ R. Williams, 'Decentralism and the Politics of Place,' in Williams, *Resources of Hope*, pp. 220. This interview first appeared in *Society and Space*, 2, 1984. Reference to the interview throughout this chapter will be to the version in *Resources of Hope*.

⁵⁹ Williams, *Towards 2000*, p. 196. See also R. Williams, 'The Shadow of the Dragon,' review of *When was Wales?*, by Gwyn Williams, *Wales: A History*, by Winford Vaughan-Thomas, *The Guardian*, 24 January 1985, here reprinted in Williams, *Who Speaks for Wales?*, p. 67. Reference to this article will be taken from its republication in *Who Speaks for Wales?*

⁶⁰ Samuel, "'Philosophy Teaching by Example": Past and Present in Raymond Williams,' p. 149. A point also stressed in Williams, 'Introduction: The Return of the Native,' p. xxvii. Gorak is arguably partly wrong, then, when he suggests that 'Wales carries for Williams the charge of a symbolic land invested with affection, nostalgia, and loyalty.' See Gorak, *The Alien Mind of Raymond Williams*, p. 7.

⁶¹ Samuel, "'Philosophy Teaching by Example": Past and Present in Raymond Williams,' p. 149.

⁶² Williams, 'You're a Marxist Aren't You?,' p. 66.

when the terms of reference of his intellectual work were consistently English, Williams imagined himself as a non-Marxist socialist – expressed not just in a critique of Marxism's understanding of culture, but also in his membership of the Labour Party.⁶³ As he began to negotiate his own personal history and his kinship with Wales, and to mine the complex and conflict-ridden depths of Welsh history, he started to identify himself with an explicitly revolutionary and Marxist socialist tradition.⁶⁴ The seeming paradox involved in this shift Williams explained in *Politics and Letters*: 'That [his desire for the Welsh people to bypass bourgeois England] connects, for me, with the sense in my work that I am now necessarily European; that the people to the left and on the left of the French and Italian communist parties, the German and Scandinavian comrades, the communist dissidents from the east like Bahro, are my kind of people; the people I come from and belong to, and my more conscious Welshness is, as I feel it, my way of learning those connections.'⁶⁵ Williams's own description of his identity from the nineteen sixties onwards measures the sense of paradox involved in this reconnection with his homeland: 'Welsh European'.⁶⁶ Through his engagement with Wales, then, Williams found a means to leave it again.

Williams's socialism was more a matter of filial inheritance than determined by the mode of production.⁶⁷ As he suggested in 'Culture is Ordinary': 'My grandfather, a big labourer, wept while he spoke, finely and excitedly, at the parish meeting, of being turned out of his cottage. My father, not long before he died, spoke quietly and happily of when he started a trade union branch and a Labour Party group in the village, and without bitterness, of the "kept men" of the new politics. I speak a

⁶³ On Williams's 'English' period, see T. Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory* (London, 1976), pp. 21-42.

⁶⁴ For his break with reformism in 1966, see Williams, 'Notes on Marxism in Britain since 1945,' in R. Williams, *Problems of Materialism and Culture* (London, 1980), p. 250. This essay was first published in *New Left Review*, I/100, 1976-1977, pp. 233-251.

⁶⁵ Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 296. Williams, 'Introduction: The Return of the Native,' p. xvii reads this paradox wrongly by separating the two movements in Williams's thought at this time.

⁶⁶ Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 296.

⁶⁷ Although, as Williams suggested, coming from a working-class background he experienced his difference from the middle class in terms most immediate and available to him – in terms of culture rather than relations of production. This is part of the reason why community and culture played such large roles in the 'structure of feeling' and the politics of so many figures in the 'first' New Left. See R. Williams, 'The Idea of a Common Culture,' in Williams, *Resources of Hope*, p. 32. This essay initially appeared as 'Culture and Revolution: A Comment' and 'Culture and Revolution: A Response,' both in T. Eagleton and B. Wicker, eds., *From Culture to Revolution: The Slant Symposium 1967* (London, 1968). Reference in this chapter will be taken from the essay as it appeared in *Resources of Hope*.

different idiom, but I think of these things.⁶⁸ The different idiom was a product of a certain sort of education. Socialist politics, as it had for so many other future radical intellectuals in the nineteen thirties, dominated Williams's initial encounter with Cambridge. Confident, energetic, unmoved by opposing views, as his biographer described him during his initial student years, Williams was editor of the student newspaper, *University Journal*, spoke regularly at the Cambridge Union, eventually becoming its chairman, and, most significantly, joined the CUSC and the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB).⁶⁹ He was a prominent member of the Cambridge CPGB's Writers' Group, a position which led him to write a propaganda piece on the Russo-Finnish war with Eric Hobsbawm, and he became editor of its 'literary' newspaper, the rather tamely named *Outlook*.⁷⁰ If his background had in quite unique ways determined his socialist politics, the context of the late nineteen thirties – that period of the popular front against European fascism and imminent world war – ensured that politics rather than academic study would dominate Williams's initial years at Cambridge.⁷¹ In 1941, his education would be interrupted by his involvement in another kind of politics – war.

A tank commander in Italy in the struggle against fascism, Williams returned to Cambridge in 1946 to finish his English degree.⁷² After the war, he later recalled, Cambridge felt like a 'totally different world.'⁷³ Not just his war experience but the transformed political climate ensured a radical disjuncture between his first and second period at Cambridge. This was registered, above all, in his post-war understanding of the relation between politics and letters.⁷⁴ 'I had become convinced that their [the Marxists] answers did not meet the questions, and that I had got to be

⁶⁸ R. Williams, 'Culture is Ordinary,' in Williams, *Resources of Hope*, p. 4. This essay first appeared in N. Mackenzie, ed., *Conviction* (London, 1958). Reference to the essay in this chapter will be from the version which appeared in *Resources of Hope*.

⁶⁹ His membership would lapse in 1941 and was never renewed. See Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 52. On Williams's first stay at Cambridge see the account in Inglis, *Raymond Williams*, pp. 70-85.

⁷⁰ E. Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times* (London, 2003), p. 154.

⁷¹ O'Connor, *Raymond Williams: Writing, Culture, Politics*, pp. 6-9.

⁷² For Williams's own perspective on his war-time experience, see Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 58.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 61. See also Inglis, *Raymond Williams*, pp. 107-109.

⁷⁴ His post-war 'structure of feeling' is nicely captured in his later account of how he interpreted Ibsen at that time: 'The theme of my analysis of Ibsen is that although everybody is defeated in his work, the defeat never cancels the validity of the impulse that moved him; yet that the defeat has occurred is also crucial. The specific blockage does not involve...renunciation of the original impulse. I think that was how I saw the fate of the impulse of the late thirties – an impulse that was not just personal but general. It had been right, but it had been defeated; yet the defeat did not cancel it out.' See Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 63.

prepared to meet the professional obligations.⁷⁵ Moved now by Leavis rather than by Marx, Williams threw himself into a study of Ibsen, keeping a connection with that pre-war modernist avant-garde that had done so much to shape him. Graduating from Cambridge in 1946, Williams, like E.P. Thompson and a host of other radical intellectuals, embarked upon a career in adult education.⁷⁶ Appointed by the Workers' Education Association (WEA) to work in East Sussex, Williams spent the next fifteen years in adult education, making what he believed was the common human inheritance of culture available to the proletariat of southern England.⁷⁷ Informed by his experience of working-class community, Williams's time in adult education can be understood as an extension of his conception of a common culture. His work in adult education was an attempt, that is, to lay the groundwork for the creation of a social order informed and transformed by the values and meanings of ordinary people. It also constituted an incipient critique of Leavis. However it was not adult education alone that claimed Williams during this time. In 1948 he established and edited a literary-cultural journal, *Politics and Letters*, with two close Cambridge friends, Wolf Mankowitz and Henry Collins. Conceived in the afterglow of Labour's triumph in 1945, *Politics and Letters* sought to 'unite radical left politics with Leavisite criticism.'⁷⁸ Following its demise in 1948, Williams found himself alienated from organized politics for the next decade or so – that is until the birth of a new Left.

Williams was present at all the important points of the making of the New Left.⁷⁹ He spoke at the *Universities and Left Review* Club and contributed to its journal, finding himself after 1956 more attuned to the concerns of the young socialists grouped around *Universities and Left Review* rather than to those dissident

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ As Roger Fieldhouse has suggested, 'There were many people who had been involved in the left-wing student politics of the 1930s seeking jobs after the war. The more left-wing they were the more they looked toward adult education as a worthwhile job to do – a politically useful job.' See R. Fieldhouse, *Adult Education and the Cold War* (Leeds, 1985), p. 22.

⁷⁷ On Williams's experience of adult education see, J. McIlroy, 'Raymond Williams in Adult Education: Part I,' *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 22, 2, 1990, and J. McIlroy, 'Raymond Williams in Adult Education: Part II,' *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 23, 1, 1991.

⁷⁸ Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 65. For more on *Politics and Letters*, see Inglis, *Raymond Williams*, pp. 107-161 and S. Woodhams, *History in the Making: Raymond Williams, Edward Thompson and the Radical Intellectuals 1935-1956* (London, 2002), pp. 75-83.

⁷⁹ There is now a fairly substantial literature on the New Left. Three accounts stand out – L. Chun, *The British New Left* (Edinburgh, 1993), M. Kenny, *The First New Left: British Intellectuals after Stalin* (London, 1995), and Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain*.

communists associated with E.P. Thompson's and John Saville's *New Reasoner*.⁸⁰ He was an important broker in the merger between *Universities and Left Review* and the *New Reasoner* which led to the formation of the *New Left Review*, and became a member of its first board. He campaigned against nuclear weapons, finding in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) the kind of self-making that was so important to his theory of culture. And his early work, especially *Culture and Society* and *The Long Revolution*, were crucial landmarks in the New Left's cultural and political revision of actually-existing types of socialist analysis.⁸¹ Williams was also an important bridge between the 'first' and the 'second' New Lefts, moving against Thompson to keep the *New Left Review* going after 1962. Following the failure of the 'first' New Left, however, he drifted toward the Labour Party, finding in 'Wilsonism' a hope for a socialist future.⁸² But he drifted out again in the late nineteen sixties, conceding that Labourism was a force that sustained rather than undermined capitalist relations of production.⁸³ In 1967 he joined with Stuart Hall and E.P. Thompson in the writing of *May Day Manifesto* and in the establishment of the short-lived movement it spawned.⁸⁴ He supported the Vietnam Solidarity Committee (VSC), was 'solid' with the student movement in 1968, and in the nineteen seventies was among the first socialists to argue for the need to construct an alliance with the new social movements, particularly the ecology movement.⁸⁵ He was a sponsoring editor of *New Socialist*, and was a leading light in the establishment of the Socialist Society in the early nineteen eighties,⁸⁶ and, when the miners went out on strike in the middle years of that decade, Williams was on hand in places such as Bedwellty, Bargoed and

⁸⁰ Williams, *Politics and Letters*, pp. 361-362. For more on *Universities and Left Review* and its club, see Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain*, pp. 54-67. For Williams's role in the early New Left, see, in particular, Kenny, *The First New Left*, pp. 86-115 and Woodhams, *History in the Making*, pp. 163-185.

⁸¹ For an illuminating account of this milieu, see F. Mulhern, 'A Welfare Culture? Hoggart and Williams in the Fifties,' *Radical Philosophy*, 77, 1996, pp. 26-37. See also P. Jones, 'The Myth of "Raymond Hoggart": On "Founding Fathers" and Cultural Policy,' *Cultural Studies*, 8, 1994, pp. 394-416.

⁸² This was not Williams's hope alone of course. It was shared by Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn. For some indication of the hopes that figures in the New Left placed in the Wilson Labour government, see P. Anderson, ed., *Towards Socialism* (London, 1965).

⁸³ Williams, *Politics and Letters*, pp. 367-373.

⁸⁴ For an account of the May Day Manifesto movement, see Inglis, *Raymond Williams*, pp. 198-210. For a recent critique of this movement see N. Tiratsoo, 'Labour and Its Crisis: The Case of the May Day Manifesto,' in Tiratsoo, et al., eds., *The Wilson Labour Governments 1964-1970* (London, 1993). For Williams's own view consult Williams, *Politics and Letters*, pp. 373-375.

⁸⁵ Blackburn, 'Raymond Williams and the New Left,' p. 19. On Williams's view of 1968, see Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 376. Williams was Vice President of the Socialist Environment and Resources Association in the nineteen eighties.

⁸⁶ Blackburn, 'Raymond Williams and the New Left,' p. 19.

Penrhyceibr to offer his practical support.⁸⁷ From the New Left to the new social movements, from CND to the *May Day Manifesto* movement – Williams's activist commitments were apiece with a socialist life that had been consistently defined against the reality of 'class exploitation, racial discrimination, militarism and the threat of nuclear cataclysm, national chauvinism, and gender violence.'⁸⁸

In theory, as in practice, throughout the nineteen seventies Williams became more radical. Unlike so many others who went from radical youth to conservative middle-age, he took the road less travelled, moving further to the Left as he got older. From the late nineteen sixties onwards, Williams began to engage with new types of Marxist cultural theory. As he later admitted, this return to Marxism 'took its place in a serious and extending international inquiry.'⁸⁹ Important to this encounter was his engagement with the work of a range of European Marxists including Lukács, Sartre, Goldmann, Althusser, Walter Benjamin, and Antonio Gramsci.⁹⁰ Williams did not just debate the felicities of this new Marxist theory with other Marxists in Britain, although this was an important aspect of his re-negotiation with its analytics. Rather, as he noted in the introduction to *Marxism and Literature*, 'I had opportunities to extend my discussions in Italy, in Scandinavia, in France, in North America, and in Germany, and with visitors from Hungary, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union.'⁹¹ Like his earlier and continuing involvement with modernism, Williams's debate with these different traditions of Marxism placed him within a cosmopolitan frame of reference, 'an international context in which,' as he suggested, 'for the first time in [his] life,' he felt he 'belong[ed] to a sphere and dimension of work in which [he] could feel at home.'⁹² In theory, at least, Cosmopolis was his homeland.

⁸⁷ Inglis, *Raymond Williams*, p. 289.

⁸⁸ D. M. Nonini, 'Race, Land, Nation: A(t)-Tribute to Raymond Williams,' *Cultural Critique*, 41, 1999, p. 167. For a similar view, see Sprinker, 'The Commitment to Socialism,' pp. 565-566. This view of Williams, of course, has been disputed. But note the comments by West, 'In Memoriam: The Legacy of Raymond Williams,' p. xii.

⁸⁹ R. Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (London, 1977), p. 4. According to John Brenkman there were significant problems with Williams's Marxist politics during this period. He picks out Williams's support for the Cultural Revolution as an instance of these problems. See Brenkman, 'Raymond Williams and Marxism,' pp. 250-251.

⁹⁰ For an early case of this encounter see R. Williams, 'Literature and Sociology: In Memory of Lucien Goldmann,' *New Left Review*, 1/67, 1971, pp. 3-18. A review of Williams's encounter with Western Marxism can be found in Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Britain*, pp. 150-152.

⁹¹ Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 4. Note, however, Gorak's suggestion that this international dialogue coexisted uneasily with Williams's commitment to 'Britishness'. See Gorak, *The Alien Mind of Raymond Williams*, p. 3.

⁹² Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, pp. 4-5.

Identities, Eric Hobsbawm has argued, are not like shoes.⁹³ In practice, if not in theory, social identity could be constituted by seemingly incompatible attachments and loyalties – a person could be British and Welsh, a socialist and a Catholic. In short, different, sometimes contradictory, identities could be worn at the same time without inducing a personality crisis. Raymond Williams, it could be argued, did not so much assume different identities at the same time as seek to appropriate different identities for a common political project. He felt community as neighbourhood and as a cosmopolitan network based on theory and politics; Wales was at once exemplar of the types of social identity which were nurtured in lived relationships in a specific place and an intimation of a global future of mobility and hybridity; and socialism was seen as an extension of the values found in community and as the only way that people could be connected to those values living where they are now. Community, Wales and socialism – these were the constituting, interacting and connecting elements in Williams's formation. In another sense, however, these different ways of seeing were also the site of what Williams's fictional self in *Border Country* referred to as a contradiction, of 'feeling it several ways at once.'⁹⁴ The movement from community to Cosmopolis through 'nationality' was both a source of contradiction and the locus of a tension that powered Williams's life work. How those tensions and contradictions were worked out in his negotiation of the nexus between the national question and socialism will constitute the focus of the rest of this chapter.

⁹³ E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, 1992, org. 1990), p. 123.

⁹⁴ Williams, *Border Country*, p. 37, here cited in Yeo, 'Intellectuals versus Cultural Producers: Mainly From Raymond Williams's Fiction,' p. 278.

According to the *Communist Manifesto*, the cash nexus was the only bond which connected men and women in a world ruled by the capitalist mode of production. A globalized capitalism, Marx and Engels believed, would destroy all other bonds between people – whether those established in face-to-face communities or those more mediated bonds constructed through nationhood. Thus as production, consumption and communication became increasingly cosmopolitan, the remorseless logic of capital would dispense with places – whether the beloved region or the imagined community of the nation.⁹⁵ For Marx and Engels, in short, globalization would submit all hitherto existing relationships, places and identities to the needs of capital accumulation, dispensing those relationships, places and identities which ran counter to its logic to the dustbin of history.⁹⁶ Upon the ruins of these recently solid formations, Marx and Engels confidently predicted, would arise a 'universal, placeless, and especially nation-less'⁹⁷ proletariat that would usher in a class-less society: a world-wide community where the free development of each was the condition for the free development of all. Attached to this vision limned in the *Communist Manifesto*, cosmopolitan socialists have consequently dismissed place-bound loyalties and communal bonds as barriers to the creation of a world-wide proletariat and the construction of an universal socialist society.

However since the publication of the *Communist Manifesto*, this vision of the geographical development of capitalism and the relationship between the proletariat and territorially-bounded communities has been submitted to remorseless critique – by non-Marxist and Marxist critics alike. Indeed, according to some, 'the insensitivity of Marxism to the diverse qualities of place and the rich meanings that can be derived therefrom...is one of [Marxism's] most serious political liabilities.'⁹⁸ Thus from this perspective it is Marxism's supposed neglect of people's embeddedness in place that

⁹⁵ An interesting analysis of Marx's argument can be found in M. Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (Harmondsworth, 1982), pp. 88-129.

⁹⁶ For exploration of the relationship between capital and place see D. Harvey, *The Limits to Capital* (London and New York, 1999, orig. 1982), pp. 373-412.

⁹⁷ M. Rustin, 'Place and Time in Socialist Theory,' *Radical Philosophy*, 47, 1987, p. 32. Here Rustin offers a critique of Marx's vision of the proletariat.

⁹⁸ See D. Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford, 1996), p. 313. Here Harvey summarizes the view of C. Norberg-Schuklz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (New York, 1980), p. 168.

has prevented it from successfully mobilizing against capital. Along this well-trod path, Mitchell Cohen has remarked that Marxism has been consistently blind to the way that human beings define themselves in relation 'to greater wholes, not a greater whole,'⁹⁹ in relation to place as well as nation, in terms of a local identity as well as a national identity. For him, and others, the effects of this shortcoming have been as obvious in Marxist theory as they have been in Marxist practice. Indeed, it has been argued that place, just like community, becomes more not less important as capitalism's tendency to destroy or transform actually existing places and communities becomes more prevalent – a view manifest in the burgeoning literature on the role of place and community in postmodernity.¹⁰⁰ Marxists have been equally alert to Marxism's supposed place-blindness. David Harvey, for example, has suggested that a post-modern capitalism tends to proliferate and encourage place-bound loyalties rather than destroy them, while other Marxists have argued that it is precisely attachment to place and community that offers the surest foundation of an effective anti-capitalist politics.¹⁰¹

A critique of universalism, and a stress on the value of place and community to socialist politics, was central to Raymond Williams's theoretical and political work. In common with his long-held view that a certain interpretation of Marxism was mechanistic,¹⁰² Williams maintained throughout his life's work that an unduly abstract cosmopolitan vision provided a barrier to the construction of socialist identities. A socialist universalism removed from the actual lived relationships of people in place, Williams maintained, was 'a mode of thought which really has made relations

⁹⁹ M. Cohen, 'Rooted Cosmopolitanism,' in M. Walzer, ed., *Toward a Global Civil Society* (Oxford, 1995), p. 226.

¹⁰⁰ For a review of the literature on place, see A. Dirlik, 'Place-Based Imagination: Globalism and the Politics of Place,' in R. Prazniak and A. Dirlik, eds., *Places and Politics in an Age of Globalization* (Lanham, 2001), pp. 15-51. According to Gyanendra Pandey, "'community" appears to be a more politically charged term today than [politics, media and history].' See G. Pandey, 'Notions of Community: Popular and Subaltern,' *Postcolonial Studies*, 8, 4, 2005, pp. 409-419. Important here has also been the huge amount of work that has been done on communitarianism. For a response to this literature consult Z. Baumann, 'Communitarianism, Freedom, and the Nation-State,' *Critical Review*, 9, 4, 1995, pp. 539-553.

¹⁰¹ See D. Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2000), p. 40. For an example of a Marxist who argues that place – in this case the nation-state – becomes more important as capital becomes more and more global, see E. Meiksins Wood, 'Global Capital, National States,' in *Globalization and Historical Materialism* (London and New York, 2003), pp. 17-39.

¹⁰² This view was equally evident in his non-Marxist as his Marxist period. See Williams, *Culture and Society*, pp. 265-284 and Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, pp. 11-20.

between men into relations between things or relations between concepts.¹⁰³ At home everywhere but nowhere in particular, cosmopolitan socialism, Williams charged, was doomed to failure because it negated 'real' and 'actual' people's lived identities. 'It is ineffective and even trivial,' he argued in *Towards 2000*, 'to come back from a demonstration of the universality of the human species and expect people, from that fact alone, to recognize their lives by treating all their immediate and actual groupings as secondary.'¹⁰⁴ For Williams, humanity's 'species being' was only revealed in significant and actual relationships. Against Marx's suggestion that 'the workers have no country', Williams argued that proletarians did have attachments to locality, region and nation that an international socialism dismissed at its peril.¹⁰⁵ Thus in opposition to the cosmopolitanism limed in the *Communist Manifesto* Williams consistently argued that place and community were key resources in the struggle for socialism.

Drawing on his own experience of growing up in a Black Mountain village in the Welsh border country, Williams argued that among 'the deepest emotions human beings can have are emotions about...place, which in a way has been their community, their society.'¹⁰⁶ As works such as *The Country and the City* and *The People of the Black Mountains* revealed, this was Williams's own experience, a structure of feeling that resounded throughout his investigations of the relationship between culture, power and identity. In an interview conducted shortly before his death, he remarked that he had always 'been enormously conscious of place, and still [got] an extraordinary amount of emotional confirmation from the sense of place and its people,'¹⁰⁷ while in a short essay from about the same time he argued that any 'new theory of socialism must now centrally involve place.'¹⁰⁸ For Williams, loyalty to place had always been crucial to proletarian politics. He believed the General Strike of 1926 and the miners' strike of the mid-nineteen eighties (examples he turned to again and again to explicate this argument) had clearly shown how imperative

¹⁰³ Williams, 'The Importance of Community,' p. 117.

¹⁰⁴ Williams, *Towards 2000*, p. 180.

¹⁰⁵ For an example see Williams, 'Marxism, Poetry, Wales,' pp. 85-86.

¹⁰⁶ R. Williams, 'Communications and Community,' in *Resources of Hope*, p. 22. This essay was based on the text of the William F. Harvey Memorial Lecture, Bedford College, University of London, April 1961. The importance of 'the strength and the warmth of people living together in work and in love; in the physical reality of place' was also accentuated in his cultural analyses. See Williams, *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence*, p. 116.

¹⁰⁷ Williams, 'The Practice of Possibility,' p. 315.

¹⁰⁸ Williams, 'Decentralism and the Politics of Place,' p. 208.

affective social relations embedded in place were to proletarian organization and class struggle. In both cases, he argued, attachment to place had been integral to the formation and strength of working-class consciousness. 'During the General Strike itself, and in the long months after it, when the miners held out,' he later remembered, 'it mattered, in our village, that we had a physical and communal and not an abstract connection.'¹⁰⁹ Thus, for Williams 'the real and powerful feelings of a native place and a native formation'¹¹⁰ were crucial to the socialist struggle against capital, just as they were to a vision of an alternative social order – a community characterized by mutual obligation, solidarity and common betterment that was not just an extension of but a liberation from the capitalist enterprise.

A vision of community as the locus of those values fundamental to both proletarian struggle and a future socialist society permeated Williams's oeuvre.¹¹¹ Community was the key around which his argument against Marxism and Leavism in *Culture and Society* turned, and it was central to the political prescriptions he outlined in *Towards 2000*.¹¹² For Williams, community signified those places where 'lived and worked and placeable identities'¹¹³ were formed, where the values of 'neighbourhood, mutual obligation and common betterment'¹¹⁴ were embodied, and 'where generations not only of economic but of social effort and human care have been invested, and which new generations will inherit.'¹¹⁵ A signpost of real social relationship, community was an embodiment of the already existing reality of working-class collectivism and solidarity and the physical site of those values whose extension constituted the basis for any viable socialist vision.¹¹⁶ Indeed, towards the end of his life, he imagined those communities under threat of extinction from flows of trade and finance – particularly those mining valleys in south Wales, Scotland and northern

¹⁰⁹ Williams, 'The Social Significance of 1926,' p. 109.

¹¹⁰ Williams, *Towards 2000*, p. 181.

¹¹¹ It also permeates his fiction. In particular, the notion of community is crucial to his Welsh trilogy – *Border Country*, *Second Generation* and *The Fight for Manod* – as John and Lizzie Eldridge reveal in their analysis of his fiction in their co-authored work, *Raymond Williams: Making Connections*, pp. 139-161.

¹¹² See Williams, *Culture and Society*, pp. 328-338, in particular, and Williams, *Towards 2000*, pp. 193-199.

¹¹³ Williams, *Towards 2000*, p. 197.

¹¹⁴ Williams, 'Culture is Ordinary,' p. 8.

¹¹⁵ Williams, 'Mining the Meaning: Keywords in the Miners' Strike,' p. 124.

¹¹⁶ Williams, *Culture and Society*, pp. 326-7.

England – as 'point[s] of growth for a reviving socialism.'¹¹⁷ 'In many villages,' Williams argued in *The Country and the City*, here looking back to the past of working-class struggle with clear implications for the present, 'community only became a reality when economic and political rights were fought for and partially gained, in the recognition of unions, in the extension of the franchise, and in the possibility of entry into new representative and democratic institutions.'¹¹⁸ In this sense, already existing or prospective 'lived and formed identities'¹¹⁹ constituted the clay from which socialist agency had and would be fashioned.¹²⁰

In the context of cosmopolitan socialism's repudiation of place-bound loyalties and territorial identities, Raymond Williams's emphasis on locality and community can be seen as a reflection of workers' continued and necessary embeddedness in specific places¹²¹ - in other words, a reflection of the fact that it is the bourgeoisie rather than the proletariat that has lived and experienced cosmopolitanism. Unlike capital which is able to traverse regional, national and continental boundaries, labour has always been rooted in particular places – whether in mining valleys, in industrial cities or on the docks of major ports. Anyone familiar with the history of de-industrialization in the late twentieth century, in places as diverse as Glasgow and Detroit, could not fail to register this fact.¹²² From this perspective, at least, Williams's place-inflected socialism might be seen as recognition of the absolute centrality of place and community to workers' material existence. Thus it might be argued that Williams's focus on place and community constituted an essential correction of Marxism's tendency to treat both place-bound loyalties and territorial identities as the flotsam and jetsam of history bound to be swept away by socialist enlightenment.¹²³ Confounding the predictions of Marxism in its universalist mode, capitalism's logic of accumulation has not obliterated every particularism, especially not territorial particularisms. In fact it could be argued, as Williams did, that love of

¹¹⁷ Williams, 'Mining the Meaning: Keywords in the Miners' Strike,' p. 127.

¹¹⁸ Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 96. For elucidation of the relationship between culture and community in Williams's work, see T. Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture* (London, 1999), pp. 119-122.

¹¹⁹ Williams, *Towards 2000*, p. 196.

¹²⁰ Ibid. See also Williams, 'The Social Significance of 1926,' p. 107 and Williams, 'The Importance of Community,' p. 115.

¹²¹ David Harvey makes this point in relation to Williams's work in *Spaces of Hope*, p. 85.

¹²² See Williams, *Towards 2000*, pp. 95-98 for his views on deindustrialization.

¹²³ The degree to which place effects class consciousness is borne out in John Foster's *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution: Early Industrialism in Three English Towns* (London, 1974).

place has always constituted an important element in the formation of social identities. In this view the local bonds of community should be seen as no less central to socialist struggle than the class interest forged through the shared experience of exploitation. Thus contrary to Marx's prediction, Williams argued that the class bond has not superseded 'the more local bonds of region or nation.'¹²⁴

If the idea of proletarians having no territorial attachment had proved erroneous, as Williams believed, then it became obvious that worker's loyalties to particular communities and places would play a critical role in class struggle. The history of class conflict appears to bear this out. Overwhelmingly, the workers' movement has tended to organize class struggles around particular territorially bounded places – and organized them well. Whether in the mining valleys of Wales, on the docks in London, or in the car factories of Coventry, the development of proletarian consciousness has been indissolubly tied to place.¹²⁵ E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* would appear to reinforce this argument – after all, the majority of his sources for his masterful account of proletarian formation came from the West Riding.¹²⁶ In working-class practice, if not in Marxist theory, place, it might be concluded, has been vital to the perpetuation, sustenance and success of working-class struggle. Indeed it has been argued that working-class politics is particularly ineffective when it has been divorced from the experiential reality of workers' enracinement 'because the promotion of universal considerations drove out sensibility to the particularistics of environment, milieu, collective memory, community, myth, built forms.'¹²⁷ In this view, the militant particularism of Spitalfields weavers rather than the cosmopolitan socialism that was central to Marx's own political practice would constitute the emblematic form of working-class politics.

A number of commentators, however, have argued that there are multiple problems with Williams's emphasis on place and community, particularly with his suggestion that both are integral to class struggle and any vision of a future socialist

¹²⁴ Williams, 'The Practice of Possibility,' p. 316.

¹²⁵ There are, of course, instances of 'nomadic' class consciousness. The early supporters of Marx's First International had such a consciousness, as did the members of International Workers of the World (IWW).

¹²⁶ See E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963). On this point see B.D. Palmer, *E.P. Thompson: Objections and Oppositions* (London, 1993), p. 91.

¹²⁷ Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*, p. 314.

society. Attention, for example, has been drawn to the amorphousness of 'community', the fact that it is a term, much like nation, which can be melded with any political ideology, from liberalism to anarchism, conservatism to socialism.¹²⁸ E.P. Thompson, for example, argued, in a critique of *The Long Revolution*, that 'if others accept his [Williams's] vocabulary and his conceptual framework, without sharing his allegiances, they may come up with very different results.'¹²⁹ Williams himself acknowledged some of the problems associated with his early use of community in *Politics and Letters*, while in *Keywords* he was sensitive to the term's polyvalent nature, how it had rarely, if ever, been understood in a negative sense.¹³⁰ For one early critic of Williams's work, his reliance on concepts such as community was indicative of a Left-Leavisism – a signpost, according to this critic, of an inherent inability to transcend the politics of reformism.¹³¹

Repeatedly, however, Williams's critics highlighted the conservative nature of 'community,' arguing that he had missed its association with a political discourse antithetical to socialism's purpose. As his *New Left Review* interlocutors, including Perry Anderson, in *Politics and Letters* charged, 'the term community has probably been more frequently used about the nation as a unit than any other body of men and women – more so than region or class or any international entity.'¹³² Community they implied was a concept that recalled class collaboration rather than class conflict, nationalism rather than socialism. Extending this reproach other commentators have argued that Williams's understanding of community, with its emphasis on 'lived and formed identities,' was complicit with colonialist and racist discourse.¹³³ Along these

¹²⁸ This point is made in relation to the nation in M. Freeden, 'Is Nationalism a Distinct Ideology?', *Political Studies*, 46, 1998, p. 749. See also M. Löwy, 'Fatherland or Mother Earth? Nationalism or Internationalism from a Socialist Perspective,' *Socialist Register*, 1989, pp. 213-214.

¹²⁹ See E.P. Thompson, 'The Long Revolution, I,' *New Left Review*, I/10, 1961, p. 34.

¹³⁰ See Williams, *Politics and Letters*, pp. 117-118 and Williams, *Keywords*, p. 76.

¹³¹ See T. Eagleton, 'Criticism and Politics: The Work of Raymond Williams,' *New Left Review*, I/95, 1976, pp. 6-7. In relation to this critique also see F. Mulhern, 'English Reading,' in H. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (London, 1989), p. 253. For a critique of Eagleton's analysis of Williams's work, see A. Barnett, 'Raymond Williams and Marxism,' *New Left Review*, I/99, 1976, pp. 47-64. Eagleton has since distanced himself from his earlier critique of Williams.

¹³² Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 117. Williams himself referred his readers of *Keywords* to 'nationalist' when explicating the meaning of 'community'. See Williams, *Keywords*, p. 76. For a general discussion of the relationship between 'community' and nationalism, see J. Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester, Second Edition, 1993), pp. 57-62.

¹³³ This has been the suggestion of a raft of critiques of Williams's work, particularly his last work, *Towards 2000*. See Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, pp. 14-15. Other critics have charged Williams with overlooking the role of the Empire in the English tradition of 'culture and society'. See Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp. 98-99. For somewhat different emphases on this

lines, but from a different perspective, Tom Nairn charged Williams with 'cultural romanticism,' suggesting that his emphasis on locality and community involved a nostalgic reflex fundamentally inconsistent with a commitment to international socialism.¹³⁴ Whether Marxist, socialist humanist or postcolonialist, commentators seem to agree that Williams's conception of community was inconsistent with progressive politics, no matter how they are defined.

These arrows of critique, it can be argued, missed their target in significant ways. Williams repudiated what he called the 'divisive ideologies of "race" and "nation",'¹³⁵ arguing that both were inimical to a socialist conception of identity. In a similar way, he consistently contrasted what he called 'real' or 'actual' communities with what he considered the 'abstract' nation state.¹³⁶ Despite the significant problems with this ontological distinction, Williams nonetheless repeatedly defined community in opposition to nation, while at the same time recognizing that community could be assimilated to what he sometimes considered an illegitimate (and anti-socialist) national interest.¹³⁷ Williams understood that local identities had been melded with the imagined community of the nation but he nonetheless maintained that this did not mean they constituted a debased currency inimical to socialist discourse.¹³⁸ No reader of *The Country and the City*, moreover, could confuse Williams's conception of community with that nostalgia common to parochial 'communitarianism,'¹³⁹ whether

general theme of the relationship between Williams and colonialism, see G. Viswanathan, 'Raymond Williams and British Colonialism: The Limits of Metropolitan Cultural Theory' and F. Pyle, 'Raymond Williams and the Inhuman Limits of Culture' both in Dworkin and Roman, eds., *Views Beyond the Border Country*, pp. 217-230 and 260-274. There are defenses of Williams in relation to this topic in N. Lazarus, *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 64-67, Sprinker, 'The Commitment to Socialism,' pp. 559-566, and Williams, 'Introduction: the Return of the Native,' pp. xxxvi-xxxix.

¹³⁴ For this critique of Williams's work, see T. Nairn, 'The Left Against Europe,' *New Left Review*, I/71, 1972, pp. 106-114.

¹³⁵ Williams, *Towards 2000*, p. 196.

¹³⁶ For the consistency of this argument in Williams's work over a long time frame, see both *The Long Revolution*, p. 103 and *Towards 2000*, pp. 181-2.

¹³⁷ As early as *Culture and Society* Williams had alerted his readers to the fact that even socialist conceptions of community have tended to 'limit the sense of community to national (and, in the context, imperialist) lines.' See Williams, *Culture and Society*, p. 326. See also *ibid.*, p. 330 where he suggests that a typical critique of the working-class ethic of solidarity is that it is inimical to the 'national interest'. For a later elucidation of this point see Williams, 'The Forward March of Labour Halted,' in *Resources of Hope*, p. 254.

¹³⁸ For an argument that echoes Williams's suggestions that the conflation of local community with the nation-state is illegitimate, see J. Ree, 'Internationality,' *Radical Philosophy*, 60, 1992, pp. 10-11.

¹³⁹ In a British context 'communitarianism' has had a socialist inflection. But, in terms of political theory, it is now associated with a typically conservative agenda. The term is contested. It is used here in its conservative sense.

nationalist, fascist or racist. In that book he launched a blistering attack on what he called 'retrospective radicalism,' suggesting that its 'critique of capitalism enfolds social values which, if they become active, at once spring to the defence of certain kinds of order, certain social hierarchies and moral stabilities.'¹⁴⁰ For Williams this sort of radicalism was akin to blood and soil fascism and had nothing to do with socialism.¹⁴¹ His notion of community was of a different order. Hence to the degree that commentators have assimilated Williams's conception of community to those notions of the concept common to either nationalist or racist discourse, they have misunderstood his intent: that community was consistent with socialist institutions, participatory democracy, and giving people the means and powers to govern their own lives.¹⁴²

Significant tensions nonetheless did plague Williams's conception of community. Surveying the disintegrating effects of what he called a 'paranational'¹⁴³ form of capitalism on 'real' communities, Williams quite often seemed to argue for the necessity of a communitarian politics that simply negated capitalist globalization. Insufficiently aware that even socialist communities could be dominated and destroyed by a universal capitalism if they failed to create solidarity on a cosmopolitan basis, Williams often was in danger of eliding his socialism with a form of particularism inimical to cosmopolitanism. In this mode, he damned rather than sought to move beyond capitalist globalization. This 'communal' register was elucidated in his account of the miner's strike in the nineteen eighties and to some extent in the socialist prescriptions outlined in *Towards 2000*. In both of these works the 'alien order of paper and money' was condemned in what an earlier Marxist discourse would have called 'undialectical' terms.¹⁴⁴ Whereas for Marx capitalism perpetrated great outrages of exploitation and alienation *and* prepared the ground for a world-wide socialist community, for Williams quite often it only meant disruption.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 37.

¹⁴¹ As he suggested in a rebuke to precisely those forms of nostalgia-based politics: 'Any account of our culture which explicitly or implicitly denies the value of an industrial society is really irrelevant; not in a million years would you make us give up this power.' Williams, 'Culture is Ordinary,' p. 10.

¹⁴² See Williams, *Culture and Society*, p. 327, Williams, 'The Idea of a Common Culture,' p. 37, and 'You're a Marxist Aren't You?,' p. 75. On Williams's conception of community see Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture*, p. 122.

¹⁴³ He meant a 'transnational' or 'cosmopolitan' capitalism.

¹⁴⁴ 'Mining the Meaning: Key Words in the Miners' Strike,' p. 124.

¹⁴⁵ See in particular Williams, *Towards 2000*, p. 186-7.

In this sense, rather than opposing and transcending globalization, Williams, contrary to the tenor of the *Communist Manifesto*, saw capitalism as only a destructive thing and socialism in terms of simple negation.¹⁴⁶ In addition, although Williams was aware of the politically regressive nature of 'actual and sustained social relationships,' that they could form the basis of a people's more thorough exploitation,¹⁴⁷ he did not sufficiently underline the fact that without a cosmopolitan perspective community politics could easily become a parochial politics antithetical to socialism – indeed not just antithetical to its purpose but a barrier to its creation.¹⁴⁸ Thus he too often overlooked the fact that ties of kinship common to community could sustain *and* undermine class consciousness, that a physical and communal connection could both enable *and* disable working-class politics, and that an attachment to place could constitute the locus for the struggle against exploitation *and* result in a class alliance that exploited other places.¹⁴⁹

In a similar vein, it could also be argued that a significant aporia attended Williams's understanding of the nexus between capitalism, place and identity. On the one hand he called attention to the importance of place and community in the making of identity; and on the other hand he argued that 'nomad capitalism' generated what he called 'mobile-privatised social relations.'¹⁵⁰ Surely there is a contradiction here. Alive to the identity-effects of a mode of production that had broken free of territorial emplacement, alert to the way that a parnational capitalism destroyed ties of place and community, he nonetheless accentuated the importance of settlement and rooted identities to socialist politics – that is, precisely those forms of settlement and identity which the cash nexus was in the process of undermining and destroying. Even if our reality is constituted by both forms of identity – both rooted and rootless – this

¹⁴⁶ For the problems with this manoeuvre, see M. Löwy, 'The Romantic and the Marxist Critique of Modern Civilization,' *Theory and Society*, 16, 1987, pp. 891-2. For the argument that Marx and Marxists have overplayed the progressive nature of capitalism, see I. Wallerstein, 'Marx and History,' in I. Wallerstein and E. Balibar, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London, 1991, orig. 1988), pp. 125-134.

¹⁴⁷ Williams, 'The Importance of Community,' p. 114.

¹⁴⁸ For a critique of communitarianism, see I. Young, 'The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference,' in L. Nicholson, ed., *Feminism/Postmodernism* (New York, 1990). For the suggestion that socialism must in some way be communitarian, see D. Miller, 'In What Sense Must Socialism Be Communitarian?,' *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 6, 1988/9.

¹⁴⁹ On this point see F. Mulhern, 'Toward 2000, Or News From You-Know-Where,' in Eagleton, ed., *Raymond Williams: Critical Perspectives*, p. 85.

¹⁵⁰ Williams, *Towards 2000*, p. 189. This was a theme of his second novel *Second Generation* (London, 1964).

situation has rebounded to capital's benefit. While it has reaped the political and economic rewards of social atomism and alienation, evident now in sprawling cityscapes from Sao Paulo to Cairo, Beijing to Niger, it has concomitantly seen history, heritage and settlement as no barrier to its hegemony – indeed it has precisely turned these to its advantage, making out of heritage and history a global tourist industry which profits from difference and otherness, where as Williams suggested whole regions and their past can be reduced to 'a resort and a festival.'¹⁵¹ Difference, place-bound loyalties, community – none have proved resistant to capital's commodifying logic.

Against an emphasis on the role of place and community in socialist struggle and politics, cosmopolitan socialists have argued that because all places and communities are part of a world-wide economic system, socialism must itself mimic the global reach of capitalism. As David Harvey has suggested, that 'meant building a movement that reaches out across space and time in such a way as to confront the universal and transnational qualities of capital accumulation.'¹⁵² In one mind at least Williams understood this need. His conclusion to his contribution to the debate (begun by Hobsbawm) on 'The Forward March of Labour Halted' bears this out: 'However it may be done, in the complexities of politics, necessarily on a much wider than British scale, the concept of a practical and possible general interest, which really does include all reasonable particular interests, has to be negotiated, found, agreed, constructed.'¹⁵³ This general interest, he argued, was socialism. Thus, in this register, socialism had to be defined and constructed at levels of abstraction that transcended place and local identity – 'human brotherhood' or 'the general interest' were among Williams's chosen formulations. For him this did not mean overriding local identities or dispensing with love of place. Rather socialism's aim, Williams argued, should be to devise a 'notion of politics as relationship between men,' which 'would mean superseding, going beyond, [community] politics rather than merely in turn negating it.'¹⁵⁴ As he put it in *Towards 2000*: 'To extend it [community] and generalize it, in sufficiently practical ways, involves the making of relationships which are in

¹⁵¹ See Williams, 'Welsh Culture,' pp. 7. For a more general elucidation of the commodification of difference, see Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference*, p. 298.

¹⁵² Harvey, *Spaces of Capital*, p. 49.

¹⁵³ Williams, 'The Forward March of Labour Halted?,' p. 254.

¹⁵⁴ Williams, 'The Importance of Community,' p. 118.

significant continuity – and not in contradiction – with the more limited relationships through which people do and must live.¹⁵⁵

Thus even in his more universalist moments, Williams maintained that local identity, community and love of place were all-important to socialism. Local particularism might at times be redolent of reaction, the ties of community might be amenable to counter-revolutionary politics, and love of place might now be more at home within nationalist ideology than socialist ideology - Hobsbawm had certainly maintained as much in his cosmopolitan persona. Williams argued that this didn't need to be the case, and indeed hadn't always been the case in socialism's history. According to him, it was absolutely crucial that socialism expropriate feeling and emotion associated with particularism, community and place for its own purposes – against both anti-capitalist conservatism (à la *Scrutiny* and other forms of retrospective radicalism) and a neo-liberalism that, he believed, had outrageously attached its politics of free enterprise to feeling for place and community.¹⁵⁶ 'The task of a successful socialist movement,' he argued, 'will be one of feeling and imagination quite as much as one of fact and organization.'¹⁵⁷ A future socialist hegemony, Williams implied, could not exist on the precepts of reason alone.¹⁵⁸ Thompson would have agreed. Seconding William Morris, Thompson believed that desire had to be harnessed to socialist ends. Likewise for Williams it was not just a matter of appropriating feeling and imagination for socialism; it was a matter of making feeling and imagination the basis of a 'world-wide socialist community'. Against abstract cosmopolitanism, and forms of Left rationalism, Williams sought to bind attachment to community, love of place, and conceptions of history and heritage to an international socialist project. In doing so he revealed the tensions involved in any such objective. As Terry Eagleton has explained: if the political Left 'seeks to evolve its own discourse of place, body, inheritance, sensuous need, it will find itself miming the cultural forms of its opponents; if it does not do so it will appear bereft of a body, marooned with a purely rationalist politics that has cut loose from the intimate

¹⁵⁵ Williams, *Towards 2000*, p. 180.

¹⁵⁶ For an argument along these lines – particularly in relation to the nation – see J. Schwarzmantel, *Socialism and the Idea of the Nation* (Hempstead, 1991), p. 1.

¹⁵⁷ Williams, 'You're A Marxist Aren't You?', p. 76.

¹⁵⁸ See Williams, *Towards 2000*, pp. 191-192. This point is also made in T. Eagleton, *Heathcliffe and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (London and New York, 1995), p. 36.

affective depths of the poetic.¹⁵⁹ This impasse was illuminated throughout Williams's work. The tension, as Williams showed, has been constitutive of socialism's history.

Toward the end of his life, in response to a question about the relationship between place and socialism, Williams remarked: 'I'm on both sides of the argument, yes; I recognize the universal forms which spring from this fundamental exploitation – the system, for all its local variety is everywhere recognizable. But the practice of fighting against it has always been entered into, or sometimes deflected, by these other kinds of more particular bonds.'¹⁶⁰ Thus on the one hand Williams recognized that capitalist modernity submitted everyone everywhere to the imperatives of profit and commodification; and on the other hand, he argued that place-bound loyalties and communal bonds constituted key resources in the struggle against these universal forms. Williams never transcended the tensions between these two registers of his thought. Williams maintained that either a socialism contained by place or a socialism seduced by abstract universalism were equally one-sided, both fated to misrepresent socialism's own interests. How might socialists reconcile people's almost universal attachment to place with a universal ideology that transcended place? One of Williams's many contributions to socialist thought was his illumination of the nature of the tensions involved in any answer to this question – tensions between immediate experience and abstract knowledge, between workers embeddedness in place and socialism as the representation of a general interest. These were dilemmas that Williams consistently confronted. No less confounding, according to many socialists, has been the persistence of nation-states and national feeling. The next section of this chapter will explore Williams's confrontation with this aspect of the national question.

¹⁵⁹ T. Eagleton, 'Nationalism: Irony and Commitment,' in T. Eagleton et al., *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature* (Minn., 1990), p. 34.

¹⁶⁰ Williams, 'The Practice of Possibility,' p. 316.

Contrary to Marx's predictions, nationhood and nationalism have outlasted modernity. Indeed it has been argued that postmodernity has created conditions where nations have diversified not died, nationalisms strengthened not withered.¹⁶¹ How had nationhood and nationalism survived globalization, contradicting the analysis of the *Communist Manifesto* and obliterating the hopes of cosmopolitan socialists everywhere? For the most part, Marxist socialists have offered two rationales for this turn of events.¹⁶² On the one hand they have argued that nationalism is evidence of insidious false consciousness; on the other, they have suggested that nationalism is a reflection of real material interests grounded in modern political economy – some, indeed, going so far as to suggest that national diversity and nationalism are akin to nature. In the former view, working-class national identity is a product of bourgeois hegemony, an illusion instilled in the proletariat to ward off recognition of their real interests. In the latter view, working class national identity is considered a natural response to a world market structured by nation-states. These different views have given rise to two different interpretations of nationhood.¹⁶³ Those Marxists who see nationalism as evidence of false consciousness typically argue that nationhood has been effectively undermined by capitalist globalization, while those Marxists who see nationalism as a natural response to a world of nations typically argue that nationhood is inherent in capitalist globalization.¹⁶⁴ And Raymond Williams – how did he conceptualise the persistence of nations and

¹⁶¹ This is the view of the sociologist Michael Mann in his 'Nation-States in Europe and Other Continents: Diversifying and Developing, not Dying,' in G. Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation* (London, 1996), pp. 295-316.

¹⁶² Rationales outlined in M. van der Linden, 'The National Integration of European Working Classes (1871-1914): Exploring the Causal Configuration,' *International Review of Social History*, 33, 1998, pp. 285-311.

¹⁶³ See C. Bartolovich, 'Global Capital and Transnationalism,' in H. Schwarz and S. Ray, eds., *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (Malden, 2000), pp. 127-134.

¹⁶⁴ For the argument that globalization has undermined the nation-state, see F. Jameson, 'Cognitive Mapping,' in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana and Chicago, 1988), pp. 349-350. For the argument that nation-states are still crucial to the world economy, see F. Fox Piven, 'Is it Global Economics or Neo-Laissez-Faire?,' *New Left Review*, 1/213, 1995, pp. 107-114 and C. Harman, 'Globalization: A Critique of the New Orthodoxy,' *International Socialism*, 73, 1996, pp. 3-33. A review of the debate can be found in G. Liodakis, 'The New Stage of Capitalist Development and the Prospects of Globalization,' *Science and Society*, 69, 3, 2005, pp. 347-350.

nationalisms in a world characterised by capitalist globalization? This section of the chapter will explore Williams's response to this reality – our reality.

Given his interest in the national question from the nineteen seventies onwards, it is remarkable that Williams's early work does not deal with nations and nationalisms in any systematic way at all. For example, *Culture and Society*, perhaps his best known and most well-regarded work, effectively overlooks the centrality of nationhood and nationalism to capitalist modernity.¹⁶⁵ This absence is surprising, and not just from the perspective of his later concern with the national question. It is disconcerting, above all, because *Culture and Society* is involved – as, indeed, was *The Long Revolution* – with a period concomitant with the rise of nationalism and with issues – culture, education and literature – absolutely fundamental to nationalism's hegemony.¹⁶⁶ Williams later lamented this absence, suggesting that his oversight was a product of his self-imposed alienation from his Welsh origins.¹⁶⁷ By the late nineteen sixties Williams's exile from Wales was terminated, allowing a full-bodied encounter with the national question. What set of circumstances facilitated this? In short, it was a product of the revival of Welsh nationalism – and the searching political, historical and social analysis of this revival in the work of a number of Welsh historians – and Williams's discontent with actually existing socialisms. Thus Williams's negotiation of the national question was determined by a context characterised by what Tom Nairn termed 'the break-up of Britain' and what Eric Hobsbawm figured as the 'crisis of socialism'.¹⁶⁸ It was in this context – the rise of peripheral nationalisms in the British Isles and their effect on the socialist movement – that Williams undertook an examination of the nexus between nationalism and capitalist modernity.

¹⁶⁵ A point made in Eldridge and Eldridge, *Raymond Williams: Making Connections*, pp. 69-70. Williams's *New Left Review* interlocutors in *Politics and Letters*, p. 117, also make this point.

¹⁶⁶ An explanation of Williams's oversight is offered in Viswanathan, 'Raymond Williams and British Colonialism,' in *Views Beyond the Border Country*, pp. 218-219. A contextual explanation for why nationalism was overlooked in the period when Williams was writing *Culture and Society* can be found in E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1750: Myth, Reality, Programme* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 3-4.

¹⁶⁷ For the lament and the rationale, see Williams, *Politics and Letters*, pp. 117-118.

¹⁶⁸ See T. Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London, 1977) and E. Hobsbawm, 'The Forward March of Labour Halted?,' *Marxism Today*, 12, 9, 1978, pp. 279-286.

Like many Marxists before him, Raymond Williams, in one register at least, argued that nationalism was evidence of pernicious false consciousness. In this way Williams suggested that nationalism could be understood as an illusion that hid 'the real differences, the real conflicts'¹⁶⁹ of society, national identity conceptualised as a false identity 'overriding all those modern economic and political relations which are in fact inevitable and determining.'¹⁷⁰ In this register, Williams would have agreed with both Hobsbawm and Thompson that the real relations of society were determined by the mode of production not by ethnicity, language or culture. Hence when the proletariat put nation before class, relations of ethnos before relations of production, they were betraying their real interests. In this view the world-system of capitalist production was not constituted by horizontal attachments of nation but by vertical attachments of class.¹⁷¹ It is from this perspective that we might understand Williams repeated rejection of a mythical Welshness. He suggested that 'singular and romantic national traditions' obfuscated 'actual people' and their actual social relations - what he called 'the inherent inequalities of class society'.¹⁷² In this register, Williams would have agreed with Marx and Engels that 'narrow national-mindedness is everywhere repellent'¹⁷³ - whether in Britain or Wales, the United States or Vietnam.

Nationalism, according to Williams, could be understood as a form of false consciousness precisely because in an age of capitalist globalization independent nationhood was a fiction. This, as we have seen, was the view of Hobsbawm, who had been particularly alert to the fact that the powers of the nation-state had been greatly diminished by transnational economic factors. Like Hobsbawm, then, Williams argued that nation-states were no longer able 'to maintain political and economic autonomies and sovereignties of a traditional kind.'¹⁷⁴ 'The average nation-

¹⁶⁹ Williams, 'Welsh Culture,' in Williams, *Who Speaks for Wales?*, p. 10. This essay was originally published in *Culture and Politics: Plaid Cymru's Challenge to Wales* (Cardiff, 1975), pp. 6-10 and was based on a talk on BBC Radio 3, 27 September 1975. Reference to the essay here will be taken from the version which appeared in *Who Speaks for Wales?*

¹⁷⁰ Williams, 'Wales and England,' p. 23.

¹⁷¹ R.N. Berki, 'On Marxian Thought and the Problem of International Relations,' *World Politics*, 24, 1, 1971, p. 81.

¹⁷² Williams, 'The Shadow of the Dragon,' p. 68 and Williams, 'Mining the Meaning: Key Words in the Miners' Strike,' p. 125. For an earlier example of this argument in Williams's work, see Williams, *The Long Revolution*, p. 104.

¹⁷³ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology* (fn. 5), p. 99, cited in Berki, 'On Marxian Thought and the Problem of International Relations,' p. 95.

¹⁷⁴ Williams, 'Wales and England,' p. 24. For a rejection of this argument see M. Löwy, 'Why Nationalism?,' *Socialist Register 1993* (London, 1993), p. 129.

state,' Williams bluntly suggested, 'simply cannot be independent.'¹⁷⁵ It was in this context that he spoke of Britain as constituting an 'artificial unity'. Thus in accord with a 'modernist' interpretation of the national question, Williams argued that the nation was a product of history not of an eternal essence as some nationalists have maintained. As a product of history, nations had been constructed and as such could be deconstructed. Capitalist globalization, according to Williams, was precisely in the process of deconstructing the traditional powers of the nation-state. In this register, then, Williams maintained that nationhood was an abstraction that hid real social relations of exploitation, that nationalism was an ideology which overrode and hid real and increasing divisions within and across nations.¹⁷⁶ Hence given the reality of capitalist globalization the persistence of nationalism was pernicious to the development of socialism. Why then did nations persist? Essentially, Williams argued, nations survived modernity, and indeed thrived on into postmodernity, because they were functional to bourgeois power.¹⁷⁷

Indeed at times Williams argued not just that nationhood was a 'political artefact' but that nations such as 'Britain' and 'England' were 'not real places.'¹⁷⁸ In *The Long Revolution* and again in *Towards 2000* Williams argued that nations overrode real bonds of locality and consequently could be understood as 'particular interpretations which include definitions of duty, function and character'¹⁷⁹ or as 'ways of ratifying or overriding unequal social and economic development, and of containing the protests and resentments of neglected and marginalized regions and minorities within an imposed general "patriotism".¹⁸⁰ For Williams, nation-states like Britain or nations like England were abstractions, Britishness or Englishness forms of identity that were not natural but learned.¹⁸¹ In his view the abstract relations of nationalism contradicted and overrode people's more immediate, more naturally-occurring, local interests.

¹⁷⁵ Williams, 'Decentralism and the Politics of Place,' p. 204.

¹⁷⁶ A position nicely summarized in Williams, 'The Forward March of Labour Halted,' p. 255, where he suggests that the 'national interest' is 'a false general interest: a label stuck over a radically unequal society, or over a necessarily privileged and exploiting system.'

¹⁷⁷ See the explanation in *Towards 2000*, pp. 190-191. For a later Marxist explanation along similar lines, see D. Laibman, 'Theory and Necessity: The Stadial Foundations of the Present,' in *Science and Society*, 69, 2005, pp. 300-303.

¹⁷⁸ Williams, *The Long Revolution*, p. 103.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Williams, *Towards 2000*, p. 192.

¹⁸¹ See Williams, 'The Social Significance of 1926,' p. 107.

The argument that nationalism constitutes pernicious false consciousness, although much contested, has force.¹⁸² When conservatives or, indeed, social democrats, marshal the 'national interest' against striking workers, as happened in Britain throughout the nineteen seventies and nineteen eighties, or when a frenetic patriotism is whipped up in support of wars, as happened during the Falklands campaign in Britain and, more recently, in America during the latest Gulf conflict, it is hard not to conclude with Williams that nationalism is a ruling class ruse designed to deflect attention away from social conflict.¹⁸³ In this view, according to Williams, socialists or social democrats who recommended that socialism be reconciled with patriotism (like Hobsbawm and Hall did in the early nineteen eighties) were simply revealing their own political and cultural subordination.¹⁸⁴ In addition, there are perhaps good reasons to suppose that capitalist globalization has fundamentally altered the nature and strength of nation-states as Williams argued. A raft of analyses have concluded that a transnational mode of production has undermined the traditional economic, political, social and military functions of the nation state, making the dreams of socialist nationalists, like those common in Britain in the early nineteen eighties, quixotic.¹⁸⁵ In this view, social democracy in one country, just like socialism in one country, has proved an inadequate solution to a world dominated by global commodity production. Social democracy in one nation, it might be suggested, leads not to socialism but to Blair.

But did this mean that nation states were not *real* places? Arguably not – the nationalization of almost everyone everywhere through national economies, national

¹⁸² The idea that nationalism can be considered an instance of false consciousness is submitted to extensive critique in B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991, org. 1983).

¹⁸³ Even liberals in America are now making this argument! See A. Lieven, *America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism* (London, 2004), pp. 19-40. For a similar argument in relation to the Falklands conflict, see D. Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford, 2005), p. 79.

¹⁸⁴ For Hobsbawm's argument along these lines, see E. Hobsbawm, 'Falklands Fallout,' in his *Politics for a Rational Left* (London, 1989), pp. 58-60; for Hall's, see his *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (London, 1988) and 'The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism among the Theorists,' in Nelson and Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, pp. 64-67. For the roots of this way of thinking among British socialists, see P. Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack: Englishness, Patriotism and the British Left, 1881-1924* (Woodbridge, 1998). For a later period, see M. Taylor, 'Patriotism, History and the Left in Twentieth-Century Britain,' *Historical Journal*, 33, 4, 1990, pp. 971-987.

¹⁸⁵ For an overview of the argument see W. Robinson, 'Globalization: Nine Theses on Our Epoch,' *Science and Society*, 38, 2, 1996, pp. 13-31.

systems of education, national labour markets and, of course, national armies, militate against such an argument.¹⁸⁶ If the distinction between 'natural communities' and the 'artificial' nation state that Williams drew in *The Long Revolution* and *Towards 2000* could be shown to be invalid – communities, as Williams himself at other times suggested, were no less artificial than nations¹⁸⁷ – then his suggestion that nation states were 'unreal' was equally erroneous. Hobsbawm himself provided an argument to the contrary. Not only do most of us still inhabit nation states most of the time, it can be argued that the nation state still reflects, if residually, real material interests. According to this argument the nation is not just an 'imagined community' or a bourgeois ruse but has material referents in the warfare state, the welfare state and even in the national economy.¹⁸⁸ Workers are bound to their nation through employment and unemployment, through regulated labour markets, through a range of social services, and even through labour parties and trade unions.¹⁸⁹ From birth to death, the nation state is a vital reality for most working classes.¹⁹⁰ Indeed it was precisely in nation states, as Gopal Balakrishnan points out, that 'the stakes of this [the twentieth] century's great class struggles were defined.'¹⁹¹ Thus, it can be argued, false consciousness on its own is not a sufficient argument to explain the strength and persistence of nationalism – indeed this was something that Williams implied when he contended that the proletariat did have a country, no matter what Marx and other Marxists might have suggested.¹⁹²

In keeping with the view that nationalism was an instance of false consciousness, Williams argued that the principal barrier to the emergence of a genuine international socialism was patriotism. 'Too many socialists,' Williams argued, 'have competed and still compete with their political rivals for possession of a

¹⁸⁶ From a Marxist perspective, see N. Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism* (London, 1978), p. 109. For an alternative understanding of the nation, which questions its 'reality', and conceptualizes it as a 'contingent event,' see R. Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 13-22.

¹⁸⁷ Williams, 'The Importance of Community,' p. 115 and Williams, *Towards 2000*, p. 196.

¹⁸⁸ A point made in C. Calhoun, 'Nationalism and Ethnicity,' *Annual Review of Sociology*, 19, 1993, p. 217.

¹⁸⁹ See A. Przeworski, 'Material Interest, Class Compromise and the Transition to Socialism,' *Politics and Society*, 10, 1980, pp. 133-137 and R. Brenner, 'The Economics of Global Turbulence: A Special Report on the World Economy, 1950-98,' *New Left Review*, 1/229, 1998, p. 21 for the argument that workers are tied to nationhood through 'national prosperity'.

¹⁹⁰ See I. Wallerstein, 'Postscript,' in E. Balibar and I. Wallerstein, *Nation, Race, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London, 1991), pp. 230-231.

¹⁹¹ G. Balakrishnan, 'The National Imagination,' in Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation*, p. 212.

¹⁹² For an example, see Williams, 'Marxism, Poetry, Wales,' p. 86.

patriotism drawn in residual imperialist and capitalist terms.¹⁹³ This was a view at odds with that of Eric Hobsbawm and Stuart Hall who argued for a reconciliation between socialism and patriotism in the context of the hegemony of the New Right.¹⁹⁴ However Williams's statement begs a question: were there other types of patriotism – anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist – potentially reconcilable with socialism? According to Williams there were. In this mind, Williams argued that there were two types of nationalism – a reactionary nationalism that reinforced unitary nation states like Britain and Spain; and a progressive nationalism that questioned the very basis of such states.¹⁹⁵ The latter type of nationalism was deserving of socialist's support, the former of their derision. In this view, then, there were good and bad nationalisms, even good and bad nations. The contrast that Williams most often drew was between Britain and Wales – British nationalism was reactionary, Welsh nationalism was progressive.¹⁹⁶ British nationalism, according to Williams, was an instance of false consciousness, but Welsh nationalism was not, or at least not always. Thus when the Welsh nation was mobilised against a unitary British state it was considered an authentic expression of real people's interests, yet when the British nation was mobilised against peripheral nationalisms or in service of wars of aggression it represented a ruling-class ruse, an instance of the bourgeois strategy of divide and rule. Why? Effectively, Williams believed that one sort of nationalism could be marshalled against capitalism, while the other was a barrier to socialist advance. In this register, Williams was an instrumental nationalist – that is, he was a nationalist to the degree that his favoured nation (in this case Wales) could be figured as crucial to the international socialist movement.

¹⁹³ R. Williams, 'Hesitations before Socialism,' in Williams, *Resources of Hope*, pp. 293.

¹⁹⁴ This was the opinion of Anthony Barnett in his 'After Nationalism,' in R. Samuel, ed., *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity: History and Politics, Vol. I* (London, 1989), pp. 140-155.

¹⁹⁵ Williams, 'Decentralism and the Politics of Place,' p. 204. The distinction is similar to that identified by J.J. Schwarzmantel between 'a nationalism of the left' and 'a nationalism of the right'. For this distinction see J.J. Schwarzmantel, 'Class and Nation: problems of Socialist Nationalism,' *Political Studies*, XXXV, 1987, pp. 242-248. But for a significant critique of this idea of different nationalisms see J. Cocks, 'From Politics to Paralysis: Critical Intellectuals Answer the National Question,' *Political Theory*, 24, 3, 1996, pp. 518-537.

¹⁹⁶ Williams, 'Marxism, Poetry, Wales,' p. 86.

Williams was not then an integral nationalist in the sense that *the* nation represented the ultimate measure of his politics.¹⁹⁷ His nationalism was instrumentalist in the sense that a particular nation could be supported to the degree to which it was perceived as having an important role to play in socialist strategy. As Williams suggested, 'through its radical emphasis on identity and community, and in its turn to popular campaigning, to demonstrations and to direct action, the new Welsh movement – at least an important section of it – has come through as part of the new socialism and the new thinking about culture which in many parts of the world has been called the New Left.'¹⁹⁸ Thus, like a host of Marxists, including as we have seen Hobsbawm and Thompson, Williams believed that the goals of certain nationalisms were commensurate with the objectives of international socialism, with the idea, that is, 'that people should determine, since it is the crucial thing for them, the conditions of their own social being.'¹⁹⁹ For Williams, Welsh nationalism was indicative of a more general anti-capitalist sentiment and as such its cause was 'better than national and more than international, for in its varying forms it is a very general human and social movement.'²⁰⁰ In this sense, Welsh nationalism represented a transnational mood which had been particularized in Wales.²⁰¹ Williams had, of course, been initially suspicious of the Welsh nationalist movement, particularly that section of it which relied on a mythical sense of Wales's history or an ethnic conception of Welsh commonality, and continued to be so throughout his writings on Wales. 'But,' he argued, 'when people started saying there are specific experiences of democratic communities, specific moral concerns within the religious tradition, specific attachments through language and the literature to values which are under pressure nearer the centre; and that out of this there are the materials of an alternative direction...when these feelings came together to identify themselves with Wales, I began to feel I could relate, and not just to my own area but to an entity one was then

¹⁹⁷ For this integral nationalism, see R.G. Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford, 1997), p. 13 and A. Vincent, 'Power and Vacuity: Nationalist Ideology in the Twentieth Century,' in M. Freeden, ed., *Reassessing Political ideologies: The Durability of Dissent* (London and New York, 2001), pp. 142-144.

¹⁹⁸ Williams, 'Who Speaks for Wales?,' p. 4.

¹⁹⁹ Williams, 'Marxism, Poetry, Wales,' p. 86. For Marx and Engels's own support for nationalist movements, see E. Benner, *Really Existing Nationalism: A Post-Comunist View from Marx and Engels* (Oxford, 1995), chapter 2. For a more general consideration of Marxism's support for certain types of nationalism, consider M. Lowy, 'Fatherland or Mother Earth? Nationalism and Internationalism from a Socialist Perspective,' pp. 219-224.

²⁰⁰ Williams, 'Who Speaks for Wales?,' p. 4.

²⁰¹ See Williams, 'The Importance of Community,' p. 118.

calling Wales...'.²⁰² In this socialist nationalist register Williams maintained that the workers did have a country, that nationalism was not always indicative of false consciousness, and, at times, that his favoured nation (Wales) was critical to socialist advance.

However there was an important addition to Williams's argument, often-times overlooked by those socialists, like Hobsbawm, who have been critical of Marxist support for small-state nationalisms. Nationalism, Williams believed, could not simply be ignored or negated as cosmopolitan socialists often recommended it should be.²⁰³ It had to be gone through, Williams believed, so you could come out the other side with a transformed conception of the general interest.²⁰⁴ As he put it in 'Remaking Welsh History': 'It is then from recognizing the plurality, instead of insisting on the authority of any chosen (but then competitive) singularity, that we can learn to be open to each other and to make the effort to move through to effective common ground.'²⁰⁵ But there is an inherent danger in this manoeuvre – a danger that Hobsbawm had illuminated in his critique of Nairn's *The Break-Up of Britain*. By arguing that socialists need to go through nationalism so as to be able to come out the other side with a new conception of the general interest, Williams risked reinforcing the less palatable aspects of nationalism – those kinds of identity which he was at pain to repudiate. In other words, he risked sustaining the very thing (nationalism) he wished to transcend. As Terry Eagleton has suggested, nationalist struggle of this kind 'will thus necessarily be caught up in the very metaphysical categories it hopes finally to abolish; and any such movement will demand a difficult, perhaps ultimately impossible double optic, at once fighting on a terrain already mapped out by its antagonists and seeking even now to prefigure within that mundane strategy styles of being and identity for which we have as yet no proper names.'²⁰⁶ The dragon slayer (socialism), in short, was in constant danger, as Hobsbawm in one mind had argued, of being obliterated by the dragon (nationalism).

²⁰² Williams, 'Marxism, Poetry, Wales,' p. 88.

²⁰³ Williams, 'The Importance of Community,' p. 117-118 and Williams, *Towards 2000*, pp. 174 and 193.

²⁰⁴ I take this insight from Eagleton, 'Nationalism: Irony and Commitment,' pp. 23-24.

²⁰⁵ Williams, 'Remaking Welsh History,' p. 72.

²⁰⁶ Eagleton, 'Nationalism: Irony and Commitment,' p. 24.

Indeed Williams often found himself in this unfortunate position of succumbing to the nationalist beast, reaffirming the 'metaphysical categories' of nationalism that he at other places sought to undermine. In the late nineteen seventies he suggested that 'socialism has lost much of its meaning, within the various political adaptations and suppressions that have gone on, that it is the problem of finding some positive content that people could identify with, and I think that this is only likely to happen if you've got something more than a critique of capitalism.'²⁰⁷ Where could evidence of this new affirmative politics be found? 'I think,' Williams suggested, 'that what you have very strongly in Wales because there's the great continuity of the language and the awareness of the difference in the past, is just this sense, which I think is very important at this stage in the twentieth century, that it is possible to *be* a different people.'²⁰⁸ At moments like this, for example when he argued for the reality of a Welsh culture based on the continuity of the language or when he suggested that the Welsh had been submitted to a systematic history of subordination and oppression stretching back to Roman times, Williams affirmed a pre-political Welsh identity that could have little to do with the sort of general interest represented by socialism.²⁰⁹ In this register, he would have agreed with A.D. Smith, and indeed Tom Nairn in his most recent nationalist mood, that nationality was rooted in pre-existing ethnicities.²¹⁰

In his specific encounter with the question of nations and nationalisms Williams swung between two contradictory paradigms: on the one hand he rejected nationalism as an instance of false consciousness, and on the other he sought to mobilize nationalism in order to advance socialism. In these different moods, Williams sought both to reject and to appropriate nationhood – consistent only to the

²⁰⁷ Williams, 'Marxism, Poetry, Wales,' p. 90. In addition, see Williams, 'The Importance of Community,' p. 118.

²⁰⁸ Williams, 'Marxism, Poetry, Wales,' p. 91 (italics in the original). See also Williams, 'Wales and England,' pp. 19 and 23 and R. Williams, 'West of Offa's Dyke,' in Williams, *Who Speaks for Wales?*, p. 36. This essay was originally published in *New Society*, 4 July, 1986, pp. 28-9. Reference will be made to the article as it appeared in *Who Speaks for Wales?*

²⁰⁹ Williams, 'Wales and England,' p. 22, Williams, 'Community,' p. 29 and Williams, 'People of the Black Mountains,' p. 172. In the latter, when asked about a Roman signal station, Williams replied: '...we actually defeated the best part of a Roman legion over at Ayro, catching them by surprise and coming down out of the mountains.' We?! The essay was originally published in *Planet: The Welsh Internationalist*, 65 October/November 1978, pp. 3-13. Reference will be made to the essay as it appeared in *Who Speaks for Wales?* At moments like these, Williams's nationalism appeared to be founded on 'pride'. For this basis of modern nationalist movements see C. Taylor, 'Nationalism and Modernity,' in R. Beiner, ed., *Theorizing Nationalism* (Albany, 1999), pp. 44-45. Williams at other places, of course, resisted the idea of Wales as a 'colony'. See Williams, 'Wales and England,' p. 23.

²¹⁰ A.D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, 1985).

degree that both moods were determined by problems of socialist construction. Evidence of false consciousness and of a real socialist identity, doomed by capitalist globalization and the vehicle of socialist enlightenment, an impediment to socialism and socialism's salve – when it came to nationhood and nationalism Williams was assailed by antinomy. However, the contradictions in his analysis of the nexus between socialism and nationalism were in many respects a reflection of the conflict between international and national impulses that constitutes his, and our, reality.

'Working Men of All Countries, Unite!': The Geography and Ecology of Socialism

Raymond Williams was a socialist - indeed from the late nineteen sixties onwards, a Marxist socialist. 'Contemporary Marxism,' he suggested in the nineteen seventies, 'is ... a movement to which I find myself belonging and to which I am glad to belong.'²¹¹ In Williams's discursive self-construction, being a Marxist implied a belief in 'the transformation of society, the movement from one whole social order to another'²¹² - that is, a belief in revolution. In such a guise Williams saw himself to be part of an 'internationalist socialist movement' – which included independent socialists in the West, dissident socialists in the East, and anti-imperialists in the South – and understood revolution to be his homeland.²¹³ For him, the international socialist movement was a transnational anti-capitalist body whose goal was the establishment of a 'world-wide socialist community,' a vision which, implicitly at least, matches Marx's own comprehension of socialism's proper geographical reach. However, as we have seen in earlier sections of this chapter, Williams also remained committed both to a 'place-bound' conception of socialism and to Wales as the potential locus of a 'national' socialism. What then was the nature of Williams's international socialism? Did he envision a world-wide socialist community built upon actually existing nations or communities or in his mind would it necessarily by-pass those units? This section of the chapter will investigate the meaning of Williams's

²¹¹ Williams, 'You're a Marxist Aren't You?', p. 76.

²¹² Ibid., p. 71.

²¹³ See R. Williams, 'Toward Many Socialisms,' in Williams, *Resources of Hope*, p. 312. This essay was originally published in M. Nikolic, ed., *Socialism on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century* (London, 1985), pp. 294-311. Quotations from this text will be taken from the version that appeared in *Resources of Hope*.

international socialism through an exploration of three of its moments – the *May Day Manifesto 1968*, his writings on ecology, and what in retrospect has been called his political testament, *Towards 2000*.

The *May Day Manifesto 1968* document was a product of socialist discontent (mostly the discontent of members of the 'first' New Left) with successive Labour governments of the mid-to-late nineteen sixties.²¹⁴ Following a meeting of prominent Left intellectual figures in August 1966, an initial document – co-edited by E.P. Thompson, Stuart Hall and Williams – expressing dissatisfaction with Labour government policy was produced in May 1967. A later expanded edition, utilizing the contributions of a range of socialist thinkers but under Williams's sole editorship, was published the next year. This text became *May Day Manifesto 1968* (hereafter *Manifesto*).²¹⁵ Building on the argument of the initial manifesto, the *Manifesto* offered an analysis of the 'world system' and argued for the institution of 'a different whole society'²¹⁶ – essentially a critique of capitalism from an international socialist perspective. In addition, the document did not just provide a critical examination of what it considered to be the anti-socialist nature of the Labour government's domestic and foreign policy but also an assessment of the first New Left's inability to offer either a 'total' conception of actually existing international capitalism or a coherent socialist programme.²¹⁷ In other words, the *Manifesto* sought to go 'beyond the fragments' and offer a critical assessment of the capitalist mode of production and a socialist strategy immanent to that critique.

²¹⁴ The list of contributors to the final edition of the *May Day Manifesto 1968* is too long to reproduce but included Terry Eagleton, Stuart Hall, E.P. Thompson, Mike Rustin, Peter Worsely, and Stephen Yeo. The collaborative nature of the document raises a question: should all its ideas be attributed to Williams? It will be suggested here that it is legitimate to assume that Williams took responsibility for those ideas that appeared under his name. Nowhere, to my knowledge, did Williams ever dissociate himself from those ideas which appeared in the *Manifesto*.

²¹⁵ A brief history of the text can be found in Williams's 'Preface' to R. Williams, ed., *May Day Manifesto 1968* (London, 1968), pp. 9-12. For more on the history of the document see Inglis, *Raymond Williams*, pp. 197-204. For more on the May Day Manifesto movement and the short-lived National Convention of the Left, see N. Tiratsoo, 'Labour and Its Critics: The Case of the May Day Manifesto Group,' in R. Cooper, S. Fielding and N. Tiratsoo, eds., *The Wilson Government 1964-1970* (London and New York, 1993), pp. 163-183 and Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Britain*, pp. 149-150. For Williams's own (later) views of the movement see Williams, *Politics and Letters*, pp. 373-374.

²¹⁶ Williams, ed., *May Day Manifesto 1968*, p. 15.

²¹⁷ In this way, the document implicitly agreed with the analysis of the 'first' New Left in Perry Anderson's 'Origins of the Present Crisis,' *New Left Review*, I/24, 1964.

Endeavoring to marry theory with practice, the *Manifesto* mined both the everyday reality of poverty in Britain *and* the problem of poverty in the so-called Third World, both the nature of the modern corporation *and* its role in a world system of capitalist production, both the locus of power in advanced capitalist societies *and* the increasing influence of transnational economic bodies like the World Bank and the IMF around the globe, and both the imperialist current in Labour's foreign policy in South-east Asia *and* the whole nature of the system of international relations. With a conception of 'combined and uneven development', the *Manifesto* sought to draw out the exploitative effects of a system based on profit not use. Against this system, Williams and his co-contributors to the *Manifesto* offered a humanist socialism: 'a recognition of the social reality of man in all his activities, and of the consequent struggle for the direction of this reality by and for ordinary men and women.'²¹⁸

At its centre, the *Manifesto* contained an analysis of what later commentators have called 'globalization'²¹⁹ - in the document's own terms, 'of a world system, of a new international capitalism and a new kind of imperialism.'²²⁰ According to the *Manifesto*, the development of free trade, burgeoning transnational economic and political institutions, the increasing mobility of capital, the penetration of national cultures by outside cultural forces, and the 'internationalisation of the bourgeoisie'²²¹ pointed to a new phase of capitalist development. This new capitalism, the *Manifesto* argued, was distinguished by its geographical span. Essentially, the capitalist mode of production had transmogrified into 'an international system, economic, political and military, which in its own internal logic is continually overriding national interests.'²²² Capital's reach was now truly transnational. National cultures, national economies, all

²¹⁸ Williams, ed., *May Day Manifesto 1968*, p. 16.

²¹⁹ For an analysis of the meaning of this term, see S. Bromley, 'Marxism and Globalisation,' in Gamble, et al., eds., *Marxism and Social Science*, pp. 280-301.

²²⁰ Williams, ed., *May Day Manifesto*, p. 18.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 100. This argument has now been extended in recent analyses of a transnational ruling class. See, in particular, K. van der Pijl, *Transnational Classes and International Relations* (London, 1998) and W.I. Robinson, 'Capitalist Globalization and the Transnationalization of the State,' in Rupert and Smith, eds., *Historical Materialism and Globalization*, pp. 208-229.

²²² Williams, ed., *May Day Manifesto 1968*, p. 133. This reflects one strand in the current debate over the relationship between globalization and the nation state. For a reflection of this debate, see R. Burbach and W. Robinson, 'The Fin de Siècle Debate: Globalization as Epochal Shift,' *Science and Society*, 63, 1999, pp. 10-39. In addition, see A. Sivanandan and E. Meiksins Wood, 'Capitalism, Globalization and Epochal shifts: An Exchange,' *Monthly Review*, 48, 9, 1996, pp. 19-32. For a later manifestation of the *Manifesto's* argument in relation to the national interest, see M. Desai, *Marx's Revenge: The Resurgence of Capitalism and the Death of Statist Socialism* (London and New York, 2002), particularly pp. 216-235 and 303-316.

were grist for capitalism's global mill. 'In Karachi,' the *Manifesto* mordantly suggested, 'one can buy twelve international brands of aerated soft drinks, from "Seven Up" to "Coca Cola".'²²³ In tandem with this new cosmopolitan capitalism, it was argued, worked a new imperialism whose hegemony was secured by economic supremacy rather than military might. Where before capital's colonialist henchman had appeared with guns and steel, now they arrived in foreign lands with bank loans and aid.²²⁴ The effect, the *Manifesto* suggested, was the same: the immiseration of the many for the benefit of the few.²²⁵ Indeed, the new system of capitalism and imperialism had brought home the fact that, whether through trade, flows of capital and finance or through an interlocking military system, everywhere was connected to everywhere else. In terms of space and time, the world had been compressed by ever-widening and ever-deepening cycles of capital accumulation, reducing everywhere to a reflection of the interests of a properly international bourgeoisie.

Given this theory, what practice did the *Manifesto* urge upon socialists? It might be thought that the orchestrators of the *Manifesto* would argue for a cosmopolitan socialist strategy appropriate to its analysis of capitalism. Indeed, when the *Manifesto* suggested that a line could not be drawn 'between the oppressed "nation" and external imperialism,'²²⁶ that the lines of battle were no longer between nations but within and across nations, it seemed to be arguing for just such an operational logistics. Along these lines, the *Manifesto* suggested that the fight against imperialism in Vietnam could in no way be divorced from the fight against the rule of capital in Britain. 'In fighting anywhere,' the *Manifesto* proclaimed, 'we are fighting everywhere.'²²⁷ Yet this maxim was marshalled to endorse a practical programme wholly removed from a cosmopolitan telos. Despite having contended that national autarky was a fiction, the *Manifesto* argued that 'against the priorities of capitalism'

²²³ Williams, ed., *May Day Manifesto 1968*, p. 56.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 67. This view later reflected the idea of a 'post-imperialism'. For this idea, see D. Becker, et al., eds., *Post-Imperialism: International Capitalism and Development in the Late Twentieth Century* (Boulder, 1987).

²²⁵ On the 'new imperialism' see Williams, ed., *The May Day Manifesto 1968*, pp. 68-73 in particular.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 94. This thesis implies a rejection of the theory of 'the development of underdevelopment.' On this idea see A.G. Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil* (New York, 1969, orig. 1967). The *Manifesto's* suggestion is reflected in F. Halliday, 'The Pertinence of Imperialism,' in Rupert and Smith, eds., *Historical Materialism and Globalization*, pp. 75-89.

²²⁷ Williams, ed., *The May Day Manifesto 1968*, p. 100.

what is needed 'is a socialist national plan.'²²⁸ International engagements, such as the fight against imperialism in South-east Asia and racism in South Africa, were still vigorously endorsed, as were fraternal relations with socialists attempting to reform actually existing socialisms, but these impulses were to be melded with a focus on making socialism in one country. Indeed, the *Manifesto* even endorsed the nationalist struggle in Scotland and Wales,²²⁹ despite the fact that it also suggested, following Isaac Deutscher, that the 'division may perhaps once again run *within* nations rather than *between* nations.'²³⁰ What did a socialist national plan in Britain and support for peripheral nationalisms in Western Europe have to do with Deutscher's vision, endorsed by the *Manifesto*, of 'one socialist world'?²³¹ The *Manifesto*'s editor might have argued that there was no contradiction between support for certain nationalisms and the vision of a world-wide socialist community, as long as those nationalisms opposed capitalism. Williams's own assessment elsewhere of the relative strengths of the class and national bond however belied this expectation. Particularism of any sort, it might be argued, would dissolve the notion of one socialist world. Indeed, the *Manifesto*'s own analysis of capitalism's geographical span illuminated the futility of any sort of socialist national plan.

Thus the *Manifesto* shifted between two contradictory positions: on the one hand, following its analysis of the new capitalism, it endorsed the cosmopolitan maxim that in 'fighting anywhere, we are fighting everywhere,' and on the other it recommended that Britain, a nation-state which the *Manifesto* argued was no longer master of its economic, social or cultural domain, should adopt a 'socialist national plan.' In short, the *Manifesto* offered a nationalist prescription to what it considered a genuinely cosmopolitan disease. Its medicine, consequently, was ill-suited to its own diagnosis. In other words, there was, at the very least, a disjuncture between theory and practice in the *Manifesto*. This was not a failure of intelligence or, indeed, of practice – after all the practical difficulties which have assailed socialist politics in any time and place are immense. Rather it was a consequence of the absence of any possible cosmopolitan socialist strategy and the hard-bitten realities of a world still

²²⁸ Ibid., p. 137.

²²⁹ Ibid., p. 163.

²³⁰ Isaac Deutscher from the Berkeley Teach-in on Vietnam, in May 1965, cited without reference in Williams, ed., *The May Day Manifesto 1968*, p. 142.

²³¹ Ibid.

constituted by national states.²³² The suggestion that 'socialism in one country' might coexist harmoniously with internationalism has been discredited by a history of irresolvable conflict between particularism and universalism.²³³ Encircled by international capital, 'socialism in one country' was bound to wither and die, as the *Manifesto* at places suggested. A transnational economic system might have made nations extraneous to future developments, but international socialism could find no other way to embody its vision of a world-wide socialist community other than in actually existing societies. Like cosmopolitan socialists at all points of history, the *Manifesto* socialists had no coherent idea how one socialist world might be created out of globalization's bewildering mix of a-nationalist and nationalist impulses.

The *May Day Manifesto 1968* movement was assailed by internal division. The movement went into free fall soon after the General Election of 1970 and never recovered.²³⁴ Its 'failure' in a sense was a product of the ambiguities that the *Manifesto* itself had uncovered – socialism was not possible in Britain while it was surrounded by capital, and the typical agents of socialist change, in particular the nation-state and a militant proletariat conscious of itself as a class, were being systematically undermined - in the one case by transnational economic, cultural and political currents, and in the other by what Williams called 'militant particularism'. In the decade ahead, Marxism would be approached as a body of theory and practice that was in almost perpetual decline and crisis.²³⁵ If Marxism appeared in crisis in the nineteen seventies, other forms of radical politics did not. Feminism, ethnicity politics, green politics and the politics of peace – all of these mobilizations, what would soon be called 'the new social movements,' appeared to be picking up socialism's slack, offering an alternative understanding of radical politics divorced

²³² For recognition of this dilemma, see A.W. Wright, 'Socialism and Nationalism,' in L. Tivey, ed., *The Nation State* (Oxford, 1981), p. 167 and E. Meiksins Wood, 'Unhappy Families: Global Capitalism in a World of Nation-States,' *Monthly Review*, 51, 3, 1999, pp. 1-12. For the almost full range of Marxist solutions to this problem, see T. Purvis, 'Marism and Nationalism,' in A. Gamble, D. Marsh and T. Tant, eds., *Marxism and Social Science* (London, 1999), pp. 219-223 and E. Nimni, *Marxism and Nationalism: Theoretical Origins of a Political Crisis* (London, 1991).

²³³ An idea suggested in Halliday, 'The Pertinence of Imperialism,' p. 85.

²³⁴ See Williams's own assessment of its break-up over the General Election in *Politics and Letters*, p. 375. As he put it there: 'A movement which had managed to sustain a significant amount of left unity disintegrated over the electoral process – over whether it was permissible to make electoral interventions to the left of the Labour Party.' See also the brief comment in B. Gilbert-Moore, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London, 1997), p. 202.

²³⁵ For later accounts of this process, see M. Schneider, 'In Search of a "New" Historical Subject: The End of Working-Class Culture, the Labour Movement, and the Proletariat,' *International Labor and Working Class History*, 32, 1987, pp. 46-58.

from Marxism's concentration on political economy and class.²³⁶ Could socialism be married with the concerns of the new social movements? Opinion among socialists differed. Some maintained that socialists could have no truck with movements antagonistic to socialism's animating principles. Others believed that the energies of these movements needed to be harnessed for socialist ends and their concerns needed to be placed at the centre of a new socialism. In particular, many believed that ecological politics offered a radical form of anti-capitalism beyond Marxism's decline and crisis.²³⁷ Raymond Williams championed this assessment of the relationship between socialism and ecology throughout the late nineteen seventies and eighties.

In radically simplified terms, there have been three major Marxist responses to the rise of environmental politics – repudiation, assimilation and coalition.²³⁸ Williams recommended the third course: recognition by the labour movement of the depth of the ecological crisis and, in light of this, a consequent rapprochement between Marxism and Green politics.²³⁹ Not just adding ecology onto Marxism's traditional concerns, Williams argued, but rethinking Marxism from the ground up in full awareness of environmentalism's critique of both actually existing capitalism and socialism was required. For Williams, a wholesale reconceptualisation of Marxism's understanding of nature and a fundamental reassessment of Marxism's traditional conception of the world-historical role and value of capitalism was in order.²⁴⁰ This meant overturning what he considered to be Marxism's inherent and environmentally destructive tendency toward 'productivism'. Thus, for him, an ecologically-blind Marxism shared with capitalism a belief in the unequivocally beneficial effects of humanity's mastery over nature. A future socialist society, sensitive to the needs of the world's ecology, he argued, would have to be premised on a rejection of this ontology of domination if it was not simply to accentuate capitalism's already destructive effect on the planet. An ecologically-conscious socialism, Williams argued, would amount 'to a positive redemption of the central socialist idea of

²³⁶ On the 'new social movements,' see J. Pakulski, 'Social Movements and Class: The Decline of the Marxist Paradigm,' in L. Maneau, ed., *Social Movements and Social Classes* (London, 1995).

²³⁷ See J. Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York, 2000), pp. 1-21.

²³⁸ These responses are outlined in 'Introduction to Part I,' in T. Benton, ed., *The Greening of Marxism* (New York and London, 1996), pp. 7-8.

²³⁹ Williams, *Towards 2000*, pp. 172-173.

²⁴⁰ In particular, see R. Williams, 'Ideas of Nature,' in R. Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London, 1980), pp. 67-85. This essay first appeared in J. Benthall, ed., *Ecology, The Shaping Enquiry* (London, 1972), pp. 146-164. In addition, see R. Williams, 'Problems of Materialism,' *New Left Review*, I/109, 1978, pp. 3-18 and Williams, *Towards 2000*, pp. 214-217 and 261-267.

production for equitable use than for either profit or power.²⁴¹ In this way socialist hegemony would not just transform existing social relations but radically alter humanity's relation to (non-human) nature.²⁴² However, how would this vision of a future socialist ascendancy be geographically embodied?

In line with his rejection of the nation-state (at least those nation-states like Britain) as the likely embodiment of a socialist political economy, and in concert with his support for European Union, indeed with his own sense of himself as a Welsh European, Williams evoked regionalism – self-governing societies – as the territorial basis of any prospective socialist hegemony.²⁴³ 'The old orientation of raw material for production is rejected,' he argued, 'and in its place there is the new orientation of livelihood: of practical, self-managing, self-renewing societies, in which people care first for each other, in a living world.'²⁴⁴ Thus he maintained that it was through self-governing societies that a 'Red-Green' community would find embodiment.²⁴⁵ Because there were many different societies, he went on to suggest, there would be many different socialisms. If there was to be genuine liberation, Williams maintained, 'there will be radical diversity both within and between societies.'²⁴⁶ Protecting the biosphere and caring for each other could only be generated at a local level, where people felt the bonds of community and attachment to place, and where people in actual relationship with others lived their true diversity.

The stress on self-governing societies as the proper territorial basis of socialism was at the centre of *Towards 2000*, Williams's last major work.²⁴⁷ Williams's assertion in *Towards 2000* that 'placeable self-governing societies'²⁴⁸ were commensurate with socialism was a reflection of his long-held belief in the value of

²⁴¹ Williams, *Towards 2000*, p. 216. Also see R. Williams, 'Socialism and Ecology,' in *Resources of Hope*, pp. 221-222. This was originally published as a pamphlet by the Social Environment and Resources Association in 1982. Reference will be made to the essay as it appeared in *Resources of Hope*.

²⁴² The idea that human beings are not part of nature is of course absurd. For the argument that human beings are an intrinsic part of nature, see Harvey, *Spaces of Hope*, pp. 213-232.

²⁴³ Williams, 'Decentralism and the Politics of Place,' pp. 238-239. See also Williams, 'The Practise of Possibility,' pp. 315-316.

²⁴⁴ Williams, *Towards 2000*, p. 266.

²⁴⁵ Williams, 'Hesitations before Socialism,' p. 288.

²⁴⁶ Williams, 'Toward Many Socialisms,' p. 310.

²⁴⁷ Williams, *Towards 2000*, pp. 197-199 in particular. It has been argued that the language of 'self-governing societies' has more to do with anarchism than socialism. See Berki, 'On Marxian Thought and the Problem of International Relations,' p. 89.

²⁴⁸ Williams, *Towards 2000*, p. 198.

participatory democracy, the idea, as it was expressed in *The Long Revolution*, 'that people should govern themselves, and make their own decisions, without concession of this right to any particular group, nationality or class.'²⁴⁹ Thus self-governing regions rather than nation-states or a world community constituted Williams's projected geography of a socialist hegemony that was sensitive to the ecological needs of both the planet and humanity. Socialism, he argued, would be founded in the lived diversity of actually existing societies or communities. Wales rather than Britain, the Basque country rather than Spain, regionalist socialism, in Williams's view, would meld love of place, warmth of community and care for the environment, enabling an interlocking world-system of societies where the free development of each region was the condition for the free development of all regions.

In a masterful response to Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man*, Perry Anderson argued that the problems of the biosphere could only be solved at a global level, by some sort of world government.²⁵⁰ Any solution to these problems, Anderson implied, would be transnational, any other level of governance likely to be inappropriate to the scale of the issue. In one register at least, Williams agreed. We can no longer just fight for particular interests, he argued, 'at a time when the earth is visibly shifting under us.'²⁵¹ What any eco-socialist alternative to capital required, he went on, was a conception of the general interest, that is, a vision of socialism that brought together all reasonable particular interests in a transcendent universal interest. It might be expected that such an analysis would imply a cosmopolitan telos, some sort of 'Socialist Mother Earth,' especially considering Williams's suggestion that capitalist social relations were increasingly globalized.²⁵² Not to Williams's mind. Despite his recognition of the necessity of a conception of the general interest, and his belief that capitalism was undermining national interests, let alone regional interests, he maintained 'that the only kind of socialism which now stands any chance of being established, in the old industrialized bourgeois-democratic societies, is one centrally based on new kinds of communal, co-operative and

²⁴⁹ Williams, *The Long Revolution*, p. xii. See also Williams, 'Culture and Revolution,' pp. 36-38.

²⁵⁰ See Anderson, *A Zone of Engagement* (London, 1994), p. 363. For the idea of a 'World Socialist Commonwealth,' see R. Westra, 'Marxian Economic Theory and an Ontology of Socialism: A Japanese Intervention,' *Capital & Class*, 78, 2002, p. 75.

²⁵¹ Williams, 'The Forward March of Labour Halted,' p. 255.

²⁵² For the idea of a 'Socialist Mother Earth,' see Löwy, 'Fatherland or Mother Earth? Nationalism and Internationalism from a Socialist Perspective,' p. 221.

collective institutions.²⁵³ The geographical setting for such communal institutions, he believed, was local not national, regional not global. Thus Williams's regionalist socialism constituted a dismissal of Marx and Engel's vision of a communist Cosmopolis and a repudiation of their analysis of class upon which their vision rested. Not for Williams then the *Communist Manifesto's* conception of a 'world city'.²⁵⁴

Williams's commitment to diversity, it can be argued, constituted a repudiation of Marxism's belief in 'the absolute unity of mankind'.²⁵⁵ This was no small matter. It is arguable that the whole political anthropology of Marxism is undermined by this commitment to diversity.²⁵⁶ In addition, William's belief in the 'natural' diversity of peoples also cancelled out Marx's belief in the formation of a world proletariat.²⁵⁷ However, Williams did not wholly give up this political anthropology. His recognition of socialism as constituting a general interest constitutes a recognition that a future socialist society would be based on the unity of mankind. Thus Williams did retain a 'dialectical' commitment to both unity and diversity. Beyond this, it could be argued there are a number of problems with Williams's particular vision of a world system of socialist regions. Above all, given that uneven development between regions would likely persist, what is there to stop diverse socialist regions from conflicting with each other over resources or access to resources? The history of conflict between socialist societies in the twentieth century – Soviet tanks in Hungary, the invasion of putatively socialist Cambodia by Vietnamese communists – is sufficient answer to this question.²⁵⁸ A world divided into regions, it could be argued, would promote conflict rather than consensus no matter what mode of production was dominant. Indeed Marx himself argued as much, suggesting that only a world without borders, a world-wide socialist society, would ensure the just distribution of resources.

²⁵³ Williams, *Towards 2000*, p. 123.

²⁵⁴ For this vision in the work of Marx and Engels, see chapter one of Löwy, *Fatherland or Mother Earth? Marxists on the National Question* (London, 1998), pp. 5-15.

²⁵⁵ Here expressed in Berki, 'On Marxian Thought and the Problem of International Relations,' p. 80. See also Wright, 'Socialism and Nationalism,' p. 167 and J. Dunn, *Western Political Theory in the Face of the Future* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 94.

²⁵⁶ Berki, 'On Marxian Thought and the Problem of International Relations,' p. 86.

²⁵⁷ For a recent assessment that endorses Marx's view see Laibman, 'Theory and Necessity: The Stadial Foundations of the Present,' p. 304. Here Laibman promotes the view of a 'world proletariat'.

²⁵⁸ It was this development – conflict between socialist societies – which provided the original inspiration for Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. See B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. xi.

At each moment of Williams's international socialism – *May Day Manifesto*, ecology politics or *Towards 2000* – there was ambiguous movement between a cosmopolitan analysis that implied trans-national class struggle and the vision of 'one socialist world' and a strategy for socialism that was based on actually existing or potentially existing societies. A cosmopolitan analysis, thinking in 'world-historical ways'²⁵⁹ as Williams put it, might be thought to be the proper basis of a world socialist community – as it had been for Marx and Deutscher. Williams retained the analysis but rejected the objective, believing that a World Socialist Republic promised homogeneity ill-suited to the real diversity of lived experience. In short, Williams's international socialism revealed the seemingly insurmountable clash between universalism and particularism. This clash, however, constitutes a reflection of socialism's inability to develop a coherent socialist strategy in a world constituted by both global capital and territorial particularism.

The Impossibility of Cosmopolitan Socialism

Raymond Williams was perhaps the firmest critic of cosmopolitan socialism from within the Marxist tradition. Against Marx, the idea of a universal proletariat, Williams believed, was a fiction, the dream of a world-wide socialist community a betrayal of the diversity inherent between and within societies. Universalism, according to him, was a form of abstraction remote from the realities of actual relationships in actual places. Love of place, warmth of community and a conception of history and heritage – all these were fundamental socialist values and inimical to cosmopolitanism. At other moments, however, Williams suggested that socialism must constitute a general interest and argued that it needed to devise a strategy that was trans-national. In this register he rejected various particularisms, including national particularisms, as forms of false consciousness and suggested that revolution was his homeland. But even in this register, he maintained that socialism must constitute itself on the basis of relationships that were formed within actual communities, whether local, regional or 'national'. Internationalism, as he conceived

²⁵⁹ See Williams, 'Towards Many Socialism,' p. 295. Here he suggests that 'Not only its two world wars, but its effective development of an interacting global economy and its unprecedented development of worldwide communications systems, make this perspective inevitable.'

it, would be developed out of such relationships rather than against them. However, as we have seen, this was a vision of future socialist world that was far removed from Marx's. Thus like Hobsbawm's and Thompson's, Williams's socialism betrayed a sometimes bewildering commitment to both unity and difference. But, it might be argued, this seeming contradiction was a reflection of both his historical context and his understanding of Marxism as a dialectical unity of opposites.

From a casual reading of Williams's oeuvre it might be concluded that he rejected socialist cosmopolitanism tout court, arguing that only a place-bound socialism was either desirable or possible. Such a reading would not be wholly wrong. However, in a searching honesty typical of all his work, Williams came close to providing a rationale for why even a place-bound socialist politics would not work. Surveying the successful establishment of a class-wide consciousness among the British proletariat during the General Strike, he pointed to the diversity of current communities, suggesting that the difficulty of mobilizing a conception of 'general interest' was now even harder than it had been in the nineteen twenties.²⁶⁰ If Williams were alive today, he might argue that the development of what he called 'mobile privatized relations' has reached such a pitch, at least in modern industrialized societies, that no hope could be entertained for a socialist politics inflected by love of place, that nomad capitalism has finally obliterated that warmth of community he found in his childhood and which consistently informed his life's work. In those moments before his death when he did imagine such a prospect, his disquiet was obvious.²⁶¹ However surveying a world where our clothes might be made in Indonesia, where we might work for a German firm, talk on a Japanese mobile phone, furnish our homes with goods made in Sweden, but reside as a migrant from India in Glasgow, Williams would nonetheless have held out hope that forms of community were still possible that could serve as the basis for an anti-capitalist politics. Another way of looking at our world is to imagine that an everyday reality constituted by a global mode of production now connects us to everybody everywhere. From this perspective, despite the mammoth obstacles which bar its construction, perhaps it is only socialism in its cosmopolitan guise which is possible. In its absence a world constituted by the continuing exploitation of people and their environment, by

²⁶⁰ Williams, 'The Social Significance of 1926,' pp. 109-110.

²⁶¹ Williams, 'The Practice of Possibility,' p. 322.

mounting religious, national and ethnic hatreds and by never-ending war might be all that is possible. Williams would have shared this fear. For him, however, diversity had to be engaged not denied, it had to be gone through so that we could come out the other side with a new understanding of those things which we had in common – the universal, he might have suggested, was already in evidence in the particular.

Chapter 4

Marxism, Post-Marxism and the National Question

Stuart Hall on Race, Nation and Ethnicity

On the occasion of Raymond Williams' death, Stuart Hall offered this tribute to his memory: 'There wasn't the usual rift between thought and feeling, idea and life, which characterizes so much "politicized" intellectual work. His practice was that of dialogue – with other traditions, positions, other ways of seeing and feeling, as a pointed response to a particular orthodoxy because "the society of dialogue" was his way of imagining what socialism would be like.'¹ Seeing, feeling, dialogue – these words are synonymous with Williams' peculiar wisdom. However, they constitute an equally appropriate summation of Hall's intellectual work. Like Williams' contributions to cultural analysis, Hall's cannot be separated from his lived experience, from a series of displacements that prepared a unique understanding of the relationship between symbolic processes and power in conditions of advanced capitalism. With a life course that nurtured an acute sensitivity to questions of culture and domination, Hall is a pioneer of cultural studies who has made a number of significant interventions into debates surrounding the relationship between ideology and experience.² In many ways, uncovering the constitutive function of culture in the production of identities has constituted the *raison d'être* of Hall's intellectual work.

The singular reach of Hall's oeuvre has been outstanding. The prodigious diversity of Hall's interests – from Henry James to Lenny Henry, from Antonio Gramsci to Bob Marley, from Althusser's *Reading Capital* to Kureishi's *My Beautiful Laundrette* – is not the result of chance. 'Hall was pitched between conceptual systems as well as countries,' Terry Eagleton explained, 'as heterodox in theory as he

¹ S. Hall, 'Only Connect: The Life of Raymond Williams,' *New Statesman*, 5 February 1988, p. 21.

² For Hall's unique influence on the development of British cultural studies, see G. Turner, *British Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (Boston, 1990) and D. Harris, *From Class Struggle to the Politics of Pleasure: The Effects of Gramscianism on Cultural Studies* (London and New York, 1992). See J. Peck, 'Itinerary of a Thought: Stuart Hall, Cultural Studies, and the Unresolved Problem of the Relation of Culture to "Not Culture",' *Cultural Critique*, 48, 2001, pp. 200-249 for a critical assessment of this influence.

was hybrid in culture.³ Hence, like his perspective on contemporary culture, the range of Hall's intellectual work paralleled his experience of dislocation. Indeed, Hall's lived experience uniquely prepared him for a series of intellectual problems that became crucial to historical materialism in the late twentieth century – the relationship between culture and power, the nexus between ethnicity and class, and the interface between socialist politics and cultural identity.

Hall's relationship to Marxism has been complex.⁴ That there is a connection between historical materialism and Hall's intellectual trajectory, however, is beyond contention. What is the nature of this nexus?⁵ Hall's estimation of the relationship between Marxist theory and cultural studies may stand in place of an expanded examination of this question. Cultural studies, according to him, could be understood as 'working within shouting distance of Marxism, working on Marxism, working against Marxism, working with it, working to try to develop Marxism.'⁶ Hall did not just work within, at the side and against historical materialism, the problematics of Marxist theory constituted the primary touchstone for his thinking about culture and society.⁷ He attempted to relate transformations in contemporary conditions of existence to those problematics which exercised Marx, in the process revising and modernizing the architecture of the Marxist paradigm. It was not just scientific socialism's silences and lacunae which provided Hall with a persistent point of reference for his work. The practice of socialist politics was important to his intellectual purpose. Although it is a relationship now largely obfuscated, his interest in popular culture was guided above all by what he considered the felt needs of socialist strategy. According to Hall, '[popular culture] is one of the places where

³ T. Eagleton, 'Stuart Hall,' in Eagleton, *Figures of Dissent: Critical Essays on Fish, Spivak, Zizek and Others* (London and New York, 2003), p. 208.

⁴ This relationship has been explored in C. Sparks, 'Stuart Hall, Cultural Studies and Marxism,' in D. Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (London and New York, 1996), pp. 71-101. The complexity of this relationship is now, of course, much diminished. Quite simply, as Terry Eagleton suggests, Hall has 'moved decisively into the non-Marxist camp.' See T. Eagleton, *After Theory* (London, 2003), p. 40. Despite Eagleton's assertion, Hall's Marxism is still emphasized in recent histories of cultural studies. For an example, see M. Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds* (London, 2004), p. 174.

⁵ The difficulties of answering the question 'what is Marxism?' – the necessary preliminary of the question 'is Hall a Marxist?' – are explored in T. Eagleton, 'In the Same Boat?,' *Radical Philosophy*, 82, 1997, pp. 37-40.

⁶ S. Hall, 'Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacy,' in Morley and Chen, eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogue in Cultural Studies*, p. 265. This essay first appeared in L. Grossberg, C. Nelson, and P. A. Treichler, eds., *Cultural Studies* (New York, 1992), pp. 277-86.

⁷ On this point, see F. Mulhern, *Culture/MetaCulture* (London and New York, 2000), p. 124.

socialism might be constituted. That is why "popular culture" matters. Otherwise, to tell you the truth, I don't give a damn about it.'⁸ Thus whether in terms of theory or practice, historical materialism has been central to Hall's intellectual development, its various problematics consistently structuring his investigations into culture, identity and power. Even when Hall moved beyond Marxism, even, in some senses, beyond socialism, this shift was defined against the Marxist tradition.⁹ Within or outside its discursive limits, Marxism figures as either touchstone or opponent (often at the same time!) of Hall's intellectual practice.

Present at each moment of the early New Left, in the vanguard of encounters between cultural analysis and Marxist theory in the nineteen seventies and eighties, and a leading exponent of post-Marxism in our so-called 'New Times,' Hall is integral to any consideration of the nexus between Marxism and nationalism in late twentieth century Britain. This chapter will investigate Hall's negotiation of that nexus through a critical discussion of three concepts central to his work: race, nation and ethnicity. The chapter will first provide an outline of Hall's social being, a cursory overview of his biography which set the limits to his analysis of the national question and pushed that assessment in certain directions. The chapter will move on to consider his understanding of race and racism in the nineteen seventies. Interpreted now as a 'black' intellectual, it was during this period that Hall was first directly concerned with the question of racism and its relation to the national question.¹⁰ The chapter will then proceed to an investigation of his analysis of Thatcherism in the nineteen eighties, taking his understanding of 'nation' as its touchstone. Beginning with his conception of New Times, the penultimate section of the chapter will interrogate the place of ethnicity and identity politics in his most recent contributions to an analysis of the national question. Thus it will explore the ways his post-Marxism has transformed his understanding of nationhood. The chapter will conclude with a brief examination of

⁸ See S. Hall, 'Notes on Deconstructing "the Popular",' in R. Samuel, ed., *People's History and Socialist Theory* (London, 1981), p. 239.

⁹ Until at least 1986 Hall claimed that 'I still operate somewhere within what I understand to be the discursive limits of a Marxist position.' See L. Grossberg, ed., 'On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall,' in Morley and Chen, eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, p. 148. This interview first appeared in *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 10, 2, 1986, pp. 45-60. Terry Eagleton has argued that 'Hall never reneged on revolutionary Marxism, since...he was never much of a Marxist in the first place.' See Eagleton, 'Stuart Hall,' p. 209.

¹⁰ On the discovery of Hall's 'blackness,' see S. Hall, 'Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities,' in A.D. King, ed., *Culture, Globalization and the World System* (London, 1991), pp. 54-5.

the value of Hall's analysis of ethnicity to a reinvigoration of cosmopolitan socialism in the new century.

The Multiple Selves of Stuart Hall: Socialism and Displacement

What 'identity' best describes Stuart Hall's social being? The migrant or exile? The Black Marxist?¹¹ The organic socialist intellectual?¹² The diasporic, post-colonial scholar? The hybrid cultural theorist? At different times, Hall has entertained each of these identities.¹³ Given his own belief in the contingency of identity, it will be important to track Hall's permutating sense of his own social being as the touchstone of an examination of his encounter with the nexus between Marxism and nationalism.¹⁴ 'What we say,' Hall has repeatedly suggested, 'is always "in context", positioned.'¹⁵ An attempt to reconstruct his 'identity-positions,' this section of the chapter will track those contexts that have shaped Hall.

Stuart Hall was born in Jamaica, a country fully imbricated in an advanced, if petrified, imperial system, in 1932. Hall's mother descended from a 'lighter-skinned English-oriented faction' of Caribbean society, his father, 'manifestly dark-skinned,' came from a lower-middle class family.¹⁶ Stuart Hall, himself the 'blackest' of his family, repudiated his parents' negotiation of the complex class, colour and status

¹¹ This was certainly the opinion of Carl Freedman in his 'Overdeterminations: On Black Marxism,' *Social Text*, 8, 1983, p. 143.

¹² On Hall's understanding of 'organic intellectuals,' with particular reference to his own work in the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, see Hall, 'Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies,' p. 267.

¹³ See 'The Formation of a Diasporic Intellectual: An Interview with Stuart Hall by Kuan-Hsing Chen,' in Morley and Chen, eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, pp. 484-503 for evidence of this.

¹⁴ See S. Hall, 'Ethnicity: Identities and Difference,' in G. Eley, ed., *Becoming National* (New York, 1994), p. 345. This article first appeared in *Radical America*, 23, 4, 1989, pp. 9-20. Reference to this essay throughout the chapter will be to the version which appeared in *Becoming National*. In addition, consult S. Hall, 'Introduction: Who Needs "Identity"?', in S. Hall and P. du Gay, eds., *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London, 1996), pp. 2-3.

¹⁵ S. Hall, 'New Ethnicities,' in Morley and Chen, eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, p. 492. This essay first appeared in K. Mercer, ed., *Black Film, British Cinema*, BFI/ICA Documents, 7, 1988, pp. 27-31. Reference will be made to the article as it appeared in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*.

¹⁶ For the various citations in this sentence, see Hall, 'The Formation of the Diasporic Intellectual,' p. 485.

stratifications characteristic of the Caribbean.¹⁷ Indeed from an early age he rejected the hierarchies of biology and wealth that underwrote imperialism, later recalling with horror his parent's attitude to colonialism's class and colour distinctions.¹⁸ Repudiating the ambitions of his family, Hall increasingly came to see himself in the mirror of an aspiring post-colonial society, the reverse image of his parent's own relation to the culturally-graded hierarchies typical of colonialism. In other words, anti-imperialism provided Hall with a voice antithetical to his parent's aspirations for him, aspirations reconciled to 'the old colonial world'.¹⁹ Yet despite post-colonial promise, Hall's experience of growing up in Jamaica appears to have been almost wholly negative. At the first opportunity he escaped.

'When individuals go to a new society,' it has been argued, 'they experience a major gap between the alien culture and the self (in)formed elsewhere: collective and individual subjects no longer coincide.'²⁰ For Hall this was only partly true. 'Having been prepared by the colonial education,' as he later remarked, 'I knew England from the inside.'²¹ This knowledge, however, did not prevent alienation from Englishness.²² He arrived in England – to study at Oxford – in 1951, just prior to the major period of West Indian immigration to the United Kingdom in the later nineteen fifties and nineteen sixties.²³ Constructed as the 'familiar stranger' by his colonial past, England, for Hall, never felt like home.²⁴ Displacement there, however, did

¹⁷ See M. Jaggi, 'Prophet at the Margins,' *The Guardian*, 8 July, 2000, p. 8.

¹⁸ See Hall, 'The Formation of the Diasporic Intellectual,' pp. 484-490 and C. Rojek, *Stuart Hall* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 57.

¹⁹ Hall, 'The Formation of the Diasporic Intellectual,' p. 486. Later Hall admitted that one of the reasons he left Jamaica was because of his parents: 'I hate the way my mother lords it over the servants; I hate the way my father wants to be seen as the person going out with the Americans.' See B. Schwarz, *Conversations with Stuart Hall* (not yet published), cited in L. Segal, 'Lost Worlds: Political Memoirs of the Left in Britain,' *Radical Philosophy: A Journal of Socialist and Feminist Philosophy*, 121, 2003, p. 19.

²⁰ A.R. JanMohamed, 'Worldliness-without-World, Homelessness-as-Home,' in M. Sprinker, ed., *Edward Said: A Critical Reader* (Oxford, 1992), p. 107.

²¹ Hall, 'The Formation of the Diasporic Intellectual,' p. 490.

²² See S. Hall, 'Culture, Community, Nation,' *Cultural Studies*, 7, 3, 1993, pp. 349-50. Despite this, Chris Rojek has suggested that 'Englishness' played a large role in the determination of Hall's political thought; indeed, that his thought, in important senses, was constructed by his attachment to Englishness. For this thesis, see C. Rojek, 'Stuart Hall and the Antinomian Tradition,' *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 1, 1, 1998, pp. 45-65. For a critique, see B. Schwarz, 'Stuart Hall,' *Cultural Studies*, 19, 2, 2005, pp. 196-199.

²³ See Eagleton, 'Stuart Hall,' p. 209. For an overview of West Indian migration to Britain after the Second World War, see Hall's own work on this topic in 'Migration from English-Speaking Caribbean to the UK, 1950-1980,' in R. Appleyard, ed., *International Migration Today, 1: Trends and Prospects* (Paris: UNESCO, 1988).

²⁴ Hall, 'The Formation of the Diasporic Intellectual,' p. 490.

induce a typically intensified psychic awareness of the place he had just escaped. In England, he found himself immersed in West Indian expatriate politics. Thus like many migrants, Hall initially found relief from isolation and alienation in a 'collectivity of landmen.'²⁵ Inspired by the hope of a 'united, socialist West Indian federation,'²⁶ he originally planned to return to Jamaica along with many of his comrades, following the completion of his studies. But as hopes for the establishment of a Caribbean federation discomposed, Hall quickly realized that his future would not include a return to his roots. By 1957 he was sure he could not return home.²⁷

Where to belong? How to belong? Assimilation and marginality, according to Darko Suvin, have constituted the idiomatic migrant responses to these questions.²⁸ Hall accepted neither solution. Instead he attempted to open a passage between the two, turning his lived experience into a signpost of modernity. Thus feeling at home in neither England nor Jamaica, Hall found shelter from the physical and psychical problems of displacement under the roof of socialism, in small groupings, such as the Oxford Socialist Society, and in collective publishing ventures, such as *Universities and Left Review*, each important forerunners of the British New Left.²⁹ With like-minded exiles Charles Taylor (Canadian), Raphael Samuel (East End Jew), Allen Hall (Scottish) and Gabriel Pearson (Jewish), Hall probed the boundaries of a socialist 'third way' between 'actually existing communism' and 'actually existing social democracy,' pushing toward a conception of socialism that included but transcended questions of class and production.³⁰

²⁵ The phrase is taken from D. Sukin, 'Displaced Persons,' *New Left Review*, II/31, 2005, p. 117. See Hall, 'The Formation of the Diasporic Intellectual,' p. 492, for his own experience of this 'collectivity'.

²⁶ See Segal, 'Lost Worlds: Political Memoirs of the Left in Britain,' p. 20.

²⁷ Hall, 'The Formation of the Diasporic Intellectual,' p. 490. Explaining that decision, Hall remarked that 'I didn't leave England, at first, because I became involved, in a new kind of way, in British politics.' That these politics were socialist should go without saying.

²⁸ See Suvin, 'Displaced Persons,' p. 117. For a somewhat heavy handed account of the intellectual politics of migration, see A. Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London and New York, 1992), p. 86. Compare Ahmad's comment with those of T. Eagleton in *After Theory* (London, 2003), pp. 21-22.

²⁹ For Hall's own account of his activities in the early New Left, consult 'The "First" New Left: Life and Times,' in Oxford University Socialist group, ed., *Out of Apathy: Voices of the New Left Thirty years On* (London, 1989), pp. 11-38 and 'The Formation of a Diasporic Intellectual,' pp. 491-8. In addition, see D. Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left and the Origins of Cultural Studies* (Durham, 1997), pp. 45-78, particularly pp. 67-78, for reference to Hall and the early New Left.

³⁰ See one of Hall's earliest published works, 'A Sense of Classlessness,' *Universities and Left Review*, 1, 5, 1958, pp. 26-32, for this point. The 'exilic' influence on early New Left thought has been missed by most historians of the New Left.

From 1956 onwards, Hall was integral to the formation and consolidation of the British New Left. In the wake of 'Hungary' and 'Suez,' he left Oxford – and his postgraduate research on Henry James – for London and the editorship of *Universities and Left Review*. In 1960 he became editor of the 'first' *New Left Review*, resigning after a torturous, if productive, two-year tenure.³¹ He was central to the establishment of New Left clubs, acted an important part in linking socialist politics to the concerns of the new social movements, like CND, and later in the nineteen sixties was co-editor, along with Raymond Williams and E.P. Thompson, of the *May Day Manifesto*, catalyst for a movement that never transcended the text on which it was based. He also acted a vital role in the revision of key components of socialist theory. To modernize socialist politics and give voice to the theoretical silences in Marx – this was the project that defined Hall's socialism.³²

In the period of the 'first' New Left, Hall's socialism was not inconsistent with his biography. In fact, his perspective on socialism, as Terry Eagleton has suggested, was always informed by his experience of colonialism and his migration 'from the Caribbean to the Cowley Road.'³³ Yet there were less mediated affiliations between Hall's politics and his background of displacement than his emphasis upon the importance of culture to the socialist struggle against capitalist imperialism. Connecting rather than prefiguring his later interest in ethnicity, Hall was active in London's West Indian community following the Notting Hill riots in 1958.³⁴ Thus a diasporic idiom informed his appropriation of socialism from the beginning. Well before Powellism, the moral panics over Black crime, and the emergence of ethnicity and identity as key concepts of social theory, his socialism already engaged with difference – the possible antinomy between ethnicity and socialism dissolved within

³¹ On Hall's editorship of *New Left Review*, see R. Williams, *Politics and Letters* (London, 1979), p. 365.

³² See 'Editorial,' *New Left Review*, I/1, 1960, p. 1. For a later statement, consult 'Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies,' p. 265.

³³ Eagleton, 'Stuart Hall,' p. 208-9.

³⁴ Schwarz, ed., *Conversations with Stuart Hall* (unpub.), cited in Segal, 'Lost Worlds: Political Memoirs of the Left in Britain,' p. 21. For a consideration of these events in Hall's own work, see 'Racism and Reaction,' in *Five Views of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Commission on Racial Equality, 1978), pp. 27-8. Note also Hall's comment that he spent a great deal of time in the nineteen fifties and sixties 'in Rhodes House library, reading the anthropological literature and absorbing the debate about African "survivals" in Caribbean and New World culture.' See 'The Formation of a Diasporic Intellectual,' p. 497.

the universalism of an imagined socialist community that sought to transcend both racism and capitalism.

The break-up of the original New Left collective in the early nineteen sixties did not signal Hall's disenchantment with the ideas that had provided the framework for its construction.³⁵ In 1964 he moved to Birmingham to establish the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) alongside Richard Hoggart, author of *The Uses of Literacy*, founding spirit of cultural studies, and an important influence on Hall's intellectual development. Hall took over as Director of the Centre in 1968.³⁶ Hall's part in the establishment and maintenance of the Centre constituted not just an extension but an intensification of his socialist agenda.³⁷ Indubitably, his affiliation with the Centre coincided with the moment of Hall's deepest encounter with Marxist theory – first with traditional 'English' Marxist critiques of orthodox Marxism, including the work of Raymond Williams and E.P. Thompson, and then with the heavyweights of Western Marxism, including Lukács, Althusser and Gramsci. The effect on cultural studies was immense. Out of this process of conceptual distillation, culture (and Marxism!) emerged all but unrecognizable to an earlier generation of Marxists – transformed from a whole way of life to a field of significations, interpellation displacing experience as the crucial mediation between politics and subjectivity.³⁸ However, this relentless ideological velocity, which he had done so much to nurture, and which had made the Centre synonymous with cutting-edge

³⁵ As late as 1992 he claimed that he still 'identified with the project of the *first* New Left.' See 'The Formation of a Diasporic Intellectual,' p. 493 (italics in original). It could be suggested that the meaning of this project was different for Hall in the nineteen nineties than it had been in the nineteen sixties. Still, the affinities between Hall's work in each period makes one hesitate before claiming that Hall was here reading the present back into the past, in the process making the project of the first New Left consonant with his increasingly post-socialist politics.

³⁶ For Hall's own account of his time in the Centre, see 'Cultural Studies and the Centre: Some Problematics and Problems,' in S. Hall et al., eds., *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies (1972-1979)* (Birmingham: CCCS, 1980), pp. 15-47 and 'Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies,' pp. 277-94. For a brilliant overview of the CCCS during Hall's directorship, see Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Britain*, pp. 141-181.

³⁷ According to Frederic Jameson, 'Cultural Studies [in Britain] ... was essentially a political project and indeed a Marxist project at that.' See F. Jameson, 'On "Cultural Studies",' *Social Text*, 34, 1993, p. 28.

³⁸ In a moment of profound understatement Richard Hoggart later recalled that under Hall's tutelage the CCCS became both more 'theoretic' and more 'political'. See M. Gibson and J. Hartley, 'Forty Years of Cultural Studies: An Interview with Richard Hoggart,' *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 1, 1, 1998, p. 19.

developments in cultural theory, prompted his resignation in 1979.³⁹ From this time until his recent retirement he worked out of the Open University as a Professor of Sociology.

Coincident with the intensification of decolonization in the Tricontinental world, and the rise of civil rights movements in various centers of metropolitan capitalism, Hall's Birmingham period witnessed not just his deepest encounter with Marxist theory but also his first systematic investigations into racism and nationalism.⁴⁰ It was during this time that "'black" was coined as a way of referencing the common experience of racism and marginalization in Britain and came to provide the organizing category of a new politics of resistance, among groups and communities with...very different histories, traditions and ethnic identities."⁴¹ This new discourse increasingly 'spoke' Hall's work. Despite the Centre's theoretical dynamism and its openness to new points of enquiry, cultural studies was initially resistant to putting critical questions of race and racism on its immediate agenda - that is, to exploring its own conditions of intellectual production, its genesis in what Hall later called 'a profoundly English or British moment.'⁴² Once again there was no necessary divorce between Hall's lived experience and Marxist theory and socialist politics. Rather the return to the conditions of his production implied reevaluating Marxism in the light of the historical experience of colonization, an experience which had reached full circle with the creation of a black diaspora in Britain. In this process, Hall brought the lived experience of race and racism, the existential reality of ethnicity to bear on the tools of historical materialism. Hall did not seek to explain his lived experience through Marxism. He brought his lived experience to Marxism in an attempt to transform its understanding of the relationship between the state, hegemony and cultural identity.

³⁹ See 'The Formation of a Diasporic Intellectual,' pp. 499-501 where he explains his reasons for leaving the Centre in 1979. See also C. Brunson, 'A Thief in the Night: Stories of Feminism in the 1970s at CCCS,' in Morley and Chen, eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, pp. 276-86.

⁴⁰ For an early example, see S. Hall, 'Black Britons,' in E. Butterworth and D. Weir, eds., *Social Problems of Modern Britain* (London, 1972). This article first appeared in *Community*, 1, 2/3, 1970.

⁴¹ Hall, 'New Ethnicities,' p. 441.

⁴² Hall, 'Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies,' p. 270. See also R. Johnson, 'What is Cultural Studies Anyway?,' *Social Text*, 16, 1986-7, p. 40.

An uncritical acceptance of Marxism thus was never constitutive of Hall's intellectual thought, not even during that period when he was most intensely engaged in working through the nexus between historical materialism and popular culture. Whether understood as a 'science of society' or a 'politics of revolution', Hall felt a continuous, conscious ambivalence in relation to Marxism. Hence, it would be wrong to suggest that Hall was at any time fully reconciled to Marxism (making Hall's 'road from Marx' unlikely), to suggest, that is, that Hall found in Marxism a homeland. It would, however, be equally erroneous to argue (as many now do) that his lived experience of colonialism, migrancy and metropolitan racism was automatically irreconcilable with a commitment to the Marxist tradition.⁴³ Indeed, like a host of exiles from the colonial periphery, Hall did find an imagined solution to his particular experience of displacement in a prospective socialist community.⁴⁴ This was a far from unlikely destination for the colonial exile.⁴⁵ What, then, made his lived experience finally irreconcilable with a commitment to Marxist politics? One answer might be found in the particular nature of British socialism. Like other 'national' socialisms, British socialism was as much nationalist as it was socialist.⁴⁶ How could Hall feel allegiance to a Marxism reconciled to (British or English) national traditions? What meaning could the 'British Road to Socialism' possibly have for a migrant from the colonial periphery?

An *English* Marxism or a *British* socialism constituted unlikely homelands for Hall. Yet it was precisely a community of this type that Hall imagined throughout the nineteen eighties. In face of a revenant conservatism, the cultural theorist consistently acknowledged the immediate need for socialists to imagine socialism in national terms, if not nationalist terms. A socialism reconciled to national identity constituted Hall's projected alternative to Thatcherism's ethnonationalism. Far from miming the organic nationalism of the New Right, he maintained that socialism had to rearticulate

⁴³ See G. Farred, 'You Can Go Home Again, You Just Can't Stay: Stuart Hall and the Cultural Diaspora,' *Research in African Literature*, 27, 4, 1996, p. 29.

⁴⁴ The most obvious antecedent response could be found in the figure of C.L.R. James. For Hall's own understanding of James's work, see S. Hall (interviewed by B. Schwarz), 'Breaking Bread with History: C.L.R. James and *The Black Jacobins*,' *History Workshop Journal*, 46, 1998, pp. 17-31.

⁴⁵ For the relationship between Marxism and colonialism, see R.J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford, 2001), especially pp. 127-139.

⁴⁶ For a review, see M. Taylor, 'Patriotism, History and the Left in Twentieth-Century Britain,' *Historical Journal*, 33, 4, 1990, pp. 971-987. See also P. Gilroy, 'The Black Atlantic as a Counterculture of Modernity,' in J. Evans Braziel and A. Mannur, eds., *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader* (Oxford, 2003), p. 62.

the meaning of national identity, rendering it commensurate with difference and tolerance. In Hall's vision, cosmopolitan socialism and organic nationalism stood equally condemned. Against both, Hall sought a "socialism" committed to, rather than dismissive of, diversity and difference.⁴⁷

But could socialism live through and with difference? Eventually Hall maintained that it could not. In a world constituted by ethnicity, socialism, he concluded, was likely to reduce cultural relations of oppression to economic relations of exploitation, forever unable to see the trees of difference for the forest of identity. By the late nineteen eighties Hall found himself not just outside the bounds of a Marxist paradigm but outside the walls of socialism *tout court*.⁴⁸ Opposite poles of the political spectrum of New Times, socialism and difference, according to him, constituted a *mésalliance* in the new century. The New Times project, in which Hall played a leading role, was sponsored by the journal *Marxism Today*, still, at this time, connected with the CPGB. Ostensibly, the project was founded to reinvigorate socialism. However, like so many other past reinvigorations of socialism, it eventually denied its object.⁴⁹

Thus New Times were bad times for socialism, despite the promises of those involved in the *Marxism Today* project. On the one hand, capital's hubris knew no limit; on the other, socialism had seen its hopes crushed.⁵⁰ At the *fin de siècle*, in what might be called the 'discoverable order of probabilities,'⁵¹ prospects for socialist revolution were nil. Socialism's world-historical defeat was accepted in intellectual circles, despite the obdurate opposition of a number of inveterate Marxists.⁵² Here

⁴⁷ S. Hall, 'The Meaning of New Times,' in Morley and Chen, eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, p. 234, which first appeared as S. Hall, 'The Meaning of New Times,' in S. Hall and M. Jacques, eds., *New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s* (London, 1989), pp. 116-34.

⁴⁸ See 'Culture and Power: An Interview with Stuart Hall,' *Radical Philosophy*, 86, 1997, p. 37 where Hall unambiguously rejects the anti-capitalist tradition of social democracy.

⁴⁹ For an account of the project and the denial, see N. Geras, 'Seven Types of Obloquy,' *Socialist Register: The Retreat of the Intellectuals* (London, 1990), pp. 1-34.

⁵⁰ This conjuncture was wonderfully evoked by Perry Anderson in his 'Renewals,' *New Left Review*, II/1, 2000, pp. 9-12.

⁵¹ See Mulhern, *Culture/Metaculture*, p. 129.

⁵² Who, incidentally, have proved most adept at illuminating Marxism's historical defeat. For a sophisticated account of Marxism's defeat from a Marxist perspective, consult P. Anderson, *The Origins of Postmodernity* (London and New York, 1998). For an account which suggests that the 'death of Marxism' is inherent in Marx's own project, see M. Desai, *Marx's Revenge: The Resurgence of Capitalism and the Death of Statist Socialism* (London and New York, 2003).

historical materialism was undermined from the Right and the 'Left'.⁵³ Thus whether on the shopfloor or in the academy, New Times constituted an apposite conjuncture in which to disavow socialism. Inhabiting what he believed to be a 'postmodern condition,' a world finally relieved of grand narratives, this was the moment when Hall, like so many others, chose to finally abandon the socialist project.⁵⁴ Epistemology offered the clue to this repudiation. Where once the reference points for Hall's thought were Marx, Althusser and Gramsci they were now Lyotard, Foucault and Derrida.⁵⁵ However, this constituted no simple act of apostasy, as many former intellectual comrades supposed.⁵⁶ Hall had always approached socialism's animating purposes at an angle, an angle informed by his lived experience of colonialism, migration and diaspora. In a post-socialist universe, the central ideological conflict, Hall claimed, was no longer between the forces of capital and labour but between two different conceptions of ethnicity – one open and one closed to difference.⁵⁷ To paraphrase Terry Eagleton, rather than moving with the times, the times had simply caught up with Hall.⁵⁸

What, then, is Hall's homeland? Clearly, it constitutes no sort of nationalist home. Nor is his imagined community coterminous with the global, at least not in the sense understood by cosmopolitan socialism. Does his imagined heimat, then, exist at a geographic and ontological level below the national, perhaps at that level of imagined human existence celebrated by contemporary postmodernism, 'the local'? In fact, Hall's imagined community includes but can not be reduced to any region of lived experience. The globe does indeed constitute one 'region' of his imagined homeland, a consequence of his belief that a 'nationalist' national identity no longer has cultural purchase as the world increasingly reflects the phenomenology of

⁵³ On the 'Left' version of this critique, consult T. Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (Oxford, 1996). The 'Right' critique, although essentially unchanged for over a century, has not received nearly enough attention from contemporary Marxists.

⁵⁴ For a prescient analysis of this intellectual conjuncture, see E. Meiksins Wood, *The Retreat from Class: A New "True Socialism"* (London, 1985). According to Bryan Palmer this disavowal has been accompanied by a 'descent into discourse'. See his *Descent into Discourse: The Reification of Language and Social History* (Toronto, 1990).

⁵⁵ See in particular S. Hall, 'The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power,' in S. Hall and B. Gieben, eds., *Formations of Modernity* (London, 1992) which is almost uncritically dependent on Foucault's work.

⁵⁶ Including Colin Sparks in his 'Stuart Hall, Cultural Studies and Marxism,' particularly pp. 88-95.

⁵⁷ For a review of Hall's contemporary position, see H. Davis, *Understanding Stuart Hall* (London, 2004), pp. 97-115.

⁵⁸ See Eagleton, 'Stuart Hall,' p. 208.

migrancy, diaspora, and cultural hybridity.⁵⁹ His felt affiliation with this 'world' can be characterized as cosmopolitan but that cosmopolitanism is not socialist. It is what Mitchell Cohen has called a rooted cosmopolitanism.⁶⁰ Dialectically connected to this global 'region' of his imagined homeland is a sense of ethnicity - the awareness of coming from somewhere.⁶¹ Ethnicity, for Hall, has nothing to do with the blood and soil of either nationalist or racist imaginings. For him, ethnicity constitutes an 'emplacement' which creates the necessary existential ground for thought and speech, constituted by *routes* rather than roots.⁶² In one sense both global and local, Hall's imagined homeland is a world free of biological and essential senses of identity, synchronous, he would maintain, with the dominant 'creole' experience of (post)modernity. Ethnicity and difference, the constituents of this world, now structure Hall's chosen response to homelessness, displacing socialism as his universal alternative to assimilation or marginality.

'Exile, far from being the fate of nearly forgotten unfortunates...[has become] something closer to a norm,' according to Edward Said, 'an experience of crossing boundaries and charting new territories in defiance of the classic canonic enclosures, however much its loss and sadness should be acknowledged and registered.'⁶³ The insight that exile prepares the transcendence of national boundaries in thought and feeling has undoubted value. In this regard, Stuart Hall is an exemplary exile.⁶⁴ Traversing the boundaries between imperial metropolis and colonial periphery, Hall's experience of displacement has facilitated an extraordinary intellectual labour. Defying the disciplinary boundaries of conventional thought, he has created new ways of thinking about the world which reflect the experience of those who live between

⁵⁹ As he has recently argued, 'in the era of globalization, we are all *becoming* diasporic.' See 'Culture and Power: Interview with Stuart Hall,' p. 34.

⁶⁰ According to Cohen, 'In a world of resurgent nationalisms ... what is needed is the fashioning of a dialectical concept of rooted cosmopolitanism, which accepts a multiplicity of roots and branches and which rests on the legitimacy of plural loyalties, of standing in many circles, but with common ground.' See M. Cohen, 'Rooted Cosmopolitanism,' in M. Walzer, ed., *Towards a Global Civil Society* (Oxford, 1995), p. 233.

⁶¹ For his conception of ethnicity see Hall, 'The New Ethnicities,' pp. 441-449.

⁶² For explication of 'routes,' see S. Hall, 'Conclusion: the Multi-Cultural Question,' in B. Hesse, ed., *Un/Settled Multiculturalisms: Diaspora, Entanglements, "Transruptions"* (London and New York, 2000), p. 216.

⁶³ E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, 1993), p. 317. Exile a norm? Unlikely. But Said's basic point remains.

⁶⁴ For the argument that 'exile' is a modernist term and 'diaspora' a post-modernist term, see N. Israel, *Outlandish: Writing between Exile and Diaspora* (Stanford, 2000), p. 17. For a similar suggestion see Eagleton, *After Theory*, p. 21.

two, three or more 'homes', who are forced by circumstances characteristic of 'late' capitalism to experience the phenomenology of 'in-betweenness'. Indeed, given the astounding dispersal of cultural studies, from the Arctic Sea to the southern cone of Latin America, from Taiwan to Australia, it can be argued that Stuart Hall has acted a large role in the creation of a discourse which 'speaks' and 'writes' us all.⁶⁵ He has, in short, mapped 'a path of exodus for future generations.'⁶⁶ In what ways has this experience been reflected in his understanding of the nexus between Marxism and nationalism? In other words, how has Hall - a figure who 'has been one of the most significant voices in the discourses of Britishness, ethnicity and multiculturalism of our post-imperial twilight'⁶⁷ - come to terms with the relationship between socialism and ethnic identity? The following sections of this chapter will track Hall's conception of this nexus through his understanding of race, nation and ethnicity.

Race and Class: Racism, Nationalism and Socialism

From the Action Française to the British National Front, cosmopolitan socialism has constituted the ideological Other of the racially imagined community, class the conceptual Other of race.⁶⁸ In whatever terms it is been historically conceived, the idea of a world of races constitutes the antipode of Marx's conception of a universal human society.⁶⁹ Indeed, the imagined community of scientific socialism supposedly echoed the biological-blindness of capital. According to Marx, capital was not just free from geographic anchorage, it was also colour-blind, uninterested in the physiology, culture and religion of those it exploited.⁷⁰ Supposing

⁶⁵ Note the transnational dimension to the collection of essays edited by Paul Gilroy, Lawrence Grossberg and Angela McRobbie, *Without Guarantees: In Honour of Stuart Hall* (London, 2000). See also 'Cultural Studies and the Politics of Internationalization: An Interview with Stuart Hall by Kuan-Hsing Chen,' in Morley and Chen, eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, pp. 392-408.

⁶⁶ See Suvin, 'Displaced Persons,' p. 121. For full consideration of the concept of 'diaspora,' so important to Hall's own work and to much contemporary cultural theory, see A. Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London and New York, 1996), particularly pp. 178-210.

⁶⁷ Eagleton, 'Stuart Hall,' p. 215.

⁶⁸ For a theoretical exegesis of this point, consult J. Gabriel and G. Ben-Tovim, 'Marxism and the Concept of Racism,' *Economy and Society*, 7, 1978, pp. 118-54.

⁶⁹ On this point, see R.N. Berki, 'On Marxian Thought and the Problem of International Relations,' *World Politics*, 24, 1971, pp. 80-105.

⁷⁰ For an echo of Marx's argument in the work of Eagleton, see his *After Theory*, pp. 18-19.

its historic nemesis to be free of national and biological prejudice, socialism thus mimed the cultural glaucoma of capital, organizing its ideological adherents on the basis of class rather than race, dismissing narrow particularisms associated with cultural oppression as either residue of pre-history or product of bourgeois mystification.⁷¹

In the wake of the explosion of theoretical and practical interest in ethnicity this thesis now appears preposterous. Consequently, this conception of historical development has been increasingly repudiated, most importantly from within the Marxist paradigm itself.⁷² According to this revisionism, Marx's conception of class and a universal socialist society was precisely the problem.⁷³ Class analysis of actually existing capitalist societies, it was argued, obfuscated other historical forms of stratification, most importantly that of race.⁷⁴ In the same way, this revisionism argued that an imagined global socialist community would necessarily sacrifice difference to solidarity, obliterating heterogeneous cultural identities in the service of a homogenizing sameness. What, then, was the relation between ethnicity and class? What was the most appropriate understanding of the nexus between solidarity and difference? From within the Marxist paradigm, it was perhaps Stuart Hall who interrogated these issues with the most intensity, ruthlessly exposing the weaknesses and strengths of historical materialism's (mis)conception of race in a series of works published in the late nineteen seventies and early nineteen eighties.⁷⁵

⁷¹ See J. Cocks, *Passion and Paradox: Intellectuals Confront the National Question* (Princeton, 2002), p. 22.

⁷² According to Paul Gilroy – still at this time operating within Marxist discourse – 'Where marxist science has stooped to provide accounts of racial conflicts, it has been at best "race-blind" and at worst eurocentric.' See his 'You Can't Fool the Youths...Race and Class Formation in the 1980s,' *Race and Class*, 23, 2/3, 1981/2, p. 207.

⁷³ For a good analysis of Marx's 'On the Jewish Question,' often taken as evidence of his racism, see A. Megill, *Karl Marx: The Burden of Reason (Why Marx Rejected Politics and the Market)* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 142-148. Megill dismisses the idea that Marx was racist.

⁷⁴ For a recent elucidation of this argument, see I. Wallerstein, *The Decline of American Power: The U.S. in a Chaotic World* (New York and London, 2003), pp. 69-99.

⁷⁵ For the argument that Marxism unambiguously informed Hall's understanding of racism in the late nineteen seventies and early nineteen eighties, see J. Solomos, 'Varieties of Marxist Conceptions of "Race," Class and the State: A Critical Analysis,' in J. Ex and D. Mason, eds., *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 89-95.

Marxism's obfuscation of ethnicity constituted the touchstone of Hall's investigation of the phenomenon of late twentieth century racism.⁷⁶ *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*, the work Hall co-authored with three other members of the CCCS in 1978, for instance, made an important attempt to rethink the nexus between class and ethnicity in late modern British society.⁷⁷ For Hall and his coauthors it was obvious that ethnicity could not be conceptualized as a reflection of the mode of production. Blacks were oppressed on the basis of class *and* race, subject to a system of social relations based on both economic exploitation and cultural subjugation. Not just exploited as workers, blacks were also oppressed on the basis of ethnicity. Objectively members of the proletariat, blacks were structured in ethnic terms which set them apart from the 'white' working class.⁷⁸ As *Policing the Crisis* put it, racial structuration reproduced a "racial division of labour" within, and as a structural feature of, the general division of labour.⁷⁹ In this sense, *Policing the Crisis* represented a critique of what Hall considered 'orthodox' Marxist conceptions of race, conceptions which, he argued, obfuscated ethnicity beneath the theoretical blanket of economism. This critique received direct expression in Hall's 1980 programmatic essay 'Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance,' where he repudiated the idea that 'those social divisions which assume a distinctively racial or ethnic character can be attributed or explained principally with reference to economic structures and processes.'⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Of course, this point can be contested. For example, according to J.C. Young, 'Communism was the first, and only, political programme to recognize the inter-relation of these different forms of domination and exploitation (class, gender and colonialism) and the necessity of abolishing all of them as the fundamental basis for the successful realization of the liberation of each.' See Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, p. 142.

⁷⁷ S. Hall, C. Critcher, T. Jefferson, J. Clarke, and B. Roberts, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order* (London, 1978). An example of the collaborative tenor of much CCCS work, this book constituted Hall's first major intellectual encounter with the black diaspora in Britain. For an overview of the context of the book's production, and a critical account of its argument, see J. Solomos et al., 'The Organic Crisis of British Capitalism and Race: The Experience of the Seventies in CCCS Race and Politics Group,' in CCCS, *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in '70s Britain* (London, 1982).

⁷⁸ Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*, p. 337 and 339. On this point, also consult H. Wolpe, 'Class Concepts, Class Struggle and Racism,' in Rex and Mason, eds., *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations*, p. 124.

⁷⁹ Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*, pp. 345-7.

⁸⁰ S. Hall, 'Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance,' in P. Essed and D. Theo Goldberg, eds., *Race Critical Theories* (Oxford and Mass., 2002) p. 39. This essay first appeared in *Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism* (Paris: UNESCO, 1980), pp. 305-45. Nearly 25 years after the publication of this essay, Hall suggested that it represented a 'text of the break,' a 'transitional text, standing poised between different conceptual paradigms.' Although he claimed that he was not aware of all the implications of this break at the time, the text 'was conscious,' he argued, 'of introducing "race" into a theoretical field from which it had been signally absent [structuralist

For Hall, however, race could not simply be added to class, as though to fix the elisions of a race-blind Marxism only required the wearing of a set of corrective spectacles. It required a new set of eyes, a new way of seeing the relation of race to the reproduction of capitalist relations of production.⁸¹ However, if race could not be elided with class nor was the position of black labour in Britain explicable without attention to the compulsive exploitations characteristic of class society. To ignore the objective position of blacks in capitalist relations of production, Hall argued, would constitute an obfuscation as disabling as that produced by economism, one likely, moreover, to reproduce social relations of racism rather than overcome them.⁸² Thus racism, according to Hall, was not just a matter of what contemporary neo-Hegelian social theory has termed 'misrecognition,' especially not given his belief that black labour constituted 'the *permanent basis of the modern industrial reserve army*.'⁸³ Relations of production were fractured by 'race relations' which in turn transformed the 'total' nature of capitalist social relations. Not just relevant to the condition of black labour, racism structured the conditions of the working class as a whole.⁸⁴ Race, according to *Policing the Crisis*, fractured the proletariat, guaranteeing a solution to Britain's crisis of economy and society that favoured the class state's fundamental existential interest: the production and reproduction of capitalist social relations.⁸⁵ 'Capital,' Hall argued elsewhere, 'contains and disables representative class institutions by neutralizing them – confining them to strategies and struggles which are race-specific, which do not surmount its limits, its barrier.'⁸⁶ Racism, in

Marxism] and of making a break with the conventional way in which race and racism had been analyzed [in both conventional Marxist and pluralist accounts]. See S. Hall, 'Reflections on "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance",' in Essed and Goldberg, eds., *Race Critical Theories*, p. 449.

⁸¹ Hall, 'Race, Articulation, and Societies in Structured in Dominance,' p. 62. On this point, also see Solomos, 'Varieties of Marxist Conceptions of "Race", State and Class,' p. 92.

⁸² See Hall's critique of 'pluralist' understandings of race in 'Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance,' p. 41.

⁸³ Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*, p. 381 (italics in the original). The concept of the 'reserve army of labour' is still utilized in contemporary explanations of racism. For an example, see I. Wallerstein, 'The Myrdal Legacy: Racism and the Underdevelopment as Dilemmas,' in Wallerstein, *Unthinking Social Science: The Limits of Nineteenth Century Paradigms* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 83-92. For an example of contemporary neo-Hegelian social thought, see C. Taylor, 'The Politics of Recognition,' in A. Gutman, ed., *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, 1994).

⁸⁴ Hall, 'Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance,' p. 62. For this type of analysis applied to the making of the metropolitan working class in a longer time-frame, see A. McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest* (London, 1993), p. 5.

⁸⁵ For a similar argument see Wolpe, 'Class Concepts, Class Struggle and Racism,' p. 124.

⁸⁶ Hall, 'Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance,' p. 63.

short, was a set of practices 'which secure the hegemony of a dominant group over a series of subordinate ones, in such a way as to dominate the whole social formation in a form favourable to the long-term development of the productive base.'⁸⁷

What insights were contributed by Hall's re-conception of the nexus between race and class? Despite the 'ontological' poverty of race, its status as a social construct rather than a naturally occurring reality, Hall's analysis of race and racism crucially illuminated the ways in which blacks were oppressed *as* blacks. In addition, he also showed how this oppression could not be alienated from material conditions of existence, that, in the words of a more recent Marxist conception, 'constructions of race and ethnicity are ... implicated in the circulation process of variable capital.'⁸⁸ 'Race,' as Hall explained, was 'the modality in which class is "lived," the medium through which class relations are experienced, the form in which it is appropriated and lived through.'⁸⁹ Indeed, for Hall the outstanding result of a racially stratified society was to disarticulate the question of ethnicity from class relations, making racism one of the primary ways the working class became divided against itself. In many cases, Hall implied, class constituted a commonality that cut across lines of ethnicity, an interest that transcended divisions instituted by racist practices. Such a conclusion would now appear strange in an epoch where ethnicity has eclipsed class as both analytic tool and source of identity. Nonetheless Hall's conception of the nexus between race and class represented a clear advance over those conceptions that either reduced ethnicity to the mode of production or which abstracted race from class relations.⁹⁰

Further advantages attached to Hall's conception of the relationship between race and capitalist relations of production. His comprehension of the nexus illuminated how capitalist globalization was constituted by both class warfare and race warfare. This was not just a matter of a global capitalism's ('white') center

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 59.

⁸⁸ D. Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2000), p. 106. On the relationship between race and capitalism, also consult H. Scott, 'Was there a time before Race? Capitalist Modernity and the Origins of Racism,' in C. Bartolovich and N. Lazarus, eds., *Marxism, Modernity, and Postcolonial Studies* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 167-182.

⁸⁹ Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*, p. 341.

⁹⁰ This advance is nicely summated by John Solomos in 'Varieties of Marxist Conceptions of Race, Class and the State: A Critical Analysis,' p. 92.

exploiting the world's ('black') periphery – a form of class/race war familiar to subaltern peoples around the globe, from tin miners in Brazil to factory workers in Indonesia. It was equally a question of the exploitation of 'peripheral' peoples within the capitalist metropolis. As the case of black labour in Britain clearly revealed, at the center of capital's empire there had emerged a class/race war that was central to the development of capitalist forces of production on a global scale. Racism, as Hall argued, was a constant and pervasive feature of the capitalist world-system, crucial to its operation, central to its production and reproduction, and vital to the maintenance of its hegemony.⁹¹ The last point can, of course, be disputed. Against Hall, it can be argued that it is precisely resistance to capital's logic that generates racism. After all, international capital gained nothing from apartheid in South Africa. The inflated price of white labour was not intrinsic to the reproduction of capitalism; in fact, it was directly contrary to its cosmopolitan interest.⁹²

For Hall, then, contrary to what Marx and Engels had predicted in the *Communist Manifesto*, it was clear that the world market had not melted ethnic particularisms into air. Indeed, as the example of black labour in Britain proved, it was clear that capital accumulation on a global scale actually worked to produce rather than abolish race war.⁹³ How could the racial structuration of capitalist social relations be overcome? How could the fracture constitutive of proletarian politics be healed? What sort of politics, in short, would abolish racism?⁹⁴ Perhaps surprisingly given his later view, transcending capitalist relations of production, for Hall, constituted the litmus test for any imagined community free of racial hierarchies. The valorization of group identity was bound to fail this test, obfuscating the irreducibly material character of racism in the context of a society dominated by private property.

⁹¹ And this on a world-wide scale according to Immanuel Wallerstein. See I. Wallerstein, *The Decline of American Power* (New York, 2003), pp. 59-60 and 85.

⁹² This is precisely why international capitalism cheered alongside everyone else, besides inveterate racists in South Africa, when apartheid fell apart towards the end of last century.

⁹³ For this argument, see S. Hall, 'Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity,' in Morley and Chen, eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, p. 436, where he suggests that capital accumulation 'operates through and because of the culturally specific character of labour power.'

⁹⁴ Recent social theory has offered two remedies for racism – either a 'politics of recognition' or a 'politics of redistribution'. See N. Fraser, 'From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a "Postsocialist" Age,' *New Left Review*, 1/212, 1995, pp. 68-93 for these two solutions.

In this register, the aim was to organize the proletariat as a whole not institutionalize the factors that divided it.⁹⁵ As Hall argued,

[capital] dominates the divided class, in part through those internal divisions which have "racism" as one of their effects. It contains and disables the representative class organizations by confining them, in part, to strategies and struggles which are race specific, which do not surmount its limits, its barriers. Through race, it continues to defeat the attempts to construct, at the political level, organizations which do in fact adequately represent the class as a whole – that is, which represent it against capitalism, against racism.⁹⁶

In a system of social relations where hegemony was secured through the production and reproduction of an ethnically stratified subaltern class, the only solution to racism was a strategy that sought to abolish both capitalism and racism. Indeed, in this view class struggle was the only appropriate solvent of both racism and class. Thus any solution which favoured 'identity politics' to the exclusion of 'class politics' was likely to reify difference based on ethnicity rather than erase it.⁹⁷

The organization of the working class beyond ethnicity implied the subjection of difference to solidarity. In other words, if only class struggle could abolish racism, then such a strategy would privilege the abolition rather than the celebration of difference. However, this represented only one register in Hall's analysis of racism in the late nineteen seventies and early nineteen eighties. In another register he imagined valorization of difference rather than its erosion as crucial to any imagined socialist strategy that sought to undermine ethnic hierarchies. In this view, class struggle would abolish class, racial struggle would abolish race. A product of his belief in the 'relative autonomy' of the cultural and political superstructures, in this register Hall maintained that blacks constituted a marginalized group whose

⁹⁵ See Hall, 'Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance,' pp. 62-3.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 63. This idea first appeared in Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*, p. 395. See also Hall, 'Pluralism, Race and Class in Caribbean Society,' in *Race and Class in Post-Colonial Society* (Paris: UNESCO, 1978), p. 179.

⁹⁷ A socialist politics, of course, need not reduce difference to solidarity but can operate through difference in the search for a new conception of human solidarity. On this point, see T. Eagleton, 'Five Types of Identity and Difference,' in D. Bennett, ed., *Multicultural States: Rethinking Difference and Identity* (Oxford, 1998), p. 52.

subjugation was a product of a specific conception of ethnic valorization. In this view, rectification required a politics of recognition.⁹⁸ For example, *Policing the Crisis* often figured black cultural identity as a sufficient means by which black labour could transcend the objective racial and class conditions of its existence, conceptualizing the black diaspora's rediscovery of 'Africanness' as an important moment in resistance to racism.⁹⁹ In other places he argued that the ideological production of the category 'black,' and the way subjects were produced by ideologies, constituted the *primary* mechanism by which people struggled over the conditions of their existence. Here the re-articulation of the meaning of 'black' provided an adequate barrier to the production and reproduction of racial hierarchies.¹⁰⁰

Hall, then, offered conflicting solutions to the problem of racism. In one mind he maintained that identity politics obscured the class fracture within capitalist society - only class struggle would dissolve racial stratification. The solution to racism in this view involved the organization of both white and black labour as a class, the transcendence of ethnic divisions within the proletariat. Hence 'race-specific' forms of struggle did not constitute a barrier to the reproduction of a racially-stratified society. However, in a contrary mind Hall maintained that, in combination with class struggle, 'black power' politics, the valorization of ethnicity, was not just sufficient but necessary to any transformation of racial and class relations.¹⁰¹ In this view, 'black power' constituted an adequate means to redress racism.¹⁰² At times, indeed, in this mind Hall came close to arguing that only 'black power' would abolish racism and

⁹⁸ For Hall's understanding of the relationship between different levels in capitalist social formations, see Hall, 'Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance,' p. 53.

⁹⁹ Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*, p. 356 for an example of this. But it should be pointed out that Hall and his co-authors maintained that 'black consciousness' constituted a 'proto-political consciousness' that could not be mistaken 'for organized political class struggle and practice.' See *ibid.*, p. 379.

¹⁰⁰ See the argument in S. Hall, 'Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates,' *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 2, 2, 1985, pp. 109-112.

¹⁰¹ Indeed, at times, each register was present simultaneously. 'A great deal of political mobilization in recent years in the Caribbean,' Hall argued, 'has been conducted under the slogans of "Black Power" and the mediation of "ethnic" concepts like this one [blackness], in the formation and mobilization of consciousness, is profound, specific and not to be dissolved. However, since, in the adopted "black" rhetoric of independence-nationalism "black" includes "coloureds" (it has so to speak been socially and politically redefined), to take this at face value would imply the solidarity of interests (however defined) between the black rural proletariat or the black lumpen-classes of the cities and "black bourgeoisie".' See Hall, 'Pluralism, Race and Class in Caribbean Society,' p. 179. Hall, indeed, never synthesized his anti-racist strategy in the context of world politics. For, of course, in the nineteen seventies in Britain there was no black bourgeoisie, whereas there was a black bourgeoisie in the Caribbean.

¹⁰² See, in particular, Hall, 'Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance,' p. 64.

class. Could these two types of politics be reconciled? Could one have simultaneously solidarity and difference?

Hall failed to offer a synthesis capable of answering these questions.¹⁰³ More recent social theorists have been more forthcoming. Whether advocating class politics or identity politics, the incompatibility of a politics of recognition and a politics of redistribution has constituted the *leitmotiv* of contemporary socialist theory. Solidarity and difference, it has been concluded, constitute contradictory forms of politics.¹⁰⁴ Thus Hall's failure to finally reconcile solidarity and difference in a coherent socialist politics should not constitute reason for dismissing the value of his attempt to imagine one – no other socialist politics has emerged able to transcend the seemingly intractable contradiction between solidarity and difference. On the one hand his emphasis upon 'black power' underlied the potential problems involved in an appeal to a 'common humanity'. Oppressed as blacks, it was arguable that blacks could only resist their subjugation through a 'race-specific' form of politics. On the other hand his appeal to a politics based on the abolition of difference represented an important reminder that only a class-based movement would be capable of undermining a system of social relations based on both class and race. Solidarity not difference, in this view, would prevent the reproduction of ethnic divisions. Thus the value of difference is the revelation of the ontology of oppression; the value of identity the revelation of forms of human solidarity beyond ethnicity. Can a politics be imagined which synthesizes the insights of a politics based on difference and a politics based on identity? As Terry Eagleton has succinctly suggested: 'Any emancipatory politics must begin with the specific ... but must in the same gesture leave it behind.'¹⁰⁵ Thus we must attend to difference while in the same moment

¹⁰³ For an exception, see N. Fraser, 'Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition, and Participation,' in N. Fraser and A. Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political Philosophical Exchange* (London and New York, 2003), pp. 7-109.

¹⁰⁴ See E.M. Wood, 'Capitalism and Human Emancipation: Race, Gender and Democracy,' in Wood, *Democracy against Capitalism* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 26 and A. Honneth, 'Integrity and Disrespect: Principle of a Conception of Morality based on the Theory of Recognition,' *Political Theory*, 20, 2, 1992.

¹⁰⁵ T. Eagleton, 'Nationalism: Irony and Commitment,' in T. Eagleton et al., *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature* (Minn., 1990), p. 30. On the importance of 'universalism' to any emancipatory politics, see N. Lazarus, S. Evans, A. Arnove, and A. Menke, 'The Necessity of Universalism,' *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 7, 1, 1995, pp. 75-145. For the argument that universalism does not necessarily equal Eurocentrism, see P. Bhanu Meta, 'Cosmopolitanism and the Circle of Reason,' *Political Theory*, 28, 5, 2000, p. 633.

transcending it. To our great detriment, socialism has not yet imagined how this might be done.

Crucial to Hall's understanding of racism was his revision of the 'classical' Marxist concept of ideology. It has been commonly asserted that the dominant Marxist response to the real conditions of a racially structured existence is to suggest that racism constitutes pernicious false consciousness. Hall explicitly repudiated the argument that racism constituted an ideology in the sense of a distorted conception of an individual's relationship to their real conditions of existence.¹⁰⁶ The point, for him, was not whether an ideology was 'true' or 'false' but whether it resonated in certain social situations. To be effective, Hall argued, ideologies must resonate with ordinary people's experiential reality.¹⁰⁷ In a neutral formulation of the concept, he argued that ideology constituted 'those images, concepts and premises which provide the frameworks through which we represent, interpret, understand and "make sense" of some aspect of social existence.'¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, as systems of representation by which subjects live their imaginary relation to their real conditions of existence, ideologies, Hall argued, had no direct or necessary correspondence with class position.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, the genesis of ideology would not be found in material interests or in reality but in imagined relations. Reversing 'conventional' understandings of the

¹⁰⁶ According to Hall, 'the encounter between British cultural studies and marxism ... was located and sited in a necessary and prolonged and as yet unending contestation with the question of false consciousness.' See his *Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies*, p. 265. The rejection of a conception of ideology as false consciousness is not uncommon among Marxists. For examples, see A. Callinicos, *Marxism and Philosophy* (Oxford, 1985), p. 134 and G. Therborn, *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology* (London, 1980), p. 5.

¹⁰⁷ See Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*, p, pp. 244-46.

¹⁰⁸ S. Hall, 'The Whites of their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media,' In G. Bridges and R. Brunt, eds., *Silver Linings* (London, 1981), p. 31. See also S. Hall, 'The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees,' in B. Matthews, ed., *Marx 100 Years On* (London, 1983), p. 26 and Hall, 'Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Poststructuralist Debates,' p. 101 for other examples of Hall's definition of ideology along these lines. Essentially there are two conceptions of ideology: critical and neutral. For this distinction see J. Larrain, 'Stuart Hall and the Marxist Concept of Ideology,' in Morley and Chen, eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, pp. 47-70.

¹⁰⁹ The idea that class position automatically gives rise to class subjects was a constant false enemy of Hall's work. Capitalism creates workers not a unified working class imbued with a socialist ideology. At one time Hall himself understood this. See Hall, 'Pluralism, Race and Class in Caribbean Society,' p. 177. Given his understanding of the Marxist tradition outlined here it is a wonder that he so often used a false Marxist enemy – objective class position automatically produces a certain type of class politics – in the construction of his arguments. For an example of Hall's use of this false enemy, see 'The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees,' p. 42.

relationship between subjectivity and ideology, he argued that it is not subjects who generate ideologies but ideologies which generate subjects.¹¹⁰

Essentially, Hall's repudiation of false consciousness derived increasingly from his belief that 'black power' or identity politics was crucial to the struggle against racism. Commensurate with this assertion went the idea that nationalism, perhaps the exemplary form of identity politics, was crucial to any coherent conception of anti-racism struggle. Thus Hall's revision of the concept of ideology acted an important role in his understanding of the nexus between racism and nationalism. There have been two broad interpretations of this nexus.¹¹¹ In one view, racism and nationalism are conceived as fundamentally distinct, the relation between the two ideologies understood as one of kind not degree.¹¹² Against this interpretation, it has been argued that racism constitutes a necessary component of nationalism.¹¹³ In the esoteric language favoured by French philosophers, Etienne Balibar has argued that racism stands as '*a supplement internal to nationalism*, always in excess of it, but always indispensable to its constitution and yet always still insufficient to achieve its project.'¹¹⁴ The absence of anything like a consensus on the nexus between nationalism and racism reveals the complexity of the subject.

For Hall, racism was not a necessary component of nationalism, despite the deep imbrication of race in nationalist politics in the context of Britain in the nineteen seventies. Hall made this argument manifest through the Gramscian concept of the 'national-popular', a key feature of his understanding of the *via media* by which the current historical bloc (the New Right) had established its hegemony over

¹¹⁰ As Hall admitted, much of his understanding of the relationship between ideology and subjectivity – and indeed the idea that there was no necessary relationship between class position and ideology – was taken from the work of Laclau and Mouffe, in particular E. Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* (London, 1977).

¹¹¹ For a review of some classic interpretations of this question, see R. Miles, 'Recent Marxist Theories of Nationalism and the Issue of Racism,' *British Journal of Sociology*, 38, 1, 1987, pp. 24-43.

¹¹² B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition (London and New York, 1991), p. 149.

¹¹³ Tom Nairn once found himself arguing along these lines. See his *The Break-up of Britain* (London, 1981), pp. 273-8.

¹¹⁴ E. Balibar, 'Racism and Nationalism,' in Balibar and I. Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London and New York, 1991), p. 54. For an argument which builds upon Balibar's thesis, see J. Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe, Zizek* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 202-3.

subordinated social groups.¹¹⁵ An important feature of this hegemony had been a reinvigorated conservatism's ability to constitute a certain Other – what Enoch Powell had called 'the enemy within' – against which a conception of Englishness could be constructed.¹¹⁶ It did not, Hall argued, have to be this way. Racism was not the necessary ground of national identity. Hall's belief in the non-necessary relationship between nationalism and racism explains much about his assessment of the value of nationhood to socialist strategy. Given his anti-racism it is possible that Hall would have advocated some sort of universal solution to the problem of racism. Indeed, this is a plausible interpretation of his understanding of racism, at least in one register of his analysis of the relationship between ethnicity and class. Overwhelmingly, however, Hall rejected 'universalism' as a solution to the problems of racism and nationalism. For him, the task of socialists was not to efface difference but to rearticulate the very notion of national identity, rendering it consonant with socialist values.¹¹⁷ It was this argument which provided the framework of Hall's notion of the appropriate strategy for socialism in the face of Thatcherism.¹¹⁸ Hall's understanding of the role of a certain conception of Englishness in Thatcherism's hegemonic project will constitute the subject of the next section of this chapter.

Socialism and National Identity: Thatcherism, Englishness and 'the People'

Hall's recognition that Thatcherism constituted an ideology designed to not just win government but to build a new civilization was the outstanding feature of his analysis of a reinvigorated conservatism. To approach Thatcherism as merely a political programme whose ambition was to capture state power, he argued,

¹¹⁵ See S. Hall 'Popular-Democratic vs. Authoritarian Populism: Two Ways of "Taking Democracy Seriously",' in A. Hunt, ed., *Marxism and Democracy* (London, 1980), pp. 145-6 where he suggests that Thatcherism has made 'the interpellations of "nation" and "national cultures/alien cultures", of "our people", ... the respectable signifiers of a new cultural racism.'

¹¹⁶ Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*, p. 338.

¹¹⁷ See in particular Hall, 'The Whites of their Eyes,' p. 31; Hall, 'Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity,' p. 439; and Hall, 'Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Poststructuralist Debates,' p. 112.

¹¹⁸ Hall, 'The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees,' p. 44.

constituted a misinterpretation of its nature.¹¹⁹ Thatcherism's ultimate aim was not 'power,' in the sense of power attained through winning elections, but hegemony, 'that process,' as Terry Eagleton has explained, 'whereby the particular subject so introjects a universal law as to consent to its imperatives in the form of consenting to his own deepest beliefs.'¹²⁰ Thus Thatcherism had sought to colonize civil society in order to make its own political ascendancy not only more complete but more permanent.¹²¹ Its success, then, was based on its ability to constitute itself as the framework or structure through which people defined social existence.

Unlike orthodox Marxism, according to Hall, the New Right understood that power was not concentrated in any 'Winter Palace' nor rooted in any 'economic base.' Uniquely, according to Hall, Thatcherism recognized that power was dispersed throughout society and that the ability to construct 'common sense' was an indispensable prologue to the creation of a new social order.¹²² In other words, the New Right understood that political interests were constructed not given, that the correspondence between class and politics was contingent not necessary, and that the ability to define the meaning of 'common sense' constituted a triumph more momentous than any electoral victory. By fighting against its enemies on a number of 'fronts,' by winning allegiance for its hegemonic project in the trenches and ditches of civil society, by securing victory, that is, in 'ideological struggle,' Thatcherism sought a more lasting form of authority which enabled the construction of a new 'national-popular culture'.¹²³

¹¹⁹ For his most complete account of this argument, see his 'The Battle for Socialist Ideas in the 1980s,' in Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (London, 1980), pp. 191-2. This essay first appeared in *Socialist Register 1982* (London, 1982). For Hall's earliest (before Thatcher even came to power) recognition of this fact, see Hall, 'Popular-Democratic vs. Authoritarian Populism: Two Ways of Taking Democracy Seriously,' in *The Hard Road to Renewal*, p. 126 and Hall, 'The Great Moving Right Show,' in *ibid.*, p. 43. 'The Great Moving Right Show' first appeared in *Marxism Today*, January, 1979.

¹²⁰ T. Eagleton, 'Nationalism: Irony and Commitment,' in Eagleton et al., *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature* (Minn., 1990), p. 32. For Hall's own various descriptions of 'hegemony,' see 'Popular-Democratic vs. Authoritarian-Populism: Two Ways of Taking Democracy Seriously,' p. 133 and 'Authoritarian Populism: A Reply to Jessop et al.,' in *The Hard Road to Renewal*, p. 155. This essay first appeared in *New Left Review*, I/151, 1985.

¹²¹ For Hall's account of Thatcherite political strategy, see 'The Culture Gap,' in *The Hard Road to Renewal*, p. 213 and 'Gramsci and Us,' in *ibid.*, p. 168. 'The Culture Gap' first appeared in *Marxism Today*, January, 1984 and 'Gramsci and Us' first appeared in *Marxism Today*, June, 1987.

¹²² For this idea, derived from Gramsci, see *ibid.*, p. 170.

¹²³ For Hall's most extensive account of 'national-popular culture,' see his 'Notes on Deconstructing "the Popular",' pp. 236-7. For this idea in relation to Thatcherism, see S. Hall, 'The Toad in the Garden:

Hall's 'Gramscian' conception of Thatcherism as a 'hegemonic project' constituted not just a strikingly original analysis of the political terrain in an advanced capitalist society but a unique example of cultural politics at work. His analysis of neo-liberalism, that is, at the same time constituted a counter-hegemonic exercise that sought to eviscerate Thatcherite ascendancy. Pivotal to Thatcherism's prestige, Hall claimed, was its ability to create a hegemonic definition of nationhood. Hegemony, in this view, was dependent on the success of any particular political ideology to imagine the nation as commensurate with itself, to construct 'the people' in its own image, and its concomitant ability to render its ideological enemies as 'alien' Others. In this way, Hall argued, national identity was absolutely vital to political hegemony.

It was in the region of 'ideological struggle' that national identity – what he called a 'root image' – had been fundamental to Thatcherism's hegemonic project.¹²⁴ On the terrain of ideological struggle a reinvigorated conservatism had not simply cajoled 'the people' into an acceptance of its vision of a new civilization. It had actually constructed 'the people' in its own image, rendering them complicit with Thatcherism's own conception of the social order. New Right ideological warriors, Hall argued, had made Englishness consonant with a certain conception of the nexus between labour and capital, with a certain understanding of the relationship between the state and the market, and with a certain attitude toward difference and 'otherness'.¹²⁵ To be English was to be against trade unions and for private enterprise, against state intervention in the economy and for free markets, against tolerance of Others and for a 'white' conception of national identity.¹²⁶ In brief, the New Right had mastered the semantic struggle against socialism to make things mean – it had won the battle 'to speak to and for "the nation"'.¹²⁷ Imagining a racial or ethnic identity as

Thatcherism among the Theorists,' in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Champaign, 1988), p. 55.

¹²⁴ Hall, 'The Battle for Socialist Ideas,' pp. 191-2.

¹²⁵ This is what Hall had earlier termed 'authoritarian populism'. See his 'Popular-Democratic vs. Authoritarian-Populism: Two Ways of Taking Democracy Seriously,' p. 127 and 144 and his 'The Great Moving Right Show,' p. 42 for an account of this idea.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 49, Hall, 'The Battle for Socialist Ideas,' p. 192 and Hall, 'The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism among the Theorists,' p. 39-40.

¹²⁷ Hall, 'The Culture Gap,' p. 212. See also Hall, 'The Battle for Socialist Ideas,' p. 188. This understanding of the articulation of nationhood with a hegemonic ideology can be found in E. Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism* (London, 1979). Hall repeatedly acknowledged his debt to this work.

constitutive of the national community, Thatcherism had transformed neo-liberalism into the blood that flowed through the veins of 'the [white Anglo-Saxon] people'.

Socialism's semantic adroitness in rendering 'nationalness' pliant to its objectives, Hall maintained, was unequivocally paramount to any future socialist ascendancy. How could socialism combat the hegemony of the New Right? Foremost, according to Hall, socialism had to engage Thatcherism in the battle of ideas surrounding those root images and values which were crucial to political ascendancy, particularly national identity. Socialism had to make itself the ventriloquist of 'the people,' not by simply miming their words but by implanting socialist ideas in their heads. In short, socialism had to construct popular identity in such a way as to provide an alternative to Thatcherism's definition of who and what 'the people' are. As Hall argued, socialism had to 'command the common sense of the age in order to educate and transform it, to make common sense, the ordinary everyday thoughts of the majority of the population, move in a socialist rather than a reactionary direction.'¹²⁸

In this 'socialist-nationalist' register, the nation did not have a meaning eternally hostile to socialism, nationalism did not always constitute a pernicious form of bourgeois hegemony, and the national culture did not inevitably signify the interests of the expropriators. National identity, according to Hall, was a contested political discourse, a contingent framework of social existence open to different meanings and purposes that could be liberated from an association with the interests of the possessing class.¹²⁹ As we have seen this was also Thompson's view, and, in at least one of their minds, Hobsbawm's and Williams's too. Thus nationhood could be reconciled with socialism, the meaning of nationalism could be invested with a purpose antagonistic to the interests of the bourgeoisie, and national culture could be rendered synonymous with democracy and tolerance. In Hall's 'Introduction' to *The Hard Road to Renewal*, a collection of his most significant contributions to an analysis of Thatcherism, he made the task of socialism transparent: 'The left cannot

¹²⁸ Hall, 'The Battle for Socialist Ideas in the 1980s,' p. 195.

¹²⁹ For a short history of this idea in socialist thought in Britain, see M. Taylor, 'Patriotism, History and the Left in Britain,' *Historical Journal*, 33, 4, 1990, p. 974. Hall's idea of nationalism here drew on Bhaktin's understanding of the 'the sign' as a site of class struggle. For a direct expression of Hall's respect for Bhaktin's work, see 'The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism among the Theorists'.

hope to contest the ground of Thatcherism without attending to these cultural questions [national identity, foremost among them], without conducting a "politics" of the subjective moment, of identity, and without a conception of the subjects of its project, those who it is making socialism *for* and *with*.¹³⁰

Thus against an organicist conception of nationhood, and in terms borrowed from Benedict Anderson's now almost-hegemonic definition, Hall consistently defined the nation as an 'imagined community'.¹³¹ For Hall, like a growing number of contemporary theorists of nationalism, the nation was a 'cultural artefact'.¹³² As a 'cultural artefact,' or, as Hall might have termed it, a 'cultural form,'¹³³ the nation constituted an 'empty signifier' whose signification was determined by ideological struggle.¹³⁴ Hence nationhood was the creation (the word is precisely appropriate) of subjective imagining and had neither an intrinsic meaning nor an immutable sociology.¹³⁵ Politically indeterminate and sociologically contingent, nationhood, Hall argued, was always open to articulation and disarticulation on the terrain of ideological contest. Irrespective of past articulations, what the national *communitas* meant would be decided by the will-to-power of ideological combatants in struggle.¹³⁶ As he repeatedly suggested, the discourse of national identity did not belong 'intrinsically to any class'¹³⁷ and the 'work of ideological struggle is...equivalent to the work of articulating/disarticulating discourses [like the discourse of national identity] from their previously secured position in an ideological field.'¹³⁸ In Hall's view, then, imagining the national community was part of a political process in which politics

¹³⁰ Hall, 'Introduction: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left,' p. 8.

¹³¹ For Benedict Anderson's definition of nation as an 'imagined political community,' see Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 6-7. For Hall's own use of this description of the nation, see Hall, 'Introduction: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left,' p. 8; and for an early example of Hall's use of Anderson's definition see his 'Gramsci and Us,' p. 167. Alan Finlayson makes the same point about Hall's understanding of nation in his 'Ideology, Discourse and Nationalism,' *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 3, 1, 1998, p. 109.

¹³² Benedict Anderson describes the nation as a 'cultural artefact' in *Imagined Communities*, p. 4.

¹³³ See Hall, 'Notes on Deconstructing "the Popular",' p. 237.

¹³⁴ For the nation as 'empty signifier,' see B. Jenkins, 'Socialism, National Identity and Nationalism: Contribution to the Theoretical Discussion,' *Journal of Area Studies*, 5, 1982, pp. 14-15. The description perfectly fits Hall's understanding of nationhood.

¹³⁵ For a slightly later expression of this view, see S. Hall, 'The Question of Cultural Identity,' in S. Hall, D. Held and T. McGrew, eds., *Modernity and Its Futures* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 292.

¹³⁶ Hall's 'Nietzscheanism' was refracted through the work of Foucault. See Hall, 'The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism among the Theorists.'

¹³⁷ For this idea, see Hall, 'Notes on Deconstructing "the Popular",' p. 238 and 'Gramsci and Us,' p. 167.

¹³⁸ Hall, 'Popular-Democratic vs. Authoritarian Populism: Two Ways of "Taking Democracy Seriously",' p. 139.

could be understood as a form of theatre - in his own words, 'as a production'.¹³⁹ In this register, national identity was conceived as a blank canvass on which ideological artists, unfettered by determinate structures, were free to create their own conception of Englishness.

The prime importance of Hall's understanding of nationhood was the emphasis he placed on nationalism's power to fulfill people's emotional need for identity. Unlike so many other Marxists, including, it has been argued, Marx himself, Hall understood nationalism's 'profound emotional legitimacy'.¹⁴⁰ This was no small advance. Able to explain nationhood's functionality for industry, Marxists had been rendered mute, at least according to Perry Anderson, before nationality's affective spell. Thus Hall's singularly sensitive awareness of 'the strength of national bonds'¹⁴¹ provided a pertinent if belated corrective to Marxism's 'scientific' dismissal of people's 'sensuous need' for national belonging.¹⁴² This view was consonant with the view of both Williams and Thompson in particular - although not with Hobsbawm who argued that socialists needed to take note of nationalism as fact not because it fulfilled a deep human need. Hall, like Thompson and Williams, believed that a whole area of human experience which was associated with feeling, emotion and need must be marshalled for socialist ends. To this a further advantage attached. Hall's aestheticized conception of national identity awakened recognition of the nexus between national identity and a sense of history. Consequently, Hall repeatedly exhorted socialists to recover socialism's history, a history where radicals had been able to imagine the nation and national identity in socialist terms.¹⁴³ It was a salutary reminder.¹⁴⁴ An imagined community commensurate with socialism, Hall believed, could only be imagined through the *via media* of a conception of the past where

¹³⁹ See Hall, 'Gramsci and Us,' p. 169.

¹⁴⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 4.

¹⁴¹ See G.A. Cohen, *History, Labour, and Freedom: Themes from Marx* (Oxford, 1988), n. 24, p. 146.

¹⁴² For the problems associated with the cosmopolitan socialist solution, see J. Dunn, 'Unimagined Communities: The Deceptions of Socialist Cosmopolitanism,' in J. Dunn, *Rethinking Modern Political Theory* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 105. For the preference among some Marxists to talk of internationalism rather than cosmopolitanism, see A. Colas, 'Putting Cosmopolitanism into Practice: the Case of Socialist Internationalism,' *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, 23, 3, 1994, p. 519. For the argument that socialists can't even transcend the nation in theory, see P. James, 'The Janus Faces of History: Cleaving Marxist Theories of Nation and Nationalism,' *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*, 18, 1991, pp. 13-24. For a defence of socialist cosmopolitanism, see W. Breckman and L. Trägårdh, 'Nationalism, Individualism, and Capitalism: Reply to Greenfeld,' *Critical Review*, 10, 1996, pp. 389-407.

¹⁴³ See Hall, 'Gramsci and Us,' p. 132.

¹⁴⁴ For Hall's own discussion of this, see his 'The Empire Strikes Back,' p. 72.

national identity was commensurate with popular liberty. In making this argument, Hall, like Thompson and Williams, had made an important attempt to appropriate emotion and feeling for the Left.

By counseling socialists to combat Thatcherism's interpretation of national identity, with an alternative assimilated to radical rather than conservative values, Hall was reminding socialist ideologues of the persistent emotional affect of national belonging. He was also providing socialists with an apposite reminder that socialist universalism would only be incarnated in particular societies, that national communities constituted the geographic arc of any imagined socialism.¹⁴⁵ Aware of socialism's dependence on national embodiment, that 'there is no way of being human which is not *a way of being human*,'¹⁴⁶ Hall attempted to fashion an imagined nation that rejected the conventional exclusions and malefactions of nationalist communities. In this way, Hall attempted to appropriate nationhood for international socialism, just as Williams and Thompson had done. An imagined community defined without reference to essentialist conceptions of ethnicity, without allegiance to any particularist conception of liberty and fraternity, without need of constructing internal or external enemies – this was the particular nature of Hall's imagined socialist national community.¹⁴⁷ In this register, Hall took seriously the *Communist Manifesto's* claim that the proletariat 'must rise to be the leading class of the nation.'¹⁴⁸

The advantages attaching to Hall's analysis of nation and nationalism appear obvious. How could the Left ignore the emotional appeal of patriotism? How could the Left hope to win power without offering a vision of what the national community meant? Weren't Hall's exhortations to socialists justified?¹⁴⁹ Perhaps. If there was

¹⁴⁵ On the dialectic between universalism and particularism, see M. Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defence of Pluralism and Equality* (New York, 1983), pp. 28-31.

¹⁴⁶ Cohen, *History, Labour, and Freedom*, p. 146 (italics in original). Cohen's argument nicely mimes Hall's later suggestion that 'you have to position yourself *somewhere* in order to say anything at all.' See Hall, 'Ethnicity: Identity and Difference,' p. 347 (italics in original).

¹⁴⁷ For this 'pluralist' understanding of the nation, see C. Calhoun, 'Nationalism and Civil Society: Democracy, Diversity and Self-Determination,' in C. Calhoun, ed., *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity* (Oxford, 1994), p. 325. This is an alternative at least as utopian as cosmopolitan socialism.

¹⁴⁸ And Franz Fanon's claim that 'national consciousness...is the only thing that will give us an international dimension.' See Fanon, 'On National Culture,' in Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York, 1963), p. 247.

¹⁴⁹ Was Hall so keenly aware of the value of national community because he precisely lacked any attachment to one? This is an interesting question. A positive answer would perhaps supply a solution

something valuable in Hall's analysis of the relationship between national identity and political hegemony, then there was nothing new about it. His recommendation that socialists give the national community a socialist inflection was redolent of the popular front strategy of the post-'class against class' Comintern and the CPGB's immediate post-war manifesto, *The British Road to Socialism*. And from an even more contiguous period, his exhortations mimed the socialist strategy of the 'first' New Left, evidenced best in the early writings of E.P. Thompson. In short, the idea that socialism must win the nation was as old as socialism itself.¹⁵⁰ Exhorting socialist ideologues to remember their ideology's past, this was one part of socialism's history that Hall had arguably failed to learn. The history of popular fronts, Anderson argued, has been characterized by defeat not triumph, the past of national roads to socialism has been paved with socialist accommodation rather than advances, and the history of socialism's engagement with nationalism, according to Hobsbawm, has involved socialism's obliteration rather than nationalism's domestication.¹⁵¹

In light of this history, Hall might have made an argument for why current vicissitudes favoured resurrection of the view that socialism and nationalism could be reconciled. No justification of such a reprise was forthcoming. Context might possibly provide reason for this absence. Given socialism's crisis, (orthodox) Marxism's final death, and the consequent potency of the New Right, Hall could likely imagine no other probable future for socialism. However an alternative contextualization of socialism's world-historical predicament might have favoured a conclusion antagonistic to Hall's. An epoch which had witnessed virulent neo-liberal attacks on the welfare state, the commodification of national defence, and the increasing internationalization of the forces of production might have led to the argument that socialism's only future was cosmopolitan.¹⁵² It is ironic, then, that it was against an ideology – Thatcherism – which precisely exemplified these trends that Hall came to represent a position – socialist nationalism – at its opposite pole.

to why Hall, more than any other socialist during the nineteen eighties, argued in favour of the utility of national identity to any imagined socialist project.

¹⁵⁰ For the British context, consult P. Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack: Englishness, Patriotism and the British Left, 1881-1924* (Woodbridge, 1998). For a broader account, see M. Forman, *Nationalism and the International Labor Movement: The Idea of the Nation in Socialist and Anarchist Theory* (Penns., 1998).

¹⁵¹ Perry Anderson has neatly summarized this history. See P. Anderson, 'The Age of EJH,' *London Review of Books*, 24, 19, 2002.

¹⁵² This is the conclusion of David Harvey. See his *Spaces of Hope*, p. 33.

Hall's conception of nations as imagined communities involved further risks. Hall's aestheticized conception of national identity might have provided illumination of what Gavin Kitching has called the 'passion of nationalism,'¹⁵³ but it was blind to the mystificatory aspects of the phenomenon which Marxism had proved so adept at confounding. Above all, Hall's conception of the nation as 'imagined community' risked both de-materializing and de-historicizing nationhood. The obverse operations have constituted the *raison d'être* of (most) Marxist analyses of the national question – (the historicizing manoeuvre) on the one hand undermining the fallacious nationalist claim that nations were eternal and primordial, and, (the material contextualization manoeuvre) on the other, pointing to nationality's role in the development of capitalist globalization.¹⁵⁴ For Hobsbawm the nation was not simply a cultural artefact – certainly not an 'empty signifier!' - but a material reality exemplified in the national economy, the welfare state, and the warfare state. It can be argued that these two points constitute the indisputable achievement of the Marxist conception of the national question, although, of course, they are not Marxism's achievements alone.¹⁵⁵ Thus Hall's failure to acknowledge the historical and material context of national identity risked providing comfort to organic nationalism.

In addition, at a strategic level, it can be argued that Hall's 'instrumental nationalism' promoted a too sanguine picture of how a national community could be inflected with socialist meaning. If national communities were just a matter of imagination then there was no structural barrier to imagining them in socialist terms. But this was not all they were, as Marxists from Eric Hobsbawm to Tom Nairn had been well aware. What else they were – material realities independent of our signification of them - were precisely those things which might render the nation

¹⁵³ G. Kitching, 'Nationalism: The Instrumentalist Passion,' *Capital and Class*, 1987, pp. 98-115.

¹⁵⁴ The list is too large to detail. Hopefully this thesis as a whole has well elucidated the significant successes involved with the Marxist answer to the national question. For a short introduction to these issues, see M. van der Linden, 'The National Imagination of European Working Classes (1987-1914): Exploring the Causal Configuration,' *International Review of Social History*, 33, 1988, pp. 285-311.

¹⁵⁵ Relevant here, of course, is the work of Ernst Gellner, in particular, his *Nations and Nationalism* (London, 1983). But also see A. Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism: Power, Property and the State* (London, 1981).

impervious to socialist inflection.¹⁵⁶ The 'idealist' appropriation of the nation as imagined community risked obfuscating the 'particularistic mystique' - not love of country but hatred of others – which has been so central to the political purchase, the sociological opaqueness, and the deep emotional appeal of the nation.¹⁵⁷ As one late Marxist commentator has concluded, despite the problematic nature of historical materialism's account of the national question, 'Marxism's underlying suspicion of the humanity of nationalism, the suspicion that it buys its love with hate, its solidarity with exclusiveness, and its intensity of feeling with a narrowness of sympathy and understanding, ...was not mistaken.'¹⁵⁸ In this view, socialism, an ideology of love, could have no truck with national belonging, no matter how lovingly it was imagined.¹⁵⁹

The hazards attached to Hall's understanding of nationhood can be extended. Product of his belief that capitalist societies were fractured not by the division between the expropriators and the expropriated but by the division between 'the people' and the power bloc, Hall's imagined community risked obfuscating the animating purpose of socialist discourse, as Hobsbawm had argued.¹⁶⁰ It also imperiled the valuable insights associated with the Marxist conception of nationalism as a form of ideology. In this view, as Jorge Larrain has suggested in relation to Thatcherism, ethnicity and nationality 'serve as devices to misunderstand and displace' the real origins of social conflict.¹⁶¹ This was the view of Williams at the time. Thus

¹⁵⁶ Hall often seemed to imply that nations could be imagined in any way ideological warriors wanted. He thus obfuscated the constraints on discursive construction. For this point in relation to discourse theory more generally, see Eagleton, *Ideology*, pp. 204-5.

¹⁵⁷ G. Balakrishnan, 'The National Imagination,' in G. Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation* (London and New York, 1996), pp. 204-13.

¹⁵⁸ G. Kitching, 'Nationalism: The Instrumentalist Passion,' p. 115.

¹⁵⁹ For socialism as an 'ideology of love,' see Eagleton, *After Theory*, p. 122. E.P. Thompson, of course, offered a conception of socialism along these lines. See his 'Outside the Whale,' in Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (London, 1978), pp. 1-34. This conception of socialism was, of course, central to the international movement for socialist humanism in the immediate post-war period.

¹⁶⁰ This was still clear to Hall at the time (1979) he wrote 'Popular-Democratic vs. Authoritarian Populism: Two Ways of "Taking Democracy Seriously",' where he expressed (p. 125) 'the possibility of dividing society along the line of the exploited and the exploiters, which, in turn, alone might provide the conditions for a more sustained socialist advance.' By the time of writing (1981) 'Notes on Deconstructing "the Popular",' he maintained (p. 238) that 'the people versus the power-bloc: this, rather than "class-against-class", is the central line of contradiction around which the terrain of culture is polarized.' The latter conception of society is consonant with nationalism; the former is not.

¹⁶¹ Larrain, 'Stuart Hall and the Marxist Concept of Ideology,' p. 68. See also R. Miliband, *Divided Societies: Class Struggle in Contemporary Capitalism* (Oxford, 1989), p.146.

Hall's conception of nationhood as imagined community, then, might better be described as a repudiation rather than a revision of Marxism.¹⁶²

Faced with nationalism's political potency, Marxists have done one of two things: either they have reviled nationalism as an instance of pernicious bourgeois hegemony or they have argued that the real nation is proletarian, the real nationalism socialist. Hall rejected both manoeuvres. He maintained that nationalism was neither intrinsically bourgeois nor proletarian, nationhood neither necessarily reactionary nor progressive. For him, the nation was sociologically contingent, an empty signifier open to articulation with a range of political ideologies.¹⁶³ In one sense, this view was simply a recognition of nationhood's amorphousness, the fact that national communities are intrinsic to the embodiment of any political ideology, the fact that all political ideologies, whether liberal, socialist or conservative, must naturalize themselves by reflecting 'the national interest'.¹⁶⁴ Conceived in this way, Hall was able to combat what he considered the disturbing tendency for orthodox Marxism to reduce the nation to a function of the economy. Hall's conception of nation and national identity did much to correct this view. Yet by reducing the nation to a property of imagination, and by reducing national identity to a matter of ideological struggle, Hall risked going too far the other way. Not a correction but an overreaction to economism constituted Hall's vision of nation and national identity. Hall, in short, offered a highly voluntarist conception of national identity, one that paid little or no attention to the material contexts of nationhood's production. Replacing an emphasis on economics with an emphasis on politics, Hall also divorced ideological struggle from any connection with relations of production.¹⁶⁵ From here it was only a short step to post-Marxism, to the view that class plays no role in the determination of politics in a society dominated by commodity production and private property.¹⁶⁶ For

¹⁶² For the logical descent of Hall's view on nationhood, see R. Munck, *Marx @ 2000: Late Marxist Perspectives* (London, 2000), chapter 7.

¹⁶³ As Hall put it: 'nationalism "has no necessary political belongingness". It is capable of being inflected to very different political positions, at different historical moments and its character depends very much on the other traditions, discourses and forces with which it is articulated.' See Hall, 'Culture, Community, Nation,' p. 355.

¹⁶⁴ See M. Freeden, 'Is Nationalism a Distinct Ideology?,' *Political Studies*, 46, 1998, pp. 748-65; and P. Lekas, 'The Supra-Class Rhetoric of Nationalism,' *East European Quarterly*, 30, 1996, p. 275.

¹⁶⁵ See T. Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (London, 1994), p. 384.

¹⁶⁶ There have been a number of compelling narratives of post-Marxism. In particular, see N. Geras, *Discourse of Extremity: Radical Ethics and Post-Marxist Extravagances* (London, 1990).

the ramifications of this descent we must turn to Hall's most recent work on globalization and ethnicity.

Globalization and Difference: Ethnicity and Identity in New Times

Having moved outside the bounds of Marxist discourse by the early nineteen nineties, Hall rejected Marxism's historical understanding of nationality and ethnicity. Capitalist globalization, for him, accentuated rather than effaced difference, rendered identity integral not peripheral to the political terrain, and made 'enracinement' rather than rootlessness central to any prospective 'cosmopolitics'. Indeed, against Marx's prediction, capitalism's final globalization, Hall argued, marked not the dissolution but the 'astonishing return' of ethnicity.¹⁶⁷ Humanity's future, he argued, would be determined by how this reprise was represented, whether ethnicity was comprehended as an 'essentialism' or a contingent but necessary effect of being, defined against or with 'difference'.

Hall's most recent work on the national question and ethnicity has been crucially structured by the New Times 'project', a collective invention of revisionist socialists, including Hall himself, connected with *Marxism Today* in the late nineteen eighties.¹⁶⁸ According to him, New Times was the reflection of a new epoch of capitalist civilization, an epoch 'characterized by diversity, differentiation and fragmentation, rather than homogeneity, standardization and the economies and organizations of a scale which characterized modern mass society.'¹⁶⁹ A paradoxically totalizing discourse (there was nothing 'postmodern' about this signifier), New Times was stretched to explain transformations in every region of social existence, from economics to culture, politics to identity, sociology to epistemology.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ S. Hall, 'The Meaning of New Times,' p. 236.

¹⁶⁸ For a brief history of this project, see Mulhern, *Culture/Metaculture*, p. 114.

¹⁶⁹ S. Hall and M. Jacques, 'Introduction,' in Hall and Jacques, eds., *New Times*, p. 11.

¹⁷⁰ Of course 'totalization' is constitutive of the postmodern meta-narrative.

At its most fantastical, the New Times thesis, as hostile interlocutors observed, appeared absurd.¹⁷¹ In flights of postmodern fancy New Times argued (in the words of Martin Jacques, co-editor with Hall of the book which appeared under the New Times sign) that 'mass production, the mass consumer, the big city, big-brother state, the sprawling housing estate and the nation-state are in decline.'¹⁷² According to some, post-modern flux, barely credible before the new century, appeared, and is, far more fantastic after September 11. In a related way, no less absurd and untenable, it has been argued, was Hall's suggestion that 'We are all irrevocably in the "secondary universes" where culture predominates over nature.'¹⁷³ Involving a typically inverted form of economic reductionism, such culturalism, it has been suggested, mimed capital's own fantasies, its typically idealist desire to 'pound Nature to pieces.'¹⁷⁴ Critique along these lines could be extended.¹⁷⁵ Nonetheless, there was more to the New Times thesis than these palpable absurdities. At its best, in what, following Jacques Derrida, might be called the spirit of Marx, New Times proposed a 'total' understanding of capitalist civilization, an account of the world of commodity production that linked economics with politics and sociology with ideas. In this register, the hostility of Marxism's criticism of New Times was obtuse. From postmodernism's own nascent corner, New Times offered a metanarrative of capitalist development that demanded serious engagement rather than righteous rebuke, despite its otherwise fantastical claims.

Hall's panorama of the New Times landscape included the increasingly controversial claim that the transnational imperatives of a globalized capitalism, in addition to a range of other factors, including international migrations and 'global

¹⁷¹ For a review of the New Times project, and its critics, see A. McRobbie, 'Looking Back at New Times and its Critics,' in Morley and Chen, eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, pp. 238-261.

¹⁷² M. Jacques, 'New Times,' *Marxism Today* (October 1988), p. 1, cited in Lazarus, *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World*, p. 35.

¹⁷³ Hall, 'The Meaning of New Times,' p. 235.

¹⁷⁴ For a critique of postmodernism's tendency to argue along lines similar to Hall, see Eagleton, *After Theory*, pp. 162-4.

¹⁷⁵ And it has been by a range of New Times's critics. For critiques of New Times, see M. Rustin, 'The Politics of Post-Fordism: or, the Trouble with "New Times",' *New Left Review*, I/175, 1989, pp. 54-77 and A. Sivanandan, "'All That Melts into Air is Solid": The Hokum of New Times,' *Race and Class*, 31, 3, 1990, pp. 1-30. In addition, see Neil Lazarus's trenchant critique in *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World*, pp. 35-41.

ecological interdependence,' had trumped the nation-state.¹⁷⁶ Here New Times's vision should have appeared anything but fantastic to Marxists. Indeed Hall's conception of the nexus between capitalist globalization and nationhood paralleled Hobsbawm's own analysis of this relationship. New Times, according to Hall and Jacques, was 'characterized by forces which transcend, and at the same time, weaken, the nation state.'¹⁷⁷ Above (by economic, political and military processes) and below (by the growth of various 'localisms'), the nation-state was being undermined and overwhelmed. Impotence not vigour was the future before the nation state. According to Hall and David Held, the growth of regional nationalisms, the world-historical integration of Europe, and accelerating measures of global economic interdependence, 'all in one way or another expos[ed] and erod[ed] the sovereignty of the nation-state, the entity to which, until now, the modern language of citizenship primarily referred.'¹⁷⁸ This is a view to which Williams would have given his assent. The latest phase of capitalism's commodification of the globe, Hall remarked in an influential essay, 'The Local and the Global,' had put an end to an earlier epoch of capitalist globalization characterized by the world market's domination 'by the economies and cultures of powerful nation-states.'¹⁷⁹ Was New Times, then, at least in its approach to the nexus between capitalist globalization and nationhood, just a recycled version of the *Communist Manifesto*?

Far from it. Contrary to Marxism in its cosmopolitan guise, Hall insisted that capitalist globalization doomed neither nationalisms nor particularisms.¹⁸⁰ For him,

¹⁷⁶ But not always unambiguously. At one point he argued that the present phase of capitalist globalization had both put the 'notion of a national formation, of a national economy, ... under considerable pressure' and that it had 'created new leading nations in the global economy.' See his 'The Local and the Global,' pp. 22 and 23. Later, in the same essay, he even more confusingly suggests that 'when I say the decline or erosion of the nation-state, do not for a moment imagine that the nation-state is bowing off the stage of history.' See *ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁷⁷ Hall and Jacques, 'Introduction,' p. 18.

¹⁷⁸ S. Hall and D. Held, 'Citizens and Citizenship,' in Hall and Jacques, eds., *New Times*, p. 173.

¹⁷⁹ Hall, 'The Local and the Global,' p. 20.

¹⁸⁰ At times Hall voiced the opposing argument, at least in relation to 'big nationalisms'. For example, he argued that one result of the 'intensified phase of globalization' had been 'a slow, if uneven, erosion of the "centered" nationalisms of the Western European nation-state.' See Hall, 'Culture, Community, Nation,' p. 354. At another point he argued 'that Englishness [for example] has not only been decentered by the the [sic] great dispersal of capital to Washington, Wall Street and Tokyo, but also by this enormous influx [of peoples] which is part of the cultural consequences of the labor migrations, the migrations of peoples, which go on at an accelerated pace in the modern world.' Hall, 'The Local and the Global,' p. 24. Quickly [*ibid.*, p. 25] he went on to argue that 'at the very moment when the so-called material basis of the old English identity is disappearing over the horizon of the West and the

the global market did not necessarily 'translate everything in the world into a kind of replica of itself, everywhere.'¹⁸¹ Rather 'the so-called "logic of capital has operated as much *through* difference – preserving and transforming difference (including sexual difference) – not [sic] by undermining it.'¹⁸² This was particularly clear in what Hall called 'global mass culture.'¹⁸³ According to him, global mass culture or the 'global postmodern' mimed 'a form of capital which recognizes that it can only, to use a metaphor, rule through other local capitals, rule alongside and in partnership with other economic and political elites.'¹⁸⁴ In short, 'capital has had to negotiate and by negotiate I mean it had to incorporate and partly reflect the differences it was trying to overcome.'¹⁸⁵ Thus for Hall this new globalized world of commodity production did not lead to homogenization. In contrast, it prepared a world populated by new as well as old ethnicities, nascent as well as ancient identities, and recently-born as well as shop-soiled subjectivities. Far from homogenizing labour power across national and ethnic borders, globalization had generated 'the subaltern proliferation of difference.'¹⁸⁶

The historical fortunes of nationalism, Hall believed, provided evidence for this claim. Capitalist globalization might have swept away the material basis of 'a strongly centered, highly exclusivist form of cultural identity'¹⁸⁷ upon which nationalisms had been based, but nationalisms themselves had not disappeared. In fact, the nationalist passion, according to him, was as virulent as ever, its fervour evident not just in the ascending and decentering nationalisms of Wales and Scotland and a range of post-communist states but also in the descending and centered nationalisms of older European nations. Hazards of 'a regression to a very defensive

East, Thatcherism brings Englishness into a more firm definition, a narrower but firmer definition than it ever had before.'

¹⁸¹ Hall, 'The Local and the Global,' p. 29.

¹⁸² Hall, 'Culture, Community, Nation,' p. 353.

¹⁸³ Hall, 'The Local and the Global,' p. 28.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. This argument – that the logic of capital produced rather than effaced difference – was a feature of Hall's understanding of capitalism from at least the late 1970s onwards. For example, in 'Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Ethnicity and Race,' published in the mid-nineteen eighties, he argued that 'the [capitalist] law of value ... operates through and *because* of the culturally specific character of labour power, rather than ... by systematically eroding those distinction as an inevitable part of a world-wide, epochal historical tendency.' See Hall, 'Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity,' p. 436.

¹⁸⁵ Hall, 'The Local and the Global,' p. 32.

¹⁸⁶ Hall, 'Conclusion: The Multi-Cultural Question,' p. 216.

¹⁸⁷ Hall, 'The Local and the Global,' p. 32.

and highly dangerous form of national identity'¹⁸⁸ were manifest in both types. Yet this was not a sufficient reason for either denying its force or lamenting its latest reincarnation, as Hobsbawm had done. That nationalisms and ethnicities proliferated in an age characterized by capitalism's commodification of ever greater areas of the planet's political landscape appeared to Hall beyond doubt, despite the arrogant predictions of rootless and rationalist cosmopolitans like Marx.

Doubt about the re-invigorated and re-venomated passions of nationalism did appear obtuse amid calls in 'backwaters,' like Scotland and Wales, for national autonomy, and amid similar calls for independence in a swathe of new states founded as a result of communism's disintegration. How could one avoid the conclusion that nationalism was far from a spent force? Not even the most optimistic cosmopolitan could doubt the veracity of Hall's claims. Aware of the fatuousness of much of the 'new' nationalism's claims to authenticity and the banality of its appeals to ancient longevities, Hall was able to anchor this revenant nationality and ethnicity politics in an account of the history of capitalism, a history that could also explain the evident value of the debased coin of ethnic nationalisms in the high courts of capital's planetary kingdom. The Front National, the National Front and the Northern League – the emergence of each was a rational product of capital's logic of difference according Hall, not simply a product of 'distress' and 'fury' as Hobsbawm maintained. Thus ethnic tensions in Lombardy or in Lahore, in Soweto or in Srebrenica, derived from the same source – capital's tendency to work through not against difference.¹⁸⁹ Ascending or descending, big or small, ethnic or civic, particularisms, Hall argued, were the product of antinomies constitutive of globalization, tensions exacerbated by the transition from one epoch of its history to another.¹⁹⁰

In a world so obviously riven by the clash of identities, Hall's explication of the nexus between capitalist globalization and ethnicity appeared well-founded. To an unrepentant 'internationalist left' (although surely there wasn't much of this Left left), Hall's analysis had the added value of illuminating the fundamentally 'place-

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁸⁹ For an alternative conception of capitalism's relation to ethnic tension, see Wallerstein, *The Decline of American Power*, p. 77. According to him 'ethnic violence' 'is the absolutely normal result of the deep and growing inequalities within our world system...'.
¹⁹⁰ Hall, 'Culture, Community, Nation,' p. 353-4.

based' nature of all forms of politics, the fact that we all speak from somewhere. In making this argument, Hall could agree with Williams that place was absolutely crucial to the construction of social identities. Thus for a 'cosmopolitanism' all too quick to speak from nowhere about everywhere, Hall's recognition of the continuing validity of ethnicity, like Williams's acknowledgement of the value of coming from somewhere, perhaps represented a necessary particularist rebuke.

Has capitalist globalization created difference or effaced it? In his cosmopolitan guise, Marx's view was that global commodity production would make everyone exchangeable with everyone else. Hall disagreed, vigorously opposing this position. Yet if Hall was correct in evoking capitalism's transnational force, in what did this globalization consist if not the homogenization of wage labor across borders of difference? Reduction of all labour power to the compulsions of wage labour, the reduction of the species being to commodification across cultural, religious, national and ethnic divergence, it has been argued, is the very definition of capitalist globalization. There is even good reason to suggest that the perpetuation and proliferation of difference has been overplayed. This claim has come from social scientists far removed from the reductionisms and essentialisms of a supposedly vulgar Marxism.¹⁹¹ For Clifford Geertz, for example, 'we may be faced with a world in which there simply aren't any more headhunters, matrilinealists, or people who predict weather from the entrails of a pig.'¹⁹² Indeed, according to Cornelius Castoriadis, 'if we look at the life of the thirteenth century, passing from Chartres to Borobudur and from Venice to the Mayas, from Constantinople to Peking and from Kublai Khan to Dante, from the house of Maimonides at Cordoba to Nara, and from the *Magna Carta* to the Byzantine monks copying Aristotle; compare this extraordinary diversity with the present state of the world, where countries are not really different from each other in terms of their present – which, as such, is everywhere the same – but only in terms of their past. *That* is what the developed

¹⁹¹ Hall himself at times appeared capable of this observation. At least in the case of Britain he claimed that 'new multinational production, the new new international division of labour, not only links backward sections of the third world to so-called advanced sections of the first world in a form of multinational production, but increasingly tries to reconstitute the backward sectors within its own society: those forms of contracting out, of franchising, which are beginning to create small dependent local economies which are linked into multinational production.' See Hall, 'The Local and the Global,' p. 23.

¹⁹² C. Geertz, 'The Uses of Diversity,' *Michigan Quarterly*, 25, 1, 1987, cited without page number in Mehta, 'Cosmopolitanism and the Circle of Reason,' p. 636.

is.¹⁹³ In this view, everywhere *is* increasingly the same. As Terry Eagleton has ironically remarked: 'Difference was the new catch-cry in a world increasingly subject to the same indignities of starvation and disease, cloned cities, deadly weapons and CNN television.'¹⁹⁴ Difference – the outcome of capitalism's commodification of the globe? Arguably not.

In theory, of course, capitalism cares little for difference. It certainly does not require difference to produce and reproduce itself. That capitalism has found ways of exploiting both men who wear cloth caps *and* men who wear turbans should come as no surprise. Eminently egalitarian in its preparedness to reduce anything or anyone to a commodity, capitalism is absolutely committed to cultural relativism. Yet despite capitalism's postmodern proclivities, despite its reduction of all difference to commodification, and despite its globalization of wage labour, it has not effaced nationalism, has not banished ethnicity to pre-history, and has not swept away all particularisms. Why? The question for Hall in the nineteen nineties was irrelevant, a sort of non-question because its premise had been rendered fallacious by both history and theory. Having rejected the Marxist paradigm as inherently 'reductionist' and 'economistic,' Hall was not likely to provide an answer premised on the need for cosmopolitan socialism, the need that is, to reclaim humanity's species being from the grip of commodification and the banality of ethnicity. For Hobsbawm, and even for Williams at one time, if capitalism did derive advantage from all kinds of particularism this was not the result of any structural tendency within its logic. Rather it is because particularisms obfuscate the compulsions of commodity production and divide those who might have some interest in overthrowing it.¹⁹⁵ Not that long ago Hall had seconded such a conclusion.

The present epoch of capitalist modernity, according to Hall, offered hope for no such judgment. Further pursuing the recovery of his own relation to a world dominated by capitalism, a relation steeped in notions of diaspora and hybridity, Hall argued that humanity's only hope would be found on 'the margins,' with subaltern

¹⁹³ Cornelius Castoriadis cited in M.V. Moses, *The Novel and the Globalization of Culture* (New York, 1995), p. 3.

¹⁹⁴ Eagleton, *After Theory*, p. 46.

¹⁹⁵ For this argument see Wood, *Democracy against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism*, p. 267.

subjectivities relatively untouched by the compulsions characteristic of 'late' capitalism.¹⁹⁶ Against internationalist expectation, capitalist globalization did not just loosen the hold of shop-soiled identities, like class, nation and race. It produced new ethnicities, providing them with the requisite room to come in from the cold into representation.¹⁹⁷ In line with its contested ontology, globalization, Hall believed, had given voice to the margins.¹⁹⁸

In the new epoch of capitalist civilization, the 'new ethnicity,' according to Hall, was constituted by the awareness that we were all '*ethnically* located and our ethnic identities are crucial to our subjective sense of who we are.'¹⁹⁹ Ethnicity was not a 'fixed essence,'²⁰⁰ it was a '*positioning*,'²⁰¹ '(the) recognition that we all speak from a particular place,'²⁰² which challenged 'the fixed binaries which stabilize meaning and representation and show how meaning is never finished or completed, but keeps on moving to encompass other additional or supplementary meanings.'²⁰³ In this view, identities were 'always in the process of formation'²⁰⁴ – a definition that would not have looked out of place in Williams's understanding of how places and peoples were made and remade. Contingent rather than arbitrary, under erasure rather than fixed, profane rather than sacred, the new ethnicities, according to Hall, were constituted by multiplicity and heterogeneity. Despite baulking before the full implications of identity's deconstruction, he maintained that there was no absolute

¹⁹⁶ According to Hall, 'The diaspora experience as I intend it ... is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of "identity" which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by *hybridity*.' See Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora,' p. 235, emphasis in the original. In addition, consult Hall, 'Conclusion: the Multi-Cultural Question,' p. 216.

¹⁹⁷ See the explanation given for this shift in S. Hall, 'What is this "Black" in Black Popular Culture?,' in Morley and Chen, eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, pp. 466 and 468. There was a considerable – though unstated – tension in Hall's work on the new ethnicity. The tension revolved around whether the new epoch of capitalist civilization actually created new ethnicities and new identities or whether it merely prepared the ground for their creation. Hall was, of course, well aware of the power of the old ethnicities (Thatcherism etc.) in this new epoch and at such times his account of the new ethnicities became a plea for their emergence. At other times, he argued that capitalist globalization had ended the old logic of identity.

¹⁹⁸ See Hall, 'Old and New Ethnicities,' pp. 44-46.

¹⁹⁹ Hall, 'New Ethnicities,' p. 447, emphasis in the original. See also Hall, 'Ethnicity: Identities and Difference,' p. 348.

²⁰⁰ Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora,' p. 225-26. See also Hall, 'Old and New identities, Old and New Ethnicities,' p. 49.

²⁰¹ Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora,' p. 226. See also Hall, 'Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities,' p. 61.

²⁰² Hall, 'New Ethnicities,' p. 447.

²⁰³ Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora,' p. 229.

²⁰⁴ Hall, 'Old and New Identities,' p. 47.

ground of identity. This was something to be celebrated rather than bemoaned. Avoiding the 'invention of tradition' common to much past ethnicity politics, Hall's new politics of ethnicity was sensitive to the fact that identity was always constructed with difference, *différance* in Jacques Derrida's sense of the word.

What sort of imagined community was implicit in Hall's vision of new ethnicities? Originally structured by the call for a socialist pluralism, Hall's analysis of New Times terminated in the by now uncontroversial claim that socialism was dead, at least as it been recognized by socialists in the past. To be sure, he still wrote for an alternative vision of modernity, what he termed a vernacular modernity, but that alternative was sought within a world inevitability dominated by commodity production.²⁰⁵ Aware of the 'kind of difference that doesn't make a difference of any kind,'²⁰⁶ Hall maintained that 'localism' was 'the only point of intervention against the hegemonic, the universalizing thrust of globalization'²⁰⁷ – a view, as we have seen, that was common to Williams's later work. Indeed, according to Hall, as the world became more globalized, so people's attachment to 'the local' intensified. Rooted on the margins, the localism of the new ethnicities had nothing to do with a regressive, essentialist ethnic politics.²⁰⁸ He repeatedly rejected 'the innocent notion of identity,' including most particularly, the notion of a fixed black identity, that constituted the framework of defensive and exclusivist forms of particularism. Deconstructing identity at the same moment as it held a conception of ethnicity constructed by difference, localism, Hall contended, would 'arise within, without being simply a simulacrum of, the global.'²⁰⁹ But this did not imply a global politics. In the new

²⁰⁵ The ambiguity in Hall's relation to the socialist project is revealed in two recent interviews. In one he argues that 'social democracy' is 'about advancing the public, the collective, the social interest, in opposition to the market, while nevertheless recognizing that a society without markets is a society seriously in danger of authoritarianism.' In a later interview he argued that he was 'polemically opposed to the notion that capitalism, because it has articulated modernity over the span of history so far, must go on doing so.' For the first citation see 'Culture and Power: Interview with Stuart Hall,' p. 37 and for the second see 'A Conversation with Stuart Hall,' *The Journal of the International Institute*, 7, 1, 1999, at <http://www.umich.edu/~iinet/journal/vol7no1/Hall.htm>.

²⁰⁶ Hall, 'What is this "Black" in Black Popular Culture?,' p. 467.

²⁰⁷ 'A Conversation with Stuart Hall'. Hall's turn to the politics of the local was partly motivated by his belief 'that a counter-politics which is pitched precisely and predominantly at the level of confronting the global forces that are trying to remake and recapture the world at the moment, and which are conducted simply at that level, are not making very much headway.' See Hall, 'Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities,' p. 61.

²⁰⁸ Hall's animus against a politics based on an 'essentialised' understanding of identity is repeatedly made. See, for examples, Hall, 'The New Ethnicities,' p. 444 and Hall, 'What is this "Black" in Black Popular Culture?,' p. 467.

²⁰⁹ Hall, 'Conclusion: the Multi-Cultural Question,' p. 216.

epoch of capitalist civilization the only politics we were left with was 'a lot of little local politics.'²¹⁰ But these 'little local politics' did not add up to a planetary sum bigger than its particular parts. In the new world of ethnicity there were only margins, no majorities.

Like Marx, Hall repudiated the notion that real individuals represent 'timeless collective essences'. But he rejected the Marxist argument – put well here by one of its opponents – 'which ascribed the most salient features of human reality to social class and conceived the future to be embodied in a universal class whose interests represented those of humanity.'²¹¹ According to Hall, 'I do not think we can mobilize people simply through their common humanity.'²¹² Williams, as we have seen, agreed. Having dismissed Marx's universalism, Hall however did not dismiss cosmopolitanism tout court. Localism, as Hall understood it, was not antithetical to a cosmopolitan vision. Of course, this conception of cosmopolitanism repudiated allegiance to what Martha Nussbaum has called 'the world-wide community of human beings.'²¹³ Like Williams, Hall argued that an imagined community of this sort was unlikely to appeal to 'real' individuals 'individuated' by language, culture and locality. As for so many others on 'the Left,' humanity, for Hall, constituted 'too weak a force to generate sufficient solidarity.'²¹⁴ Rooted rather than rootless, Hall's cosmopolitanism was 'vernacular'.²¹⁵ In this view, cosmopolitanism was not opposed to particularism but worked to render enracinement the bulwark of a new

²¹⁰ Hall, 'Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities,' p. 52.

²¹¹ Cohen, 'Rooted Cosmopolitanism,' p. 225.

²¹² Hall, 'Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities,' p. 67.

²¹³ See M.C. Nussbaum, 'Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism,' in *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism* (Boston, 1996), p. 4. For Hall's rejection of what he called 'empty cosmopolitanism' see 'Culture and Power: Interview with Stuart Hall,' p. 34.

²¹⁴ B. Robbins, 'Introduction Part I: Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism,' in P. Cheah and B. Robbins, eds., *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation* (London and Minn., 1998), p. 4, here expressing the view with which he disagrees. For positive assessments of this view, see A. Colas, 'Putting Cosmopolitanism into Practice: The Case of Socialist Internationalism,' *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 23, 3, 1994, p. 519 and R. Rorty, 'Solidarity of Objectivity?,' in J. Rachman and C. West, eds., *Post-Analytic Philosophy* (New York, 1985), pp. 3-19.

²¹⁵ For an expression of this, see 'A Conversation with Stuart Hall,' *The Journal of the International Institute*, 7, 1, 1999, at <http://www.umich.edu/~iinet/journal/vol7no1/Hall.htm> and S. Hall, 'The Multicultural Question,' The Political Economy Research Centre Annual Lecture, 4 May 2000 in Firth Hall, Sheffield, p. 12-13 which can be found at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/uni/academic/N-Q/perc/lectures/halltext.pdf> Hall's understanding of a vernacular modernity replicated the cosmopolitanism of Homi Bhabha. See H. Bhabha, 'Unsatisfied Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism,' in P. C. Pfeiffer and L. Garcia-Moreno, eds., *Text and Narration* (Columbia, 1996), pp. 191-207.

cosmopolitics.²¹⁶ For example, Hall argued that it was paramount that Britishness was rearticulated to include rather than exclude 'blackness'. According to him, it was essential that black was reconciled with the Union Jack: 'blacks in the British diaspora,' Hall argued, 'must, at this historical moment, refuse the binary black *or* British.'²¹⁷ From the perspective of a vernacular cosmopolitanism, national identity could be reframed with 'the logic of coupling rather than the logic of a binary opposition.'²¹⁸

Hall's conception of localism illuminated the political currency of the 'heart-felt experience' of place. Locality, Hall recognized, was a coin that no radical politics could fail to trade in. To ignore the sensuous particularism attached to place was to obfuscate the basis of people's sense of individuation. In addition to this advantage, Hall's localism also provided a necessary repudiation of an 'essentialised' conception of identity, a notion of subjectivity which structured the worst forms of particularisms. By offering a conception of 'localism' opposed to those particularisms which refused to live with difference, Hall was able to show the degree to which a place-based politics was open to inflection to varying ideological discourses – feeling attached to place for Hall was, as it was for Williams, contested.²¹⁹ Hall's conception of ethnicity, furthermore, constituted an important check on Marxism's Enlightenment heritage - an inheritance that, Mitchell Cohen suggests, has operated as a barrier to socialism's adequate comprehension of particularism.²²⁰ Against an abstract conception of 'humanity,' Hall's rearticulation of ethnicity as a positioning provided illumination of the context of social thought. Even for a cosmopolitan politics otherwise hostile to his localism, Hall's awareness of the irreducible necessity of emplacement to the construction of any common project served a vital purpose. Attached to this conception of ethnicity was the awareness that to go beyond

²¹⁶ This is part of a larger movement within cosmopolitanism. According to Bruce Robbins, 'For better or worse, there is a growing consensus that cosmopolitanism sometimes works together with nationalism rather than in opposition to it.' See Robbins, 'Introduction Part I: Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism,' p. 2.

²¹⁷ Hall, 'What is this "Black" in Black Popular Culture?,' p. 472. Here Hall applauded Paul Gilroy's book *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (London, 1987). See also Hall, 'The New Ethnicities,' p. 488.

²¹⁸ Hall, 'What is this "Black" in Black Popular Culture?,' p. 472.

²¹⁹ In particular, see Hall, 'Culture, Community, Nation,' p. 355.

²²⁰ Cohen, 'Rooted Cosmopolitanism,' p. 229.

defensive and exclusivist conceptions of ethnicity you could not simply ignore ethnicity 'but somehow [had to go] all the way through it and out the other side.'²²¹

Like 'the people', 'the margins' is a notoriously amorphous sociological concept, an 'empty signifier' into what can be poured all manner of meanings.²²² What 'margins' is Hall talking about? Although he provides few concrete examples, we can assume that Hall's 'margins' do not refer to Fascist fringe groups or those organizations constituted by human 'vampires,' although there is perhaps no good epistemological reason not to. Beyond this, as one late-Marxist commentator has complained, inherent to the appeal to 'the margins' is the assumption that 'minorities are always more vibrant than majorities.'²²³ Margins, it is commonly imagined, constitute a surplus which cannot be contained within dominant hegemonies, a potential locus of resistance that promises to rupture oppressive norms. However, it might be argued, that for those who want to offer a genuine alternative to capitalist modernity it is precisely majorities that must be mobilized, majorities formed by the operating logic of capitalism's commodification of the globe. Echoing the romanticized appeal to 'the margins' common to much contemporary 'radical' politics, Hall's celebration of 'the margins' risked then appealing to a form of social agency outside the logic of capitalist globalization.²²⁴ In effect, Hall's 'localism' evacuated the site of the global, *classicus locus* of an ascendant cosmopolitan capitalism, at the same time as it replicated the identity politics of the Right.²²⁵

Indeed illumination of the importance of some sorts of positioning obfuscated others. Most importantly, Hall's ethnicity politics obscured what David Harvey has called '*positioning in relation to capital circulation and accumulation*.'²²⁶ Alert to difference, Hall consistently neglected, it could be argued, the primary difference

²²¹ See Eagleton, 'Nationalism: Irony and Commitment,' p. 23.

²²² For this amorphousness, see Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*, pp. 100-104.

²²³ Eagleton, *After Theory*, p. 15.

²²⁴ For this tendency, see *ibid.*, p. 104.

²²⁵ For the argument, see G. Talshir, 'Knowing Right from Left: The Politics of Identity between the Radical Left and Far Right,' *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 10, 3, 2005, pp. 311-335. This was most obvious in Hall's case in his appeal to 'strategic essentialism'. According to Hall, no politics could emerge from a complete deconstruction of identity. But if this was true, what guarantee could Hall provide that his chosen form of 'identity' wouldn't slide toward essentialism? For Hall's appeal to the necessity of stable identity to any political project see Hall, 'Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities,' p. 51.

²²⁶ D. Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2000), p. 102.

dividing humanity, namely class difference, a difference that had been absolutely crucial to all those figures so far discussed in this thesis.²²⁷ Hall's neglect of this form of positioning derives from the operational logic of his 'localism'. Indeed, as Pratap Mehta has suggested, 'All talk of attention to difference, creating new cultural forms, and hybridizing identities may be obscuring the force of a powerful historical process at work.'²²⁸ That 'powerful historical process' - capitalist globalization - increasingly connects us to everyone else – a view that was offered, in different ways, by Hobsbawm, Thompson and Williams. Through the universalization of commodity production 'we are connected to all sorts of places, causally if not always consciously, including many that we have never traveled to, that we have perhaps only seen on television – including the place where the television itself was manufactured.'²²⁹ Hall's emphasis on difference serves to obfuscate these connections. An emphasis on difference, then, can blind rather than illuminate forms of solidarity potentially created by capitalism's commodification of the planet, forestalling types of politics which can work effectively on a number of what have been termed 'spatio-temporal scales'.²³⁰ Individuals made sensitive to difference can be rendered senseless to those similarities which link them across divides of diversity.²³¹

It is because of our mutual embeddedness in circuits of capital accumulation that we might imagine an alternative community to that offered by neo-liberalism. In this imagined alternative, class 'positioning' transcends borders of difference, whether geographical, cultural or existential. According to this view, it is as a result of 'our situatedness in relation to capital accumulation' that we 'can hope to re-establish a conception of social justice as something to be fought for as a key value within an ethics of political solidarity built across different places.'²³² This is the *leitmotiv* of

²²⁷ But not always! According to Hall 'ethnic communities are no longer affected by economic and social change in a homogenous way, but in a way that drives lines of distinction and division between the prospects for those who still don't see anything at all- a dead-end.' See S. Hall, 'Aspiration and Attitude: Reflections on Black Britain in the Nineties,' *New Formations*, 1998, p. 49. This is almost a call for the return of class politics (although here suitably obfuscated by his appeal to the 'heterogeneity' of ethnic experience).

²²⁸ Bhanu Mehta, 'Cosmopolitanism and the Circle of Reason,' p. 635.

²²⁹ Robbins, 'Introduction Part I: Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism,' p. 3.

²³⁰ Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*, p. 353. See his *The New Imperialism* (Oxford, 2003), for a recent survey of this concept. It could be argued that Hall subverts his own ostensible attempt to reconcile 'solidarity' and 'difference,' most recently expressed in his 'Conclusion: The Multi-Cultural Question,' p. 235.

²³¹ For this argument, see D. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: the Reinvention of Nature* (London, 1991), pp. 202-3.

²³² See Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*, p. 360.

socialist cosmopolitanism. In this vision, a socialist society would 'travel through difference' in order 'to come out somewhere on the other side without, however, having left it behind.'²³³ Difference would not be effaced in such an imagined community but rather sublated in the search for conditions of 'mutual belonging' and 'new forms of human solidarity.'²³⁴ Hall maintained that this sort of community – based on the idea of humanity's species being – was unimaginable. He vigorously rejected a 'universalist' cosmopolitanism. For him, a cosmopolitics without difference would constitute a form of totalitarianism.

As against Hall, cosmopolitan socialism, it might be argued, does not necessarily ignore the embodiment of identities in 'place'. For Marxism in its cosmopolitan guise, what 'roots' us in 'experienced communities' of locality, is not just language, kinship and culture but also our mutual and universal embeddedness within the world market. There is an argument, then, which suggests that we need to illuminate the 'invisibly determining and often exploitative connections'²³⁵ that connect us through global flows of capital, labour and money rather than proliferating difference. Hall works actively against that project. It is impossible, as Frederic Jameson has suggested, for us to 'delink' from the world market.²³⁶ In such vicissitudes, only a Marxist conception of cosmopolitanism can explain to us why this has come to be and what sort of politics can guarantee a self-determining human future. Hall's vision of cosmopolitanism, it could be argued, would reproduce current conditions rather than transcend them - and this at a time when it has been alleged that the 'opportunities for turning distant economic interdependence into conscious political cooperation have never been so promising.'²³⁷

Cosmopolitan Socialism in New Times

Hall's intellectual project began as a renewal of Marxism but terminated in its repudiation and dismissal. From the outset, Hall's theoretical enterprise was crucially involved with the varied mediations between particularity and universality. Engaging

²³³ Eagleton, 'Five Types of Difference and Identity,' p. 52.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Robbins, 'Introduction Part I: Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism,' p. 3.

²³⁶ F. Jameson, 'Five Theses on Actually Existing Marxism,' *Monthly Review*, 47, 11, 1996, p. 10.

²³⁷ Robbins, 'Introduction Part I: Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism,' p. 10.

'ethnicized' aspects of modernity, Hall's intellectual labour uncovered important links between capitalism's development and ethnic identity, illuminated key aspects of national identity and nationalism, particularly what has been called the nationalist passion, and highlighted the dependence of identities and potential solidarities on language, kinship and culture. It can be argued that this sensitivity to questions of difference and ethnicity derived from his lived experience, an existential biography characterized by the experiences of migration and diaspora. Hall's encounter with the national question was not free from omissions, however. Not only did he fail to offer a synthesis between solidarity and difference, at times neglecting the historical and material reality of nationhood and the cosmopolitan nature and purpose of capital, but he also failed to uncover some of the obfuscatory aspects of nationalism as ideology.

Above all, particularly in his more recent, post-Marxist work, his understanding of nationality and ethnicity systematically obscured other ways of being in the world. We have all been constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed by capitalist forces of production. Identity, of course, has not been constituted by these forces alone. As Hall tirelessly argued, we are also constituted by discourses of difference, whether difference is based on race, ethnicity, gender or sexuality. But it can be argued that it is a globalizing capitalism which *primarily* constitutes human subjectivity. If this last statement is incorrect, as Hall now supposes, then cosmopolitan socialism is not just utopian but impossible. However, it could be argued that the political implications of Hall's own imagined community will lead to 'the mutual ruin of the contending classes (and ethnies)' rather than to forms of human solidarity which have gone through difference and come out the other side.

Chapter 5

Marxism, Capitalism and World History

Perry Anderson on Nationalism and Internationalism

Perry Anderson, according to a recent claim, is 'one of the foremost contemporary Marxist thinkers.'¹ Few would dissent from this verdict.² His contribution to the Marxist tradition has been unique. Long-time editor of *New Left Review*, arguably the world's premier independent Marxist journal, Anderson has provided several definitive assessments of the fortunes of European Marxism since the October Revolution.³ Beyond engagement with Marxism's history, he has written a number of illuminating accounts of significant post-war intellectuals and intellectual cultures, provided a vigorous revision of English social and political history, and an Olympian prehistory of the capitalist mode of production.⁴ A historian committed above all to the 'top down view of history,'⁵ a political theorist who has applied the strictures of historical materialism both to Marxism and its opponents, a social theorist who has tracked theory's pathways through structuralism, psychoanalysis and postmodernism, Anderson exemplifies an almost forgotten type of intellectual - the genuine polymath and generalist who defies disciplinary categorization and who has

¹ M.A. Habib in M. Payne, ed., *A Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory* (Oxbridge and Cambridge, Mass., 1996), pp. 27-8, cited in G. Elliott, *Perry Anderson: The Merciless Laboratory of History* (Minneapolis and London, 1998), p. xi. See also P. Blackledge, *Perry Anderson, Marxism and the New Left* (London, 2004), p. ix.

² Yet others have overtopped it. 'Britain's most brilliant Marxist intellectual' – is how Terry Eagleton has summarized his impact. See Terry Eagleton, in a review of Ellen Meiksins Wood's *The Pristine Culture of Capitalism: A Historical Essay on Old Regimes and Modern States* (London and New York, 1991), *Guardian*, 1 October 1992, cited in Elliott, *Perry Anderson*, p. xi.

³ See especially P. Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London, 1975); 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci,' *New Left Review*, 1/100, 1977, pp. 5-78; *Arguments within English Marxism* (London, 1980); *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism* (London, 1983); and 'The Ends of History' in Anderson, *Zone of Engagement* (London, 1992), pp. 279-375.

⁴ Figures covered include Michael Mann, Roberto Unger, W.G. Runciman, Norberto Bobbio and Ernest Gellner. Many of these accounts are collected in P. Anderson, *A Zone of Engagement* (London, 1992). For his 'total history' of England and his account of English intellectual culture see P. Anderson, *English Questions* (London, 1992). See his *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* and *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (both London, 1974) for his pre-history of the capitalist mode of production.

⁵ Anderson's most pregnant account of his historical method appears in the 'Foreword' to his *Lineages of the Absolutist States*, especially pp. 8-9.

only intermittently and lately been associated with the university.⁶ A cosmopolitan intellectual, Anderson's reach is global, his work transversing and transcending not only intellectual disciplines but also national borders. Having immeasurably enlarged the horizons of Marxism in the Anglo-American world, Anderson's oeuvre constitutes, then, an integral primary and secondary source of any prospective history of Marxism in the period following fascism's defeat. Less often acknowledged, his work also constitutes a unique site to interrogate the nexus between Marxism and the national question in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

As a long-standing advocate of cosmopolitan socialism, Anderson has delivered a series of significant interventions in debates surrounding the meaning of nationalism and internationalism. He has made a number of seminal contributions to an understanding of the relationship between capitalism and nationhood along with various polemical assessments of the value of nationalist politics to the cause of international socialism. At a time when the search for an appropriate form of international (socialist) politics to contest an increasingly transnational regime of capital has intensified, it is more than timely to review Anderson's encounter with the national question. This review will proceed in the following manner. First, it will provide a brief outline of Anderson's social being, probing the biographical pressures that informed his particular assessment of the national question.⁷ Second, it will consider Anderson's understanding of nationalism and national liberation in the nineteen sixties, beginning with an analysis of his contributions to the anti-nationalist project of *New Left Review*, finishing with an assessment of the ambiguities of his support for revolutionary nationalism in the Tricontinental world. Third, it will consider Anderson's conception of the historicity of nationhood through a brief evaluation of his historical sociology. This evaluation will be juxtaposed with an enquiry into the nature of his socialist internationalism. The review will then proceed to a consideration of Anderson's most recent contributions on the national question, an

⁶ See Elliott, *Perry Anderson*, p. xi. As Elliott suggests, although a generalist, Anderson is the opposite of the amateur.

⁷ This is a difficult operation. As Edward Skidelsky has suggested, Anderson 'is notoriously elusive. No interviews, no broadcasts – and even the London School of Economics, where he is a visiting lecturer, did not have a photograph to contribute to the illustration of this [*New Statesman*] profile.' See E. Skidelsky, 'Perry Anderson,' *New Statesman*, 19 March, 1999, p. 18. Intrepid surfers of the World Wide Web can now find a photograph of and an interview with Anderson at <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/Elberg/Anderson/anderson-con1.html>

assessment of his conception of the relationship between nationhood and capitalism and the fortunes of Marxist socialism in relation to both. The chapter will conclude with a brief review of the place of Anderson's cosmopolitan socialism in our nationalist world.

Forging a Nationless Identity: Cosmopolitanism and the Socialist Homeland

Perry Anderson's social being constitutes the antithesis of the nineteenth century nationalist project. Conceived in China, born in England, raised in America and Ireland, he has lived on both sides of the Atlantic but calls neither side home.⁸ In a recent interview he even rejected his birthplace, suggesting he should have been born in China.⁹ An imagined Sino-genesis, one speculates, would have been more agreeable to Anderson. Breaking any possible link between ethnicity and citizenship, he could have definitively scripted his biography in the trope of an outlaw from national identity, the rootless cosmopolitan *par excellence*.¹⁰ Anderson, then, proves the truth of what his brother, the well-known student of nationalism, has called the 'counterfeit quality' of the birth certificate.¹¹ Beyond birth, other probable significations of identity are likewise absent. His language is international rather than national; his *ethnos* he would deny having any; his culture is coterminous with the world not with any particular geography; and his physical 'home' has been determined by the contingencies and vagaries of the academic labour market and the course of the international class struggle not by heart-felt attachment to place.¹² In Anderson's case there is no relationship between homeland, culture and attachment. Indeed, deracination, for Anderson, has involved neither assimilation nor marginality, typical

⁸ He, in my opinion, disproves Edward Said's contention that 'All of us without exception belong to some sort of national, religious or ethnic community: no one, no matter the volume of protestations, is above the organic ties that bind the individual to ... nationality.' See E. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (New York, 1994), p. 40.

⁹ 'Perry Anderson Interview: Conversations with History; Institute for International Studies, UC Berkeley,' at <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/Elberg/Anderson/anderson-con1.html>

¹⁰ I don't agree with Bruce Robbins' suggestion that 'cosmopolitan' 'immediately evokes the image of a privileged person'. It is certainly not intended in that negative or pejorative sense here. For Robbins' thoughts on cosmopolitanism, see his *Secular Vocations: Intellectualism, Professionalism, Culture* (New York and London, 1993), pp. 180-197.

¹¹ B. Anderson, 'Long Distance Nationalism,' in Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World* (London and New York, 1998), p. 70.

¹² To John Dunn's contention in *Western Political Theory in the Face of the Future* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 56 that 'We are all nationalists now' Anderson would reply 'not I!'

destinies of the exile or émigré.¹³ His peculiar experience of homelessness has given rise to an identity which is precisely characterized by the lack of any particular identity (although this, of course, constitutes an identity). Involuntary and voluntary mobility, Anderson has admitted, 'unsettled what one might think of as an unreflective or automatic attachment to one's own country.'¹⁴ Anderson, like Hobsbawm, has no *patria*.¹⁵

Perry Anderson was born in London in September 1938, the same month that Chamberlain consigned the Sudetenland to Nazi rule and Britain to the brief delusion that war with Germany could be avoided. He was initially taken to China where his father worked. Following the outbreak of war, his family moved to America. After 1945 he spent the remaining years of his childhood in Ireland, his father's birthplace. In a later interview Anderson would describe the household he grew up in as 'cosmopolitan,'¹⁶ something that could perhaps be taken for granted in a habitus dominated by an Irishman who served the British Empire in China. Anderson's father (James Carew O'Gorman Anderson) died shortly after the war when Anderson was eight.¹⁷ In 1914 he had taken up a post with the Imperial Customs Union in China. Scornful of the Orientalism of his fellow Europeans, James Anderson's political beliefs remained hard to fathom from the diaries he left behind. Whatever the nature of those attitudes they were of little consequence to his adolescent son. In a series of articles in the *London Review of Books* based on his father's diaries, Anderson remarked that by the time he left university 'associations with China were like faded scraps of wallpaper in a house one wished to forget.'¹⁸ Indeed by the time he arrived at Oxford in 1956, Anderson felt little attachment to his Irish roots. Even many years later Anderson's contempt for post-war Ireland was hard to disguise: 'Customs conjured up only the local caitiffs of a seedy clericalism, peering at books on the

¹³ D. Suvin, 'Displaced Persons,' *New Left Review*, II/31, 2005, pp. 116-8 for a general overview of the typical responses of the émigré.

¹⁴ 'Perry Anderson Interview,' p. 1. 'One's own country'? This is perhaps a surprising admission from a cosmopolitan socialist. It reveals the sheer pervasiveness of nationality.

¹⁵ Anderson might be characterized as one of Homi Bhabha's 'wandering peoples who will not be contained within the Heim of the national culture and its unisonant discourse, but are themselves the marks of a shifting boundary that alienates the frontiers of the modern nation.' See H. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation,' in H. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (London and New York, 1990), p. 315. Of course Bhabha did not have cosmopolitan socialists in mind when he celebrated wandering peoples.

¹⁶ 'Perry Anderson Interview,' p. 1.

¹⁷ P. Anderson, 'A Belated Encounter,' *London Review of Books*, 30 July, 1998, p. 3.

¹⁸ P. Anderson, 'My Father's Last Years in China,' *London Review of Books*, 20 August, 1998, p. 34.

quayside to see if they were on a blacklist based on the Papal index.¹⁹ No heart-felt sentiment filled his memory of home; no feeling of love attended reflection on his roots. Pre-figuring his later attitude to nationalism, and perhaps consequent on what his brother, Benedict, termed a series of cultural 'estrangements' (China, the US and Ireland), Anderson was quite happy not to have a fatherland.²⁰

New Left politics rapidly filled the void left by Anderson's 'background of depaysements.'²¹ Anderson reached Oxford at a time when politics, under the stress of events in Egypt and Hungary, were about to explode. 'It was,' he remembered, 'virtually impossible for any lively young person not to be very quickly and deeply politicized by that experience.'²² His particular politicization took the form of a radicalization in a socialist direction. Voicing discontent with the late hubris of British imperialism, Oxford was home to one of the first independent socialist voices to emerge in the wake of the thaw in international communism announced by Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalinism. It was there that Stuart Hall, Raphael Samuel and Gabrielle Pearson produced *Universities and Left Review*, along with *New Reasoner* a central voice of socialist dissent.²³ Centered in the student generation of the nineteen fifties, figures around *Universities and Left Review* eventually generated important links with those communist revisionists associated with *New Reasoner*. It was out of these connections that a merged journal – *New Left Review* – appeared in 1960. Anderson was in some important senses removed from both groups. Age, experience and geography separated him from the *New Reasoner* group; interest, politics and association set him apart from those figures allied with *Universities and Left Review*. Influenced heavily by two thinkers, Raymond Williams and Isaac Deutscher, both, like him, awkwardly situated in relation to the original New Left,

¹⁹ Anderson, 'A Belated Encounter,' p. 3.

²⁰ B. Anderson, 'Introduction,' in Anderson, *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (Ithaca and London, 1990), pp. 1-2.

²¹ The phrase is Gregory Elliott's. See Elliott, *Perry Anderson*, p. 1. Elliott provides a superb intellectual biography of Anderson from 'Origins of the Present Crisis' (1964) to 'The Ends of History' (1992). It has been extremely helpful in the construction of this chapter.

²² 'Perry Anderson Interview,' p. 1.

²³ See S. Hall, 'The "first" New Left,' in Oxford Socialist Discussion Group, ed., *Out of Apathy: Voices from the First New Left Thirty Years On* (Oxford, 1990) and D. Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies* (Durham and London, 1997), pp. 54-67 for accounts of *Universities and Left Review*.

Anderson was part of a 'second wave' of New Leftists at Oxford that coalesced around the left-wing student journal *New University*.²⁴

Moving with the fortunes of those movements for which it claimed to speak, principally Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and socialist humanism, *New Left Review* entered into crisis in the early nineteen sixties. An exodus from New Left clubs conjoined with the failure of various New Left projects induced not just ideological and political volatility but fiduciary alarm. Subjected to these pressures, Stuart Hall, inaugural editor of the journal, resigned. The *New Left Review* board asked Anderson to step forward and shoulder the burden of editing the journal in 1962.²⁵ Charged with its reinvigoration, and the stabilization of its political outlook, Anderson's editorship was submitted to increasing criticism from board members, most prominently E.P. Thompson.²⁶ Despite 'old guard'²⁷ critique, Anderson remained unrepentant. He believed he had identified obstruction to New Left advance – chiefly the early New Left's commitment to populism, empiricism and nationalism – and he set about to prevail through the importation of Marxist theory and an enlarged horizon of intellectual exchange.²⁸ Influenced by Sartre's *Les Temps Modernes*, Anderson sought to create an intellectually rigorous journal which was open to European Marxist traditions and supportive of national liberation movements in the tricontinental world.²⁹ He sought, in essence, radical separatism from the theory and politics of native radicalism. The board disagreed. It disbanded and editorial control of *New Left Review* fell into the hands of a triumvirate which included Anderson, Tom Nairn, and Robin Blackburn.³⁰

²⁴ See Blackledge, *Perry Anderson, Marxism and the New Left*, pp. 2-5. For Deutscher's influence on Anderson, see P. Anderson, 'Socialism and Pseudo-Empiricism,' *New Left Review*, I/35, 1966, p. 23. See also Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism*, p. 155.

²⁵ Interpretations of this succession abound. For Anderson's own, see *Arguments within English Marxism*, pp. 136-7.

²⁶ See M. Kenny, *The First New Left: British Intellectuals after Stalin* (London, 1995), pp. 71-72.

²⁷ Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism*, p. 137.

²⁸ Anderson led the way here. See his 'Portugal and the End of Ultra-Colonialism,' Part I, II and III, in *New Left Review*, I/15, 16, and 17, 1962, pp. 83-102, 88-123 and 85-114. As Elliott notes this work 'derived from his employment at a Third World Institute, African Research and Publications.' See Elliott, *Perry Anderson*, n.14, p. 248. On the importation of Marxist theory see NLR, 'On Internationalism,' *New Left Review*, I/18, 1963, pp. 3-4.

²⁹ On *New Left Review*'s conscious imitation of *Les Temps Modernes*, see R. Blackburn, 'A Brief History of *New Left Review*, 1960-1990,' in *Thirty Years of New Left Review: Index to Numbers 1-184* (London, 1992), p. vii.

³⁰ For Anderson's own description of the early history of *New Left Review* see his *Arguments within English Marxism*, p. 136. For a conflicting assessment, see E.P. Thompson, 'The Peculiarities of the

Unlike the New Left's 'old guard,' Anderson and his *New Left Review* editorial cohort came to political maturity in a context dominated by what he later called the 'reactionary consolidation'³¹ of the nineteen fifties. 'In Britain,' according to Anderson, 'its major idiom was glutinously chauvinist – reverent worship of Westminster, ubiquitous cult of constitutional moderation and common sense, ritualized exaltation of tradition and precedent.'³² The English intelligentsia, the ruling class's ventriloquist, was complicit in this consolidation, providing the very chauvinist discourse the establishment mimed.³³ According to Anderson, the dominant idiom of the national culture was 'parochial and quietest,'³⁴ intended to forestall social change. Self-satisfied, impervious to modernization, the British ruling class was immured in a culture which exalted traditionalism intellectually, conservative stasis politically, and hierarchies of estate socially. Desperately clinging to its imperial heritage, the establishment was nonetheless translating its energies to the maintenance of the American alliance and the goals of the 'Free World' abroad. Worse signs, according to Anderson, emanated from the opposite end of the social spectrum. Here the dominant culture was manifest in the proletariat's ideological purblindness. Integrated into what he described as a 'national consensus,'³⁵ the proletariat, it was widely maintained, had divested itself of its world-historical mission.³⁶ Satisfied with consumer durables, rising income levels, and improving standards of health and education, the English proletariat barely expressed any discontent with the status quo. Above and below, the value of the national culture, for Anderson and *New Left Review*, was nil.

English,' in Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (London, 1978), p. 35. For a later review of the early history of *New Left Review*, see Kenny, *The First New Left*, pp. 23-40.

³¹ Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism*, p. 148.

³² Ibid.

³³ See the comments of F. Mulhern, 'Introduction: Preliminaries and Two Contrasts,' to R. Debray, *Teachers, Writers, Celebrities – The Intellectuals of Modern France* (London, 1981), p. xix, cited in Anderson, *English Questions*, p. 194.

³⁴ Anderson, *English Questions*, p. 194.

³⁵ Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism*, p. 148.

³⁶ See I. Birchall, 'The Autonomy of Theory: A Short History of *New Left Review*,' *International Socialism*, 2, 10, 1981, p. 76.

In the mid-nineteenth century, socialist internationalism was rooted in the social being of groups of labour émigrés, exiled from home in search of work.³⁷ A century later, following the establishment of closed labour markets, Anderson argued that socialist internationalism became embodied in the social being of deracinated cosmopolitan intellectuals. It was now movements such as the New Left which illuminated the spirit of internationalism first sparked by the Working Men's Associations. Grouped around journals such as *New Reasoner*, *New Left Review*, *Les Temps Modernes*, and *Monthly Review*, at the forefront of organizations such as CND and Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (VSC), cosmopolitan socialist intellectuals established networks and pathways that sought to pre-figure a future post-capitalist society.³⁸ As editor of *New Left Review*, Anderson embodied this cosmopolitan *esprit de corps* to a high degree.³⁹ Indeed it was precisely on the issue of internationalism that he taxed his predecessors. Consequently, Anderson set *New Left Review* on a course for more cosmopolitan waters, leaving the national culture, which he considered a confluence of empiricist, traditionalist and chauvinist streams, far behind. This is the course the socialist helmsman would chart for *New Left Review* for the next two decades, calling in along the way at 'Red Bases' in the Sorbonne and Beijing, at outposts of national liberation struggle in Hanoi, Porto Amelia and La Paz, and at colonies of continental Marxist theory in Torino, Berlin and Paris. Having resigned the editorship of *New Left Review* in 1983, Anderson remained influential at Carlisle Street until the new century, when he once again assumed command, this time on the other side of the Atlantic.⁴⁰ Geographical displacement did not lead to a diminution of cosmopolitan energies. Rather as the world increasingly mirrored the cosmopolitan register of *New Left Review*, these energies were intensified.⁴¹

³⁷ For an account of the émigré groups that grouped around Marx's First International, see the brief history provided in P. Anderson, 'Internationalism: A Breviary,' *New Left Review*, II/14, 2002, pp. 10-11.

³⁸ For a dramatic account of these links, see T. Ali, *Street Fighting Years: An Autobiography of the Sixties* (London and New York, 2005, orig. 1987).

³⁹ See P. Sedgewick, 'The Two New Lefts,' in D. Widgery, ed., *The Left in Britain, 1956-1968* (Harmondsworth, 1976), p. 148 where he describes those associated with the 'second' *New Left Review* as 'rootless'.

⁴⁰ Without explanation, Anderson stepped down as editor of *New Left Review* in 2004. The review is now edited by Susan Watkins. Anderson, however, remains on the editorial committee. Anderson is currently Professor of History at UCLA.

⁴¹ If anything *New Left Review* has become more cosmopolitan in the new century. Picking up an edition of the 'new' *New Left Review* at random, I find articles by Habermas on Europe, by Said on the Palestinian National Authority, by W.J.F. Jenner on Racism in China, by Leo Chanjen Chen on Chinese Cinema, and reviews of Ludo De Witte's account of the assassination of Lumumba and of Anna Politkovskaya's account of the war in Chechnya. See *New Left Review*, II/11, 2001.

Searching for the source of his cosmopolitan bias,⁴² we might ask how Anderson would imagine the end of his homelessness. Unlike other exiles⁴³ who have overcome the psychic fragility of their 'outer-nation' existence through 'long distance nationalism,'⁴⁴ Anderson's Promised Land has been consistently imagined as some variant of socialist revolution. His heimat has been imagined as a common future, not sought for in a past, whether individual or collective. 'Roots,' as Darko Suvin has suggested, 'can be sought in a projected better world, one worked towards by applying the tools of the intellectual profession.'⁴⁵ In this sense Anderson awaits 'enracinement' in an imagined socialist community of the future. Once imagined as conceivable in the term of his own life, Anderson's home is now imagined as temporally distant. Reflecting on the existence of a 'co-national,' Anderson speculated that Gramsci's 'strength of mind ... in the depths of his own defeat...was to bring moral resistance and political innovation together.'⁴⁶ The reflection suggests as much about Anderson as it does about the one-time inhabitant of Mussolini's penal system. A later influence on Anderson (Trotsky) was prone to think in terms of epochs rather than years and decades. Anderson now imagines his homeland in similar terms. Today's cosmopolitan socialist rejects the recent past, home to distortions and deformations of the socialist ideal, dwells little upon the present, home to socialism's definitive defeat, and necessarily reflects on his homeland in terms far beyond his corporeal existence.

Anderson's intellectual career, as Frederic Jameson reflected in another context, has manifested 'the perceptual and intellectual advantages of figures we might once have considered as exiles, but who come before us today as the bearers and vehicles of transnationality.'⁴⁷ In a world characterized by continual movement across borders, by an increasingly homogenized world culture, by a world market

⁴² As Tom Nairn has suggested, although the cosmopolitan speaks 'from nowhere in particular,' he or she is no more free of particularity than the nationalist; cosmopolitanism is a belief system of the order of nationalism, bias inheres in both. See Nairn, 'Internationalism and the Second Coming,' p. 268.

⁴³ If Anderson can be described as an exile it is the result of his removal or distance from the characteristically 'late capitalist' obsession with identity – not for Anderson today's obsessive search for roots on the basis of ethnicity, language or territory. For the degree to which 'identity-formation' has become another aspect of our 'consumer culture' see F. Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,' *New Left Review*, 1/146, 1984, p. 99.

⁴⁴ See Anderson, 'Long Distance Nationalism,' pp. 58-74.

⁴⁵ Suvin, 'Displaced Persons,' p. 120.

⁴⁶ P. Anderson, 'Foreword,' in Anderson, *English Questions* (London, 1992), p. 11.

⁴⁷ See F. Jameson, 'Preface' to S. Kouvelakis, *Philosophy and Revolution: From Kant to Marx*, trans. by G.M. Goshgarian (London and New York, 2003), p. xii.

whose geographical end is coterminous with the earth itself, exile has become a familiar experience.⁴⁸ A peripheral figure in the nineteen sixties, Anderson's particular experience has given rise to an imposing oeuvre, which, as one commentator has mordantly suggested, stretches 'from 800 BC to last week.'⁴⁹ Anderson has attempted to master this historical time-line in the form of a total synthesis, informed by the optic of historical materialism. Given the importance of nationalism to developments in world history, it is little wonder that the national question has loomed large in his intellectual work. Exploring territory so far unmapped, the remainder of this chapter will set out to discuss the dimensions of Anderson's encounter with the national question.

An Extra-Territorial View: Nationalism and National Liberation

The appropriate response to nationalism, Marx argued, was contempt. Oppressed classes, whether structural or national, would not find emancipation through particularism, Marx claimed, but through a cosmopolitan socialism that promised to transcend the spurious universalism of capitalist society. Despite the dominance of this register in Marx's thought, it was not asserted without ambiguity. We have already encountered Marx's support for national liberation in Poland and Ireland.⁵⁰ The idea here was that certain peripheral national movements, and their abrasive challenge to reactionary Empires, could have a positive effect on the development of the global socialist movement; that the uneven development of the capitalist world-system justified socialist support of nationalist movements. How successful was the marriage of cosmopolitanism with an instrumental nationalism? Anderson's work in the nineteen sixties provides a particularly interesting site within which to answer this question. Acerbic critic of English nationalism, on the one hand, panegyrist of revolutionary nationalisms, on the other, Anderson echoed the peculiar

⁴⁸ On these issues, see M. Miyoshi, 'A Borderless World? From Colonialism to Transnationalism and the Decline of the Nation State,' *Critical Inquiry*, 19, 1993, pp. 721-51.

⁴⁹ S.L. Malcomson, 'Ten Thousand Megalomaniacs: Perry Anderson, Man of Steel,' *Voice Literary Supplement*, March 1993, p. 21, cited in Elliott, *Perry Anderson*, p. xi.

⁵⁰ See E. Benner, *Actually Existing Nationalisms: A Post-Communist View from Marx and Engels* (Oxford, 1997) pp. 144-158 and J.H. Lim, 'Marx's Theory of Imperialism and the Irish National Question,' *Science and Society*, 56, 2, 1992, pp. 163-178.

marriage of anti-nationalism and nationalism that can be found in the work of Marx and later Marxists.

Anderson's anti-nationalism in the early nineteen sixties was expressed in two complementary forms: on the one hand a dismissal of Britain's national culture and on the other in an unabashed embrace of internationalism. The twin dimensions of Anderson's anti-nationalism, his 'fierce hatred of the reigning cultural conformism in Britain'⁵¹ and his commitment to the internationalization of the national culture, received expression in his and Tom Nairn's revision of English social and political history in the early nineteen sixties.⁵² Drawn out over a series of essays in *New Left Review* between 1962 and 1964, the Nairn-Anderson theses primarily taxed the national culture with a failure to provide a total account of British history, an account which might signpost a solution to the present crisis of state and economy.⁵³ Deploying the recently absorbed conceptual universe of continental Marxism – principally Gramsci, with a dose of Sartre and Lukács – Anderson and Nairn set out to provide a global map of British history, a compressed narrative of the British *longue durée* that would at once enable comprehension of the contemporary crisis of society and state and illumination of the shortcomings of an inadequate intellectual culture.⁵⁴ No antiquarian investigation of the past, Anderson and Nairn's genealogy of the present had a characteristically political purpose. The object of the Nairn-Anderson theses was clear: to provide a reorientation to the past that would promote an accurate understanding of the present - the necessary precondition, it was claimed, of any future socialist strategy.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism*, p. 149.

⁵² Normally included among the essays that make up the Nairn-Anderson theses are the following: T. Nairn, 'The British Political Elite,' *New Left Review*, I/23, 1963, pp. 19-25; P. Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis,' *New Left Review*, I/23, 1963, pp. 26-53; T. Nairn, 'The English Working Class,' *New Left Review*, I/27, 1964, pp. 43-57; and T. Nairn, 'The Nature of the Labour Party,' in P. Anderson and R. Blackburn, eds., *Towards Socialism* (Ithaca, 1966). The latter article originally appeared in *New Left Review*, 27 and 28, 1964. 'Origins of the Present Crisis,' was later reprinted in *English Questions*, pp. 15-47. Reference to the essay made here will be to the version as it appeared in *New Left Review*.

⁵³ Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis,' p. 27. See also Anderson, *English Questions*, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁴ For the 'theoretical background' of the Nairn-Anderson theses see Anderson, *English Questions*, pp. 2-4. On the relationship between *New Left Review* and Gramsci in this period, see D. Forgacs, 'Gramsci and Marxism in Britain,' *New Left Review*, I/176, 1989, pp. 74-77 and Elliott, *Perry Anderson*, p. 13.

⁵⁵ See Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis,' p. 27. Cf. Elliott, *Perry Anderson*, p. 14.

The centerpiece of the Nairn-Anderson theses, 'Origins of the Present Crisis' opened with a national lament: 'We must be unique among advanced industrial nations in not having one structural study of our society today.'⁵⁶ This lament set the tone of what was to follow: the peculiarities of the English measured against a European meter. Echoing Marx's own assessment of German development, Anderson's analysis in 'Origins of the Present Crisis' found England backward or deviant on each historical, political and social measure.⁵⁷ Having undergone an incomplete bourgeois revolution, English society was home to the first industrial revolution but also to a social order characterized by a class compact between fractions of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. The combination of an abbreviated bourgeois revolution and an extremely successful industrial revolution meant there was no 'fundamental contradiction between the old aristocracy and the new bourgeoisie.'⁵⁸ The unholy social compact which constituted the English ruling bloc, solidified during the late Victorian era of imperialism, 'saturated and "set" British society in a mould it has retained to this day'⁵⁹ – feudal, monarchic, hierarchical and traditionalist. Having avoided the 'normal' tracks of historical development in the nineteenth century, England had experienced neither invasion nor defeat in war, twin midwives of European social transformation in the twentieth century. In addition, this deviant historical development had birthed a 'pre-mature' proletariat which echoed the non-hegemonic character of the bourgeoisie.⁶⁰ An incomplete bourgeois revolution, a precocious industrial revolution which proved a barrier to economic modernization, the dominance of a social bloc characterized by aristocratic hegemony and bourgeois timidity, and a proletariat dominated by a corporate rather than a hegemonic class

⁵⁶ Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis,' p. 16.

⁵⁷ Reviews of Anderson's 'Origins of the Present Crisis,' and the wider debate it inspired, can be found in N. Poulantzas, 'Marxist Political Theory in Britain,' *New Left Review*, 1/43, 1967, pp. 57-74; R. Johnson, 'Barrington Moore, Perry Anderson, and English Social Development,' in S. Hall et al., eds., *Culture, Media, Language* (London, 1980), pp. 48-70; Elliott, *Perry Anderson*, pp. 14-18; Blackledge, *Perry Anderson, Marxism and the New Left*, pp. 18-23. The debate as a whole was also covered in my unpublished MA thesis, 'History and Revolution: Debates between Perry Anderson and E.P. Thompson,' University of Western Australia, unpub. MA thesis, 2003.

⁵⁸ Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis,' p. 20.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 43. This understandably raised the ire of other British Marxists. For critiques of Anderson's conceptualization of working class corporatism, see J. Hinton, 'The Labour Aristocracy,' *New Left Review*, 1/34, 1963, pp. 72-77; and K. Nield, 'A Symptomatic Dispute? Notes on the Relation between Marxian Theory and Historical Practice in Britain' *Social Research*, 47, 3, 1980, pp. 479-507. Anderson noted these critiques in his 1987 revision of 'The Origins of the Present Crisis,' 'The Figures of Descent.' He remained unrepentant. The essay which originally appeared in *New Left Review*, 1/161, 1987, pp. 20-77 was later reprinted as part of *English Questions*, pp. 121-192. Reference in this chapter to that essay will derive from *English Questions*.

consciousness - it was these infelicities of English historical development, Anderson argued, which overdetermined the 'present crisis'.⁶¹

Furnishing a history of the *state* rather than the *nation*, 'Origins of the Present Crisis' nominated an incomplete 'bourgeois revolution' as the source of twentieth century British economic stagnation. The bourgeoisie, 'Origins' argued, had successively failed to wrest political power from the aristocracy, thus aborting normal historical development. Whether at the time of its initial entrée onto the historical stage during the upheavals of the seventeenth century, whether through its flaccid acceptance of aristocratic hegemony during the revolutionary wars against France in the early nineteenth century, or whether during the 'high noon of imperialism'⁶² at that century's *fin de siècle*, the bourgeoisie had successively failed to grasp the nettle of history. Supine acceptance of a feudal state ensured the absence of normal social and political development in Britain; here capitalism was neither shadowed by the growth of a nation-state nor by the evolution of a revolutionary proletariat inspired by a cosmopolitan ideology (Marxism) that promised to consign the nation and nationalism to the dustbin of history.⁶³ Albion's bourgeoisie, then, failed to prepare the ground for the institution of a nation state and consequently bequeathed to the proletariat 'no impulse of liberation, no revolutionary values, no universal language.'⁶⁴ In a society where 'the aristocracy became – and remained – the vanguard of the bourgeoisie,'⁶⁵ national liberation was the unlikely *telos* of historical development. The consequences, Anderson argued, were catastrophic. By the mid twentieth century Britain sheltered under a political roof more suited to feudal times, was ruled by a social bloc dominated by the aristocracy, and was stuck with a type of capitalism resistant to modernization and dependent on disappearing imperial privilege.

⁶¹ Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis,' pp. 42-43.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁶³ See *Ibid.*, p. 39. For a very different reading of British historical development, see E.M. Wood, *The Pristine Culture of Capitalism: A Historical Essay on Old Regimes and Modern States* (London, 1991).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 43. This line of argument would, of course, be taken up later by Tom Nairn in both his *The Break-Up of Britain* (London, 1978) and *The Enchanted Glass* (London, 1988). The last chapter of the thesis will consider Nairn's unique contributions to the nexus between Marxism and nationalism.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 35. Anderson would later remain unrepentant about this view of the nineteenth century ruling class. See Anderson, 'Figures of Descent,' in *English Questions*, pp. 130-6. Armed with advances in European and British historiography – principally A. Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War* (New York, 1981) and Harold Perkin's *The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880* (London, 1969) – Anderson maintained his views on the aristocratic colouration of the nineteenth century British ruling class.

Alongside this conception of incomplete 'nationalist' development, 'Origins of the Present Crisis' held in view an alternate conception of the effect of the national question on British development. In this view the bourgeoisie were not taxed with nationalist failure but with nationalist exorbitance. To summarise Anderson, it had not been lack of national consciousness but – in one sense – excess of it which had prevented the bourgeoisie from fulfilling its historic mission. Although Britain had failed to take the 'normal' nationalist road of development, nationalism had exerted a profound influence over the evolution of British society in the form of 'social imperialism'.⁶⁶ The bourgeoisie's integration into a single hegemonic class dominated by the aristocracy ensured its vulnerability to the appeal of reactionary nationalism, to a form of nationalism which sought not to free society from its feudal ties but to reinforce them by deflecting the normal development of social conflict. Social imperialism, Anderson argued, 'created a powerful "national" framework for social contradictions which at normal periods insensibly mitigated them and at moments of crisis transcended them altogether.'⁶⁷ It sanctified the perverse social alliance between aristocracy and bourgeoisie, consolidating not only 'the preternaturally hierarchical character of the total social order'⁶⁸ but also the ideology of 'traditionalism'. In a society where the ruling class's hegemony was secured within the region of civil society, nationalism, in the form of social imperialism, operated as an ideology obscuring 'the primary reality of a society divided into economically-based classes.'⁶⁹ It was an important component of the ruling social bloc's 'cultural supremacy,' the means by which it successfully secured the continuing legitimation of its rule.

'Origins of the Present Crisis,' thus, sustained two competing, if not incompatible, conceptions of nationalism: on the one hand a nationalism consonant with 'normal' historical development, what might be called 'revolutionary' nationalism; and on the other, a type of nationalism that retarded historical

⁶⁶ For an overview of the concept of 'social imperialism,' see G. Eley, 'Defining Social Imperialism: Use and Abuse of an Idea,' *Social History*, 2, 1976, pp. 265-290.

⁶⁷ Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis,' p. 35. The idea of 'social imperialism' has been most often associated with German history, but see H. Lebovics, *The Alliance of Iron and Wheat in the Third Republic 1860-1914: The Origin of the New Conservatism* (Baton Rouge, 1988).

⁶⁸ Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis,' p. 34. In addition, see Anderson, 'Socialism or Pseudo-Empiricism,' p. 33.

⁶⁹ Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis,' p. 39.

development, a 'counter-revolutionary' nationalism that not only subverted the course of 'normal' social and political progress but hid the 'real' conflicts of the social order.⁷⁰ English history, according to Anderson, was characterized by too little of the former and too much of the latter. In Anderson's schema, the absence of 'revolutionary nationalism' prevented both a full scale clash between aristocracy and bourgeoisie and the emergence of a fully industrialized capitalism; while the overpowering presence of 'reactionary' nationalism ensured that the bourgeoisie could neither complete its unfinished work of 1640 and 1832 nor modernize capitalist forces of production.⁷¹ Nationalism thus constituted, for Anderson, the key to the present crisis of British capitalism and social development. But this relatively straightforward conception of nationalism – as either revolutionary or counter-revolutionary – was complicated by the presence of another form of nationalism in 'Origins of the Present Crisis,' registered again by its absence in British history. According to Anderson there were two principle ways a fully mature capitalist society could develop – either a bourgeoisie wrested power from the aristocracy, in the process freeing up the development of social relations of production (what might be called the French road of capitalist development) or, in the absence of a successful bourgeois revolution, the state could step in to ensure the proper development of machinofacture (what might be called the German road of capitalist development). Britain had repudiated both. In Britain, the state appeared supremely ill-suited to the task of capitalist modernization. Controlled by a social bloc dominated by the aristocracy, wedded to an 'out-dated' laissez faire understanding of capitalist development, and prioritizing the financial over the industrial sector of capitalism, the British state lacked the necessary 'technocracy'⁷² to successfully modernize the economy.⁷³ Maintaining its rule within the interstices of civil society rather than through the outer walls of the state, the ruling social bloc had long disabled the only mechanism it had left to modernize British capitalism: the Listian programme of national state-led capitalism.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ This contrast has become a staple of the literature on nationalism. See H. Kohn, *The Age of Nationalism* (New York, 1968, orig. 1962) for a classic argument along these lines. For a more recent example, see P. Alter, *Nationalism* (London, 1990).

⁷¹ See Elliott, *Perry Anderson*, p. 35.

⁷² See Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis,' p. 52.

⁷³ Ibid. For an overview of state-led national economic development, see C. Tilly, ed., *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton, 1975).

⁷⁴ For a comprehensive overview of the Listian programme of national economics, see R. Szporluk, *Communism and Nationalism: Karl Marx Versus Friedrich List* (New York and Oxford, 1998), pp. 115-168.

If the bourgeoisie was a failed national class, what was the relationship between the proletariat and nationalism? A key question addressed by Anderson in 'Origins of the Present Crisis' – indeed it informed the Nairn-Anderson theses as a whole – was why socialism had been defeated in 'a country where the manual working-class constitutes an overwhelming sociological majority of the population.'⁷⁵ In the terms of Anderson's analysis this question appeared as interrogating why the working class had not developed a hegemonic ideology capable of challenging and overturning existing society. Anderson offered two competing solutions to this problem, each outlining a different conception of the relationship between proletariat and nation. The first suggested that nationalism had obscured the proletariat's 'real' or 'true' interests.⁷⁶ Here nationalism appeared in the guise of false consciousness. Like the bourgeoisie, Anderson argued, the proletariat had been prevented by social imperialism from uncovering the real class conflict at the base of society.⁷⁷ Social imperialism, in brief, confirmed and reinforced the proletariat's 'immovable corporate class-consciousness.'⁷⁸ The second thesis argued that the proletariat had been deflected from socialist revolution through its successful integration into the 'national' state. It was the 'national integration'⁷⁹ of the proletariat, not its false consciousness, in this conception of working class and nation, which had trumped socialist revolution. Echoing Hobsbawm's judgment, Anderson argued that through the establishment of a national mass media and a national system of welfare, the working class had been successfully integrated into both the national state and the capitalist economy.⁸⁰ Here, far from appearing as a phantom, nationalism appeared as the proletariat's authentic response to the capitalist social order.

⁷⁵ Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis,' p. 38.

⁷⁶ For a brief account of the false consciousness interpretation of nationalism in the Marxist tradition, see E. Benner, *Really Existing Nationalisms: A Post-Communist View from Marx and Engels* (Oxford, 1995), p. 15. For a critique of this conception, see G. Cohen, *History, Labour and Freedom* (Oxford, 1988), p. 144. But also see J. Cocks, *Passion and Paradox: Intellectual Confront the National Question* (Princeton, 2002), pp. 24-5, where it is argued that this conception of nationalism cannot be attributed to Marx.

⁷⁷ Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis,' p. 36 where he suggests that 'The enthusiastic participation of most of the Left in the holocaust of the First World War was only the most spectacular production of decades of nation-imperial mystification.'

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 41. In the original this phrase appears in italics.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁸⁰ For the working class's integration into the capitalist economy, see A. Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy* (Paris, 1985), pp. 133-169. For the 'nationalization' of the working class see C. Calhoun, 'Nationalism and Ethnicity,' *Annual Review of Sociology*, 19, 1993, p. 217.

What, given the 'alternative theory of our present situation'⁸¹ outlined by 'Origins of the Present Crisis,' were the possible set of futures before Britain? Anderson essentially offered antagonistic set of futures – bourgeois national development, the transformation of ruling-class hegemony under international economic pressure; and socialist-nationalist development, the English working-class completing the unfinished social and economic work of 1640 and 1832.⁸² In the terms of Anderson's own analysis, however, neither set of futures seemed likely or indeed possible. The first directly contradicted his argument that 'the gigantic international corporation is increasingly emerging as [the international economy's] basic unit.'⁸³ The transnationalization of capitalist forces and relations of production suggested here makes nonsense of the idea of national economics and necessarily forecloses any solution to capitalism's crisis based on national economic development. Anderson's second solution was fatally undermined by the same premise. How was 'socialism in one island' to be successfully constructed within a sea of capitalism? There were perhaps more damaging limitations to Anderson's conception of socialist nationalism⁸⁴ than the problems and contradictions of 'socialism in one country'.⁸⁵ Marx had always premised the socialist society of the future on the basis of the full development of capitalist relations of production. When these latter relations became a fetter on the development of productive forces it was then that a transition to socialism could successfully occur. In Anderson's schema, however, socialism was to be built on foundations that he himself described as 'backward' – the whole contemporary justification of Anderson's analysis rested on the purported fact that Britain's economy was quickly becoming the 'sick man of Europe'. Not the full

⁸¹ Anderson, 'Socialism or Pseudo-Empiricism,' p. 33.

⁸² See Szporluk, *Nationalism and Communism*, p. 44. The second future was seen in terms, partly, of a victory for Wilson in the forthcoming election. On Anderson's early enthusiasm for 'Wilsonism,' see P. Anderson, 'Critique of Wilsonism,' *New Left Review*, I/27, 1964, pp. 3-27. And for commentaries, see Elliott, *Perry Anderson*, p. 19 and Blackledge, *Perry Anderson, Marxism and the New Left*, pp. 26-7.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 51. Earlier, in an article on Swedish Social Democracy, he had defined capitalism as 'a coherent totality – a global mode of existence which embraces all the diverse activities and institutions of a society and reveals the same organizing principles in each of them.' Unexplored here, was the relationship between capitalism as 'global mode of existence' and its break-up into a political system of nation-states. See P. Anderson, 'Sweden II: Study in Social Democracy,' *New Left Review*, I/7, 1962, p. 45.

⁸⁴ Anderson at times seemed to suggest that socialism was the ultimate form of economic modernization. Indeed, according to him, further economic development pointed toward a future characterized by a mix of state intervention in the economy and planning. This was a type of capitalism he called 'neo-capitalism'. Socialism, in this sense, would modernize the capitalist system. See Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis,' p. 51.

⁸⁵ This programme was outlined in P. Anderson, 'Problems of Socialist Strategy,' in Anderson and R. Blackburn, eds., *Towards Socialism* (London, 1965).

development of capitalist relations of production but their arrested development, scarcity not abundance, was to form the basis of Anderson's intended socialist transformation in Britain. 'Origins of the Present Crisis' offered, then, incompatible solutions to the crisis of national development, solutions which themselves were beset by contradiction and aporia.

E.P. Thompson provided a different critique of 'Origins of the Present Crisis'. He repudiated both the empirical and the theoretical basis of the Nairn-Anderson theses. In particular, Thompson objected to Anderson's attempt to fit the history of English social development to a model derived from French history. Thompson rejected Anderson's analysis of the social forces behind the English Revolution, disputed his interpretation of 1832, challenged his disparagement of the 'English ideology' and lamented his abbreviated history of the English working-class as a class characterized by a 'corporate' rather than a 'hegemonic' consciousness. In response, Thompson proposed an understanding of the eighteenth-century gentry as a capitalist class, a vision of the English ruling-class as 'Old Corruption,' and a conception of the English bourgeois revolution as a 'great arch' that stretched back to 'the great monastic farmers of Domesday.'⁸⁶ In addition, he proposed a different way of seeing the reformism of the English working class – one that returned agency to where it belonged, in people not classes - and a very different evaluation of the history of English ideas. Against Anderson Thompson wished to reaffirm 'that there are (despite some of the truths of Anderson's account) certain strengths and humane traditions in British life which Other countries, including those whose airports are superb, whose Marxism is mature, and whose salesmanship is high-powered, do not always display.'⁸⁷ What the Nairn-Anderson theses lacked, according to Thompson, was 'the control of "grand facts".'⁸⁸ This, Thompson argued, was a great detriment to any future socialist advance because 'England is unlikely to capitulate before a Marxism which cannot at least engage in a dialogue in the English idiom.'⁸⁹

⁸⁶ E.P. Thompson, 'The Peculiarities of the English,' in Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (London, 1978), pp. 41 and 47.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

'Origins of the Present Crisis' caused a storm on the New Left.⁹⁰ Characteristic of this meteorological disturbance was the intemperate response from E.P. Thompson, a response that was most effective when pointing to the unspoken typology which hid behind Anderson's narrative of the 'peculiarities of English history.'⁹¹ Other interlocutors also converged on this badly disguised typology, with emphasis again placed on a negative assessment of Anderson's *jacquerie* against all things English.⁹² Evidence of anti-nationalism within not just Anderson's published work but within the journal he edited was easy to marshal.⁹³ His anti-nationalism implied not just a widening of theoretical horizons but the rejection of native radical traditions of thought and practice. Anderson's commitment to an 'internationalization' of theory, however, was not matched by belief in the 'internationalization of socialist strategy.' His internationalism, thus, was not just theoretical, as critics have suggested, and as Anderson himself later admitted, but less 'real' than might have been supposed. 'Problems of Socialist Strategy' confirmed this.⁹⁴ In Anderson's searching examination of socialist strategy, penned as the practical coda to 'Origins of the Present Crisis,' the conception of 'socialism in one country' went unchallenged. In a reprise of Gramsci's understanding of the 'national-popular,'⁹⁵ a reprise that pre-empted Hall's later employment of this concept, 'Problems of Socialist Strategy' maintained that an integrated socialist ideology – the necessary basis, it was argued, of any adequate conception of socialist transformation - needed to immerse itself in

⁹⁰ For an early account of the 'two' New Lefts, see P. Sedgewick, 'The Two New Lefts (1964),' reprinted in D. Widgery, comp., *The Left in Britain, 1956-1968* (Harmondsworth, 1976), pp. 131-53. For a later account see E. M. Wood, 'A Chronology of the New Left and Its Successors, or: Who's Old-Fashioned Now?,' *Socialist Register 1995* (London, 1995), pp. 22-49.

⁹¹ Thompson, 'Peculiarities of the English.'

⁹² In particular, see Johnson, 'Barrington Moore, Perry Anderson, and English Social Development,' pp. 60-1. For a later critique along similar lines, see Wood, *The Pristine Culture of Capitalism*, p. 3; and for a critique of the methodology itself, see D. Blackburn and G. Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth Century History* (Oxford, 1984).

⁹³ Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism*, p. 149 where he suggests that the whole purpose of *New Left Review* during his early editorship 'was founded on the conviction that just as historical materialism was born in the mid-nineteenth century from the confluence of at least three different national systems of thought ... so it could be expected to develop more freely and fruitfully in the mid-twentieth century from an equal, or rather even greater, breaking of national barriers.'

⁹⁴ Anderson would later reject this essay [it would not be reprinted in *English Questions*], claiming that the essay had partaken of the 'illusions of left social-democracy'. See Anderson, 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci,' p. 27, n. 48. This is true. What Anderson also failed to mention was that it, like 'Origins of the Present Crisis,' partook equally in the illusions of socialism in one country.

⁹⁵ On this idea in Gramsci's work, see M. Forman, *Nationalism and the International Labor Movement* (University Park, Penns., 1998), pp. 143-59. See also C. Boggs, *Gramsci's Marxism* (London, 1976), p. 19.

'national cultural traditions'.⁹⁶ (After reading such a statement, it might be wondered what all the fuss between Anderson and Thompson was about!) Internationalist in intent, nationalist in effect, Anderson's socialism, like Thompson's at this time, was far removed from Marx's cosmopolitanism.⁹⁷ 'We wrote as Marxists,'⁹⁸ Anderson, referring to his and Nairn's interventions, later asserted...but as Marxists who could imagine no viable socialist community beyond the political geography of the nation.

The paradoxical effects of Anderson's anti-nationalism were revealed most clearly in his 1968 'Yeatsian' missile against the national culture.⁹⁹ Its touchstone, like 'Origins', was a series of national laments: England, alone among European nations, lacked a revolutionary student movement, an indigenous sociology and a 'national Marxism' (a bizarre conception for a cosmopolitan socialist!).¹⁰⁰ The source of these national peculiarities was 'not social recruitment' but 'intellectual heritage'¹⁰¹ - 'Britain, the most conservative major society in Europe, now has a culture in its image: mediocre and inert.'¹⁰² What can we make of Anderson's characterization of the national culture? The first response might well be surprise. On the one hand he elided Britain with England, making no distinction between 'national' cultures in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (what was the 'nation' of Anderson's conception of the 'national culture?'); on the other he appeared to fall prey to the dominant culture's own belief that there was such a thing as a *French* ideology, a *German* ideology and an *English* ideology.¹⁰³ This was a point that Thompson made.¹⁰⁴ Indeed when Anderson concluded that the national culture was 'empiricist' rather than 'theoretical', 'traditionalist' rather than 'rationalist', 'parochial' rather than 'international', 'hierarchical' rather than 'egalitarian', and 'provincial' rather than

⁹⁶ Anderson, 'Problems of Socialist Strategy,' p. 289.

⁹⁷ No other critique of Anderson's central contribution to the Nairn-Anderson theses has made this point. For recent critiques of 'Components of the National Culture,' see Elliott, *Perry Anderson*, pp. 32-37; and Blackledge, *Perry Anderson, Marxism and the New Left*, pp. 39-47.

⁹⁸ P. Anderson, 'Figures of Descent,' in Anderson, *English Questions*, pp. 122.

⁹⁹ P. Anderson, 'Components of the National Culture,' in *English Questions*, pp. 48-104. The essay originally appeared in *New Left Review*, 1/50, 1968, pp. 214-84. Reference in this chapter will be to the essay as it appeared in *English Questions*.

¹⁰⁰ Anderson, 'Components of the National Culture,' in *English Questions*, p. 48.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹⁰³ It should go without saying that Anderson's understanding of culture was far removed from that of other socialist thinkers like Raymond Williams and E.P. Thompson. In many ways Anderson reduced culture 'as a whole way of life' (the idea that culture describes the totality of social life) to the typically conservative idea of elite culture.

¹⁰⁴ Thompson, 'The Peculiarities of the English,' p. 57.

'cosmopolitan', representatives of the dominant culture would have assented. In seeking to undermine the conservatism of the national culture, then, he ended up reinforcing it. Satisfied that there was little or nothing within British intellectual history that was worth salvaging, Anderson was left with only one possible solution to the regeneration of the national culture: the importation of 'theory' from abroad.¹⁰⁵ The ultimate consequence of 'Components of the National Culture' thus was a naturalization of nationalism.¹⁰⁶

Yet there could be no greater distance than that between Anderson's estimation of the national culture and the positive valuation of the national culture to be found in either the early New Left or the CPGB. Seen in this context, 'Components of the National Culture' constituted a radical critique of the Left's assessment of the value of the national culture in the construction of a socialist society. Where, for example, Thompson had maintained that the national culture was the necessary starting point of any radical transformation of relations of production, Anderson maintained it was the national culture that constituted the formative obstacle to socialist revolution in Britain. 'Silently underpinning the social status quo,' the national culture, Anderson argued, 'stifles intellectual questioning of the existing order and deprives political opposition on the Left of the resources needed to understand its society, the condition of changing it.'¹⁰⁷ If revolution was to be imagined in Britain, Anderson maintained, the national culture would have to be overturned, replaced by a revolutionary culture which rejected 'empiricism' and 'traditionalism'. The task of revolutionary socialists, hence, was not to make the national culture commensurate with Marxist socialism but to make Marxist socialism the anthesis of the national culture.¹⁰⁸ Not the

¹⁰⁵ This had begun, of course, before Anderson composed 'Components of the National Culture'. In 1966 *New Left Review* published a selection of writings by European Marxists, including those of Andre Gorz, Georg Lukacs and Sartre. This would continue throughout the nineteen sixties and seventies. No Marxist could question the significant service rendered by the *New Left Review* during these years.

¹⁰⁶ As Gregory Jusdanis in his 'Beyond National Culture?', *boundary 2*, 22, 1, 1995, p. 24, suggests, 'National culture ... is often [a] substitute for national identity.' Later in the same essay (p. 31) Jusdanis pinpoints the way that culture – in the sense used by Anderson – comes to play a prominent place in nationalist discourse. As Eugen Weber has established, nations have to invent national cultures. See E. Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford, 1976), p. 5 where he suggests French peasants had to 'be integrated into the national society, economy, and culture.'

¹⁰⁷ Anderson, 'Components of the National Culture,' p. 104.

¹⁰⁸ As Elliott suggests, *Perry Anderson*, p. 53, 'The remedy for a conservative national culture was an internationalist, revolutionary-Marxist culture; its vector, the student movement; its vehicle, the *NLR* and New Left Books.'

reinterpretation of the nation's past but a rejection of it constituted the socialist strategy of 'Components of the National Culture.'

Having deconstructed the nation's superstructure, the ostensible goal of 'Components of the National Culture' remained the creation of a 'national Marxism'. Anderson appeared caught in an impossible contradiction. Total repudiation of the national culture constituted an insecure ground for the construction of a 'national Marxism,' anti-nationalism an unstable basis for any attempt to construct 'socialism in one country,' still, at this time, the implied geography of Anderson's conception of social transformation. If the goal was to make Marxism indigenous to Britain then surely the socialist nationalism of the CPGB or that of the early New Left represented a more coherent cultural strategy. But it was precisely this socialist nationalism that 'Components of the National Culture' ostensibly spurned. Anderson's assessment of the relationship between socialism and the national culture in 'Components of the National Culture' was far removed, then, from his earlier suggestion in 'Problems of Socialist Strategy' that any successful revolutionary theory in Britain must immerse itself in 'national cultural traditions'. How would a Marxism based explicitly on a rejection of the national culture not be rendered 'abstract' and 'external' to the society it was trying to win as Anderson suggested it would in 'Problems of Socialist Strategy'?¹⁰⁹

If the national context appeared hostile to Marxist fortunes in the nineteen sixties, the international context appeared to promise better things. Consistent with his *jacquerie* against all things English – including native radical traditions – Anderson found political sustenance in 'Third World' anti-colonial movements.¹¹⁰ Cuba, especially, loomed large in 'second' New Left imagining.¹¹¹ Given 'universal significance' by socialists like Anderson desperate to fill the void of socialist agency, the Cuban Revolution appeared as 'the decisive phenomena of (their) time.'¹¹² The

¹⁰⁹ See Anderson, 'Problems of Socialist Strategy,' p. 223.

¹¹⁰ See Anderson's own comments on this in *Arguments within English Marxism*, pp. 151-3. For a full overview of these movements, see S.N. MacFarlane, *Superpower Rivalry and Third World Radicalism: The Idea of National Liberation* (London and Sydney, 1985), pp. 42-130.

¹¹¹ Anderson has maintained a long-standing association with Cuba. For the latest manifestation of this interest in the beleaguered socialist island see his review of Richard Gott's, *Cuba: A New History*, which appeared as 'Revolution without End' in *New Statesman*, 22 November 2004, pp. 48-9.

¹¹² R. Blackburn, 'Prologue to the Cuban Revolution,' *New Left Review*, I/21, 1963, p. 52.

Cuban revolution not only posed a challenge to the dominance of the imperialist West, but offered an alternative path to socialism, diverging from the model laid down by the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe. It was a present that seemed to point the way toward the future - national liberation movements in the colonial world taking up the baton of socialism laid down by the European working-class, promising at once to overturn imperialism and 'liberate the dialectic in the oppressor.'¹¹³ Association with tricontinental national liberation did not constitute the only example of 'second' New Left internationalism. In conjunction with the celebration of anti-imperialist nationalism abroad went the promotion of student struggle at home. Together, Anderson argued, these social movements breathed new life into the tired body of international socialism.

Replicating Sartre's own 'Third Worldism,' Anderson became engaged in a celebration of Guevarism¹¹⁴ in the late nineteen sixties.¹¹⁵ In 'The Marxism of Regis Debray,' Anderson and co-editor of *New Left Review*, Robin Blackburn, praised Debray's analyses of Latin American revolution as 'one of the most brilliant examples of Marxist-Leninist analysis to have appeared in many years.'¹¹⁶ According to Anderson and Blackburn, what distinguished Debray's revolutionary writings from all other forms on offer was 'their relentlessly Leninist focus on *making the revolution*, as a political, technical and military problem.'¹¹⁷ (*Making?* Thompson must again have wondered what all the fuss was about.) Already a supporter of peasant revolution in Vietnam, Anderson would later find himself drawn to Mao.¹¹⁸ Although suspicious of

¹¹³ G. Therborn, 'From Petrograd to Saigon,' *New Left Review*, I/48, 1968, p. 11. Reflecting on this mood among Western socialists, Victor Kiernan likened it to 'a new stirring of the old European dream of the noble savage: humanity uncorrupted by the fleshpots of Egypt was to arise from the Andes or the Mountains of the Moon (even, it appeared at times, from Harlem) to accomplish what a degenerate Western working class no longer cared to attempt.' See V. Kiernan, 'The Peasant Revolution,' *Socialist Register 1970* (London, 1970), p. 9.

¹¹⁴ In a 1968 issue of *New Left Review*, in an unsigned introduction to Guevara's work (likely to have been penned by Anderson), it was argued that 'our duty in the metropolises of imperialism itself is to undermine from within the atrocious and oppressive system which Che fought to destroy from without.'

¹¹⁵ For an account of Anderson's trip to Bolivia to secure the release of Debray, see Ali, *Street Fighting Years*, pp. 209-10. For a cogent overview of the relationship between Marxism and national liberation, see R.J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 167-181.

¹¹⁶ *NLR*, 'The Marxism of Regis Debray,' *New Left Review*, I/45, 1967, p. 8. This article was later reprinted in L. Huberman and P. Sweezy, eds., *Regis Debray and Latin American Revolution* (New York, 1968), pp. 63-69.

¹¹⁷ See 'The Marxism of Regis Debray,' p. 8.

¹¹⁸ As Gregory Elliott remarks, Maoist influence in *New Left Review* 'reached its zenith in 1968-69. Issue number 53 of the review contained discussion of the 'red bases' strategy, while the following

the more extreme interpretations of insurrectionary *foco* theory and strategy,¹¹⁹ Anderson assimilated both his Marxist thought and his socialist practice to the idea of revolutionary vanguardism. This received its clearest expression in his analysis of the prospects of revolutionary socialism in advanced capitalist societies, following the events of May 1968 in Paris. Again stressing the importance of 'Marxist theory and revolutionary culture,'¹²⁰ Anderson maintained that the 'May events highlighted the potential of small revolutionary groups in helping to unleash a class storm that shook society to its foundations.'¹²¹ According to his analysis of the French revolt, Vietnam Solidarity Committee (VSC) and the Revolutionary Socialist Students Federation (RSSF) could 'be seen as the first, embryonic expressions of this form of politics.'¹²² Recalling the spirit of the Bolsheviks in Petrograd in 1917, VSC and RSSF, Anderson argued, joined the revolutionary struggle against imperialism in the periphery with the struggle against imperialism in the core.

What were the implications of revolutionary nationalism for Anderson's ostensible cosmopolitan socialism? What tended to get forgotten in his celebration of revolutionary nationalism was Marx's ideal (not always unambiguously expressed) of the unity of mankind.¹²³ This was no minor revision. It undermined the structure of Marx's cosmopolitan project. Along with the loss of this animating purpose, went the postulate, equally central to Marxian thought, that it is classes not nations that constitute the basic units in history.¹²⁴ It also involved a fundamental revision of Marxist class theory. Castigating E.P. Thompson for his 'populism' in 'Socialism and Pseudo-Empiricism,' Anderson had argued that 'Where "the people" rather than concrete determinate social groups are continually invoked as the victims of injustice and the agents of social change, it becomes natural to speak of the "people" as a

issue published a talk by Mao. See Elliott, *Perry Anderson*, p. 59. For more on Anderson's 'Maoist' period, see Blackledge, *Perry Anderson, Marxism and the New Left*, p. x and 48-50.

¹¹⁹ Anderson briefly resigned as editor of *New Left Review* over this issue in 1968.

¹²⁰ 'Introduction,' *New Left Review*, 1/52, 1968, p. 7. For more on the New Left's relation to student struggle, see A. Quattrocchi and T. Nairn, *The Beginning of the End: France, May 1968* (London, 1968).

¹²¹ 'Introduction,' *New Left Review*, 1/52, 1968, p. 7 and A. Cockburn and R. Blackburn, eds., *Student Power: Problems, Diagnosis, Action* (Harmondsworth, 1969).

¹²² 'Introduction,' *New Left Review*, 1/52, 1968, p. 7. For a discussion of both the RSSF and VSC, see Ali, *Street Fighting Years*, pp. 233-56.

¹²³ See Berki, 'On Marxian Thought and the Problem of International Relations,' p. 93.

¹²⁴ See E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital* (London, 1975), p. 101, for the reasons why Marxists tended to deny the transnational nature of class.

nation with a pre-eminent destiny among other peoples.¹²⁵ Once socialists invoked 'the people' rather than 'the working class,' socialism, Anderson argued, would be sacrificed to nationalism.¹²⁶ Hence Anderson's charge against the first New Left, and Thompson in particular: 'the people' had replaced class, nationalism had replaced socialism. Yet Anderson's support for revolutionary nationalism involved support for precisely these operations. Now it would be 'the people' who would bring about socialist change, and it would be nationalism which would constitute the vehicle of socialism. In the imagining of revolutionary nationalists, as George Lichtheim has suggested, 'nationalism is identified with socialism, the peasantry with the proletariat, anti-imperialism with anti-capitalism, until all the distinctions painfully elaborated in Marxist literature for a century are cast overboard in favour of a simple dichotomy: Western imperialism versus the starving masses of the Third World.'¹²⁷

Why, then, would a self-styled cosmopolitan socialist like Anderson proclaim solidarity with revolutionary nationalism? In brief, political opportunity. With the social power of the proletariat at the centre of the capitalist world-system seemingly displaced and diminished, Marxists turned to the mass misery on that world system's periphery to find the real movement of things.¹²⁸ It was only there in movements marrying social and national liberation that socialist revolution, Marxists like Anderson believed, could find a constituency. By this measure particular nationalisms could be figured 'good' or 'bad,' dependent on whether they either opened up or closed down the prospect of socialist advance. We have already witnessed this suggestion in the work of Williams. Thus, when the nation was mobilized by Wilson or Johnson in the service of imperialism, nationhood was castigated and repudiated. But, when marshaled against the despised American Empire by insurrectionary Hanoi or Havana, nationhood was fervently celebrated. Marxists, like Anderson, were not 'nationalists' in the inflated sense of making the nation or a nation the archimedean point of their socialist politics. Their nationalism was instrumental - national liberation was celebrated only to the degree that it transformed the inter-national balance of class forces. This instrumental nationalism when conjoined to the explicit anti-nationalism of the Nairn-Anderson theses revealed a deep aporia in Anderson's

¹²⁵ P. Anderson, 'Socialism and Pseudo-Empiricism,' *New Left Review*, I/35, 1965, p. 36.

¹²⁶ A. Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London and New York, 1992), p. 101.

¹²⁷ G. Lichtheim, *Imperialism* (Harmondsworth, 1974), p. 139.

¹²⁸ Arrighi, 'American Century, Marxist Century,' p. 87-88.

Marxism. To bemoan the outcome of nationalism in capitalist nations – that it hid the real conflicts within society, that it deflected the working class from socialist revolution – while celebrating nationalisms in the tricontinental world was to establish an intellectual and political straitjacket from which there was no release.¹²⁹

What becomes striking in a consideration of Anderson's contributions to the Nairn-Anderson theses and his revolutionary nationalism is the degree to which an ostensibly anti-nationalist contribution to the development of Marxist thought in Britain could become trapped in nationalist premises. Taken together, then, his contributions to the Nairn-Anderson theses and his revolutionary nationalism reveal not so much the limitations of his internationalism as much as the pervasiveness of nationalism. Caught between two different forms of socialist nationalism – the Soviet version east of the Elbe, the Keynesian-social democratic version to its west – Anderson proved unable to break out of the vice-like grip that nationhood had on socialist thinkers in this period. As both Anderson and Thompson proved, there appeared no way around the nation, no internationalist third way between the nationalism of Soviet communism and the nationalism of Western social democracy. Neither Thompson nor Anderson had offered a solution to the problem of 'how the proletarians of the world were in practice to unite to appropriate human productive forces on a world scale.'¹³⁰ This was hardly cause for castigation. Neither Thompson and Anderson nor any other Marxist has been able to solve this problem. Yet by failing to uncover the unconsciously 'nationalist' premises of his Marxism, Anderson left his socialism open to a slide into nationalism and reinforced the nationalist premise that the nation was the only legitimate political community.

World History and Internationalism: On National States and Capitalism

In interrelated endeavours – a history of the capitalist mode of production and an elaboration of Marxism through an account of Marxism's history - Anderson

¹²⁹ For the argument that 'national liberation' and 'nationalism' cannot be separated see B. Parry, 'Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse,' *Oxford Literary Review*, 9, 1987, pp. 27-58 and N. Lazarus, *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 68-143.

¹³⁰ J. Dunn, 'Unimagined Communities: The Deceptions of Socialist Internationalism,' in J. Dunn, *Rethinking Modern Political Theory* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 105.

attempted to marry a perspective on world history with a conception of socialist practice. Broadly situated within 'the transition debate',¹³¹ *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* and *Lineages of the Absolutist State* sought to uncover the key to the mystery of why a fully developed system of commodity production first emerged in Western Europe.¹³² Correlatively, Anderson's history project was also concerned to expose the historical preconditions of the asymmetric trajectories followed by Eastern and Western Europe in the wake of the dissolution of antiquity, a seemingly intransigent riddle for both modern historiography and contemporary history.¹³³ Anderson sought answers to both problems in the divergent nature of the transition from antiquity to feudalism in each half of the European continent, divergences which produced asymmetrical forms of Absolutism east and west of the Elbe.¹³⁴ Essentially, for Anderson, 'what rendered the unique passage to capitalism in Europe was *the concatenation of antiquity and feudalism*.'¹³⁵ Yet the Romano-Germanic synthesis characteristic of Western feudalism was attenuated in Eastern Europe. Here neither a mercantile bourgeoisie emerged to mediate class struggle between landowning nobles and the peasant masses nor did the preconditions of commodity production or civil society develop within the interstices of its medieval social formations.¹³⁶ Consequently, it was only in the Western half of the continent that a mature industrial capitalism developed under its own historical steam. Described later in *English Questions* as a detour through the prehistory of the European bourgeois revolutions, Anderson's history project did not just seek to explain the genesis of capitalism as an international economic system. It also sought the state structure that acted as its vehicle. Anderson found this instrument in the Absolutist state, the transitional form between pre-capitalist social formations defined by the 'organic unity of economy and

¹³¹ This debate was collected together under the imprint of New Left Books in the mid nineteen seventies. See R. Hilton, et al., *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism* (London, 1976).

¹³² For overviews and critique's of Anderson's history project, see A. Hellner, 'Review of *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* and *Lineages of the Absolutist State*,' *Telos*, 33, 1977, pp. 202-10; R. Miliband, 'Political Forms and Historical Materialism,' in Miliband, *Class Power and State Power* (London, 1983), pp. 50-62; and P. Hirst, 'The Uniqueness of the West – Perry Anderson's Analysis of Absolutism,' in Hirst, *Marxism and Historical Writing* (London, 1985), pp. 91-125.

¹³³ See Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, p. 9. For a later view of this question, see R. Brenner, 'Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-industrial Europe,' in T.H. Aston and C.H.E. Philpin, eds., *The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-industrial Europe* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 10-63. The article was originally published in 1976 in *Past and Present*. The book contains the debate sparked off by Brenner's article.

¹³⁴ See Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism*, p. 213.

¹³⁵ Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, p. 420. Italics in the original.

¹³⁶ See *Ibid.*, p. 195.

polity' and capitalist social formations defined by the formal separation of economics and politics.

The genesis of Absolutist states in the sixteenth century, according to Anderson, marked the final political outcome of the long crisis of economy and society that had overwhelmed Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It was to this social formation that Anderson devoted the larger of his two-volume genealogy of the capitalist mode of production, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*. What were the determining features of the Absolutist state? Despite being ruled by the 'feudal aristocracy,' the Absolutist state, Anderson argued, could be distinguished by a number of institutional features whose genesis sharply sealed it off from medieval social formations – 'standing armies, a permanent bureaucracy, national taxation, a codified law, and the beginnings of a unified market.'¹³⁷ Given these defining characteristics, it might be imagined that the European Absolutist state was precisely a *national* state. An army which owed its allegiance to a centralizing monarch, a civilian bureaucracy loyal to the state, a system of law whose reach was coextensive with territorial borders, and the unification of commodity markets within those borders – surely these delimiting structures rendered the Absolutist state consonant with the national state. Not so, according to Anderson. Reluctant to militarize their peasant masses, Absolutist states established military forces dominated by 'foreign' mercenaries rather than national conscripts, an essential feature of the national state.¹³⁸ In addition, the function of these armies set them sharply apart from military forces characteristic of capitalist nation-states. War, in the period of absolutism, remained, as it been in medieval times, a zero-sum game whereby states maximized their mode of expansion at the direct (territorial) expense of competitors, rather than a

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 17. For a review of the relationship between Absolutism and nationalism which directly attacks Anderson's account, see A.W. Marx, *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 33-72.

¹³⁸ Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, pp. 29-30. On the centrality of a 'national conscript' army to the 'nationalization of the masses,' see C. Tilly, 'States and Nationalism in Europe 1492-1992,' in J.L. Comaroff and P.C. Stern, eds., *Perspectives on Nationalism and War* (Amerstam, 1995), p. 196. But also see M. Mann, 'The Emergence of Modern European Nationalism,' in J.A. Hall and I.C. Jarvie, eds., *Transition to Modernity* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 143. On this same point, see Jusdanis, 'Beyond National Culture?,' p. 41.

medium of inter-economic competition where increased capital accumulation might accrue to each antagonist.¹³⁹

Scarcely more 'nationalist' was the Absolutist state's bureaucracy or its system of law and taxation or its dominant mode of production and exchange. Object of financial trade between private individuals, the bureaucracy characteristic of the Absolutist state provided a stunning contrast to the bureaucratic networks staffed by interchangeable subjects on the basis of meritocracy described by Gellner as typical of the modern nation-state.¹⁴⁰ If a 'meritocratic' bureaucracy was foreign to the Absolutist state, so was the notion of the 'juridical "citizen" subject to fiscality by the very fact of belonging to the nation'¹⁴¹ - an entity crucial, liberal nationalists have argued, to the later dominance of national sentiment.¹⁴² Under the rule of absolutism, the burden of taxation was overwhelmingly shouldered by the poor, the seigniorial class remaining free from the exactions of direct fiscal levies.¹⁴³ Finally, while the ruling economic doctrine of the epoch extinguished particularistic impediments to exchange within 'national' borders, and sought to create an integrated 'national' market for commodity production, it still subordinated profit to power – the separation of economy and polity characteristic of the modern capitalist state constituted the antipode of the Absolutist state dominated by mercantilism.¹⁴⁴ An army composed of nationalized masses, war as a means to pump prime national economies, a state bureaucracy established on the basis of meritocracy, the citizen as the defining feature of systems of law and taxation, and the separation of economic and political powers – all these institutional features of the modern nation-state were foreign to the idiomatic

¹³⁹ Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, p. 31. As Anderson suggested, 'The normal medium of inter-capitalist competition is economic, and its structure is typically additive: rival parties may both expand and prosper – although unequally – throughout a single confrontation, because the production of manufactured commodities is inherently unlimited. The typical medium of inter-feudal rivalry, by contrast, was military and its structure was always potentially the zero-sum conflict of the battlefield, by which fixed quantities of ground were won or lost.'

¹⁴⁰ Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, pp. 33-4. On Gellner's understanding of the relationship between bureaucracy and nationalism see E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, 1983).

¹⁴¹ Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, p. 35.

¹⁴² See C. Taylor, 'Nationalism and Modernity,' in J.A. Hall, *The State of the Nation* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 191-228 and W. Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford, 1995). See also C. Tilly, 'Citizenship, Identity and Social History,' *International Review of Social History*, Supplement 3, 1996, pp. 1-18.

¹⁴³ Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, p. 35.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

Absolutist state. In the epoch of Absolutism, according to Anderson, a state's ultimate legitimacy rested on dynasty not territory.¹⁴⁵

Anderson's comparative history of pre-capitalist social formations prefigured two common assumptions of later nationalism studies: that nations and nationalism are definitively modern phenomena, on the one hand, and, on the other, that it is states that create nations not nations states.¹⁴⁶ Anderson's histories were clear-cut on the first point. As Anderson bluntly put it: 'The ideological conceptions of "nationalism" as such were foreign to the inmost nature of absolutism.'¹⁴⁷ The full emergence of the modern nation-state did not only have to await those various ruptures which assaulted the European *ancien regimes*, beginning with the French Revolution in the late eighteenth century and ending with the dissolution of the majority of surviving monarchies after 1918. The modern nation state was also, according to Anderson, the pre-eminent response to certain developments within the capitalist mode of production. In this sense, it was a function of international capital at a particular stage of its history. The Absolutist state, then, not only 'accomplished certain partial functions in the primitive accumulation necessary for the eventual triumph of the capitalist mode of production,'¹⁴⁸ but it prepared the preconditions for the emergence of the industrial capitalist nation-state, precisely the vehicle of machine industry's triumph. It followed from this, according to Anderson, that it was the modern state rather than pre-existing ethnicities which laid the basis for the genesis of nationalism.¹⁴⁹ Anderson provided an intimation of the pre-history of this process when he suggested that when Absolutist states mobilized 'patriotic sentiments' it 'was

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁴⁶ Common but not unchallenged verities of contemporary nationalism studies. Taken together the two positions constitute what is called the 'modernist' theory of nations and nationalism. For the two most influential expressions of this position, see E. Gellner, 'The Coming of Nationalism and its Interpretation: The Myths of Nation and Class,' in G. Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation* (London and New York, 1996), which provides a review and a revision of his influential work *Nations and Nationalism*; and E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, 1990). For arguments antagonistic to this thesis, see A. Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1997), which takes particular umbrage at Hobsbawm's book. For an alternative view to both see Marx, *Faith in Nation*, pp. 19-20.

¹⁴⁷ Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, p. 39.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁴⁹ For the alternative argument, see J.A. Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill, 1982) and A. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, 1986). Also consider W. Connor, *Ethnonationalism* (Princeton, 1994).

always manipulated by grandees or sovereigns.¹⁵⁰ The full history of this process would have to wait for the later part of the nineteenth century, when states undertook to nationalize their masses, a process alien to the ruling bloc of Absolutist states.¹⁵¹ Neither the warfare state nor the welfare state, highly efficient instruments of nationalization, would have made any sense to those social formations 'whose permanent political function was the repression of the peasant and plebian masses at the foot of the social hierarchy.'¹⁵²

A coda to Anderson's genealogy of the Absolutist state, composed in the mid-nineteen seventies, threw light on these issues, further explanation of which the temporal structure of his two-volume history had disallowed. Not published until his collection of essays, *English Questions*, appeared in 1992, 'The Notion of Bourgeois Revolution' constituted an abbreviated synopsis of what the third volume of a tetralogy on the history of the modern capitalist state would have looked like.¹⁵³ It sought 'to establish the formal structures and limits of any possible "bourgeois revolution"'¹⁵⁴ that would allow anomalous versions of the phenomenon to be seen as 'intelligible variations within a common field.'¹⁵⁵ Having established those formal structures,¹⁵⁶ and pitted them against actual bourgeois revolution, Anderson argued that there were essentially two phases of the phenomenon. The first – stretching from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century – was consonant with the dominance of agrarian and mercantile capital (Holland, France, America and England), while the second – principally restricted to the nineteenth century – was coeval with the industrial revolution of factories and proletariats (Germany, Italy and Japan).¹⁵⁷ In the earlier period bourgeois revolutions were perpetrated from below and gave rise to national states consonant with the 'rights of man'; in the later phase bourgeois revolutions were perpetrated from above and gave rise to national states based on

¹⁵⁰ Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, p. 39. Here is evidence again of Anderson's interpretation of nationalism as 'false consciousness'.

¹⁵¹ See Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp.101-30.

¹⁵² Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, p. 19. For an alternative view of Absolutism, consider Marx, *Faith in Nation*, pp. 34-5.

¹⁵³ See Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, p. 11.

¹⁵⁴ Anderson, 'The Notion of Bourgeois Revolution,' in *English Questions*, p. 109.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 116-7. Cf. the classic argument of Barrington Moore, Jr's, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Boston, 1966). Despite discussing Germany and Japan, two case studies provided in Barrington Moore's book, Anderson made no reference to *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*.

ethnic nationalism.¹⁵⁸ The echo of Hobsbawm's understanding of modern European history resounds throughout Anderson's account. In the 'second' cycle of bourgeois revolution, Anderson argued following a 'Hobsbawmian' formula, 'the banners of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity' were replaced with 'the signs of Nationality and Industry'.¹⁵⁹

Building on the analysis offered in *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, 'The Notion of Bourgeois Revolution' contained within it, then, a highly compressed and highly suggestive interpretation of the relationship between class struggle (or bourgeois revolution) and the ideology of nationalism. Historical varieties of nationalism, according to 'The Notion of Bourgeois Revolution,' were overdetermined by the economic strength of capitalism and the nature of class struggle. The first wave of bourgeois revolutions belonged to an epoch prior to the Industrial Revolution and was characterized by great social and political upheaval; the second wave of bourgeois revolutions belonged to an epoch posterior to the Industrial Revolution and was characterized by social stasis.¹⁶⁰ The distinction drawn here was between two types of nationalism, nationalism from *below* and nationalism from *above*. The key determinant was the absence or presence of a revolutionary proletariat, the existence or non-existence of what Anderson referred to as the chasm between capital and labour. Absent in the first set of bourgeois revolutions, this chasm determined the limited political thrust of the second set. In the first period of bourgeois revolution nationalism appeared as a function of the further advance of both capitalist relations of production and the bourgeoisie, in the second phase of bourgeois revolution nationalism appeared both as a means to intensify commodity production and as an ideology designed to obscure the social antagonism between the expropriators and the expropriated. Nationalism served, then, two functions, depending on the strength of capitalism. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, when capitalism was relatively weak, nationalism acted to expand capital accumulation as a reflection of bourgeois interest;

¹⁵⁸ Anderson, 'The Notion of Bourgeois Revolution,' p. 117. See also Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, p. 431.

¹⁵⁹ Anderson, 'The Notion of Bourgeois Revolution,' p. 118. The issue of 'bourgeois revolution' has now received extended treatment in C. Mooers, *The Making of Bourgeois Europe: Absolutism, Revolution and the Rise of Capitalism* (London and New York, 1991).

¹⁶⁰ For a broad overview of the process of nation-building in these two temporalities, see J. Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 2nd ed. (Manchester, 1993), pp. 88-93 and 96-114. See also R. Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, Mass. 1992).

subsequent to the Industrial Revolution, when capitalism was in a position of relative dominance, nationalism acted as a brake on the political ambitions of the proletariat. In each case nationalism acted as a conduit for the further expansion of capital accumulation – in different time-periods it gave rise to distinguishable forms of nationalism and thus different types of national state.¹⁶¹

Anderson's understanding of nationalism, then, diverged radically from the contemporaneous argument of other Marxist social scientists, like Tom Nairn, who maintained that nationalism constituted a distinctive response of subjected peoples to the process of uneven capitalist development.¹⁶² Where Nairn and others had conceptualized nationalism as a paradoxically modern reaction to capitalist modernity, Anderson argued that nationalism was both facilitator of and response to the global reach of capitalist forces of production. 'The only historical task fully realized by' bourgeois revolutions, Anderson argued, 'was the construction of a national state.'¹⁶³ 'With the single exception of the Risorgimento,' he went on to suggest, 'the winning of national independence was always accompanied by the subjugation of other peoples.'¹⁶⁴ In Anderson's view, nationalism was precisely the vehicle of uneven capitalist development. National conflict and imperial expansion provided the political counterpart to the increasing reach of commodity production. For Anderson, the consummation of the national state and the fullest extent of capitalist reproduction were two sides of the same coin. Capitalist modernity did not create the conditions for the emergence of national identity. Nationalism facilitated

¹⁶¹ This is reflected in Anderson's suggestion that 'The overturns in Germany, Italy and Japan (constitutive of the second cycle of bourgeois revolutions) created different types of authoritarian state which passed over in a subsequent epoch, without internal rupture, into fascism.' See Anderson, 'The Notion of Bourgeois Revolution,' p. 115. Of course, the suggestion that Japan was fascist is disputed. See R.O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (London, 2004), pp. 197-200.

¹⁶² For this argument, see M. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966* (Berkeley, 1975) and T. Nairn, 'The Modern Janus,' *New Left Review*, 1/94, 1975, pp. 3-30. Also see I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World System*, Vols. 1-3 (San Diego, 1974-1988) and M. Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1993). For a review of the general argument, see C. Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Minneapolis, 1997), pp. 115-8.

¹⁶³ Anderson, 'The Notion of Bourgeois Revolution,' p. 115. Also consider the account provided in C. Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States* (Cambridge, 1990). Surprisingly perhaps, Anderson has had very little to say about the work of Charles Tilly.

¹⁶⁴ Anderson, 'The Notion of Bourgeois Revolution,' p. 115. More often the view has been expressed that the winning of national independence has constituted a defence against a homogenizing imperialism. See Jusdanis, 'Beyond National Culture?,' p. 41-42 and Calhoun, *Nationalism*, p. 104-115. For a more 'dialectical' approach to this question see B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London and New York, 1993), particularly chapter 4.

the very process of capitalist modernity, providing a political carapace for both the stable reproduction of commodity production within a given territory and its extension through capitalist imperialism. This did not imply that nationalism could not be a response to capitalist modernity. The Dutch Revolution and the Meiji Restoration – these were just two cases, at temporal extremes of poles of the world-historical cycle of bourgeois revolution, where nationalism could be generated as a response to capitalist modernity. Each in turn, however, became its agent – whether through the erection of colonial empire in Asia in the case of the Netherlands or the annexation of Korea in the case of Japan.¹⁶⁵ Like birds of a feather, capitalism and nationalism flocked together. In this sense, Anderson's account of bourgeois revolution closely echoed Hobsbawm's narrative of world history. The same dialectic between capitalism and nationhood was at work.

Like the Naim-Anderson theses, Anderson's two volume pre-history of the capitalist mode of production constituted, as Gregory Elliott has suggested, a genealogy of the present: 'reconstruction of the past in order to understand the present and master the future.'¹⁶⁶ What kind of politics did Anderson's reconstruction of the past require? In short, a return to the politics of what he designated 'classical' Marxism. First announced in his influential assessment of Western Marxism in the mid-nineteen seventies, Anderson's turn to 'classical' Marxism¹⁶⁷ was not just a product of his history project but a direct result of his assessment of the failures of both the student movement and anti-imperialist nationalism.¹⁶⁸ Indeed, a potential move away from positions commensurate with the traditions of revolutionary national liberation and student politics had been sounded as early as 1968 when he suggested that France's 'Festival of the Oppressed' had 'vindicated the fundamental socialist belief that the industrial proletariat is the revolutionary class of advanced capitalism, whose collective social power – once liberated – could transform our societies beyond

¹⁶⁵ Anderson, 'The Notion of Bourgeois Revolution,' p. 115. See, for a later expression of this argument, P. Anderson, 'Arms and Rights,' *New Left Review*, II/31, p. 15.

¹⁶⁶ Elliott, *Perry Anderson*, p. 79.

¹⁶⁷ Anderson's definition of 'classical' Marxism, of course, can be contested. Lenin and Trotsky – at least after 1917 – are rarely considered part of the 'classical' tradition.

¹⁶⁸ In terms of his history-project, this turn was announced in his analysis of the Russian Revolution in *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, where he suggested that 'The Russian Revolution was not made against a capitalist state at all.' See Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, p. 359. The same argument was repeated in *Considerations of Western Marxism*, where Anderson argued that the failure of revolution in Germany was of more moment for the international socialist movement than its success in Russia.

imagination.¹⁶⁹ At this time directly contradicting his assessment of revolutionary nationalism, Anderson's move toward traditional socialist politics constituted a response to the wave of industrial militancy that broke out all over Western Europe during the nineteen seventies, no more spectacularly than in Britain itself.¹⁷⁰ Labour militancy in advanced capitalist societies not only brought into question the premises underlying his association between socialist revolution and national liberation. It also undermined the revolutionary pessimism common to the tradition of continental Marxism, particularly that of the Frankfurt School. *Considerations on Western Marxism* reflected these trends, not just Anderson's disappointment with the political results of continental Marxism but also with the international implications of revolutionary Marxist nationalism, particularly as it was reflected in Maoism. In *Considerations on Western Marxism*, the tradition of continental Marxist thought was criticised for its distance from the mass politics of revolutionary socialism and for its undue preoccupation with philosophy. It was now adversely compared with the 'classical' Marxism of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, which, Anderson suggested, had maintained a connection with both socialist practice and political economy. 'The tradition descended from Trotsky,' Anderson argued, 'has ... been in polar contrast...to that of Western Marxism. It concentrated on politics and economics. It was resolutely internationalist....'¹⁷¹ Where the tradition of 'classical' Marxism had united theory and practice, the tradition of Western Marxism had terminated this relationship.¹⁷² It was on this basis, Anderson argued, that 'this politico-theoretical

¹⁶⁹ 'Introduction,' *New Left Review*, 1/52, 1968, p. 7. The authorship of this 'Introduction' is attributed to Anderson by both Elliott and Blackledge. As Gregory Elliott suggests in *Perry Anderson* (p. 86), 'the move away from revolutionary nationalism was reflected in *New Left Review* in the late nineteen sixties and early nineteen seventies – generic Third Worldism was eschewed. An axiom of the "dependency theory" associated with Andre Gunder Frank was refuted by Ernesto Laclau's "Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America". Two years later, on the eve of the Yom Kippur War and the OPEC oil price hike, Bill Warren's famous assault on the whole problematic of the "development of underdevelopment" was published.' Elliott goes on to argue (p. 87) that 'The *NLR*'s overall development in the 1971-74 period may be summed up in three modulations of editorial line: the repudiation of Maoism; a distancing from Western Marxism; and the consolidation of Trotskyism.'

¹⁷⁰ See Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism*, p. 95. For more on the wave of labour militancy in Western Marxism during the nineteen seventies, see D. Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European left in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1996), pp. 357-88. For labour militancy in Britain during this period consult A. Barnett, 'Class Struggle and the Heath Government,' *New Left Review*, 1/77, 1973, pp. 3-41.

¹⁷¹ Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism*, p. 100. For more on Trotsky's internationalism, see E. Mandel, *Trotsky as Alternative* (London, 1995), pp. 13-31.

¹⁷² Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism*, p. 29. Compare Anderson's comments on this issue with those of Deutscher, 'Marxism in Our Time,' in *Marxism, Wars, and Revolution*, p. 245.

heritage [Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky] provides one of the central elements for any [contemporary] renaissance of revolutionary Marxism on an *international* scale.¹⁷³

There were a number of problems with Anderson's prescription. Castigating Marx for his neglect of nationalism, Anderson failed to delineate the substantial divergences to be found in his own imagined 'classical' Marxism, especially asymmetries in relation to the national question.¹⁷⁴ Was it the task of contemporary Marxists to follow Lenin's promotion of national self-determination? If not, should they elect Luxemburg's proletarian internationalism or, perhaps Bauer's conception of national liberation? An unruly conception of 'classical' Marxism left all these types of questions unanswered. This aporia was particularly damaging to an assessment of Marxism that berated the tradition for its failure to deal adequately with the nation-state.¹⁷⁵ Apart from failing to provide Marxists with any guidance on this issue (invocation of the 'classical' tradition left more questions unanswered than answered), Anderson also failed to specify the geographical reach of his own concepts. Proletarian democracy, revolutionary practice, the revolutionary party – all these concepts, essential to the contrast marshalled by Anderson between 'classical' Marxism and West European Marxism, were employed in *Considerations on Western Marxism* without consideration of their appropriate spatial dimension. When Anderson did evoke unambiguously transnational categories, such as the 'international proletariat,' they sat uneasily beside an analysis which elsewhere relied heavily on national distinctions. An appropriate response to Anderson's lamentation regarding Marx and the Marxian tradition's neglect of the national question might have been: 'physician, heal thyself!'

Anderson's assessment of the national question, however, was brought into sharper relief in *Arguments within English Marxism*. Proclaiming his adherence to the tradition of Marxism associated with Trotsky, he maintained that the importance of Trotsky's legacy was revealed 'in the standard and mode of internationalism it

¹⁷³ Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism*, p. 100.

¹⁷⁴ Some of these asymmetries are explored in M. Lowy, 'Marxism and the National Question,' in R. Blackburn, ed., *Revolution and Class Struggle: A Reader in Marxist Politics* (London, 1978), pp. 136-60.

¹⁷⁵ Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism*, p. 121. Marxists, of course, have been obsessed with the nation and with nationalism. See, for evidence of obsession, B. Jenkins and G. Minnerup, *Citizens and Comrades: Socialism in a World of Nation States* (London, 1984).

embodied.¹⁷⁶ Castigating E.P. Thompson for a refusal to engage with this tradition of thought in his own work and socialist practice, Anderson held up Trotsky's assessment of the national question as an example that deserved emulation. 'No other revolutionary,' according to Anderson, 'ever practiced so long and so consistently proletarian internationalism, in his own politics.'¹⁷⁷ Trotsky's internationalism, he argued, could not just be measured by his aversion to 'socialism in one country' and his 'intransigent refusal to compromise with national sentiments within the ranks of the labour movement in the developed world.'¹⁷⁸ It could also be gauged by his concern for 'the culture and society of other nations besides his own.'¹⁷⁹ If Marxists wanted a solution to the national question, Anderson argued, they would find that solution in the political biography of Trotsky. Praise for Trotsky's internationalism could not have been more fulsome: 'Political, cultural and theoretical, the dimensions of this internationalism overtop any before or since.'¹⁸⁰ Even death had not diminished its standing: the 'moral and intellectual grandeur' of Trotsky's internationalism had 'only grown with the passage of time, and the unfolding of other strands in the labour movement.'¹⁸¹ According to Anderson, 'it is this tradition alone that has proved capable of an adult view of socialism on a *world* scale.'¹⁸²

There are many types of socialist internationalism. What was the nature of the type Anderson defended here? Characteristic of Anderson's whole oeuvre, the character of his internationalism was revealed in his assessment of the form defended by an opponent, in this case E.P. Thompson. Underlining the contextual differences between his own and Thompson's form of socialist internationalism, Anderson maintained that his own form was necessarily based on a 'frontal rejection of national

¹⁷⁶ Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism*, p. 155.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. For Luxemburg's proletarian internationalism see M. Forman, *Nationalism and the International Labour Movement: the Idea of the Nation in Socialist and Anarchist Theory* (University Park, Pennsylvania, 1998), pp. 83-94.

¹⁷⁸ Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism*, p. 155.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. This, of course, was a feature of Anderson's own work. France, Germany, Italy, Portugal – all these nations, among others, found representation in Anderson's work. Most recently see P. Anderson, 'Land without Prejudice: Berlusconi's Italy,' *London Review of Books*, 21 March, 2002; and P. Anderson, 'Degringolade: The Fall of France,' *London Review of Books*, 2 September, 2004 and 'Union Sucree: The Normalising of France,' *London Review of Books*, 23 September, 2004.

¹⁸⁰ Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism*, p. 156. Many would disagree. This position in the Marxist tradition is more commonly attributed to Luxemburg's proletarian internationalism. On her unwavering anti-nationalism see J.K. Lun, 'Rosa Luxemburg and the Dialectics of Proletarian Internationalism and Social Patriotism,' *Science and Society*, 59, 4, 1995-6, pp. 498-530.

¹⁸¹ Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism*, p. 156.

¹⁸² Ibid.

mystification, at the most immediate level.¹⁸³ Whereas the context of Thompson's political formation had allowed the co-existence of national and international impulses without strain, the situation of his own formation as a socialist had pitted these two impulses against each other. Anderson, although critical of the 'theoretical internationalism which was its result, failed to point out that his socialist internationalism was reconciled to different sorts of nationalism. Where Thompson's internationalism was harmonized with aspects of the (English) national tradition at home and various anti-Soviet nationalisms abroad (Hungary), Anderson's socialist internationalism involved a rejection of the national tradition at home and the support of anti-colonial (whether Vietnamese, Chinese or Cuban) nationalisms abroad.¹⁸⁴ What separated Thompson's internationalism from Anderson's, then, was not its assessment of nationalism but its valuation of specific nationalisms, essentially the value of the (English) national tradition. Anderson's internationalism was not constituted by anti-nationalism. Rather, like Thompson's, it offered support for particular nationalisms on the basis of whether a specific nationalism could be reconciled with socialism. Not the rejection of nationalism but 'the refusal to compromise with national sentiments within the ranks of the labour movement in the developed world'¹⁸⁵ constituted the basis of Anderson's embrace of the tradition of socialist internationalism associated with Trotsky. This left open the option of reconciling internationalism with nationalisms in the Tricontinental world. Not the rejection of national mystifications of all kinds, but the rejection of certain types of national mystification constituted the basis of Anderson's socialist internationalism.¹⁸⁶

Arguments within English Marxism constituted Anderson's most sustained reflections on socialist strategy since 'Problems of Socialist Strategy' in the mid nineteen sixties.¹⁸⁷ In this reading the 'left social-democracy' of the earlier assessment

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 148.

¹⁸⁴ I disagree with Ernest Mandel's suggestion (which he believed derived from Trotsky) that 'Revolutionary internationalism means first and foremost the duty of international solidarity with the oppressed and exploited popular masses in rebellion throughout the world, regardless of the ideological posture of these rebellions.' See Mandel, *Trotsky as Alternative*, p. 17. This is an extraordinary comment for a Marxist to make. Anderson, despite his support for Trotskyism, thankfully, never took his internationalism to these dubious lengths.

¹⁸⁵ Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism*, p. 152.

¹⁸⁶ I. Deutscher, 'On Internationals and Internationalism,' in his *Marxism in Our Time* (Berkeley, 1971, pp. 110-111.

¹⁸⁷ It might be suggested that 'Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci' fills this role. But I agree with the assessment of Gregory Elliott, that 'Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci' made few concrete strategic

had been replaced with the revolutionary tradition associated with Lenin and Trotsky. Eliding the vision of socialist strategy contained in Thompson's early New Left writings with the Communist Party's 'British Road to Socialism,' Anderson charged both with reformism. It was their failure to propose a strategy for the transcendence of the capitalist state which raised Anderson's disapprobation. Recalling institutions – 'communes, soviets or councils'¹⁸⁸ – associated with the revolutionary heritage of Marx, Lenin and Morris, Anderson argued that a revolution in social relations of production could not be effected without either the emergence of alternative loci of proletarian power or without a fundamental assault on the primary mechanisms of bourgeois hegemony. For Anderson and the post-Thompson New Left, 'a socialist revolution [meant] something harder and more precise.'¹⁸⁹ The matter of precision can be contested. Anderson refers to 'the dissolution of the existing capitalist state'¹⁹⁰ yet makes no mention of the contradiction between an international state system and a transnational economic order.¹⁹¹ In addition he fails to specify the geographic extent of this new state and order. He refers to a post-capitalist future where 'the associated producers can for the first time exercise direct control over their working lives and direct power over their political government'¹⁹² but makes no mention of what he means by 'their' government, whether 'their' government will be regional, national or global. He explains that 'change will not occur without a fundamental economic crisis'¹⁹³ but once again renders opaque the geographical range (Europe? The world?) of this crisis. In other places Anderson spoke of 'the structural unity of the capitalist order'¹⁹⁴ and 'capitalist relations of power'¹⁹⁵ implying that capitalism displayed an extra-national nature. But whether this meant that both the revolution and a post-revolutionary order would be likewise extra-national we are not told. In reality the problem of the relationship between socialist strategy and nationalism is simply

recommendations. See Elliott, *Perry Anderson*, p. 118. Note also G. Hodgson, 'The Antinomies of Perry Anderson,' in Hodgson, *Socialism and Parliamentary Democracy* (Nottingham, 1977), pp. 105-37 and Blackledge, *Perry Anderson, Marxism and the New Left*, p. 100.

¹⁸⁸ Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism*, p. 193.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ According to Mandel, a central contradiction of capitalism. See Mandel, *Trotsky as Alternative*, p. 13. The same point has been made more recently by Ellen Meiksins Wood. See her *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View* (London and New York, 2002), pp. 166-181.

¹⁹² Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism*, p. 194. For the problems associated with terms like 'society' and 'nation' see C. Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons* (New York, 1984), p. 11.

¹⁹³ Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism*, p. 194.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

avoided. On the national question, at least, his understanding of socialist strategy was far from precise.

The existence of already-established socialist states necessarily problematised any Marxist account of socialist strategy in advanced capitalist states. Did the Soviet Union, China, and the communist states of Eastern Europe constitute already existing models of socialism? Here Marx and most of the Marxist tradition was of no help. Marx never envisaged a world divided by capitalist and socialist relations of production, never alluded to the problems of socialist cosmopolitanism in a world where neither capitalism nor socialism constituted a universal economic order. From the late nineteen seventies Anderson was arguing that any socialist movement in Western Europe must construct a 'positive dialectic' with existing socialist states, at least those in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.¹⁹⁶ Indeed, he continued to characterize those states as 'post-capitalist,' no matter the degree of their decrepitude or deformation, until the mid nineteen eighties, recommending that socialists avoid the trap of either equating the USSR with the USA or an envisaged socialist future with actually existing socialism. For Anderson socialism was necessarily an international phenomenon. It would only truly succeed when it had been established on a world scale, even if that scale was constituted by separately existing states rather than world socialist government. Anderson, of course, had no illusions about socialism in actually existing workers' states. In fact, as early as 1980 he was entertaining the 'jolting' prospect that whatever gains had been made in these states might be lost via capitalist restoration. He also entertained, however contrary to orthodox Marxist predictions, the prospect that reform within workers' states might be the necessary prerequisite of socialist progress in the advanced capitalist world. The latter prospect represented Anderson's final indulgence of the revisionist contention that socialism could be built in societies which had not experienced the full development of capitalist forces and relations of production, and the contention that socialism could

¹⁹⁶ See P. Anderson, 'The Strategic Option: Some Questions,' in A. Liebich, ed., *The Future of Socialism in Europe?* (Interuniversity Centre for European Studies, Montreal, 1978), pp. 27-9. See also 'NLR, 1975-1980,' unpublished report, [1980], pp. 69-71, cited in Elliott, p. 141-2, where it is suggested that 'we should be careful not to allow a *dissociation* to develop between projection of a rethought future for socialism in the West, and analysis of ongoing processes of socio-political development in the East. This involves both the political duty of defending the workers' states against either outright denunciation or mere dismissal on the Left, and the intellectual duty of linking the lessons of historical experience (not all of it negative) in one zone with proposals for advance in the other zone.'

be successfully implemented in a world of nation states. The indulgence would be later extended in his assessment of the Second Cold War and his conception of the relationship between the USSR and revolutionary progress in the non-socialist world.¹⁹⁷ It would be an indulgence quickly withdrawn.

At the End of History: Globalization and Nationalism

In the mid nineteen eighties, following his resignation as editor of *New Left Review*, Anderson resumed interrogating issues first approached in the Nairn-Anderson theses during the nineteen sixties. Returning to the two principle themes of his analysis of English history in 'Origins of the Present Crisis' – 'the archaic nature of a ruling stratum' and 'the defensive character of a labour movement intensely conscious of class'¹⁹⁸ – Anderson reasserted in 'Figures of Descent' the basic configurations of his earlier intervention. History, however, was not compulsively repeating itself. In the interim a major development in international capitalism had occurred which demanded a substantial revision of the prescriptions Anderson had offered in 'Origins of the Present Crisis'. The crisis of British capitalism was no longer peculiar to Britain, a prospective revival no longer susceptible to a manipulation of the national economy. In the two decades between 'Origins of the Present Crisis' and 'Figures of Dissent,' a 'radical internationalization of the forces of production'¹⁹⁹ had intervened to explode Anderson's conception of the nature of what in his earlier assessment had been a uniquely British crisis of economy and society. Globalization portended the universalization of the crisis of British capitalism, and disabled any prospective national solution to economic stagnation. Liberalization of exchange rates, 'the emancipation of finance from its remaining national

¹⁹⁷ On Anderson's interpretation of the Second Cold War, see Elliott, *Perry Anderson*, pp. 143-149 and Blackledge, *Perry Anderson, Marxism and the New Left*, pp. 107-11. Both Elliott and Blackledge attribute authorship of the 'Foreword' to *New Left Review*, ed., *Exterminism and Cold War* (London, 1982), pp. vii-xii to Anderson.

¹⁹⁸ Anderson, 'Figures of Descent,' p. 167. This essay – just like 'Origins of the Present Crisis' – sparked off a vigorous debate on British economic decline. For that debate, see M. Barrat Brown, 'Away with All the Great Arches: Anderson's History of British Capitalism,' *New Left Review*, I/167, 1988, pp. 21-51; A. Callinicos, 'Exception or Symptom? The British Crisis and the World System,' *New Left Review*, I/169, 1988, pp. 97-106; and G. Ingham, 'Commercial Capital and British Development: A Reply to Michael Barratt Brown,' *New Left Review*, I/172, 1988, pp. 45-65.

¹⁹⁹ Anderson, 'Figures of Descent,' p. 192.

constraints,²⁰⁰ and the denationalization of money capital – all these trends had rendered national control of the economy an anachronism. The rapid internationalization of production, exchange and circulation, in short, had 'render(ed) all national correctors, whatever their efficacy to date, increasingly tenuous in the future.'²⁰¹

'A Culture in Contraflow,' Anderson's up-dated account of the national culture, echoed the conclusions of 'Figures of Descent'. Just as a changed world economy rendered the national economy superfluous, so analogously transnational cultural forces rendered the national superstructure redundant. Whereas Anderson's earlier intervention into the national culture was straightforwardly posited on the existence of a nation state, 'A Culture in Contraflow' was forced to question the very object of its optic. 'Internationalization of the forces of production' – manifest in the expansion of multinational corporations, capital flight to the four corners of the earth, the explosion of deterritorialized credit systems and the global interpenetration of financial markets – 'accelerated rapidly throughout the capitalist world, bypassing and diminishing the nation state.'²⁰² Ideas tracked material developments. 'In this epoch,' Anderson surmised, 'no culture could remain national in the pristiner senses of the past.'²⁰³ The consequences, however, were not unambiguous for socialism. In one sense, the denationalization of the national culture had been undeniably positive: 'The ferruginous philistinism and parochialism of long national tradition,' Anderson suggested, 'were discomposed.'²⁰⁴ No superstructural tariffs existed to hold up the traffic of cultural exchange; no culture was autarkic enough to prevent the transnational exchange of ideas. In another sense, the metamorphosis of the national culture had not redounded to the benefit of international socialism. Hegemony, in the new vicissitude, accrued to capital.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 181.

²⁰¹ Anderson, 'Figures of Descent,' p. 192. For a later analysis along the same lines, see P. Anderson, 'Introduction,' in Anderson and P. Camiller, eds., *Mapping the West European Left* (London and New York, 1994), pp. 17-8.

²⁰² Anderson, 'A Culture in Contraflow,' in *English Questions*, p. 201. This essay was first published in *New Left Review*, I/180, 1990, pp. 41-78 and *New Left Review*, I/182, 1990, pp. 239-301. Reference made to this essay in this chapter will be to the essay as it appears in *English Questions*.

²⁰³ Anderson, 'A Culture in Contraflow,' p. 201. See Elliott, *Perry Anderson*, p. 202 for a cogent critique of Anderson's purpose in this article.

²⁰⁴ Anderson, 'A Culture in Contraflow,' p. 204.

The argument that the transnationalization of capitalist forces of production had rendered the nation state a nominal force in world history has constituted one of the primary leitmotifs of Anderson's most recent work.²⁰⁵ In the vigorous contemporary debate over the future of nation and nationalism, Anderson progressively found himself in agreement with those, like Hobsbawm, who maintained that both were diminishing forces of world-historical importance. By the mid nineteen seventies, according to Anderson, the capitalist world economy had entered a new 'transnational' phase, signaled by the downfall of the Bretton Woods system which had been established at mid-century in the wake of global conflagration.²⁰⁶ This new 'transnational' phase, he argued, impacted most severely on the nation state and its post-war champion, social democracy. Full employment and the welfare state constituted the two great achievements of social democracy in the period after the defeat of fascism. But the instruments through which these achievements were secured – fiscal and monetary policy – were no longer operable. 'The internationalization of capital flows released by the deregulation of financial markets,' Anderson suggested, 'has made it increasingly difficult either to devalue to restore trade balances, or lower interest rates to stimulate demand.'²⁰⁷ It was no longer possible for a national government to raise taxes, to maintain budget deficits, or to expand social services. International monetary markets, minutely sensitive to inflationary pressures, had disabled the traditional instruments of national social democratic government.

If nation states were nominal, how could Anderson explain the undeniable saliency of national identity in the epoch of transnational capitalism? The explosion of nationalist antagonism generated in the wake of communist collapse, the growth of ethnic conflicts on the periphery of the capitalist world system, and the surge in xenophobia in the developed world – none of these trends, Anderson suggested, disproved the contention, made famous by Hobsbawm, that nationalism was likely to

²⁰⁵ A cogent case against this argument is made by Michael Mann in 'Nation-States in Europe and Other Continents: Diversifying, Developing, not Dying,' in Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation*, pp. 295-316.

²⁰⁶ See Anderson, 'Internationalism: A Breviary,' p. 18-19. See also P. Anderson, 'Force and Consent,' *New Left Review*, II/17, pp. 5-6. For the argument that the Bretton Woods system was established on just those principles which are regularly characterized as typical of the 'neo-liberal' phase of globalization, see L. Panitch and S. Gindin, 'Finance and the American Empire,' *Socialist Register 2005* (London, 2005) which can be found online at <http://www.yorku.ca/socreg>.

²⁰⁷ Anderson, 'Introduction,' in *Mapping the West European Left*, p. 14.

constitute a residual force in the future development of world history.²⁰⁸ European integration, the global spread of capitalism, and the development of a homogenized world culture, were far better guides to the nature of the world system than local conflicts between Serbs and Croats in Bosnia. Anderson essentially agreed with Fukayama's assessment of nationalism as a potential solvent of the liberal-democratic 'end of history': 'Nationalism is virulent where not much counts; where things are of greater moment, inoculation has occurred, or is under way.'²⁰⁹ Liberal democracy, Anderson argued, had progressively displaced nationalism as the primary legitimating mechanism of the social order in advanced industrial societies. It was expanding incomes, the availability of consumer durables, and the association of free markets with freedom, and of democracy with parliamentary government and free elections, not the nation-state, that consistently reconciled the labouring masses to capitalist society. Exaltation of the Free World had replaced ethnicity 'as the dominant means of discursive integration...in the West.'²¹⁰ Nationalism had been tamed by consumer pursuits, national identity undermined by the homogenization of culture, national sovereignty subverted by the discourse of human rights.²¹¹ 'The object-world of all the rich capitalist countries,' Anderson explained, 'has been relentlessly hybridized, as the circuits of multi-national production and exchange grow more pervasive. The old signifiers of difference have progressively waned.'²¹² A historicized conception of nationalism, Anderson concluded, pointed toward a future where national identity would play a much reduced role in the determination of world history.

Anderson's historicization of nationalism left at least one aspect of the phenomenon unexplained. Undoubtedly, he had provided a persuasive account of the nexus between national identity and capitalist development. But he left obscure a central concern of nationalism studies: why were so many men and women prepared

²⁰⁸ The salient form of contemporary nationalism – essentially in post-communist and post-colonial states – was in any case, Anderson argued, the product of a specific history, a history which was peripheral to developments outside of communism and imperialism. See Anderson, 'Internationalism: A Breviary,' p. 23.

²⁰⁹ Anderson, 'The Ends of History,' p. 337.

²¹⁰ Anderson, 'Internationalism: A Breviary,' p. 19.

²¹¹ P. Anderson, 'Fernand Braudel and National Identity,' in *A Zone of Engagement*, p. 270. The essay first appeared as 'Nation-State and National Identity,' review of Fernand Braudel's *The Identity of France*, *London Review of Books*, 9 May, 1991, pp. 3-8. See also Anderson, 'Force and Consent,' p. and Anderson, 'The Ends of History,' p. 337. For a review of this cosmopolitan argument, see I. Wallerstein, 'The Ideological Tensions of Capitalism: Universalism versus Racism and Sexism,' in E. Balibar and I. Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London, 1991), pp. 29-36.

²¹² Anderson, 'Fernand Braudel and National Identity,' p. 266.

to die for their nation?²¹³ Nationalism's ability to fulfill the felt needs for meaning and identity remained obscured in Anderson's account of nationalism. In a critique of Ernest Gellner, perhaps the most important contemporary theorist of nationalism, he argued that the sociologist from Prague had 'theorized nationalism without detecting its spell.'²¹⁴ Gellner, in short, had neglected 'the overpowering dimension of collective meaning that modern nationalism has always involved: that is, not its functionality for industry, but its fulfillment of identity.'²¹⁵ Following a survey of Anderson's own conception of nation and nationalism, it might be wondered whether his critique of Gellner was not a clear case of the Marxist kettle calling the liberal pot black. Anderson had consistently advanced two basic interpretations of nationalism: on the one hand, that nationalism constituted malevolent false consciousness, and on the other, that nationalism was a function of the 'nationalization of the masses', that it constituted an authentic response to national existence.²¹⁶ Once the nation state had been replaced by liberal democracy as the chief integrative discourse of modern capitalist societies, Anderson was left to rely solely on false consciousness as an explanation of nationalism's continuing vitality. In whatever guise it appeared, whether as a response in American society to the attacks of September 11, whether as an important explanation of the clash between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, nationalism was seen as a form of false consciousness, an ideology that prevented social actors from grasping the true nature of existing realities.²¹⁷ The fallacy of false consciousness as an explanation of national identity has become a leitmotiv of nationalism studies in the last three decades. Indeed, such is the disrepute of this 'vulgar' Marxist explanation of nationalism that it is rarely seen as worthy of critique. This disrepute should be resisted. Yet false consciousness does not explain always and everywhere why national identity exerts the force it does, and it fails to explain

²¹³ This was the question addressed in his brother's famous book on nationalism. See, in particular, Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 131-32. In addition, see G. Balakrishnan, 'The National Imagination,' in Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation*, p. 205.

²¹⁴ P. Anderson, 'Max Weber and Ernest Gellner: Science, Politics, Enchantment,' in *A Zone of Engagement*, p. 205. This essay first appeared as 'Science, Politics, Enchantment,' in J. Hall and I. Jarvie, eds., *Transition to Modernity: Essays on Power, Wealth, and Belief* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 187-212.

²¹⁵ Anderson, 'Max Weber and Ernest Gellner,' p. 205.

²¹⁶ For the latter argument, see I. Wallerstein, 'The Construction of Peoplehood: Racism, Nationalism, Ethnicity,' *Sociological Forum*, 2, 1987, p. 387. Also see N. Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism* (London, 1978), p. 109.

²¹⁷ False consciousness as an explanation of nationalism recurs throughout Anderson's work. See Anderson, 'Force and Consent,' p. 13; Anderson, 'Scurrying toward Bethlehem,' p. 30; and Anderson, 'Internationalism: A Breviary,' p. 14 for recent explanations of nationalism along these lines.

why nationalism has acted a preponderant role in modern societies of all types. It does not explain why the magician always casts his spell in the national form and why the spell most often works.

What Anderson's dominant conception of nationalism typically obscured was the genuinely popular appeal of national identity. In this way, he was able to largely underplay the degree to which ethnicity had trumped class. Indeed, his explanation of the salience of national identity typically disregarded the view, now commonly expressed, that nationalism fulfils a primary human need for identity.²¹⁸ The internationalization of the forces of production has not done away with people's need for stable identities. Too often, indeed, Anderson was prone to reduce ethnicity to class at best or worse to ignore ethnicity altogether. Anderson's account of nation and nationalism, thus, overlooked the argument that pre-modern ethnicities constitute the infrastructure of modern nation states, that the continuing resilience of nationalism can be explained by the persistence of ethnic consciousness.²¹⁹ It is this contention which has provided the principal thorn in the side of modernist interpretations of nation and nationalism in recent times. It is an argument, especially when expressed in the work of a scholar like Anthony Smith, which deserves respect.²²⁰ In addition, Anderson's conception of national identity tended to obscure historical variations in nationalism, between, say, the effects of national consciousness in France and in the Balkans.²²¹ Finally, he has been too reticent in explaining why nationalism 'remains the preeminent rhetoric for attempts to demarcate political communities, claim rights of self-determination and legitimate rule by reference to "the people" of a country.'²²² For most nationalism scholars, the sum total of these deficiencies adds up to an inability to grasp the continuing vitality of nationalism and ethnicity. Impotence rather than mastery, in this view, would constitute the most appropriate description of Anderson's most recent assessment of the national question. Is it any wonder that

²¹⁸ See G. A. Cohen, *History, Labour, Freedom* (Oxford, 1988), p. 144, for an argument along these lines from a former Marxist.

²¹⁹ Calhoun, 'Ethnicity and Nationalism,' p. 227-9.

²²⁰ A.D. Smith's bibliography is now quite substantial. It deserves investigation, especially from a Marxist perspective. For his more recent works on this question see A. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (London, 1998); *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford, 1999); and *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (Cambridge, 2001).

²²¹ Calhoun, 'Ethnicity and Nationalism,' p. 220.

²²² *Ibid.*, p. 235.

some still suppose that 'the nation is like the atomic nucleus in a general conflagration of Marxism as theory and socialism as practice'?²²³

Analytic inadequacies do not necessarily invalidate revelation of nationalism's dangers. It is as a witness to the beast of nationalist practice and the doggerel of nationalist discourse that Anderson has made one of his most significant contributions to nationalism studies in recent times. From the quiver of classical socialist theory, Anderson has fired a number of telling arrows against the indiscriminate, if not promiscuous, contemporary celebration of national identity and ethnicity politics. He has laid bare the barbaric logic of ethnic nationalism in the Middle East, exposing how yesterday's victim of ethnic and national aggression can today become the perpetrator of savageries. He has revealed the extent to which all ethnic nationalisms 'contain seeds of potential violence against other nationalities,' and how it is 'historical situations' not 'cultural traits' which 'determine whether these bear fruit.'²²⁴ He has uncovered the perils associated with establishing political legitimacy on the basis of blood and faith, and of defining citizenship in terms of biological criteria.²²⁵ He has exposed the means by which examples of senseless nationalism have contributed to the justification of war, most recently in Afghanistan and Iraq. He has uncovered the seminal role of nationalism in breeding imperialism, the way that 'a fervent cult of the homeland' has all too often provided a seemingly unassailable rationale for subjugation. And he has exposed the irrationalities of chauvinism in all its forms, whether in Chamberlain's Britain or Berlusconi's Italy. Against the absurdities of various contemporary particularisms Anderson has reaffirmed a vision of Enlightenment politics. *All* types of nationalism, Anderson has argued, threaten the reason descended from the eighteenth century Enlightenment, above all the reason of international socialism.²²⁶

²²³ R. Debray, 'Marxism and the National Question,' *New Left Review*, I/105, 1971, p. 31.

²²⁴ P. Anderson, 'Scurrying into Bethlehem,' *New Left Review*, II/13, 2001, p. 13.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ This view, of course, stands opposed to the overwhelming consensus – one once entertained by Anderson himself – that a certain type of nationalism is the classical expression of the Enlightenment tradition. For an expression of Anderson's current distance from this consensus see Anderson, 'Scurrying toward Bethlehem,' p. 13. Cf. Anderson, 'Internationalism: A Breviary,' p. 7.

In a world where all sorts of particularisms reign unchecked, Anderson's obdurate anti-nationalism demands homage.²²⁷ With the fear of 'Asiatic hordes' reanimating the politics of the Right across the developed world, with the explosion of ethnic-based conflicts in post-colonial societies, and with a belligerent chauvinism filling the void at the nucleus of Chinese civil society, Anderson's stubborn universalism sounds a refreshing contrapuntal note to the realpolitik of identity politics. Universalist aspiration in this vision is not some form of cosmopolitan imperialism as Tom Nairn has supposed, or a form of totalitarianism as the majority voice of post-colonial critique has maintained. Rather it emerges as a fully human alternative to a politics whose ultimate foundation rests on the rock of brute existence.²²⁸ Anderson's obdurate anti-nationalism, of course, can not be sundered from his conception of the basis of contemporary nationalism and his interpretation of its distinctive genesis in the past. If national identity does indeed constitute an aspect of human nature then Anderson's universalism is hopelessly utopian. In short, if nationalism constitutes the only habitable zone of identity and the only possible arc of community, and if solidarity can only be imagined as an effect of ethnicity, then Anderson's vision for cosmopolitan socialism is not just unlikely but perverse.

Increasing condemnation of the logical terminus of a politics based on ethnic or national identity had important consequences for Anderson's conception of the territorial reach of a coherent socialist politics. In recent times, he has been at pains to expose the foibles of a socialist politics whose horizon does not extend beyond the nation-state. Indeed, identifying the contemporary lacunae of socialist nationalism now constitutes the dominant signature of Anderson's conception of the nexus between Marxism and nationalism. 'The politics of a rational Left,' he has argued, 'needs to be international in a new and more radical way today: global in its conclusions.'²²⁹ Socialism, in short, must track the planetary compass of capital. 'The future belongs to the set of forces that are overtaking the nation-state. So far, they

²²⁷ Anti-nationalism is given due homage in F. Halliday, 'Bringing the "Economic" Back In: The Case of Nationalism,' *Economy and Society*, 21, 1992, pp. 483-9. For a critique of cosmopolitanism, which is anti-nationalism's logical terminus, see A. Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 23-4.

²²⁸ Another example can be found in M. Nussbaum, 'Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism,' in J. Cohen, ed., *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism* (Boston, 1996), pp. 2-17. See also T. Eagleton, 'Nationalism: Irony and Commitment,' in T. Eagleton et al., *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature* (Minn., 1991), p. 31.

²²⁹ P. Anderson, 'The Light of Europe,' in *English Questions*, p. 353.

have been captured or driven by capital – as in the past fifty years, internationalism has changed sides. So long as the Left fails to win back the initiative here, the current system will be secure.²³⁰ In circumstances where 'the reconstruction of the globe in the American image, *sans phrases*'²³¹ was a reality, effective resistance to the hegemony of capital had to strike a cosmopolitan pose. 'The arrogance of the "international community" and its rights of intervention across the globe are not a series of arbitrary events or disconnected episodes. They compose a system, which needs to be fought with a coherence not less than its own.'²³² Not only would socialism have to match the global reach of its historic enemy. It would have to quit the search for a social agent outside of the capitalist mode of production. The historic prospect of cosmopolitan socialism's triumph would only be found within capital's heartland - not on its periphery, as revolutionary nationalists had supposed, but from within the core of its social logic; not via an agency outside its reach, as revisionist Marxists had argued, but from within the social being of those subjugated to its customary rule. 'Only in the evolution of this order could lie the secrets of another one.'²³³ Had capitalist globalization released any intimations of such a global alternative to its rule?

Evidence of such intimations throughout the previous century's *fin de siècle*, Anderson increasingly maintained, could be found in the process of European integration. Returning to interrogate themes he had first engaged in the nineteen sixties, Anderson found evidence of possible 'contrary processes' in a nascent supranational Europe.²³⁴ Intended to grease the wheels of capital accumulation, European integration revealed the panorama of an alternative future disobedient to capital's laws. So revolutionary were the consequences of integration, Anderson argued, that they posed 'the question of whether in practice it might not unleash the contrary logic.'²³⁵ The process of European integration, in this vision, could

²³⁰ Anderson, 'The Ends of History,' p. 367.

²³¹ Anderson, 'Internationalism: A Breviary,' p. 24.

²³² Anderson, 'Force and Consent,' p. 30.

²³³ Anderson, 'Renewals,' p. 17.

²³⁴ See, in particular, P. Anderson, 'The Sign of the Interim' and 'The Europe to Come,' in P. Anderson and P. Gowan, eds., *The Question of Europe* (London, 1997), pp. 51-71 and 126-126. 'The Sign of the Interim' first appeared in *London Review of Books*, 4 January, 1996, pp. 13-17; 'The Europe to Come,' first appeared in *London Review of Books*, 25 January, 1996, pp. 3-8. See also Anderson, 'The Light of Europe,' pp. 302-53.

²³⁵ Anderson, 'The Europe to Come,' p. 131.

potentially turn the world upside down. Socialists, grasping this contrary logic, would not oppose integration, as figures like E.P. Thompson had done in the past. Rather the task of socialists was 'to press towards the completion of a genuine federal state in the community with a sovereign authority over its constituent parts'²³⁶ – a view which paralleled that of Williams. For Anderson, 'to avoid an otherwise seemingly inevitable polarization of regions and classes within the Union,' it was necessary that some sort of 'social democracy' be 'reinstated at the supranational level.'²³⁷ Having transcended the nation state, a socialist Europe would offer the rest of the world the vista of a common future, beyond particularism, beyond capitalism.

In reality, Anderson took little comfort from what he would later describe as 'false consolations,' finding 'silver linings in what would otherwise seem an overwhelmingly hostile environment.'²³⁸ Rather than preparing fertile ground for its gravedigger, capitalist globalization had created conditions where socialism was least at home. 'The new reality,' Anderson suggested, 'is a massive asymmetry between the international mobility and organization of capital, and the dispersal and fragmentation of labour that has no historical precedent. The globalization of capitalism has not drawn the resistances to it together, but scattered and outflanked them.'²³⁹ The crusade of identity politics was a reflection of these developments, providing at the least propitious time a withering attack on any conception of universalism. With the field of universalism cleared for capital, identity politics was precisely undermining the conditions for the success of its own cause. Historic socialism provided no adequate salve. 'The case against capitalism,' Anderson argued, 'is strongest on the plane where the reach of socialism is weakest – at the level of the world system as a whole.'²⁴⁰ It was socialism not liberalism that was dependent on national embodiment; it was socialism not liberalism that was dependent on the solidarities of place and nation; and it was socialism not liberalism that had been fatally undermined by the withering away of the nation state.²⁴¹ Socialism and liberalism, in short, did

²³⁶ Anderson, 'The Ends of History,' pp. 364-5.

²³⁷ Anderson, 'The Ends of History,' p. 365. For an alternative account of European integration from a Marxist perspective, see W. Bonefeld, 'European Integration: The Market, the Political and Class,' *Capital & Class*, 77, 2002, pp. 117-44.

²³⁸ Anderson, 'Renewals,' p. 14.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Anderson, 'The Ends of History,' p. 366.

²⁴¹ For this point see S. Avineri, 'Marxism and Nationalism,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 26, 1991, pp. 654-5. But see also R. Williams, *Towards 2000* (London, 1983), pp. 195-7.

not have the same order of being. How could socialism close the ontological gap between itself and its enemy? A coherent solution to this problem has so far eluded Anderson, as indeed it has eluded every other cosmopolitan socialist. But one solution had been rendered incoherent – socialist nationalism.²⁴² Anderson has done much in recent times to show why.

Out of Place: Cosmopolitan Socialism in the New Century

When Anderson returned to edit *New Left Review* at the beginning of the new century, the international Left had reached a historic nadir. Enfeebled defence rather than abrasive advance typified the politics of working class movements around the world: from the Pennines to the Urals, the Great Lakes to Cape Horn, the Levant to the Antipodes. In such circumstances, Anderson argued, the stance of a rational Left should be characterized by 'an uncompromising realism': 'refusing any accommodation with the ruling system, and rejecting every piety and euphemism that would understate its power.'²⁴³ It was time, Anderson suggested, that the Left dispense 'with well-meaning cant' and 'call a spade a spade.'²⁴⁴ What were the consequences for socialism of Anderson's 'uncompromising realism'? Steadfastly refusing any illusion or comfort, Anderson argued that the only future for socialism was global not national, cosmopolitan not particularist.²⁴⁵ An unrelenting enemy of identity politics, of obscurantism in all its diverse contemporary forms, of the routines of capital accumulation – this was the only realistic future open to socialism.

Realism, no matter what the intellectual benefit, does not guarantee political triumph, as Anderson well understood. Reinforcing Fukuyama's 'end of history' thesis, Anderson put the future prospect's of a global alternative to neo-liberalism bluntly: 'No collective agency able to match the power of capital is yet on the

²⁴² Anderson reviewed the absurdities of 'socialism in one country' in his 'The Ends of History,' p. 307. Also see D. Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Edinburgh, 2000), p. 33 for a powerful argument against the nationalist vision of socialist revolution.

²⁴³ Anderson, 'Renewals,' p. 14. For a critique of this position see Blackledge, *Perry Anderson, Marxism and the New Left*, pp. 155-66.

²⁴⁴ Anderson, 'Renewals,' p. 15.

²⁴⁵ For a critique of this position from a Marxist perspective, see the recent work of Ellen Meiksins Wood, in particular, *Empire of Capital* (London and New York, 2003), pp. 10-25. Wood argues that the nation-state should remain the focus of socialist politics.

horizon.²⁴⁶ 'Whatever limitations persist to its practice,' Anderson continued, 'neoliberalism as a set of principles rules undivided across the globe: the most successful ideology in world history.'²⁴⁷ If socialism was to be a realistic alternative in the twenty-first century, Anderson argued, it must be cosmopolitan.²⁴⁸ Cosmopolitan socialism, however, seemed an unlikely telos of world history at the beginning of the new century. The only realistic socialism, henceforth, seemed impossible. As dawn broke over a new millennium, cosmopolitan socialism, like Anderson himself, remained without a home.

²⁴⁶ Anderson, 'Renewals,' p. 17. For a more sanguine account of the current conjuncture faced by Marxist socialism see K. Moody, *Workers in a Lean World* (London, 1997).

²⁴⁷ Anderson, 'Renewals,' p. 17.

²⁴⁸ For a critique of this idea, see D. Miller, 'In What Sense Must Socialism Be Communitarian?', *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 6, 1988/9, pp. 76-70 and M. Rustin, 'Place and Time in Socialist Theory,' *Radical Philosophy*, 47, 1987, p. 32. For a superb short evocation of the problems of cosmopolitan socialism, see Eagleton, 'Nationalism: Irony and Commitment,' p. 34.

Chapter 6

Cosmopolitan Socialism, Socialist Nationalism and Nationalism

Tom Nairn and Marxism's National Question

Lord Acton, nineteenth-century Regius Professor of History at Oxford University, famous interlocutor of the national question, and conservative critic of the 'Mazzinian' ideal of nationality, maintained that multi-national Empire rather than nationhood was the most efficacious framework for the development of civil society.¹ Nonetheless, for Acton, nationalism's emergence marked the end of two unconscionable prospects: either a retrogression to medieval absolutism or a leap-forward to cosmopolitan socialism.² Tom Nairn, one of the leading contemporary theorists of nationalism, would agree. In contrast to Acton, however, he has argued that nationhood not multi-national Empire constitutes civil society's most appropriate homeland. Acton was no nationalist fellow-traveller; Nairn is arguably nationalism's closest friend.³ For Nairn, one-time Marxist critic of national furies, now nativist scourge of what he calls 'departure-lounge internationalism,' nationalism is both an inevitable thing and an inevitably good thing. The nation-state, according to him, is not just the best imaginable but the only available defence against what he would term the big battalions of history: socialism, imperialism and internationalism. Democracy, freedom, and liberty – all these coordinates of the good life, he suggests, can only be secured and sustained through independent nationhood.

The importance of Tom Nairn's work to contemporary nationalism studies requires no elaborate defence.⁴ Students of the national question have long acknowledged the importance of his contribution to the social scientific investigation

¹ For a brief introduction to Lord Acton's thoughts on nationalism, see A.D. Smith, 'Nationalism and the Historians,' in G. Balakrishnan, (ed.), *Mapping the Nation* (London, 1996) pp. 179-180.

² Lord Acton, 'Nationality,' in *ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

³ For Nairn's own views on Lord Acton, see T. Nairn, 'Ambiguous Nationalism: A Reply to Joan Cocks,' *Arena Journal*, 22, 2004, p. 124, n. 5. For an earlier view, see T. Nairn, 'Scotland and Europe,' in Nairn *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London, 1977), p. 103, n. 11. This essay was first published as 'Scotland and Europe,' *New Left Review*, 1/83, 1974, pp. 57-82. Throughout this chapter reference will be made to the essay as it appeared in *The Break-Up of Britain*.

⁴ This is not so obvious in the United States according to J. Cocks, 'Fetishizing Ethnicity, Locality, Nationality: The Curious Case of Tom Nairn,' *Arena Journal*, 10, 1998, pp. 130-1.

of nationhood.⁵ Indeed, perhaps with the exception of Eric Hobsbawm, few other students of the national question have made as great a contribution as Nairn to the analysis of the nexus between Marxism and nationalism. For Paul James, Nairn's work 'comprises the most frequently debated, contemporary marxist theory of the nation,'⁶ while for John Breuilly Nairn's Marxist-inspired analysis of the national question is exceptional, indeed 'striking,' by virtue of the ease with which it reveals nationalism's 'specific appeal.'⁷ Significantly, these assessments of Nairn's contribution to the national question were offered before he published *Faces of Nationalism* in the last century's fin de siècle, that is, before he jettisoned Marxism as theory and socialism as practice and embraced a less conflict-ridden conception of nationalist politics.⁸ Exploration of the nexus between Marxism and nationalism has proved no less fascinating from Nairn's newly worn nationalist position however. Indeed, whether from the perspective of the cosmopolitan socialism of 'The Left Against Europe,' the socialist nationalism of *The Break-up of Britain* or the nationalism of his latest work, Nairn's oeuvre constitutes a unique vantage-point from which to investigate the multi-faceted relationship between nationality and historical materialism.⁹

This chapter will track Nairn's odyssey from the class politics of Marxism to the ethnicity politics of nationalism. Consonant with the contention that geography, politics and historical context inflect any encounter with the national question, the first part of the chapter will investigate Nairn's own 'identity humus'. In terms of geography it will travel from Fife to Oxford, from Pisa to London and Amsterdam, and from Edinburgh to the Antipodes;¹⁰ in terms of politics it will stretch from the

⁵ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991, org. 1983), p. 3. For an assessment from another leading student of nationalism, see E. Gellner, 'Nationalism or the New Confessions of a Justified Edinburgh Sinner,' in E. Gellner, *Spectacles and Predicaments: Essays in Social Theory* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 265-276.

⁶ P. James, *Nation Formation: Towards a Theory of Abstract Community* (London, 1996), p. 108.

⁷ J. Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester, 1993, org. 1982), p. 412.

⁸ This is not meant to imply that Nairn's account of nationhood is any less valued. On the contemporary relevance of Nairn's work to the analysis of nationalism consult H. Bhabha, 'Anxious Nations, Nervous States,' in J. Copjec, ed., *Supposing the Subject* (London, 1994), pp. 201-217.

⁹ This oeuvre is far from complete - *Global Nations* (London, forthcoming) will be published soon in 2006.

¹⁰ Currently Nairn is Innovation Professor in Nationalism and Cultural Diversity in the Globalism Institute at RMIT in Melbourne, Australia. He has held this position since 2002. For a compressed overview of what he called his 'embarrassingly long trail of "identity "decisions"' - including Italy, England, France, the Netherlands, Ireland and Australia - see T. Nairn, 'Ambiguous Nationalism: A Reply to Joan Cocks,' *Arena Journal*, 22, 2004, p. 129, n. 10.

'second' new Left and '1968' to the 'death of socialism'; and in terms of history it will span the three decades from the high-point of anti-colonial nationalism in the nineteen sixties and seventies to the explosive nationalisms of our own time. The remaining sections of the chapter will examine Nairn's conception of the nexus between Marxism and nationalism. The first of these sections will interrogate Nairn's cosmopolitan socialism, evidenced most clearly in 'The Left against Europe,' a book-length essay that filled an entire edition of *New Left Review* in the early nineteen seventies. Nairn's most famous text, *The Break-up of Britain*, will constitute the subject matter of the second of these sections. Here the focus will concentrate on Nairn's socialist nationalism. The last of these sections will provide an analysis of Nairn's non-Marxist nationalist politics, evidenced, above all, in *Faces of Nationalism* and other of his recent work. The chapter will conclude with a brief assessment of Nairn's view of cosmopolitan socialism in our own century.

From Revolution as Homeland to Caledonian Heimat: Tom Nairn's Backyard(s)

What is Nairn's nation? Or what constitutes, as Nairn might put it in his folksy register, his backyard?¹¹ In contrast to Perry Anderson or Eric Hobsbawm, Tom Nairn, the everyday 'backwoodsman,' pledges allegiance to a fatherland – Scotland, the place of his birth.¹² Nairn is unique among the intellectuals under discussion in this thesis for being a nationalist, in the sense of taking what he calls the *ism* of nationalism seriously.¹³ E.P. Thompson was a nationalist without being fully aware of it. Nairn is a nationalist and proud of it. However, Nairn, unlike Thompson, has little time for internationalism. In Nairn's view fellow-feeling for foreigners like that of the great Marxist historian constitutes a veil for metropolitan hegemony.¹⁴ Like Stuart Hall, Nairn allows his ethnicity rather than solidarity with humanity to define his being-in-the-world, although, according to Nairn, this makes him like the

¹¹ T. Nairn, 'Internationalism: A Critique,' in *Faces of Nationalism*, p. 32. This essay was first published in *The Bulletin of Scottish Politics* in 1979. The chapter will refer to the essay as it appeared in *Faces of Nationalism*. For Nairn's most recent and systematic investigation of his 'backyard' see T. Nairn, *After Britain: New Labour and the Return of Scotland* (London, 2000).

¹² As Nairn suggests in 'The Question of Scotland,' *Faces of Nationalism*, p. 180, 'I have never hidden the fact that my own dilemmas and oddities emanate from those of my country, Scotland.'

¹³ Nairn first began to systematically investigate nationalism during the late nineteen sixties. See his 'The Three Dreams of Scottish Nationalism,' *New Left Review*, I/49, 1968, pp. 3-18.

¹⁴ Nairn, 'Internationalism: A Critique,' p. 42.

majority of humanity, just one among the great mass of 'the supposedly hairier, smellier and less washed.'¹⁵ However, unlike Hall, Nairn does not imagine nationality as a choice - not for him Hall's postmodern supermarket of identities. For Nairn, ethnicity is destiny.

Tom Nairn was born in Kirkcaldy, on the east coast of Scotland, in 1932. Home to textile production, Nairn's birthplace was subject to the industrialization common to north Britain in the Victorian period.¹⁶ Although part of an industrial network that stretched from west to east across the lowlands of Scotland, Kirkcaldy was not a center of industry populated only by what Marx termed capitalists and proletarians. It was also home to the 'service intelligentsia' or the 'institutional middle class,'¹⁷ men like Tom Nairn's father who was headmaster at a local school. Despite being numerically dwarfed by the working class, it was this 'culturally dominant stratum,' according to Willie Thompson, who acted as 'the transmitter of [Scotland's] peculiar national traits.'¹⁸ Like most sons of the middle class, Nairn was not destined for the factory or the pit - social advancement through education constituted his fate. Thus he attended Edinburgh University, just across the Firth of Forth from Kirkcaldy, in the early nineteen fifties, graduating with an MA in 1956.

Like most young men born in the hinterland, social advancement for Nairn ultimately meant migration to the metropolis. This constituted a common theme of Scottish intellectual history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Suffering what he would later call 'a typical form of "provincialization",' many 'hungry and ambitious intellectuals were drawn out of their hinterlands and into the cultural service of their respective capitals.'¹⁹ Nairn was no different. Following this well-travelled path, Nairn settled in the metropolis, undertaking postgraduate studies at Oxford University. Shortly afterwards he acquired a British Council scholarship that allowed

¹⁵ T. Nairn, 'Introduction: On Studying Nationalism,' in *Faces of Nationalism*, p. 3.

¹⁶ T. Devine, *The Scottish Nation, 1700-2000* (London, 1999), p. 251.

¹⁷ W. Thompson, 'Tom Nairn and the Crisis of the British State,' *Contemporary Record*, 6, 2, 1992, p. 308.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* Nairn would later provide his own characterization of this social stratum's social consciousness: 'evil mélange of decrepit Presbyterianism and imperialist thuggery.' For him, the Scottish middle class was discernible by virtue of its 'heavy, gritty stylelessness,' its deafness to 'allusion and the subtler sorts of humour,' and by its 'exasperating pedantry and solemn formalism.' See Nairn, 'The Three Dreams of Scottish Nationalism,' p. 15. On the role of educated classes in nationalist movements, see E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: Europe, 1789-1848* (London, 1962), pp. 133-5.

¹⁹ Nairn, 'Scotland and Europe,' in *The Break-Up of Britain*, p. 125.

him to study, travel and live in Italy. Aesthetics and philosophy, the initial focus of his intellectual pursuits at Edinburgh and Oxford, were quickly replaced by Gramscian Marxism at the Scuola Normale Superiore of Pisa during 1957-8.²⁰ Returning to Britain at the beginning of the nineteen sixties, he maintained established links with Italian communism, becoming the British correspondent for the Communist Party of Italy's newspaper, *Unita*, while assuming a fellowship at Birmingham University.²¹

Up until the nineteen sixties, then, Nairn's career was typical of the upwardly mobile middle class of the hinterland, in form if not content. Born on the periphery of the United Kingdom, Nairn had received a metropolitan education and encountered no national barrier to social advancement - his fate was not that of Creole elites in Latin America whose social being, according to Benedict Anderson, provided the basis for some of the earliest nationalist movements.²² No doubt Nairn felt his difference from the southern English elites that dominated Oxbridge, just as Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams had in their different ways.²³ Alienation from Englishness in Nairn's case, however, did not find expression in particularist passion. Rather his lived experience of marginality was overcome through immersion in a cosmopolitan milieu.²⁴ Like many other intellectuals from the periphery of European development, Nairn found a home with the deracinated and the rootless whose fatherland was socialist revolution. Nairn's cosmopolitan socialism received embodiment at the time of his return from Italy to England when he became involved, alongside Perry Anderson and Robin Blackburn, in the editorship of the *New Left Review*, perhaps at this time *the* quintessentially cosmopolitan socialist journal, and the movement which is now known as the 'second' New Left.²⁵

²⁰ U. Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction* (Basingstoke, 2000), p. 87.

²¹ Thompson, 'Tom Nairn and the Crisis of the British State,' pp. 308-10.

²² See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 47-66. Nairn, of course, disputed this view, believing that nationalism's origins could be found on the 'periphery' of Europe.

²³ For an example of Nairn's invective against English elites, see his 'English Nationalism: the Case Against Enoch Powell,' in *The Break-Up of Britain*, p. 266, and pp. 256-66 more generally. The essay was originally published as 'Enoch Powell: the New Right,' *New Left Review*, 1/61, 1970, pp. 3-27. Reference in this chapter will be made to the essay as it appeared in *The Break-Up of Britain*.

²⁴ On the cosmopolitanism of colonials in the metropolis, see C. Calhoun, *Nationalism* (London, 1997), p. 109.

²⁵ The best history of the *New Left Review* can be found in G. Elliott, *Perry Anderson: The Merciless Laboratory of History* (London, 1997). But also see L. Chun, *The British New Left* (Edinburgh, 1994) and D. Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies* (Durham and London, 1997).

At its birth, the British New Left was distinguished from other revisionist socialisms by its thoroughgoing internationalism. This internationalist standard was maintained following the editorial *coup d'état* at the *New Left Review* in 1962, a usurpation that signaled the genesis of a 'second' New Left. Indeed, if there is one bridge that connects the 'first' New Left of E.P. Thompson, Raphael Samuel and Stuart Hall to the 'second' New Left of Anderson, Blackburn and Nairn, it is this outward-looking orientation. Yet in many ways the successor journal and movement constituted a bastard offspring. The second 'New Left' declared war against the nationalist inflection of all socialist movements in the capitalist West, including its own, and, echoing larger political developments, turned the *New Left Review's* theoretical antennae away from domestic radical thought toward the tradition of Western Marxism.²⁶ The socialist journal's new editorial triumvirate's commitment to free trade in ideas in one sense echoed the internationalism of the 'first' *New Left Review* - after all it had been no less concerned with global developments in socialist theory.²⁷ However the Anderson and Nairn led *New Left Review* swapped the 'first' *New Left Review's* humanism for a more rigorous and harder-edged form of continental Marxist thought. Put another way, where the 'first' *New Left Review* favoured the poetry of Adam Wazyk, the 'second' *New Left Review* favoured the structuralism of Louis Althusser. To this transnationalization of theory Nairn was a pre-eminent contributor.²⁸

The 'second' New Left's commerce in 'foreign' theory did not result in a neglect of what Anderson called 'national realities'.²⁹ Indeed, following its assumption of control, the editorial triumvirate set *New Left Review* the task of producing a 'total' history of national realities that searched for the origins of Britain's current economic and political malaise in a past of half-baked bourgeois revolution, obsession with imperial grandeur, and resistance to Enlightenment. The original

²⁶ For a collection expressive of this influence, see *New Left Review*, ed., *Western Marxism: A Critical Reader* (London, 1978).

²⁷ For the pre-history of this tendency in the 'first' New Left see B.D. Palmer, 'Reasoning Rebellion: E.P. Thompson, British Marxist Historians, and the Making of Dissident Political Mobilization,' *Labour/Le Travail*, 50, 2002, pp. 187-216.

²⁸ His access to Gramscian Marxism made him a perfect companion on the *New Left Review's* drive to internationalize British socialist theory.

²⁹ P. Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism* (London, 1980), p. 149.

impetus came from Nairn himself. It was he who first set out those ideas which became collectively known as the Nairn-Anderson theses in an article in the Italian Communist Party's theoretical journal, *Il Contemporaneo*, in 1964.³⁰ Inspired by Gramsci, Nairn's 'The Nemesis of the Bourgeoisie' provided a foundation for those ideas which would find extended elaboration in Anderson's 'The Origins of the Present Crisis.' The animating purpose of the Nairn-Anderson theses opened up an unbridgeable rift within the nascent New Left movement.³¹ On the receiving end of what they believed were characteristically nationalist reflexes from founding spirits of the New Left like E.P. Thompson, Anderson and Nairn mapped out a direction for the *New Left Review* that was distinguished by the repudiation of socialist humanism and the attempted reinvigoration of British Marxism through exposure to Continental philosophy. Cosmopolitan socialism rather than national nihilism was perhaps a more fitting (and fair) description of the *New Left Review's* animating purpose from 1962 onwards.³²

Having distanced itself from proletarian politics in its own backyard, the 'second' New Left's internationalist impulse sought access to the real movement of things in two political forms in the later nineteen sixties – anti-colonial nationalism and student rebellion. Both were foreign to 'classical' Marxist politics: the first because its social base was peasant, the second because its social base was middle class. In conditions, however, where the metropolitan proletariat appeared integrated into both capitalist economies and national polities, there seemed nowhere else for international socialists to find an image of the future. Consequently, they searched for a promise of Utopia among the Mountains of the Moon and in the Latin Quarter of Paris.³³ Nairn was not immune to these visions.³⁴ Indeed as the political

³⁰ D. Forgacs, 'Gramsci and Marxism in Britain,' *New Left Review*, I/176, 1985, p. 75.

³¹ For Nairn's own early contributions to the Nairn-Anderson theses, see his 'The British Political Elite,' *New Left Review*, I/23, 1964, pp. 19-26; 'The English Working Class,' *New Left Review*, I/27, 1964, pp. 43-57 [critique of E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963)]; 'The Nature of the Labour Party,' *New Left Review*, I/27, 1964, pp. 38-65; and 'The Nature of the Labour Party, II,' *New Left Review*, I/28, 1964, pp. 33-63.

³² For the suggestion that the Nairn-Anderson theses constituted evidence of national nihilism, see Perry Anderson's comments in *English Questions* (London, 1992), p. 5. It was, of course, Isaac Deutscher who made the suggestion.

³³ For the conjunction of student revolt and national liberation, see G. Stedman Jones, 'The Meaning of Student Revolt,' in A. Cockburn and R. Blackburn, eds., *Student Power/Problems, Diagnosis, Action* (Harmondsworth, 1969), p. 25.

³⁴ Willie Thompson's suggestion that 'Nairn did not participate in these ecstasies (student revolution)' is questionable. See Thompson, 'Tom Nairn and the Crisis of the British State,' p. 312.

reverberations of imperialism politicized a new generation of metropolitan radicals, Nairn imagined the beginning of a new global epoch of revolutionary history. The May revolt in Paris, he maintained, 'was the precursor of the first revolution in history which can be right.'³⁵ In retrospect, the late nineteen sixties constituted the apotheosis of Nairn's socialist cosmopolitanism, that time when he most deeply experienced social revolution as his homeland.

Nairn's concern with anti-colonial nationalism and student insurrection did not involve a neglect of his own hinterland, the constant danger, he would later complain, of cosmopolitan politics.³⁶ In fact, he linked student revolt in Paris directly with the emergence of particularist furies in Scotland. Having made contact with the nationalist 'beast' (the word accurately captures Nairn's assessment of nationalism at this time), he argued that:

I for one am enough of a nationalist, and have enough faith in the students and young workers of Glasgow and Edinburgh to believe that these forces (for revolutionary change) are also present in them. I will not admit that the great dreams of May 1968 are foreign to us, that the great words on the Sorbonne walls would not be home on the walls of Aberdeen or St. Andrews, or that Liniwood and Dundee could not be Filns and Nantes. Nor will I admit that, faced with a choice between the Movement du 22 Mars and Mrs. Ewing, we owe it to 'Scotland' to choose the latter.³⁷

This is a great distance away from Nairn's later nationalism, when the politics of Mrs. Ewing became his own. Yet, as early as the late nineteen sixties, he was maintaining that nationalist passions in Scotland were a manifestation of a global shift toward decentralization - an early indication that nationalism for Nairn was not necessarily a 'dreamland'.

³⁵ T. Nairn and A. Quattrocchi, *The Beginning of the End: France, May 1968* (London, 1968), p. 153.

³⁶ Nairn, 'Internationalism: A Critique,' pp. 30-1.

³⁷ T. Nairn, 'The Three Dreams of Scottish Nationalism,' in *Memoirs of a Modern Scotland* (exact source unspecified) in N. Davidson, 'In Perspective: Tom Nairn,' *International Socialism*, 82, 1999 available at <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/isj82/davidson.htm>.

Dismissed from Hornsey Art School (where he had been employed from 1966 in the Department of General Studies) over his support for '1968,'³⁸ Nairn accepted a position with the Institute for Policy Studies, 'a left-wing think-tank established in the wake of the 1960s radical movement.'³⁹ This appointment took Nairn to Amsterdam where he was charged with establishing a European bureau of the Institute. Logically enough, his job with the Institute immersed him in the politics of European supranationalism. In the nineteen sixties Britain had twice failed to gain admission to the European Economic Community, frustrated on each occasion by a combination of Gallic obstruction and domestic parochialism.⁴⁰ While Nairn was stationed in Amsterdam, Britain again sought entry, this time with the ostentatious support of its own bourgeoisie. Commensurate with his cosmopolitanism, Nairn, as shall be shown in greater depth in the next section, embraced a dialectical understanding of European integration, providing at the same time a 'classical' Marxist critique of the nationalism of the British Left. Thus Nairn's 'exile' from Britain following '1968' did not result in his neglect of domestic politics nor did it involve a revision of his cosmopolitan socialism.

His return to Scotland shortly after did. Nairn's homecoming dovetailed with a rise in Scottish nationalism's fortunes.⁴¹ Despite initial setbacks during the early nineteen seventies, the Scottish National Party (SNP) had become by 1974 'a real parliamentary force.'⁴² Indeed by the mid-nineteen seventies both major all-British parties had accepted some sort of Home Rule or devolution on Britain's northern periphery as a *fait accompli*. On his return to Edinburgh, Nairn, in concert with SNP member, Michael Spens, established the Scottish International Institute. Based loosely on Nairn's experiences in Amsterdam, the Scottish International Institute was a small organization that sought to place the rise of nationalist fervour in north Britain within the context of wider international developments.⁴³ In line with his analysis of Scottish nationalism in the late nineteen sixties, the Institute was designed to lionize

³⁸ T. Nairn, 'Hornsey,' *New Left Review*, 1/50, 1968, pp. 65-70.

³⁹ See Thompson, 'Tom Nairn and the Crisis of the British State,' pp. 313.

⁴⁰ For an account, see A. Milward, *The European Rescue of the Nation-State* (London and New York, Second Edition, 2000), pp. 345-424.

⁴¹ For a brief overview of Scottish nationalism in this period see Devine, *The Scottish Nation*, pp. 574-590.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 574.

⁴³ For an expression of the Institute's goals see 'Scotland and Europe,' p. 93.

Scotland's unique Enlightenment heritage and to undermine the majority sector of the nationalist electorate's obsession with what Nairn derisively called 'tartanry'.⁴⁴ In terms that he was not afraid to employ at the time, the Institute's aim was to rescue Scottish nationalism from romantic barbarism. Indeed, in the newly-minted nationalist coin that Nairn traded in, Scotland's attachment to Enlightenment was seen as a potential saviour of the world.⁴⁵ Having decided that nationalism was inevitable, Nairn duly became a nationalist.

Nairn's repudiation of cosmopolitanism did not immediately involve a rejection of his attachment to some sort of imagined socialist community, to the future as it had been envisaged by John MacLean and generations of Clydeside ship workers and Lanarkshire miners. Nairn's socialist nationalism was made manifest in his decision to join the newly founded Scottish Labour Party in 1976.⁴⁶ A response to the march that the SNP had stolen on working-class politics during the preceding decade, and an explicit rejection of the Unionism of the all-British Labour Party, the SLP sought to harness the nationalist horse to socialism's wagon. According to Willie Thompson, Nairn believed 'that the SLP corresponded to the sort of political force he [Nairn] regarded as necessary to accomplish the model of political change which he had developed theoretically [he was about to publish *The Break-Up of Britain*] and as potentially combining the strengths of both nationalism and socialism.'⁴⁷ The SLP's self-image fit Nairn's socialist nationalism well. As he put it, 'We [the SLP] have to fight coherently on both fronts [socialism and nationalism].'⁴⁸ The possibility of coherence is no doubt open to dispute. Nonetheless Nairn saw no contradiction between socialism and nationalism, despite his cosmopolitan past and his nationalist

⁴⁴ In his earliest analysis of particularism, Nairn vituperatively characterized actually-existing Scottish nationalism as a spirit animated by a mixture of militarism, tartanry and alcoholism. 'The SNP nationalists,' he suggested, 'are merely lumpen-provincials whose parochialism finds its adequate expression in the asinine idea that a bourgeois parliament and an army will rescue the country from provincialism.' See Nairn, 'The Three Dreams of Scottish Nationalism,' p. 18.

⁴⁵ See 'Old and New Nationalism,' p. 194.

⁴⁶ Thompson, 'Tom Nairn and the Crisis of the British State,' p. 317 and T. Devine, *The Scottish Nation, 1700-2000* (London, 1999), p. 586. The SLP was established by Labour MPs Jim Sillars and Alex Neil in January 1976.

⁴⁷ Thompson, 'Tom Nairn and the Crisis of the British State,' p. 317. For Nairn's own assessment of this politics, see his 'Into Political Emergency: A Retrospect from the Eighties,' in *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London, 1981, orig. 1977), pp. 365-404.

⁴⁸ T. Nairn, 'The National Question,' Internal SLP Document, cited in Drucker, *Breakaway: The Scottish Labour Party* (Edinburgh, 1978), p. 124, and here taken from Thompson, 'Tom Nairn and the Crisis of the British State,' p. 317.

future. Not long after the aborted bid for Scottish devolution in the late nineteen seventies, however, he would.

A 1979 referendum on the question of Scottish home rule resulted in a historic nationalist triumph. Nationalist expectation, however, was soon deflected by Unionist perfidy - an assessment provided by most nationalists at the time, including Nairn.⁴⁹ The election of Thatcher did nothing to raise the post-referendum nationalist gloom. An ascending New Right extinguished any immediate prospect of a swift transition to independence. With a resurgent and increasingly hegemonic New Right having obliterated any immediate expectation of Scottish independence, Nairn soon after had another foundation of his politics blown from under his feet. In 1982 he resigned from the editorial board of the *New Left Review* following a difference of opinion with Anderson and Blackburn over questions of procedure and politics.⁵⁰ Nairn now appeared to be without any institutional medium for the politics which had sustained his work over the preceding two decades. The preservation of the Union, despite peripheral perturbation, ensured, however, an outlet for his nationalist fury. Far from a 'dreamland,' a future independent Scotland was now his homeland.

Representative of his continuing disdain for the British state, which had first received expression in the Nairn-Anderson theses, *The Enchanted Glass* was Nairn's only substantial contribution to scholarship during the nineteen eighties.⁵¹ The book reconfirmed Nairn's long-held belief in republicanism and advertised his full commitment to separatist nationalism. In this polemic against King & Country,

⁴⁹ For a brief account of the 1979 referendum, see Devine, *The Scottish Nation*, pp. 587-90. For Nairn's reaction to the referendum's failure consult *Faces of Nationalism*, p. 227 where he explains in a long footnote his own reaction to the failed bid for self-determination.

⁵⁰ Rather ungenerously, Nairn, in a later interview with Willie Thompson, claimed that 'it is by no means accidental that so many of the dominant figures on the Review originate in the traditional English ruling class and possess as a result the self-confidence and effortless superiority derived from that background' [the quote is a précis of Nairn's words by Thompson]. He also maintained that the dispute which led to his severing ties with the journal could be described 'as a revolt of the middle class against the ruling class ending, as usual, with the former defeated' [once again the word's are Thompson's]. One imagines that here Nairn was principally referring to Anderson, his one time collaborator. See Thompson, 'Tom Nairn and the Crisis of the British State,' p. 320. According to Neil Davidson the dispute was over 'the question of whether the decline of Stalinism, both as state power in the East and working class organization in the West, could herald the revival of a genuine revolutionary movement. Anderson and the editor, Robin Blackburn, were at this stage still committed ... to a perspective which saw such a development as being possible. Nairn sided with the faction which held that it was not, and after they lost the fight, he resigned in solidarity with them.' See Davidson, 'Tom Nairn: In Perspective'.

⁵¹ T. Nairn, *The Enchanted Glass: Britain and its Monarchy* (London, 1988).

however, there was much less evidence of the socialism which had initially fired his political imagination. His republican-nationalist politics was given partial shape by an increasingly close connection with Charter 88, founded by one time joint editor of the *New Left Review*, Anthony Barnett. Established in 1988 – the tercentenary of the Glorious Revolution – within the offices of the *New Statesman*, Charter 88 constituted a broad church whose aim was the constitutional reform of Britain's polity. Its principal objectives fit nicely into Nairn's now decades-long condemnation of the British state.⁵² The Charter's goals of a written constitution, a bill of rights, regional parliaments and the abolition of the House of Lords sought to finish the work of 1688 and 1832, to institute a belated bourgeois revolution.

To nationalist delight, events in Scotland were soon outpacing Charter demands. In the late nineteen eighties the nationalist 'beast' awoke from its post-referendum slumber to claim a famous electoral victory in Glasgow. Nationalism's fortunes were rising even higher on the continent. Best of all, from a nationalist perspective, a reinvigorated ethnic politics was obliterating the shop-soiled dreams of international socialists in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.⁵³ Nairn was on hand to celebrate these nationalist triumphs. *Faces of Nationalism*, published in 1997 but constituted by articles mostly composed in the immediate wake of nationalist insurgencies, cheered the course of events, even though it contained a now-mandatory lament at the backwardness of Britain. In a state which Nairn claimed would still be recognizable to William of Orange, nationalities remained trapped beneath a political roof which refused to embrace modernity. Despite an overwhelming endorsement of Scottish devolution in the late nineteen nineties, and the establishment of a Scottish parliament soon after, Nairn, now back teaching nationalism studies in Edinburgh (he would soon leave to take up a position in Australia), remained suspicious of the course of events in Ukania (Nairn's derogatory title for the UK), his nationalist antennae still sensitive to Unionist deceit. He found demonstration of such deception

⁵² And continues to do so. See T. Nairn, 'Farewell Britannia: Break-Up of New Union?,' *New Left Review*, II/7, 2001, p. 68. For earlier views consider T. Nairn, 'The Future of Britain's Crisis,' *New Left Review*, I/113-114, 1979, pp. 43-69; T. Nairn, 'The Crisis of the British State,' *New Left Review*, I/130, 1981, pp. 37-44 and T. Nairn, 'The Sole Survivor,' *New Left Review*, I/200, 1993, pp. 41-47.

⁵³ On 1989 and nationalism, see E. Gellner, 'Nationalism and Politics in Eastern Europe,' *New Left Review*, I/189, 1991, pp. 127-134. On nationalism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, see R. Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism and the Revolution and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford, 1995).

in Blairite plans for devolution, remarkable, according to him, only as evidence of the latest design to keep Old Britannia going.⁵⁴ However, the course of events, if not the plans of politicians, pointed to a future, he argued, beyond Britain - a future characterized by the proliferation of small-scale nation states, universal democracy and free markets. Soon, he laughed, we would all be Macedonians.

Cosmopolitan socialism, socialist nationalism, and nationalism – these constitute the important way-stations on Nairn's intellectual odyssey through the last four decades.⁵⁵ What, then, is Nairn's imagined community? The answer to this question is not in doubt. Nairn has refused to apologize for the national peculiarities that have driven his analyses of particularism. His imagined community is a Scotland no longer ruled from London: a properly constituted nation-state republic committed to democracy and resigned to the inevitability of globalized commodity production. Nairn's nationalism is not however narcissistic.⁵⁶ His nationalist passion is international, extending to all nations with and without states. Thus Nairn's imagined globe would be made up of all sorts of national communities, as small as Andorra and as large as Australia, determined by but freely determining their ethnic destiny. A globe, in short, that accepted the inescapability of the nationalist end of history, constitutes his imagined homeland.

Cosmopolitan Socialism and Socialist Nationalism: Marxism and the National Question

Marxism was born at the beginning of the great age of nation-states and nationalisms.⁵⁷ Indeed, Marxism and the modern nation-state emerged almost simultaneously, 1848 marking both the 'springtime of nations' and the publication of the *Communist Manifesto*. This conjuncture faced Marxism with an immediate dilemma which it has yet to transcend. How does an ostensibly cosmopolitan

⁵⁴ T. Nairn, *Pariah: Misfortunes of the British Kingdom* (London and New York, 2002).

⁵⁵ Joan Cocks inadequately characterizes Nairn's intellectual odyssey as a 'journey from neo-marxism (sic) to neo-nationalism.' See J. Cocks, 'Fetishizing Ethnicity, Locality, Nationality: The Curious Case of Tom Nairn,' p. 145.

⁵⁶ A point made in P. James, 'Nationalism and Post-Nationalism,' *Arena Journal*, 11, 1998, p. 173.

⁵⁷ See, for Nairn's own adumbration of this coincidence, 'The Left Against Europe,' *New Left Review*, I/71, 1972, p. 105.

ideology negotiate a world of nation-states and nationalisms? Marxists, as we have seen, assumed either one of two guises in response to this predicament. In one guise they affirmed their cosmopolitanism, refusing to endorse the assertion of their nationalist opponents that nations embodied timeless ethnicities. Yet this persona proved difficult to sustain in a world where nationalism constituted 'the idiom of all contemporary political feeling.'⁵⁸ In such circumstances Marxists assumed an opposite guise. In this socialist-nationalist persona, Marxists echoed the nationalism of their opponents, in form if not always in content. Antinomy has not generated practical or theoretical development - Marxism has consistently failed to synthesize these two aspects of its heritage. Thus the original dilemma has been a source of ongoing aggravation for Marxist scholars.⁵⁹ This frustration underwrote and permeated Nairn's examination of Marxism's 'national problem' in the context of the growth of a European federation of states in the last half of the twentieth century.

Composed in the early nineteen seventies, and dictated by Nairn's involvement with the Institute for Policy Studies, 'The Left Against Europe' (1972) constituted a searching examination of the nexus between scientific socialism and the national question. Although utilizing the debate over British entry into Europe as its touchstone, the focus of Nairn's essay was 'the real historical relationship between marxism and the nationalism which has characterized European history during the century now enduring.'⁶⁰ According to Nairn, the debate over Europe in Britain had precipitated a capsizal in the relationship between ideology and ethnicity. In short, the Left had swapped class for nation, the Right nation for class.⁶¹ The reversal, Nairn charged, was disastrous for the Left. Rather than comprise a vanguard of the national interest, socialists needed to abandon their 'narrow national limits,'⁶² he

⁵⁸ J. Dunn, *Western Political Theory in the Face of the Future* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 56.

⁵⁹ For some the aggravation is inherent in Marxist theory. For this view, see J. Ehrenreich, 'Socialism, Nationalism and Capitalist Development,' *Review of Radical Political Economists*, 15, 1, 1983, p. 1

⁶⁰ Nairn, 'The Left Against Europe,' p. 6. Nairn, of course, would later famously describe this relationship as a 'historical failure'. For this view, consult Nairn, 'The Modern Janus,' in *The Break-Up of Britain*, p. 329. This essay first appeared as 'The Modern Janus,' *New Left Review*, 1/94, 1975, pp. 3-29. Reference in this chapter will be made to the version that appeared in *The Break-Up of Britain*.

⁶¹ Nairn, 'The Left Against Europe,' pp. 13 and 35-6. For a superb overview of the sociology of nationalism and internationalism since the French Revolution, see P. Anderson, 'Internationalism: A Breviary,' *New Left Review*, II/4, 2002, pp. 5-25 - an account that generally concurs with Nairn's diagnosis here.

⁶² Nairn cited approvingly a statement by Giorgio Amendola in *I comunisti e l'Europa* where Amendola maintained that "international integration is a reality with which one will have to come to

argued, and embrace European integration as the foundation-stone of a socialist Cosmopolis. By endorsing European integration, Nairn suggested, the Left would be redeeming the 'most precious inheritance of the European working class: the traditions of Marxist internationalism.'⁶³

Before the publication of *The Break-Up of Britain* (1977), 'The Left Against Europe' constituted Nairn's most sustained investigation into the national question in general and the nexus between Marxism and nationalism in particular. A materialist account of nationhood and a cosmopolitan critique of nationalism, 'The Left Against Europe' offered a Marxist interpretation of the nation-state in a political climate dominated by capitalist globalization - that is, within a world-historical context conditioned by the increasing transnationalization of commodity production.⁶⁴ From this perspective of global political economy, Nairn's essay mounted a defence of socialist cosmopolitanism and advanced a caustic assault against what he considered the puerile follies of nationalist ideology.⁶⁵ What effect did nationalism have on Marxist socialist politics? What might explain the appeal of nationhood to the working class? What circumstances legitimated an assessment of proletarian nationalism as 'false consciousness'? What was the relationship between contemporary capitalism and the nation-state? What did the process of European integration have to do with cosmopolitan socialism? 'The Left Against Europe' was designed as a guide to an appropriate Marxist response to such questions.⁶⁶

The chief contention of 'The Left Against Europe' was that nationalism constituted 'false consciousness'.⁶⁷ As far as the majority of students of the national

terms", and the left can only respond adequately to this process by quickly transcending its "narrow national interests".' Nairn cites this text without direct attribution in 'The Left Against Europe,' p. 6.

⁶³ Nairn, 'The Left Against Europe,' p. 58. Much like Marx's understanding of the term ('internationalism'), Nairn was here referring to cosmopolitanism rather than inter-nationalism, an ideology commensurate with the existence of nation-states.

⁶⁴ For a more recent account that runs along the same tracks, see R. Went, 'Economic Globalization plus Cosmopolitanism?,' *Review of International Political Economy*, 11, 2, 2004, pp. 338-344.

⁶⁵ Nairn would, of course, later reject this argument. By the late nineteen seventies he was arguing that 'internationality' was not a sufficient basis for cosmopolitan politics. See Nairn, 'Internationalism: A Critique,' pp. 26-7. He continues to maintain that nationalism not cosmopolitanism is the logical and historical outcome of 'internationality'.

⁶⁶ Nairn was heading here into largely un-chartered waters, although he was able to build on the work of more recent cosmopolitan socialists like Isaac Deutscher, particularly arguments he outlined in *Marxism in Our Time* (London, 1972).

⁶⁷ See, in particular, Nairn, 'The Left Against Europe,' pp. 98 and 117. Nationalism as 'false consciousness' was a feature of his earlier analysis of Scottish nationalism, where he argued that

question are concerned, 'false consciousness' is an inappropriate means of grasping nationalism's essence, rejected as evidence of Marxism's inherent reductionism, a conclusion sometimes endorsed by Marxists themselves.⁶⁸ This assessment should be resisted.⁶⁹ A conception of nationalism as false consciousness reminds us that, although not simply a ruling class ruse, nationalist passions can be mobilized to 'contain' or 'neutralize' class discontent.⁷⁰ How could this be denied given the realities of 1914? Other lessons can be derived from socialist internationalism's implosion in the early part of the 'age of extremes' than those normally drawn, as Nairn demonstrates in 'The Left Against Europe'.⁷¹ As 1914 revealed, nationalism has been utilized by ruling classes to deflect attention away from problems of class contestation.⁷² Nationalism is not only this but it *can* function in this way. After all, as Nairn suggested in his account of the Left's response to European integration, hadn't the proletariat always been 'the political victims of the nation-state, not its beneficiaries'?⁷³

Always? Nairn here forgot the better judgment elsewhere outlined by 'The Left Against Europe'. In one register he did unambiguously suggest that nationalism was perennially inimical to proletarian interest, that the nation was always a site of counter-revolution. In another register, however, Nairn conceded the significant profit the proletariat had amassed from its association with nationhood. Consequently, Nairn argued that proletarian nationalism had (at one time) represented a wholly rational response to the working class's immersion in a world of nation-states. Thus, echoing the views of Hobsbawm and Thompson, Nairn noted that

nationalism in Scotland was 'unreal' and 'false'. See Nairn, 'The Three Dreams of Scottish Nationalism,' pp. 11-12. Another earlier characterization of nationalism as 'false consciousness' can be found in his 'English Nationalism: the Case of Enoch Powell,' p. 272.

⁶⁸ For a rejection of the understanding of nationalism as 'false consciousness' from a one-time Marxist, see G.A. Cohen, *History, Labor, Freedom* (Oxford, 1996), p. 144-46. This argument, of course, stands at the base of many recent accounts of nationalism, such as Benedict Anderson's justly-regarded classic, *Imagined Communities*. For the rejection of the 'false consciousness' thesis by a self-avowed Marxist, see A. Callinicos, *Marxism and Philosophy* (London, 1985), p. 134.

⁶⁹ For the reasons why, see T. Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London, 1991), pp. 14-18.

⁷⁰ For Nairn's own argument, see 'The Left Against Europe,' p. 43. Nairn's suggestion that 'Class contestation cannot be eliminated even by all-conquering nationalism' was incautious, if not erroneous.

⁷¹ And in an earlier article. See Nairn, 'English Nationalism: the Case of Enoch Powell,' p. 273.

⁷² For a more recent analysis along these lines, this time taking Bush's America and its attack on Iraq as its example, see D. Harvey, 'From Globalization to the New Imperialism,' in R.P. Appelbaum and W.I. Robinson, eds., *Critical Globalization Studies* (New York and London, 2005), pp. 95 and 99.

⁷³ Nairn, 'The Left Against Europe,' p. 72.

nationalism had played an important part in the making of the working class.⁷⁴ In this sense, Nairn argued, proletarian nationalism was not evidence of false consciousness but a function of the working class's nationalization, the fact that the 'national economy' and the welfare state were crucial sites of the proletariat's material existence.⁷⁵ Indeed the nation-state, he argued, was the unique locus of proletarian triumph.⁷⁶ From this perspective, the proletariat's defence of the national interest against European integration could be understood as an effect of this history of national working-class struggle against national (and international) capital.

'The Left Against Europe' thus did not ignore the 'materiality' of nationalist fervour, dismissing it merely and only as an instance of false consciousness. In fact, cosmopolitan socialists have not always failed to come to grips with the nation's emotional hold over identity, as many, if not all, students of the national question have supposed. Nairn was fully cognizant of nationalism's power to define identity, even for socialists. As he remarked, 'the problems and ideals of the left remain, in Britain, as elsewhere, deeply entwined with a "national" experience.'⁷⁷ In such circumstances, socialist's defence of the national interest could be understood less as a betrayal than a fulfillment of the proletariat's objective interest. Socialist nationalism, hence, could be illuminated in a context where the making of the working class and socialism coincided with a period of ascendant nationalisms. But in the latter half of the twentieth century was nationalism still ascendant?⁷⁸ For Nairn this did not represent an appropriate judgment of nationalism's future. In fact, global political

⁷⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 59. Hobsbawm's argument can be found in 'What Was the Workers Country?,' in E. Hobsbawm, *Worlds of Labour* (London, 1984), p. 49 and in greater depth in his *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914* (London, 1987), pp. 126-9. For more on the 'nationalization of the masses' see M. Mann, 'The Social Cohesion of Liberal Democracy,' *American Sociological Review*, 35, 3, 1970, an article that Nairn himself cited with approval.

⁷⁵ For a later instance of this argument see Nairn, 'Internationalism: A Critique,' pp. 34-38.

⁷⁶ Nairn, 'The Left Against Europe,' p. 59. For this point also see C. Vogler, *The Nation-State: The Neglected Dimension of Class* (Aldershot, 1985), pp. 1-44.

⁷⁷ Nairn, 'The Left Against Europe,' p. 9. See also *ibid.*, p. 56. It has, of course, been argued that the nation-state represents the end point of human social and political evolution. This is a view that Nairn now endorses. For an early example of this argument, see his 'Into the Political Emergency,' pp. 370-1.

⁷⁸ For alternative answers to this question, see M. Mann, 'Has Globalization Ended the Rise and Rise of the Nation-State?,' *Review of International Political Economy*, 4, 3, 1997, pp. 472-496 and J. Habermas, 'The European Nation-State and the Pressures of Globalization,' *New Left Review*, 1999, pp. 46-59. Mann answers the question in the negative, Habermas in the positive.

economy, he argued, was ensuring the reverse: that nationalism's reach was encountering its limit and that the nation-state was entering its era of decline.⁷⁹

It was in the context of capitalism's commodification of the planet that the 'The Left Against Europe' launched its missile against socialist nationalism.⁸⁰ If the proletariat's interest was structured by class rather than ethnicity, then socialist nationalism could only represent a betrayal of that interest.⁸¹ Socialist nationalism, according to Nairn, did not represent nation *and* class but nation *over* class: when it defended the national interest, it was sacrificing socialism's universal intent; when it suggested that the proletariat was the 'true' nation, it was betraying socialism's attachment to humanity.⁸² In these terms, Nairn argued, socialist nationalism represented 'the [working] class as seduced by the nation.'⁸³ His views echoed those of Hobsbawm in his critique of Nairn's later text *The Break-Up of Britain*. Akin to the operations of a dominant gene, when nation and class were bred, Nairn argued, the former always ended up dissolving the latter.

Although the mainstream labour movement's socialist nationalism constituted the primary target of 'The Left Against Europe,' Nairn also delivered a stinging rebuke to the nationalism of the 'first' New Left.⁸⁴ 'The Left Against Europe' poured scorn on the original New Left's avocation of the national interest, arguing, for example, that

⁷⁹ Nairn, 'The Left Against Europe,' pp. 115 and 118. Declining? Of course this point would now be vigorously contended by most students of nationalism, Nairn among them. Contention around the relationship between capitalist globalization and the nation-state has been at the center of the recent debate between Hobsbawm and Nairn. For an account of this debate, see R. Beiner, '1989: Nationalism, Internationalism, and the Nairn-Hobsbawm Debate,' *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, 40, 1999, pp. 171-184 and below.

⁸⁰ This critique of socialist nationalism is not only absent from his later work in the nineteen seventies; it was also absent from his analysis of Scottish nationalism in the late nineteen sixties. In 'The Three Dreams of Scottish Nationalism,' Nairn argued that the only solution to the dilemmas of nationalist development in Scotland was 'a Socialist Nationalism whose dream has dimensions which really correspond to those of the stubborn visionary drive towards identity.' See Nairn, 'The Three Dreams of Scottish Nationalism,' p. 18.

⁸¹ For the argument that socialist nationalism represents a form of 'false consciousness,' see Nairn, 'The Left Against Europe,' p. 35.

⁸² Socialist nationalism, as this thesis has already suggested, can also be seen as a repudiation of socialism's central animating purpose: that nationalism obscures the class heterogeneity of nation-states. For more on this point see J. Schwarzmantel, 'Nation versus Class: Nationalism and Socialism in Theory and Practice,' in J. Coakley, ed., *The Social Origins of National Movements: The Contemporary West European Experience* (London, 1992), pp. 48-9.

⁸³ Nairn, 'The Left Against Europe,' p. 43.

⁸⁴ Nairn also provided an attack against the 'moral internationalism' and 'popular nationalism' characteristic of E.P. Thompson's socialism. See 'The Left Against Europe,' pp. 56-9. For his critique of Raymond Williams's thought, see *ibid.*, pp. 106-114. Here Williams's nationalism appeared to be British rather than Welsh.

Raymond Williams's appeal to a 'romantic' *gemeinschaft* was incompatible with international socialist discourse. Lamenting the New Left's submission to the nationalist temptation, Nairn argued that socialists must welcome European integration as the logical development of the bourgeois *gesellschaft*, just as Marx had once welcomed the nation-state.⁸⁵ In a wonderful paean to the civilizing force of capitalism's global hunt for profit, 'The Left Against Europe' sung the praises of bourgeois self-interest and limned commodity production's world-connecting mission as the basis for the creation of a socialist Cosmopolis.⁸⁶ Nairn's suggestion, it can be argued, was apposite.⁸⁷ After all, it was precisely the transnationalization of bourgeois society which scientific socialism had predicted.⁸⁸ Like Hobsbawm's, Nairn's socialism was underscored by a historical materialist discourse which argued that the bourgeoisie had created the nation-state to expand capital's rule and then destroyed nationhood in an attempt to globalize it.⁸⁹ Williams's cultural nationalism not only risked replicating the arguments of Right-wing nationalists like Powell but also the views of proponents of 'socialism in one country' - a view that history, and Marx, had already proved inadequate.⁹⁰ The task of Marxists, Nairn argued, was to develop a dialectical analysis of European integration rather than retreat into the womb of some fictional *gemeinschaft*.

In opposition to what he considered the limitations and perversities of socialist nationalism, whether labourist, communist, or socialist humanist, Nairn praised the material and moral virtues of the socialist cosmopolitanism that had fired scientific socialism's founders. In a wonderful moment Nairn argued that 'Marxism's Jewish grandeur was created almost entirely *against* the rising tide of that [nationalist] culture, by exiles, émigrés and cosmopolitan refugees, and the phoney

⁸⁵ And arguably capitalist imperialism. For this argument, one in desperate need of re-statement, see B. Warren, *Imperialism: Pioneer of Capitalism*, ed. J. Sender (London, 1980).

⁸⁶ As indeed Marx did. For a discussion of this, see E. Gellner, 'Nationalism and Marxism,' in Gellner, *Encounters with Nationalism* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 13-14.

⁸⁷ For the general problems of cultural romanticism, and its anti-modernist and counter-revolutionary tendencies, see R. Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse* (Princeton and Oxford, 2001), pp. 57-67.

⁸⁸ Nairn, 'The Left Against Europe,' p. 93.

⁸⁹ In particular see *ibid.*, pp. 72-3. See also Nairn, 'The Three Dreams of Scottish Nationalism,' p. 14 where he argued that nationalism, even Scottish nationalism, had been rendered 'unreal' by virtue of its location in 'a capitalist world more unified every day by the great monopolies.'

⁹⁰ For Nairn's suggestion that socialist nationalism echoed the ethnic politics of the Right, see *ibid.*, p. 36. For a contemporary demonstration of the absurdity of 'socialism in one country' see Harvey, *Spaces of Hope*, p. 33.

Volksgemeinschaften of the imperialist nation-state has always been anathema to it.⁹¹ Importantly, Naim's internationalism was not just moral, the kind of fellow-feeling for 'foreigners' which was a feature of the first New Left, and a necessary feature of any cosmopolitan socialism - it was also structural. It attached itself to what Marx called the real movement of things, that is, to the progressive development of a globalizing capitalism. In this sense, Naim's anti-nationalism was an expression of the emerging reality of his period's capitalist globalization. Even if capital had not yet reached its global limit, it was still imperative, Naim argued, for socialists to avoid any association with particularism.⁹²

'The Left Against Europe' was, of course, not free from certain obfuscations and elisions. Perhaps the most damaging of these was Naim's failure to distinguish between civic and ethnic nationalisms. At least in theory, and, for some students of nationalism, also in practice, an intelligible distinction can be made between the (civic) nationalism of the 'rights of man' and the (ethnic) nationalism of 'blood and soil'.⁹³ Hobsbawm often argued that this distinction should be made. In the majority of analyses of nationhood the distinction between what is sometimes inadequately termed 'western' and 'eastern' nationalisms is unambiguous.⁹⁴ Although it has been argued that there are few actually-existing examples of either 'ideal-type', it is surely legitimate to separate the universalist nationalism of Jacobin France and the anti-universalist nationalism of Nazi Germany, and, hence, illegitimate to elide the nationalist politics of Mazzini with that of Maurras. The crucial measure of distinction is the Enlightenment.⁹⁵ In the spirit of the Enlightenment, civic

⁹¹ Naim, 'The Left Against Europe,' p. 118, italics in original. The philo-Semitism limned here provides a bracing contrast to what Joan Cocks would call the latent anti-Semitism of his more recent assessments of nationalism. For Cocks' judgment, see Cocks, 'Fetishizing Ethnicity, Locality, Nationality: The Curious Case of Tom Naim,' p. 137.

⁹² Naim, 'The Left Against Europe,' p. 116, italics in original. This is a view shared today by Perry Anderson.

⁹³ For a distinction between different sorts of nationalism along these lines, see E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1789: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, 1992, org. 1990), pp. 101-30. For the argument that the two are not so clear in practice, see J. Habermas, 'The European Nation-State: On the Past and Future of Sovereignty and Citizenship,' in his *The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory*, eds. C. Cronin and P. De Greiff (Oxford, 2002, org. 1996), pp. 111-17.

⁹⁴ For problems inherent to the distinction between 'western' (civic) and 'eastern' (ethnic) nationalisms, see A.W. Marx, *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism* (Oxford, 2003), pp. vii-ix.

⁹⁵ There is an argument that nationalism is inherently at odds with the Enlightenment. For this argument, see J. Schwarzmantel, *The Age of Ideology: Political Ideologies from the American Revolution to Postmodern Times* (New York, 1998), pp. 131-33. This is a view that perhaps would have been shared by many cosmopolitan philosophes. As Diderot remarked to Hume: 'My dear David, you belong to all nations, and you'll never ask an unhappy man for his birth certificate. I flatter myself

nationalists value *égalité* over hierarchy, liberty over authority, and political citizenship over ethnic community. Against this 'enlightened' nationalism stand various forms of counter-enlightenment nationalism, distinguished by the characteristic appeal to the pre-modern ideals of authority, hierarchy and community, evidenced today not just in the identity politics of extreme right-wing nationalist movements but also in the typical identity politics of religious fundamentalism.⁹⁶ If an unambiguous distinction is not made between civic and ethnic nationalisms, as 'The Left Against Europe' neglected to do, then we might mistake Edward Heath for Enoch Powell or, just as disastrously, elide Jacques Chirac with Jacques Le Pen.

'The Left Against Europe' provided what today might be termed a modernist interpretation of nations and nationalisms. Just as significantly, it also offered an anti-nationalist rebuke to the manifest and sometimes latent nationalism of the British Left, from anarchist *groupuscules* to the Labour Party. Measured against the overwhelmingly optimistic appraisal of identity politics in our own time, an assessment with which Naim now comprehensively concurs,⁹⁷ 'The Left Against Europe' contained what could be considered a bracing indictment of the irrationalities of nationalist ideology. Indeed, in Naim's analysis the sophistries he supposed characteristic of nationalist ideology were exposed with polemical verve. The national interest was figured as 'an old scarecrow,' the nation-state as a 'spirit-whore' (*sic* the gendered language) whose wiles 'seduce' the proletariat and prevent it from identifying its 'true' trans-national interest; while nationalism was equated with 'ugliness,' transmogrified in Naim's discourse into the Mr. Hyde of political ideology 'who has run berserk and drunk with blood through the pages of history.'⁹⁸ This negative assessment is very rare today. Yet it might be argued with good reason that a critique of nationalist ideology along these lines is just as necessary now as it was in

that I am, like you, a citizen of the great city of the world.' See February 22, 1768. *Correspondance*, VIII, p. 16, cited in P. Gay, *The Enlightenment: The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York, 1966), p. 13. Rousseau's patriotism was perhaps exceptional among the major philosophes.

⁹⁶ For the pre-history of counter-Enlightenment nationalisms, see D. M. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (Oxford, 2001).

⁹⁷ See T. Naim, 'A Myriad Byzantiums,' *New Left Review*, II/23, 2003, pp. 115-133 for an expression of his support for contemporary identity politics.

⁹⁸ Naim, 'The Left Against Europe,' pp. 35, 67, 91, 43, and 57. Naim's characterization of nationalism here echoes his earlier analysis in 'The Three Dreams of Scottish Nationalism' where he argued that nationalism was no longer a condition of progress. See Naim, 'The Three Dreams of Scottish Nationalism,' p. 17. Naim continued to use the Jekyll and Hyde metaphor in his descriptions of nationalism. But compare his use of this metaphor in 'The Left Against Europe' with his use of the metaphor in 'Internationalism: A Critique,' pp. 41-42.

the past.⁹⁹ Vulgar anti-nationalism, mobilized wonderfully in 'The Left Against Europe,' is perhaps a necessary tonic in a contemporary environment where all sorts of nationalist absurdities are entertained with seriousness.¹⁰⁰

'A Joke in Doubtful Taste': Socialist Nationalism and the 'Revision' of Marxism

"National" Marxism has always been a joke in doubtful taste.¹⁰¹ Underpinned by the belief that capitalist globalization had deflated nationalist pretension, this was Nairn's judgment on socialist nationalism¹⁰² in 'The Left Against Europe'. By the time he published *The Break-Up of Britain* in 1977, he was arguing the opposite: that the only realistic political prospect for Marxism was an alliance with nationalism.¹⁰³ What prompted this volte-face? A leading reason offered by Nairn himself was the 'the receding horizon of the socialist revolution'.¹⁰⁴ Although no doubt an important cause, revolutionary socialism's regression did not explain Nairn's adamant confidence in the promise of separatist nationalism. Here the explanation is both world-historical and instrumental. In the latter's terms, by the

⁹⁹ Joan Cocks notes how refreshing Marx's own denigrations of ethnicity now appear in her *Passion and Paradox: Intellectuals Confront the National Question* (Princeton, 2002), p. 22.

¹⁰⁰ Something argued for in F. Halliday, 'Bringing the "Economic" Back In,' *Economy and Society*, 21, 1992, pp. 483-9.

¹⁰¹ Nairn, 'The Left Against Europe,' p. 117.

¹⁰² Nairn made no distinction between 'national' Marxism and socialist nationalism in this text. 'The Left Against Europe' was written just four years after Perry Anderson, co-editor of the *New Left Review*, had published his important article 'Components of the National Culture,' where he argued for the need to create a 'national' Marxism in Great Britain. See P. Anderson, 'Components of the National Culture,' in his *English Questions* (London, 1992), p. 48.

¹⁰³ For reviews of *The Break-Up of Britain*, see A.W. Orridge, 'Uneven Development and Nationalism I,' *Political Studies*, 29, 1, 1981, pp. 1-15; J. Blaut, *The National Question: Decolonizing the Theory of Nationhood*, (London and New Jersey, 1987), pp. 76-100; Ehrenreich, 'Socialism, Nationalism and Capitalist Development,' pp. 1-42; and Jenkins and Minnerup, *Citizens and Comrades*, pp. 60-69. For a critique of Nairn's 'socialist nationalism' from a nationalist perspective, see C. Beveridge and R. Turnbull, 'Scottish Nationalist, British Marxist: The Strange Case of Tom Nairn,' in their *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture* (Edinburgh, 1989).

¹⁰⁴ T. Nairn, 'The Twilight of the British State,' in *The Break-Up of Britain*, p. 87. This essay was first published, under the same name, in *New Left Review*, 1/101-102, 1977, pp. 3-61. Reference will be made to the essay as it appeared in *The Break-Up of Britain*. Related to this must be added the dispiriting outcome of '1968' – the failure of intellectuals and workers to institute what Nairn hoped would be a new epoch of revolutionary history, a project which he and the *New Left Review* had been committed since the early nineteen sixties. For Nairn's own account of the pressures that forced the writing of *The Break-Up of Britain*, see 'Into Political Emergency: A Retrospect from the Eighties,' p. 368. As he remarks there the project of founding a revolutionary alliance between intellectuals and workers also found its echo in *The Break-Up of Britain*. However there was a crucial difference between the two projects overlooked by Nairn. Arguably up until the early nineteen seventies Nairn imagined this project in cosmopolitan terms, from the mid-nineteen seventies onwards he imagined it in nationalist terms.

mid-nineteen seventies Nairn considered nationalism the only feasible form of political hegemony.

Believing that nationalism was the only possible politics, he acted accordingly. The political dilemma for *The Break-Up of Britain*, therefore, was not socialist internationalism *or* nationalism, as it had been for 'The Left Against Europe,' but rather what *sort* of nationalism would predominate in the body politic. In practical and theoretical terms, *The Break-Up of Britain* argued that ethnicity was more significant than class as a determinant of consciousness and identity, separatist nationalism rather than class struggle a more likely agent of political revolution.¹⁰⁵ Instrumental concerns induced a theoretical sea-change. Fissiparous fracture rather than homogenous development was now figured as the logical outcome of capitalism's commodification of the globe. Despite intermittent protestations to the contrary, and no matter the torsion forced on its author, still at this time ostensibly a socialist, *The Break-Up of Britain* was a nationalist text that argued that Marxist theory was anachronistic and that cosmopolitan socialism was practically impossible.¹⁰⁶ In Nairn's new vision, a rainbow of national flags, rather than the red flag, would prevail over the continents of the Earth.

Published just a few years after the SNP had moved from the margin to the mainstream of Scottish politics,¹⁰⁷ *The Break-Up of Britain* attempted to steer a course between the bourgeois nationalism of the Scottish nationalist movement on the one hand and the inveterate Unionism of British socialism on the other. In short, *The Break-Up of Britain* taxed nationalists for not being socialist enough, socialists for not being sufficiently nationalist. Nairn deplored both the 'Ruritanian envy and parish-pump bile'¹⁰⁸ of much nationalist ideology and the 'metropolitanism' of much socialism. Reproaching nationalists for their nationalism and socialists for their internationalism, Nairn's text could not avoid the contortions involved in any analysis

¹⁰⁵ Nairn, 'Northern Ireland: Relic or Portent?', in *The Break-Up of Britain*, p. 218. This essay first appeared in 1976.

¹⁰⁶ This was the judgment of Eric Hobsbawm in his trenchant review of Nairn's text. See E. Hobsbawm, 'Reflections on "The Break-Up of Britain",' *New Left Review*, I/105, 1977, pp. 3-23. According to Cocks, however, *The Break-Up of Britain* was a 'neo-marxist' text. See Cocks, 'Fetishizing Ethnicity, Locality, Nationality: The Curious Case of Tom Nairn,' p. 136. As I hope to show, Hobsbawm's judgment was more accurate. Cocks argued that Nairn promoted a revision of Marxism – more accurately that 'revision' constituted a 'repudiation' of Marxism.

¹⁰⁷ For a brief overview of these developments, consult Devine, *The Scottish Nation*, pp. 574-5.

¹⁰⁸ Nairn, 'Old and New Scottish Nationalism,' p. 177.

that promoted an ideological synthesis between what many, including Nairn both before and after its composition, would consider incompatible doctrines.¹⁰⁹ Nonetheless as a locus of the dialogue between nationalism and socialism it is perhaps without equal in the tradition of British intellectual history. Journeying across peripheral nationality politics in Scotland, Ulster and Wales, metropolitan nationalism in England, the state of Britain's polity, and the general theory of nationhood, *The Break-Up of Britain* was home, and arguably still is, to Nairn's most important arguments concerning the nexus between Marxism and the national question.¹¹⁰

A measure of the radical transformation in Nairn's politics can be gauged through *The Break-Up of Britain's* characterization of the project of the first New Left. In 'The Left Against Europe' Nairn rebuked the first New Left's cultural nationalism, suggesting that a romantic attachment to heimat was insufficient ground for any kind of coherent socialist politics. In *The Break-Up of Britain*, however, the very same cultural nationalism was lauded as an example of 'socialist culture'.¹¹¹ According to Nairn, the 'left-nationalist popular culture,' which had emerged from the work of E.P. Thompson and Raymond Williams, offered 'a much more concrete hope in the British political future.'¹¹² In the 'history from below' movement, Nairn remarked, '[England has] at least part of what corresponds to the usual mode of nationalist revival – the attempt to find strength for a better, more democratic future by re-examining (on occasion re-inventing) a mythic past.'¹¹³ Reversal does not accurately capture the nature of this transformation in Nairn's attitude to the first New Left. From the perspective of the Nairn-Anderson theses, apostasy would perhaps better characterize *The Break-Up of Britain's* conception of the cultural value of *The Making of the English Working Class* and *Culture and Society*. Once indicative of all the problems of socialism in Britain, 'populist socialism' was now the locus of Nairn's political hopes.

¹⁰⁹ But for the practical effects of this marriage, see T. van Tijn, 'Nationalism and the Socialist Workers' Movement,' in F. van Holthoon and M. van der Linden, eds., *Internationalism in the Labour Movement 1830-1940*, vol. 2 (Leiden, 1988), pp. 611-23.

¹¹⁰ Paul James has suggested that Nairn 'has become a figure of almost compulsory citation.' See James, *Nation Formation*, p. 108. He has become so because of *The Break-Up of Britain*. Few other texts get re-published on the twenty-fifth anniversary of their original publication. See T. Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (Melbourne, 2004, orig. 1977).

¹¹¹ T. Nairn, 'Culture and Politics in Wales,' in *The Break-Up of Britain*, p. 303.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 304.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

The political and theoretical volte-face characteristic of *The Break-Up of Britain* was not consistently evident. The anti-nationalist invective typical of 'The Left Against Europe' was still palpable in Naim's successor text. In his most celebrated study of the national question, nationalist ideology is repeatedly described in pejorative terms, whether as a neurotic judged in need of psychoanalytic therapy or as a 'roaring drunk' beyond sense.¹¹⁴ Equated with 'chauvinist lunacy' and the 'clap-trap' of romanticism,¹¹⁵ nationalism at one point in Naim's text is even deemed to have its logical terminus in fascism.¹¹⁶

The anti-nationalism of *The Break-Up of Britain* was mostly residual, however. Positioned in disproportionate measure alongside such anti-nationalist vituperation is an overwhelmingly positive verdict on nationalism's world-historical mission. The contrast might have jarred if the verdict hadn't been delivered with such assurance. In terms which reflect this confidence, Naim characterized nationalism as the necessary 'mobilization against the unpalatable, humanly unacceptable, truth of grossly uneven development.'¹¹⁷ Things which resist humanly unacceptable vicissitudes are not often rendered in dark shades. Beyond equating explosions of ethnic particularism with human liberation, *The Break-Up of Britain* claimed that nationalism was synonymous with *the* modern condition, constituting as such an inescapable fact of human social evolution.¹¹⁸ Peoples on the hinterland of capitalist development were '*compelled* to mobilize against progress. That is, they have to demand progress not as it is thrust upon them initially by the metropolitan centre, but "on their own terms".¹¹⁹ Ethnicities having things 'on their own terms', for Naim, was what the *ism* of national-ism was about.¹²⁰ Providing that such circumstances were true, how could one not be a nationalist? Naim argued that there was no choice –

¹¹⁴ For the former characterization, see 'The Modern Janus,' p. 359 and, for the latter, see 'Scotland and Europe,' p. 93.

¹¹⁵ Naim, 'Scotland and Europe,' pp. 104 and 117.

¹¹⁶ Naim, 'The Modern Janus,' pp. 345-7.

¹¹⁷ Naim, 'Scotland and Europe,' p. 96.

¹¹⁸ Naim, 'Northern Ireland: Relic or Portent?,' pp. 246 and 250.

¹¹⁹ Naim, 'Scotland and Europe,' p. 97, emphasis added.

¹²⁰ For an insightful interpretation of the difference between *nationalism* and nationalism in Naim's work, particularly in *The Break-Up of Britain*, see James, 'Nationalism and Post-Nationalism,' p. 173-4.

nationalism for him was 'the new climate of world politics, the new received truth of political humanity.'¹²¹

The upshot of Nairn's characterization of nationalism as 'a general fact of modern history'¹²² was to render the conventional Marxist meta-history defunct. Advertised as a revision of historical materialism, *The Break-up of Britain* displaced class conflict from its nucleic role in Marxism's understanding of historical development.¹²³ As Nairn put it in a succinct summation of his theory of nationhood: 'Nationalism – the conflict between the great centres of economic and political power and the hinterlands of European development – not the class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat was the upshot of bourgeois revolution in the eighteenth century.'¹²⁴ England and France rather than the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, nations not classes, he argued, in what amounted to a repudiation rather than a revision of historical materialism's animating purpose, were the principal agents of history.¹²⁵ It was the fact of uneven capitalist development, according to *The Break-Up of Britain*, that imperiled Marx and Engels's account of modern history in *The Communist Manifesto*.¹²⁶

Supposing that the spread of commodity production would be evenly diffused across the planet, historical materialism, according to Nairn, had misrepresented capitalist development and consequently obfuscated nationalism's preponderant role in the general historical process. Indeed Marx and Engels, Nairn argued, had been unable to divine that the upshot of a global system of commodity production was not increasing homogeneity – the abolition of all sorts of particularism – but ethnic fragmentation.¹²⁷ According to Nairn, 'capitalism, even as it spread remorselessly

¹²¹ Nairn, *The Modern Janus*, p. 344.

¹²² Nairn, 'Northern Ireland: Relic or Portent?', p. 250.

¹²³ For this point, see Cocks, 'Fetishizing Ethnicity, Locality, Nationality: The Curious Case of Tom Nairn,' p. 133.

¹²⁴ Nairn, 'Scotland and Europe,' p. 98.

¹²⁵ Indeed Nairn explicitly characterized nations in class terms. According to his analysis of 'old' and 'new' Scottish nationalism, Scotland could be considered a 'middle class' nation destined to negotiate the clash between 'elite bourgeois' and 'proletarian' nations. See Nairn, 'Old and New Scottish Nationalism,' p. 183. Much of Nairn's repudiation of Marxism's conception of history rested on the work of Immanuel Wallerstein, particularly his *The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy* (London, 1974). The idea of 'proletarian nations', of course, goes back to Papini and early Italian fascist thought.

¹²⁶ Nairn, *The Modern Janus*, p. 341.

¹²⁷ See Nairn, 'Supra-Nationalism and Europe,' pp. 319-20 and Nairn, 'Old and New Scottish Nationalism,' p. 134.

over the world to unify human society into one more or less connected story for the first time, also engendered a perilous and convulsive new fragmentation of that society.¹²⁸ Despite displacing class from Marxism's conception of historical development, *The Break-Up of Britain* nonetheless argued that nationalism was an overwhelmingly 'bourgeois' phenomenon, in the sense that it was the hinterland's bourgeoisie who led the resistance against the gross fact of uneven development. Compelled, as Nairn put it, to turn to 'the people,' peripheral bourgeoisies fought metropolitan imperialism with the only things at hand: language, culture and custom – the resources of the *Volk*.¹²⁹

What can be made of Nairn's 'revision' of historical materialism's meta-history? *The Break-Up of Britain*, it can be argued, was in a sense too close to its subject, in both emotional and temporal terms. Nairn's conception of the historical process was canalized by the spectre of imminent 'national' fragmentation on Europe's periphery, rendering him unable to take proper account of the long term and wider effects of capitalist globalization. Far from complete in extent, and, of course, still fractured by the existence of uneven development, the direction of capitalist globalization was unequivocal, as 'The Left Against Europe' had argued. The process of capitalist globalization was inducing fragmentation, as *The Break-Up of Britain* suggested, but it was nonetheless undermining national independence.

The reduction of all places to the exigencies of commodity production – the argument that globalization has created 'two cosmopolitan classes, as it were, locked in the same battle from Birmingham to Shanghai'¹³⁰ - is not necessarily invalidated by the existence of ethnic fragmentation. Nor has uneven development ceased to be a feature of capitalist globalization.¹³¹ But not only is the overall direction of capitalist globalization unequivocal, it is not altogether clear that the effects of uneven capitalist

¹²⁸ Nairn, 'The Modern Janus,' p. 341.

¹²⁹ Nairn, 'Scotland and Europe,' p. 99. For more on the question of the relationship between nationalism and social group, see V. Kiernan, 'Nationalist Movements and Social Classes,' in H.J. Kaye, ed., *History, Classes and Nation-States: Selected Writings of V.G. Kiernan* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 138-165.

¹³⁰ Nairn, 'The Modern Janus,' p. 341. Of course Nairn presented this argument to deride it. It can be argued, however, that the bourgeoisie is indeed truly cosmopolitan. But while labour has been reduced to a commodity everywhere capital has not yet reduced the conditions of labour to the same everywhere.

¹³¹ See N. Smith, 'Satanic Geographies of Globalization,' *Public Culture*, 10, 1997, pp. 169-89 and D. Harvey, 'Cosmopolitanism and the Banality of Geographical Evils,' *Public Culture*, 12, 2000, pp. 529-564, for a consideration of his point from the perspective of geographical knowledges.

development straightforwardly benefit nationalism. If sub-Saharan Africa is taken as an example of the persistence of uneven development, then nationalism can hardly be figured as the dominant result of capitalism.¹³² Rather capitalist globalization has increasingly rendered 'independence' a fiction. In 'The Twilight of the British State' indeed, Nairn argued that 'the post-World War II development of the capitalist economy, with its US-centered multi-nationals and internationalization of the forces of production, has to some extent, weakened and de-legitimated all the older sovereign states – diminishing "independence" everywhere but by the same token making it more plausible to demand this status, even for regions and peoples that would never previously have thought of undertaking the whole armament of nation-state existence.'¹³³ Thus in the terms of this surprising logic, national independence is now possible for nations without states precisely because independence in real terms is an illusion.

Indeed, even at the time that *The Break-Up of Britain* was composed, Nairn was in no doubt that capitalism had developed a transnational dimension. As he suggested, the 'late nationalism'¹³⁴ which was a feature of developed national states, had emerged in 'the age of multi-nationals,'¹³⁵ what he called 'the effective internationalization of capital.'¹³⁶ Ironically, indeed, *The Break-Up of Britain* suggested that nationalism actually promotes forms of development conducive to capitalism's rule. As Nairn pointed out, the hinterland's bourgeoisie exploited 'national mythology' to promote capitalist development. In these terms, the German and Italian middle class might have promoted national integration in the nineteenth century as a means of escaping the economic dominance of British capitalism, but the benefits of this integration have redounded on a contemporary bourgeoisie who ultimately see its interest as transnational. The cunning of history, it might be

¹³² B. Davidson, *Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State* (New York, 1992). See also E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1870: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, 1992, org. 1990), p. 164 and E. Hobsbawm, *The New Century* (in conversation with Antonio Polito) trans. Allan Cameron (London, 2000), p. 36.

¹³³ Nairn, 'The Twilight of the British State,' p. 76. Eric Hobsbawm in his critique of *The Break-Up of Britain* argued that the proliferation of small-states lacking economic, military and political independence was exceptionally well suited to this period of capitalist globalization.

¹³⁴ Nairn, 'Scotland and Europe,' p. 105.

¹³⁵ Nairn, 'Old and New Scottish Nationalism,' p. 128.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

suggested, has ultimately worked in favour of Berlusconi and Albrecht rather than the descendants of Mussolini and Hitler.¹³⁷

Notwithstanding the problems of Nairn's overall vision of the relationship between capitalist globalization and the nation state, *The Break-Up of Britain* did offer illumination of some important connections between the origins of nationalism and the development of world political economy.¹³⁸ The majority of explanations of nationalism before Nairn's relied on the supposedly incontrovertible fact 'that human society consists essentially of several hundred different and discrete "nations", each of which has (or ought to have) its own postage stamps and national souls.'¹³⁹ Pointing to the contemporary existence of nations as proof of their antiquity, this sort of argument notoriously relied upon appeals to nature and biology rather than history and political economy to explain the origins of nationalism. Nairn was at his acerbic best when exposing what he considered to be the fallacious pieties of this nationalist ideology. Not for Nairn the appeal to specious metaphysical categories – even chauvinist lunacy, he maintained, could be explained through gross material facts.¹⁴⁰ In bracing contrast to the majority of nationalism studies, especially those of an empirical kind, *The Break-Up of Britain* argued that 'nationalism was a historical construct,¹⁴¹ the outcome of forces that had little to do with ancient gods and national heroes. Hobsbawm would have given his assent.

Contemptuous of nationalist explanations of nationalism, Nairn maintained that it was uneven capitalist development not the existence of a national soul that

¹³⁷ As Perry Anderson has recently put it, 'Never since the Gilded Age have financial buccaneers and industrial magnates stalked the earth with such giant strides, trampling over labour and swaggering through culture, from heights of power and wealth Gould or Morgan could scarcely have imagined. A glance at press or television is reminder enough of the ubiquity of this tribe.' See P. Anderson, 'The Vanquished Left: Eric Hobsbawm,' in P. Anderson, *Spectrum: From Right to Left in the World of Ideas* (London and New York, 2005), p. 306.

¹³⁸ Illuminated, further developed, expanded and revised in arguably two of the most famous accounts of nationalism's genesis: Anderson's *Imagined Communities* and Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalisms*, both published (in London) in 1983. The anti-imperial origins of nationalism are also a feature of Anderson's account – except he locates those origins in Spanish America rather than in peripheral Europe as Nairn does. *The Break-Up of Britain*, of course built on Gellner's earlier essay 'Nationalism,' published in his collection *Thought and Change* (London, 1964), which Nairn later suggested 'founded the social scientific theory of nationalism.' For the judgment, see Nairn, 'Introduction: On Studying Nationalism,' in *Faces of Nationalism*, p. 1.

¹³⁹ Nairn, 'The Modern Janus,' p. 332. This type of derision is absent from his more recent judgments on nationalism. For an example see his reading of the value of contemporary nationalisms in 'Internationalism and the Second Coming,' p. 274.

¹⁴⁰ Nairn, 'Scotland and Europe,' p. 104.

¹⁴¹ Nairn, 'Old and New Scottish Nationalism,' p. 153.

explained nationalism's preponderant role in world history. Although 'imposed from without', nationalism was not however a product of 'the machinery of world political economy'¹⁴² alone. A world-system of production, Nairn argued, was necessary but not sufficient soil in which to cultivate nationalist furies. What factor interceded between uneven development and a fully-fledged nationalism to ensure the emergence of the latter? Despite his modernist credentials, at moments Nairn seemed to suggest that there was something in the claims of nationalists after all. No matter the extent or exact nature of the lunacy, nationalist subjectivity, *The Break-Up of Britain* argued, did play a significant role in what Nairn otherwise considered the 'objective' process of nationalist development.¹⁴³ As he suggested in relation to the development of Scottish nationalism: 'Once the material circumstances for a new sort of political mobilization had formed, the thistle-patch [shorthand in Nairn's analysis for what he called typical nationalist delusions] proved very useful.'¹⁴⁴

It was more than just useful, according to *The Break-Up of Britain*. Despite defining it as 'subjective illusion and conceit', a 'well-preserved identity'¹⁴⁵ was necessary to the genesis of nationalism and gave to its adherents something that class consciousness could not: 'a culture which however deplorable was larger, more accessible, and more relevant to mass realities than the rationalism of the Enlightenment inheritance.'¹⁴⁶ This proved, according to Nairn, that nationalism must be more than just false consciousness, despite being 'the most notoriously subjective and ideal of historical phenomena.'¹⁴⁷ Whatever the place of gross material facts in Nairn's theory of nationalism, it was hard to resist the conclusion that for *The Break-Up of Britain* it was 'romantic nonsense' that had explanatory force in nationalism's genesis.

Nairn's equation of national identity with subjective illusion and chauvinist lunacy appears unfortunate - and not just from the perspective of his later work. The

¹⁴² Nairn, 'The Modern Janus,' p. 335.

¹⁴³ A role that has become more and more emphasized in the 'backlash' against modernist theories of nationalism. See for two early examples, J Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill, 1982) and A.D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nationalism* (Oxford, 1986).

¹⁴⁴ Nairn, 'Old and New Scottish Nationalism,' p. 131.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

¹⁴⁶ Nairn, 'The Modern Janus,' p. 354.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 335-6.

torsion of attempting to refute the critique of nationalism as false consciousness while relying on adjectives like lunacy, nonsense, illusion and conceit to describe nationalist ideology is all too apparent.¹⁴⁸ Of more concern, perhaps, was Nairn's failure to describe what proportions of each precipitating factor – uneven development and ethnicity – were necessary to trigger nationalist fervour. One of the few cases of a nationalist movement that *The Break-Up of Britain* mined in any depth was the Scottish one.¹⁴⁹ When faced with the emergence of a specific nationalist movement, *The Break-Up of Britain* ended up reverting to the characteristics Nairn had revealed as typical of nationalist explanations. Having overcome the problem of describing how nationalism could surface in Scotland given his general account of nationalist development – his explanation was that capitalist overdevelopment provided the motor of this second round of nationalism – Nairn was nonetheless forced to admit that the key precipitating factor of the emergence of Scottish nationalism was a 'well preserved identity'.¹⁵⁰

Still, *The Break-Up of Britain* did represent an advance over contending explanations of nationalism, as later students of the national question have suggested.¹⁵¹ Nearly all later assessments of Nairn's text have zeroed in on its success in illuminating nationalism's tenacity and persistence. More significant, perhaps, was its overall characterization of nationalism as the heart of modern politics. In anticipation of Benedict Anderson's political anthropology of nationalism, Nairn revealed how nationalism was the 'general condition of the modern body politic, more like the climate of political and social thought than just another doctrine.'¹⁵² Related to this was Nairn's suggestion that the extent of nationalism's affect could be registered in its global diffusion. Whether conservative, liberal or socialist, all political ideologies, in one way or another, had to represent themselves as commensurate with the national interest. According to Nairn, so long had been nationalism's reach 'that one can show (e.g.) quite easily how the other cultural forms, conservatism, liberalism, and Marxism, were in practice exported always in association with it, or

¹⁴⁸ A point made in Cocks, 'Fetishizing Ethnicity, Locality, Nationality: The Curious Case of Tom Nairn,' p. 135.

¹⁴⁹ Nairn, 'Scotland and Europe,' p. 96.

¹⁵⁰ Nairn, 'Old and New Scottish Nationalism,' p. 173.

¹⁵¹ See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 3. See also P. Lawrence, *Nationalism: History and Theory* (Harlow, 2005), pp. 164-5.

¹⁵² Nairn, 'Scotland and Europe,' p. 94. For Anderson's method, see *Imagined Communities*, pp. 5-7.

even in terms of it.¹⁵³ As might be expected, Nairn taunted Marxism more than any other cultural form with the neglect of precisely this point, despite its own embedded practice.¹⁵⁴

Nairn's overall assessment of Marxism's confrontation with nationalism is open to doubt. Far from neglecting or underestimating nationalism, recurrent defeat at the hands of its nationalist foe had made Marxist socialism home to some of the most remarkable appraisals of the national question, as Hobsbawm suggested. It is perhaps enough to list the names of Kautsky, Luxemburg, Bauer, Lenin, and Gramsci to get some measure of the significance, variety and sense of this achievement.¹⁵⁵ Far from neglecting or obfuscating nationalism, as Nairn suggested, Marxists have been obsessively concerned with the problems posed by the national question. Practical and theoretical dilemma has promoted analysis of an uncommon quality. The extent of this quality can be measured in Nairn's own words. 'In my view,' Nairn suggested in *The Break-Up of Britain*, 'an amended version of Lenin's old conception is the only satisfactory position that marxists can adopt towards the problem of neo-nationalism in the British Isles or elsewhere.'¹⁵⁶ For a text that had staked its authority on proving how often Marxism had got the national question wrong, this was a remarkable conclusion.

What was the political upshot of Nairn's 'revision' of Marxism and his renovated view of nationalism? In short, Nairn sought, in the terms of 'The Left Against Europe', to marry the beauty (socialism) and the beast (nationalism). Thus socialist nationalism constituted the practical deduction of *The Break-Up of Britain's* theoretical analysis. According to Nairn, ethnicity was fate. As the 'general condition of the modern body politic,'¹⁵⁷ one had to be a nationalist of some sort. In such

¹⁵³ Nairn, 'Supra-Nationalism and Europe,' p. 310.

¹⁵⁴ According to Eric Hobsbawm, 'Marxist movements and states have tended to become national not only in form but in substance, i.e., nationalist,' See his 'Some Reflections on "The Break-Up of Britain",' p. 13.

¹⁵⁵ For an insightful overview of some leading Marxist theoretician's encounter with the national question see M. Forman, *Nationalism and the International Labour Movement: the Idea of the Nation in Socialist and Anarchist Thought* (Pennsylvania, 1998). For a review of these encounters from a post-Marxist perspective see E.P. Nimni, *Marxism and Nationalism: Theoretical Origins of a Political Crisis* (London, 1991). For the argument that Luxemburg, in particular, deserves to be taken seriously in any account of nationalism see J. Cocks, 'From Politics to Paralysis: Critical Intellectuals Answer the National Question,' *Political Theory*, 24, 3, 1996, pp. 521-6.

¹⁵⁶ Nairn, 'The Twilight of the British State,' p. 87.

¹⁵⁷ Nairn, 'Scotland and Europe,' p. 94.

circumstances the question resolved into what sort of nationalist. Not just an outcome of world political economy, this contingency had arisen in the context of what he called Great British socialism's foreshortening. Deeming the 'world socialist government' of cosmopolitan socialists a dangerous illusion, Nairn argued that 'it is the failure of the Left to advance far enough, fast enough, on the older state-nation platforms which history had provided...that has made this "second round of bourgeois nationalism" inevitable.'¹⁵⁸ In such vicissitudes, according to *The Break-Up of Britain*, socialism would have to await a coherent solution to the national question. In any case, nationalism 'has become the grave-digger of the old state in Britain, and as such the principal factor making for a political revolution of some sort.'¹⁵⁹ In a political context where nationality outweighed class consciousness in the determination of identity, socialist nationalism, according to *The Break-Up of Britain*, constituted the only means to avert bourgeois nationalism's slide into regression and myopia. Only this ideology could effectively work with the 'healthy' side of nationalism, inspiring genuine democracy and liberation and forestalling the morbidity otherwise characteristic of nationalism's nature.¹⁶⁰ Socialist nationalism, in short, promised to veil the ugly side of nationalism's Janus-like identity.

The most often repeated criticism of cosmopolitan socialism is that it imagines a global community, coextensive with the whole of humanity, which is impossible to institute in practice.¹⁶¹ *The Break-Up of Britain* replicated this argument. But is socialist nationalism also utopian? According to Anderson it is. The example of actually existing and recently deceased forms of 'socialism in one country,' Anderson has argued, should fill no socialist nationalist with confidence. The painful strangulation of socialism by nationalism in numerous socialist societies of the past and present (recall what is currently happening in China!) should be enough to convince any potential socialist nationalist of the follies involved in any expression of this political ideology. As Marx had suggested long before the twentieth century's

¹⁵⁸ Nairn, 'Old and New Scottish Nationalism,' p. 179.

¹⁵⁹ Nairn, 'The Twilight of the British State,' p. 90.

¹⁶⁰ Nairn, 'The Modern Janus,' p. 349.

¹⁶¹ For a critique of cosmopolitan socialism along these lines, see J. Dunn, 'Unimaginable Communities: The Deceptions of Socialist Cosmopolitanism,' in J. Dunn, *Rethinking Modern Political Theory* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 105. Also consult M. Viroli, *For Love of Country: An Essay on Patriotism and Nationalism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995), p. 15. Others remain more optimistic about cosmopolitanism's prospects. See, for this contrary view, Robbins, 'Introduction Part I: Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism,' p. 10.

various socialist-nationalist revolutions, 'the revolution on the Continent is imminent and its character will be at once socialist; will it not be *necessarily crushed* in this *little corner of the world*, since on a much larger terrain the development of bourgeois society is still *in the ascendant*.'¹⁶² What conclusion has been drawn from the example of socialist-nationalist practice of the twentieth century? According to Hobsbawm and Anderson, it is only in fairytales that the beauty stays married to the beast.

The Break-Up of Britain was remarkable in offering one of the first 'modernist' accounts of the origin of nationhood and nationalism.¹⁶³ This thesis has become something of a *sine qua non* of contemporary nationalism studies. Less remarkable, however, was the nature of its political solution to the national question – which might give the clue to why this aspect of Nairn's text is today almost universally neglected. Banality is appropriate as a description of its politics in two senses: on the one hand, because there was little new about socialist nationalism, as Nairn had spent much of 'The Left Against Britain' explaining; and, on the other hand, because of the aporia involved in any proclamation of socialist nationalism, something that Nairn in both his earlier cosmopolitan socialist and later nationalist guise would admit. Yet there is a sense in which this aspect of *The Break-Up of Britain* was remarkable, although that sense points toward absurdity rather than lucidity. Authored by a socialist, *The Break-Up of Britain* was written for a Marxist audience in conditions where the class struggle appeared no longer the principle determinant of politics. However, Nairn had all but overthrown socialism. His analysis now recommended a new form of politics for its socialist audience – separatist nationalism. In one moment it asked socialists to discard the socialist project, and in the next sought to replace that project with a type of politics which Nairn deemed necessarily deranged, a politics whose logical terminus was fascism! This constituted poor political marketing. Hardly music to socialist ears, the political project of *The Break-Up of Britain* was

¹⁶² Marx is cited in Harvey, *Spaces of Hope*, p. 33. He takes the quote from I. Meszaros, *Beyond Capital* (New York, 1995), p. XII.

¹⁶³ The term 'modernist' as a description of *The Break-Up of Britain* is, of course, retrospective. At the time Nairn considered his account of nationhood 'materialist'. However, conventionally Nairn's early writings on nationalism are included among examples of the modernist type [no doubt the term 'materialist' is too offensive to today's dominant liberal sensibility]. For an overview of modernist theories of nationhood, see J. Breuilly, 'Approaches to Nationalism,' and A. Smith, 'Nationalism and the Historians,' both in Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation*, pp. 158-170 and 185-194.

unlikely to be welcomed. *Faces of Nationalism*, as we shall see in the next section, proved that Nairn himself rejected the book's politics.

Nationalists of the World, Unite!: Nationalism and the End of Socialism

The Break-Up of Britain was published on the cusp of the great age of nationalism studies. Shortly after Nairn's text appeared a series of masterful accounts of the origins of nationalism were written, including Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* and Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism*, both originally published in 1983.¹⁶⁴ Not even this significant wave of scholarly literature, however, matched the tsunami of nationalism studies that rose up in the wake of the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the break-up of the Soviet Union.¹⁶⁵ What the world experienced as an earthquake at the end of the last century constituted for nationalism studies a boon. Ethnic conflict and war in the former Yugoslavia and former Soviet Union, and the creation of a multitude of new nation-states in Eastern Europe – all these world-historical developments provided nationalism studies with renewed dilemmas. In concert with ethnic conflict in the postcolonial world and the continued evolution of separatism in Europe, these events were registered as epoch-ending, even if scholars disputed their meaning. This was the context – both world-historical and academic – that has animated Nairn's most recent work on the national question, above all his *Faces of Nationalism*, his next most significant statement on

¹⁶⁴ Other significant studies that appeared around this time were the following: J. Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill, 1982), J. Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester, 1982); E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983); M. Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller Nationalities* (Cambridge, 1985); and A. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, 1986). For a superb overview of nationalism studies in the last half of the twentieth century, see G. Eley and R.G. Suny, 'Introduction: From the Moment of Social History to the Work of Cultural Representation', in Eley and Suny, eds., *Becoming National* (New York, 1996). For a more recent overview, see P. Lawrence, *Nationalism: History and Theory* (Harlow and New York, 2005).

¹⁶⁵ Any list would be inadequate. Among the more important works, however, were the following: E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism after 1780*; A. Smith, *National Identity* (London, 1991); L. Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992); P. Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, 1993); W. Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton, 1994); and B. Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (London and New York, 1998).

nationhood after *The Break-Up of Britain*. Following the 'end of communism', how did Nairn conceptualize the nexus between Marxism and nationalism?

Just prior to the 'velvet revolutions' in Eastern Europe, Francis Fukuyama caused a storm in the academic and journalistic worlds by affirming Hegel's early eighteenth century thesis that history had ended at the Battle of Jena.¹⁶⁶ For Fukuyama, following the defeat of fascism and communism, there was no prospective alternative to the present global regime of commodity production and liberal democracy represented by fin de siècle America. An echo of this judgment has informed Nairn's most recent analysis of the national question, including *Faces of Nationalism*, a book comprising articles written in the two decades following *The Break-Up of Britain*.¹⁶⁷ Subtitled 'Janus Revisited' - a reference to an essay from his earlier work - *Faces of Nationalism* concurred with Fukuyama's judgment that socialism was dead and that capitalism constituted the inevitable framework of post-modernity.¹⁶⁸ Despite echoing Fukuyama's judgment on socialism, *Faces of Nationalism*, however, distanced itself from 'The End of History' in other respects. The final triumph of commodity production, according to Nairn, did not entail the end of nationalism.¹⁶⁹ Continuing uneven development, he argued, ensured that 'medieval particularism' would continue to fashion the landscape of post-history.¹⁷⁰ For Nairn, uneven capitalist development and the exponential growth of nationalism constituted the twin products of history's centuries-long labour.

¹⁶⁶ F. Fukuyama, 'The End of History,' *The National Interest*, 16, 1989, pp. 3-18. The essay was later expanded into a book – *The End of History and the Last Man* (London and New York, 1992).

¹⁶⁷ But not this text alone. In addition see his 'Internationalism and the Second Coming,' in Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation*, pp. 267-280; 'Breakwaters of 2000: From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism,' *New Left Review*, I/214, 1995, pp. 91-103, 'Reflections on Nationalist Disasters,' *New Left Review*, I/230, 1998, pp. 91-103; 'Democracy and Genocide,' *Arena*, 16, 2000/1, pp. 75-84, 'Globalization and the Unchosen: Leaving America Behind,' *Arena*, 19, 2002, pp. 45-60, 'America versus Globalization,' *Open Democracy*, January 9 – February 20 2003 @ opendemocracy.net; 'Mario and the Magician,' *New Left Review*, II/9, 2003, pp. 115-33; 'Post-2001 and Third Coming of Nationalism,' *Arena*, 21, 2003, pp. 81-97, 'Ambiguous Nationalism,' *Arena*, 22, 2004, pp. 119-138; and 'Break-Up Twenty-Five years On,' in G. Miller and E. Bell, eds., *Scotland in Theory: Reflections on Culture and Literature* (Amsterdam, 2004), pp. 17-33.

¹⁶⁸ Nairn, 'Internationalism and the Second Coming,' p. 274. See also his 'Demonising Nationality,' in *Faces of Nationalism*, p. 66. This essay was originally published in *London Review of Books*, 9, 4, 1993. Reference here will be made to the essay as it appeared in *Faces of Nationalism*.

¹⁶⁹ As Fukuyama had argued. See his *The End of History and the Last Man*, pp. 268- 275.

¹⁷⁰ Nairn, 'Breakwaters of 2000: From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism,' p. 95. See also his 'Demonising Nationality,' p. 63.

Written from a 'nationalist point of view,'¹⁷¹ *Faces of Nationalism* sought to dispute two claims asserted in the aftermath of the 'nationalist disasters' that engulfed Eastern Europe following the fall of the Berlin Wall – on the one hand the allegation, famously made by Hobsbawm, that nationalism was a declining vector of historical development;¹⁷² and on the other, the suggestion that ethnic and national discord, like that manifest in the Balkans, augured an atavistic Abyss. Each of these postulates, Nairn argued, was erroneous. For him, far from being 'on the way out' as Hobsbawm predicted, nationalism constituted the tracks upon which all post-historical development would travel. According to *Faces of Nationalism*, a single economic order induced ethnic dissonance, forcing the planet 'to fold up into a previously unimaginable and still escalating number of different ethno-political units.'¹⁷³ This, Nairn claimed, was an unambiguously good thing.¹⁷⁴ Rather than constituting a Dark God, nationalist development, he suggested, constituted humanity's only safeguard against the establishment of a 'global South Africa'.¹⁷⁵ Self-styled as a rebuke of the Enlightenment, *Faces of Nationalism* not only maintained that nationalism constituted 'the universal condition of modernity'¹⁷⁶ – it also suggested that nationalist separation promoted a 'more conscious and humane development lying (we have to hope) beyond primitive industrialization.'¹⁷⁷ Indeed, whatever the costs of nationalist development, it was infinitely preferable, Nairn suggested, to the recent past of the gulag and the prospect of humanity's self-immolation through nuclear war.¹⁷⁸

What can be made of Nairn's allegation that the 'new wave of nationalism' constituted 'an alternative principle for the political restructuring of the world in the twenty-first century'?¹⁷⁹ In short, was nationalism *the* future, as *Faces of Nationalism*

¹⁷¹ Nairn, 'Internationalism: A Critique,' p. 25.

¹⁷² For this argument see Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, p. 163.

¹⁷³ Hobsbawm, 'Demonising Nationalism,' p. 63. For an argument that supports Nairn's position see M. Mann, 'Nation-States in Europe and Other Continents: Diversifying, Developing, Not Dying,' in Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation*, pp. 295-316. Mann's essay was first published in *Daedalus*, 122, 3, Summer, 1993, pp. 115-140.

¹⁷⁴ Nairn, 'Demonising Nationalism,' p. 63.

¹⁷⁵ Nairn, 'Owl of Minerva,' p. 51. A 'global South Africa,' according to Nairn, would be the inevitable result of imperialism. He takes this view from Ernest Gellner.

¹⁷⁶ Nairn, 'Questions of Rootedness,' in *Faces of Nationalism*, p. 25.

¹⁷⁷ Nairn, 'Owl of Minerva,' p. 55.

¹⁷⁸ Nairn, 'Demonising Nationality,' p. 61. See also T. Nairn, 'Cities and Nationalism,' in *Faces of Nationalism*, p. 128. This essay first appeared in *London Review of Books*, 19, 6, 1997. Throughout this chapter reference will be made to essay as it appeared in *Faces of Nationalism*.

¹⁷⁹ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, p. 181. Nairn uses this quote in 'The Owl of Minerva,' p. 54.

declared? According to Hobsbawm and Anderson there is serious reason to doubt this claim. Ethnic tension, xenophobia and claims for nationalist separatism are still prominent features of history's present – a fact that has lent Nairn's claim its creditability. But, as Hobsbawm has argued, the continuing presence of ethnic discord and separatist enmity does not vitiate the suggestion that nationalism is no longer capable of re-ordering the post-communist world.¹⁸⁰ Most significantly, ethnic separatism – the idea, which underwrote *Faces of Nationalism*, that every state should have a nation, every nation a state – ran against the grain, it has been argued, of both large-scale population movement and the consequent development of linguistic and cultural diversity within already-existing states.¹⁸¹ For Hobsbawm, ethnic identity politics was quite patently a reaction to these trans-national processes - it did not offer a feasible programme to transcend them, without, that is, ethnic cleansing.¹⁸² Rather than being a programme by which the world could be re-ordered, ethnic nationalism was a symptom, according to Hobsbawm, of contemporary *anomie*, representing the '[attempt] to erect barricades to keep at bay the forces of the modern world.'¹⁸³ A review of contemporary xenophobia in the principle states of western Europe would be sufficient to prove the validity of this point.

Inspired by a wave of ethnic separatism in eastern Europe, the central essays of *Faces of Nationalism* buoyantly envisaged a new 'springtime of nations,'¹⁸⁴ a 'general liberation of unconfined diversity.'¹⁸⁵ The future, according to Nairn, belonged to the local - to small-scale nation states committed to free markets and democracy, a future imagined by Hall as well.¹⁸⁶ Nairn's assessment was clear – in the last century's *fin de siècle* 'the forward gazing side of [nationalism's] visage [a reference to Nairn's earlier characterization of nationalism as the Roman deity, Janus]

¹⁸⁰ See Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, p. 164. See also his 'Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today,' in Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation*, p. 257 and J. Bosker-Liweraant, 'Globalization and Collective Identities,' *Social Compass*, 49, 2, 2002, pp. 254-5.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 173. This is an argument reflected in the work of Stuart Hall, as we have seen.

¹⁸² For Hobsbawm's dismissal of ethnicity's universalism see 'Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today,' pp. 257-8 and *The New Century*, pp. 22-3.

¹⁸³ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, p. 173. In addition, see his 'Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today,' pp. 264-5 and S. Amin, *Capitalism in the Age of Globalization: The Management of Contemporary Society* (London and New York, 1997), pp. 55-92.

¹⁸⁴ Nairn, 'Breakwaters of 2000: From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism,' p. 103.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

¹⁸⁶ Nairn, 'Micro-States,' p. 147.

may be more prominent than it was in 1977.¹⁸⁷ Assessing the same period, *Ages of Extremes* came to a radically different conclusion. Characterizing the break-up of the USSR as a 'human catastrophe,'¹⁸⁸ and lamenting what he considered the baneful effects of capitalism in Eastern Europe, Hobsbawm offered the mounting gap between rich and poor, a growing pattern of 'individualistic anarchism,'¹⁸⁹ and the prospect of a renewed descent into barbarism as the outstanding features of the world that *Faces of Nationalism* had celebrated as commensurate with freedom and prosperity.¹⁹⁰ Hobsbawm's conclusion was characteristically pungent: 'the century ended in a global disorder whose nature was unclear, and without an obvious mechanism for either ending it or keeping it under control.'¹⁹¹ Perry Anderson has rejected both views but he remained no less convinced than Hobsbawm that the post-communist world was deserving of celebration: 'the salient feature of the present is not that the world at large is out of control, but that it has never been subject to such an extent of control by one power [the USA], acting to diffuse and enforce one system [neo-liberalism], as we see today.'¹⁹²

A large measure of the value Nairn attributed to nationalism derived from the contrast he drew between his vision of a future nationalist Utopia and the recent 'totalitarian' past, associated in his mind with the gulag and nuclear war. The validity of this analysis can be doubted as Joan Cocks has suggested.¹⁹³ Nairn's political analytic equated communism with fascism, condemned each as totalitarian, and caustically contrasted both with nationalism. This is an astronomical distance away from the view of *The Break-Up of Britain* where Nairn had argued that fascism revealed more about nationalism than any other episode in humanity's ideological history.¹⁹⁴ In *Faces of Nationalism* ethnic cleansing, anti-Semitism and irredentism are not signposts of nationalism's fascist potential as they were in *The Break-Up of Britain* but rather characterized as the necessary cost of nationhood and democratic development.¹⁹⁵ In addition, in line with the view of neo-liberals, the fall of

¹⁸⁷ Nairn, 'Demonising Nationality,' p. 67.

¹⁸⁸ Hobsbawm, *The New Century*, p. 74.

¹⁸⁹ Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, p. 580.

¹⁹⁰ In addition to *Ibid.*, pp. 558-585, see Hobsbawm, *The New Century*, pp. 31-59.

¹⁹¹ Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, p. 562.

¹⁹² Anderson, 'The Vanquished Left,' p. 318.

¹⁹³ See Cocks, 'Fetishizing Ethnicity, Locality, Nationality,' pp. 141-2.

¹⁹⁴ Nairn, 'The Modern Janus,' p. 347.

¹⁹⁵ Nairn, 'The Owl of Minerva,' p. 53.

communism is represented as an unambiguously good thing in *Faces of Nationalism* without thought for the actual costs of the transition to capitalism in the former Soviet Union and other former actually-existing socialist states, costs that Hobsbawm explored in *The New Century*.¹⁹⁶ *Faces of Nationalism* characterized fascism as an 'universalist crusade'¹⁹⁷ and 'ethnically deranged'¹⁹⁸ and ultimately commensurate with communism. A common enough feature of ideological polemic, this view of the homologies of communism and fascism does not suffice as historical or political analysis.¹⁹⁹

A defence of identity politics, *Faces of Nationalism's* anti-Enlightenment animus was expressed via a critique of the modernist theory of nationhood, specifically as it appeared in its dominant Gellnerian embodiment. Here was registered the greatest distance between *The Break-Up of Britain* and *Faces of Nationalism*. Where the former had asserted, if in the end somewhat ambiguously, that nationalism was primarily a product of uneven development, the latter argued that ethnicity was the source of nationalism's genesis. Following Perry Anderson, Nairn argued that Gellnerian modernization theory could not adequately account for nationalism's spell - 'its binding or passionate attraction, and its capacity to inspire the phenomena of self-sacrifice and genocide.'²⁰⁰ A latent and unacknowledged commitment to theoretical Marxism, *Faces of Nationalism* argued, blinded Gellner to an awareness of 'the overpowering dimension of collective meaning that modern nationalism has always involved: that is, not its functionality for industry, but its fulfillment of identity.'²⁰¹ A consistent anti-Marxist in politics, the great theorist of nationalism, Nairn suggested, was nonetheless unduly influenced by historical

¹⁹⁶ Costs highlighted by Hobsbawm in *Age of Extremes*, p. 564 and *The New Century*, pp. 45-6.

¹⁹⁷ Nairn, 'The Owl of Minerva,' p. 51.

¹⁹⁸ Nairn, 'The Curse of Rurality: Limits of Modernization Theory,' p. 105.

¹⁹⁹ The weakness of this view has been exposed in fascism studies. For a review, see R.O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (London, 2004), pp. 211-15. For a good critique of the totalitarian position see M. Neocleous, *Fascism* (Buckingham, 1997), pp. 1-18.

²⁰⁰ T. Nairn, 'The Curse of Rurality: Limits of Modernization Theory,' in *Faces of Nationalism*, p. 105. This essay first appeared in *London Review of Books*, 18, 19, 1996 and was developed further in a commemorative volume on Ernest Gellner – J.A. Hall, ed., *The State of the Nation: Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1998). Reference will be made to the essay as it appeared in *Faces of Nationalism*.

²⁰¹ P. Anderson, *A Zone of Engagement* (London, 1992) cited without exact page number in Nairn, 'The Curse of Rurality,' p. 105. Anderson would not, of course, agree with Nairn's own conclusion, something that Nairn failed to mention.

materialism.²⁰² What, then, according to Nairn, could account for the spell? The missing piece in the puzzle of nationalism's origins he argued was "'the blood" in the familiar metaphorical sense of transmission or inheritance from the past, in either a biological or socio-cultural sense.²⁰³ Ethnicity rather than industrialization, according to *Faces of Nationalism*, constituted the primary explanation of nationalism's genesis, while human nature rather than uneven development explained the persistence of nationalist politics. Thus in opposition to the central argument of *The Break-Up of Britain*, Nairn concluded that ethnicity was 'the forger rather than the forged artifact of modernity's storm-ridden domain.'²⁰⁴

Like certain accounts of the origins of capitalism, the notion of 'pre-existing ethno-linguistic or ethno-religious identities'²⁰⁵ as an explanation of nationalism's genesis is fundamentally circular – it presumes the prior existence of the thing it sets out to explain.²⁰⁶ In any case, things which are assumed to be a part of human nature – that is, primordial – in the end do not need to be explained. Consequently, in the primordialist vision of nationalist development outlined by *Faces of Nationalism* both class and world political economy is rendered irrelevant. Nationalism is no longer a product of capitalist development; the class content of nation states is completely obfuscated. Indeed, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are wholly absent from Nairn's book. Theoretical and methodological concerns aside, Nairn's account of nationalism's ethnic origins gave moral comfort to ethnic nationalism at a time when the savageries of identity politics were consuming large parts of Eastern Europe. His explanation of ethnic outrage as an effect of democratic development, it could be argued, was perverse.²⁰⁷ According to Nairn, 'ethnos offered the only way of ensuring

²⁰² T. Nairn, 'From Civil Society to Civic Nationalism: Evolution of a Myth,' in *Faces of Nationalism*, p. 74. This essay was based on a talk given at the Italian Department, University College, London, 1997.

²⁰³ Nairn, 'Introduction: On Studying Nationalism,' in *Faces of Nationalism*, p. 9. See also T. Nairn, 'Does Tomorrow Belong to the Bullets or the Banquets?' *Borderlands: Nations and Nationalism, Culture and Community in the New Europe*, a special supplement to the *New Statesman and Society*, 19 June 1992, pp. 30-32 and Nairn, 'Post-2001 and the Third Coming of Nationalism,' p. 82.

²⁰⁴ Nairn, 'Introduction: On Studying Nationalism,' p. 9. Although as we saw in our analysis of *The Break-Up of Britain*, Nairn argued something similar in his analysis of Scottish nationalism, if not in his general theory of nationalism.

²⁰⁵ Nairn, 'A Civic-Nationalist Divorce,' in *Faces of Nationalism*, p. 156.

²⁰⁶ For this argument in relation to the debate on the origins of capitalism see E.M. Wood, 'Capitalism or Enlightenment?', *History of Political Thought*, XXI, 3, 2000, p. 407.

²⁰⁷ See Nairn, 'The Owl of Minerva,' p. 53 and 'Demonising Nationalism,' p. 66. As Joan Cocks has suggested. See her, 'Fetishizing Nationality, Ethnicity, Locality: The Strange Case of Tom Nairn,' p. 139-42.

such cohesion and common purpose.²⁰⁸ In light of this suggestion, *Faces of Nationalism's* appeal to constitutionalism and democracy could only appear tendentious. In its primordialist register, *Faces of Nationalism* had more in common with Heidegger than Habermas.²⁰⁹

If the politics of *Faces of Nationalism* appeared tendentious, his conception of nationalism's origins appeared confused. Despite the primordialist critique of modernization theory praised in several of the book's central essays, a significant amount of space in *Faces of Nationalism* constituted a defence of a modernist interpretation of nations and nationalisms. Thus despite the assertion in the 'Introduction: On Studying Nationalism' – that an always-existing ethnicity was the crucial factor in the genesis of nationalism – a significant proportion of *Faces of Nationalism* is given over to proving the adequacy of the modernization theory the opening essay critiques. The antinomies at the center of *Faces of Nationalism* are disorientating. In one register ethnicity appeared as the forger, in another, the forged. Nairn exposes the limits of modernization theory, and then argues that it is 'the general process of modernization which creates nationalism.'²¹⁰ Nationality and ethnic discord are described as part of 'human nature' yet nationalism is figured as 'highly novel and artificial.'²¹¹ Identities are pre-existing and 'have to be made'.²¹²

To a certain extent these contrasting views were a product of the transition in Nairn's conception of nationalism in the twenty years following the publication of *The Break-Up of Britain*. Yet even a comparison between essays written in the earlier and the latter part of the nineteen nineties reflect these astonishing incongruities.²¹³ What might then explain the contrapuntal notes sounded by *Faces of Nationalism*? To a certain extent dissonance derived from Nairn's vision of nationalist politics and his conception of the nexus between nationalism and democracy. Essentially, Nairn

²⁰⁸ See Nairn, 'Demonising Nationalism,' p. 66.

²⁰⁹ Heidegger's own notion of 'rootedness' is explored in D. Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 299-302.

²¹⁰ Nairn, 'The Owl of Minerva,' p. 50. See also Nairn, 'Demonising Nationalism,' pp. 65-6. Compare these statements with those in his 'Introduction: On Studying Nationalism,' particularly, pp. 9-10.

²¹¹ Nairn, 'Internationalism: A Critique,' p. 28. Compare this analysis with comments in 'Introduction: On Studying Nationalism,' p. 11.

²¹² Nairn, 'Identities in Scotland,' in *Faces of Nationalism*, p. 186. Compare this with his comments in 'The Curse of Rurality: The Limits of Modernization Theory,' p. 104.

²¹³ Most obviously compare 'The Owl of Minerva' (1993) with 'The Curse of Rurality: The Limits of Modernization Theory' (1996).

employed a primordialist conception of national identity to prove that nationalism was inevitable and a modernist conception of national identity to argue for the value of civic nationalism over ethnic nationalism. A de-historicized conception of nationalism's genesis was determinist – if nationalism was a product of human nature then it was beyond politics. A historicized conception of nationalism's genesis was agentially equivocal – if nationalism was a product of history then there could be different types of nationalism.

A central argument of *The Break-Up of Britain* had been the contention that 'all nationalism is both healthy and morbid.'²¹⁴ *Faces of Nationalism* overturned this verdict. Nairn's most recent work on the national question has been founded on the view that there are indeed two types of nationalism – on the one hand, a 'civic' nationalism based on democracy and political citizenship; and on the other, an 'ethnic' nationalism rooted in a blood and soil conception of national identity.²¹⁵ Yet having contended that 'the contestant worlds at the end of pre-history seem to be those of ethnic nationalist politics and a civic or identity politics'²¹⁶ he went on to suggest that ethnic nationalism had disappeared with socialism at the end of history and that civic nationalism constituted the likely future form of nationalist politics.²¹⁷ The 'generalization of anarchy'²¹⁸ unleashed following the break-up of the closed world of metropolitan hegemony, he suggested, would give rise to a 'more civic and institutional nationalism of the sort which the post-1989 *longue durée* will surely favour.'²¹⁹ Indeed, only a civic nationalism, *Faces of Nationalism* argued, would be commensurate with a future composed of 're-born city states, regions restored to life and imploded metropolitan fragments – post-ethnic communities with limits and powers.'²²⁰ Cultural diversity, democracy, political liberalization and the free reign of

²¹⁴ Nairn, 'The Modern Janus,' p. 347.

²¹⁵ Nairn, 'Race and Nationalism,' p. 121 and 'The Curse of Rurality: Limits of Modernization Theory,' p. 111. For a critique of this understanding of nationalism, see B. Yack, 'The Myth of the Civic Nation,' and N. Xenos, 'Civic Nationalism: Oxymoron?,' both in *Critical Review*, 10, 2, 1996, pp. 193-211 and 212-231.

²¹⁶ T. Nairn, 'Race and Nationalism,' in *Faces of Nationalism*, p. 121. This essay first appeared in *London Review of Books*, 18, 6, 1996. In addition see Nairn, 'Democracy and Genocide,' p. 80.

²¹⁷ Nairn, 'Breakwaters of 2000: From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism,' pp. 99-100 and, more recently, 'Globalization and the Unchosen,' p. 60.

²¹⁸ Nairn, 'Micro-States,' p. 147.

²¹⁹ Nairn, 'Ulster,' in *Faces of Nationalism*, p. 163. This essay first appeared in *London Review of Books*, 17, 6, 1995. Reference here will be made to the essay as it appeared in *Faces of Nationalism*. For this argument also see Nairn, 'Internationalism and the Second Coming,' pp. 276-77.

²²⁰ Nairn, 'Ulster,' p. 164.

a global marketplace – this was the world to which the 'nationalist' revolutions of 1989 had given birth. Thus far from all nationalism's being both healthy and morbid, as *The Break-Up of Britain* had argued, in Nairn's most recent work nationalism was associated in an uncomplicated way with liberty, democracy and progress.²²¹

Absent from *Faces of Nationalism* is an awareness of what Nairn had earlier called the psychology of nationalism: 'the mythicization of the past, evocations of the Volksgeist, and so on.'²²² Having rendered Marxism anachronistic, *Faces of Nationalism* dismissed the characteristic Marxist irreverence toward nationalist ideology, which had still been a feature of *The Break-Up of Britain*. During the most recent descents into nationalist hells such irreverence would have been salutary. As Fred Halliday has argued, 'in the light of what nationalism is doing and saying, and indeed what nationalisms have always done and said, a robust Leninist skepticism towards "nationalist bickering" and its attendant illusions is today rather in order.'²²³ Just as significantly, Nairn's contention that all nationalisms would necessarily be civic, democratic and diminutive in the future is difficult to credit given actually existing contemporary nationalisms.²²⁴ Developments in China since its full acceptance of the free market in the early nineteen nineties and in the United States since September 11, 2001, according to Hobsbawm and Anderson, have made a nonsense of Nairn's optimistic view in *Faces of Nationalism*.²²⁵ Nationalism is just as likely to be ethnic, populist and imperialist as it is to be civic, democratic and diminutive - as developments in the United States and China have shown.²²⁶ An

²²¹ See Nairn, 'Internationalism and the Second Coming,' pp. 275-7 and Nairn, 'Breakwaters of 2000: From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism,' pp. 100-03. This point is also made in Cocks, 'Fetishizing Ethnicity, Locality and Nationality: The Curious Case of Tom Nairn,' p. 141.

²²² Nairn, 'Old and New Scottish Nationalism,' p. 141. There are remnants of such an understanding in 'Race and Nationalism,' pp. 113-121.

²²³ Halliday, 'Bringing "the Economic" Back In,' p. 321

²²⁴ According to Andrew Vincent, 'The fundamental flaw and problem in this post-1989 post-communist interest in nationalism is that very little of it has been civic or liberal in practice. If anything, the bulk of the nationalism seen, for example, in Europe in the last decade has been quite markedly insular and deeply xenophobic in character.' See A. Vincent, 'Power and Vacuity: Nationalist ideology in the Twentieth Century,' in M. Freeden, ed., *Reassessing Political Ideologies: The Durability of Dissent* (London and New York, 2001), p. 133.

²²⁵ On Indonesia see Harvey, *A Brief History of Neo-Liberalism*, pp. 96-7. Nairn's optimistic view of the relationship between nationalism and democracy is also challenged by the views of Eric Hobsbawm and Perry Anderson: see Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, pp. 578-583 and Anderson, 'The Vanquished Left,' p. 309.

²²⁶ Something that Nairn admits in his most recent work on nationalism. For his analysis of 9/11 American nationalism see Nairn, 'Post-2001 and the Third Coming of Nationalism,' pp. 83-86 and Nairn, 'Globalization and the Unchosen,' pp. 55-60.

uncomplicated vision of nationalism's future like that outlined in *Faces of Nationalism* is unlikely to register this fact.

There were, however, actually-existing civic nationalisms typical of those celebrated in *Faces of Nationalism*. Nairn's own nationalism provided a pertinent example. At the beginning of the new millennium, he returned to his own national question in two books, *After Britain* and *Pariah*, in the context of what he still took to be 'the break-up of Britain.' *Pariah* constituted an up-dated version of Nairn's long and tenaciously held thesis that Britain was a relic destined for the dustbin of history along with other failed multi-national states, while *After Britain* contained his most powerful argument for the realization of ethnic separatism in north Britain. Indeed, *After Britain* in a sense was constructed as a validation of the 'break-up of Britain' thesis and a celebration of Scotland's re-emergence as a nation following the successful vote on devolution.²²⁷ In a reprise of the Sleeping Beauty vision of nationhood, Nairn suggested that although it had existed since 1707 in 'dismembered form', as a 'metaphorical wound' or a 'river of loss,' in 1997 Scotland had become a nation once again – in the romantic rhetoric favoured by Nairn, 'the moorlander' had finally ascended from his 'surly bad-time solitude.'²²⁸ In typically nationalist terms, the vote on devolution in Scotland, according to Nairn, had brought 'the underground river up to the surface.'²²⁹ The ascent spelt the 'end of Britain', that is, the end of a state which had based itself on the denial of ethnicity. However, Nairn speculated, it was the political processes common to civic versions of nationalism not ethnic fury which had undermined and disabled the multi-national state.²³⁰ Democracy, sovereignty and nationality were the promised result. On the periphery of Europe, Nairn seemed to suggest, the promise of the future (1789) had finally arrived.²³¹

²²⁷ 'Colonial Empire, Liberalism, the heavy-industrial workshop of the world, British Socialism and Thatcherism have all in turn become Nineveh and Tyre,' according to Nairn, 'while the eclipsed state-land of the Scots has run beneath and outlasted each ruin in turn, until ready to resume its existence.' See Nairn, 'Introduction,' in *After Britain*, pp. 12-13.

²²⁸ Nairn, 'The Return of Scotland,' in *After Britain*, pp. 97-98, and 99.

²²⁹ Ibid., p. 111. See also Nairn, 'The Unmaking of Scotland,' in Nairn, *After Britain*, p. 251.

²³⁰ See Nairn, *Pariah*, p. 135 and Nairn, 'The Unmaking of Scotland,' p. 252 and 'The Return of Scotland,' p. 117.

²³¹ Nairn was of course less than sanguine about the devolution process, although he still seemed to suggest that Britain was 'dead'. For his suspicions see Nairn, 'Blair's Britain,' in *After Britain*, pp. 38-45. For the argument that Britain had 'ceased to exist' see Nairn, *Pariah*, pp. 10-11.

It was not good news to all. National separatism on Britain's periphery was not an unambiguous prospect, set to guarantee a future of small-states, democracy, popular sovereignty and prosperity, as both Eric Hobsbawm and Stuart Hall pointed out. Conditioned perhaps by his biography, Hobsbawm had been a long-term critic of the break-up of existing multi-national states, arguing that separatist nationalists had overlooked 'the enormous difficulties and cruelties to which the attempt to divide Europe [and by extension every other part of the world] into homogenous nation-states has led in this century (including separation, partition, mass expulsion and genocide).'²³² Racism was a spectre before which Nairn's separatist nationalism was largely silent, no matter how strenuous *After Britain's* appeal to a long-standing history of civic politics in Scotland (here Nairn appeared willing to admit that ethnicity's subordination in Britain had produced some political benefit). The likely perpetuation of racism in the wake of ethnic separation was likewise Hall's concern. A non-ethnic nationality like Britishness, according to him, was potentially more inclusive than an ethnic identity on which separate states in Britain would be necessarily founded. Black and British, Hall argued, was a more likely composite identity than black and English.²³³

After Britain and *Pariah* were equally silent about the nature of the social order that would replace the existing multi-national state.²³⁴ Unlike *The Break-Up of Britain*, neither *After Britain* nor *Pariah* prescribed socialist nationalism as a cure for Britain's political, social, and economic ills. About the social order that would replace Britain Nairn was agnostic. However, given that *Faces of Nationalism* had asserted that capitalism constituted 'the sole matrix of further evolution'²³⁵ it was clear that an independent Scotland would not be socialist. In any case, socialism, according to Nairn, was incompatible with national liberation, internationalism merely a veil for socialist metropolitan chauvinism.²³⁶ This view of the internationalist impulse constituted a constant refrain of Nairn's work, evident, above all, in his long-standing critique of 'Great British Socialism,' a feature equally of *The Break-Up of Britain* as it was of *Pariah*. Realism, according to Nairn, dictated that a liberated Scotland would

²³² Hobsbawm, 'Reflections on "The Break-Up of Britain",' p. 4.

²³³ See the 'Appendix' to *Pariah* for Nairn's critique of Hall's understanding of Britishness. The 'Appendix' contains an interchange between Nairn and the journalist Alibhai-Brown.

²³⁴ A point made in F. Mulhern, 'Britain After Nairn,' *New Left Review*, II/5, 2000, pp. 53-66.

²³⁵ Nairn, 'Demonising Nationality,' p. 66.

²³⁶ See Nairn, 'Internationalism: A Critique,' pp. 42-45.

take its place among ordinary civic nation-states in a world dominated by global commodity production and liberal democracy. This vision is not utopian – after all, as Eric Hobsbawm suggested as long ago as 1978, small-states, such as modern day Singapore or Andorra, are perfectly suited to capital's global regime. But from the perspective of 'The Left Against Europe,' or even indeed of *The Break-Up of Britain*, Naim's vision constituted a political future to be bemoaned.

In his most recent analyses of the national question Naim oscillates between a number of conflicting positions. Most obviously his primordialist vision of the origins of nationalism clashes with his professed civic nationalism. Naim's primordialism (the idea that 'nationality and ethnic discord' are part of 'human nature') constitutes the firm basis for his belief that nationhood is natural and perennial, while his avocation of civic identity politics allows him to side-step the more obvious infelicities of ethnic-nationalist furies. His political nationalism, in other words, appears an unlikely outcome of his assertion that popular mobilization against industrialization takes place 'primarily along ethnic lines'.²³⁷ Just as jarring in the context of his ostensible support for what he called 'a certain style of nationalism whose construction rests more upon democracy than upon ethnos,'²³⁸ was Naim's suggestion that 'ethnos offered the only way' for peoples to attain the 'cohesion and common purpose'²³⁹ necessary for the establishment of nationhood. Aporia is also a feature of his explanation of what civic nationalism constitutes. In one register civic nationalism is defined against 'the traditional ideological projections of universality made by the...abstract secular Enlightenment of the eighteenth century,'²⁴⁰ while in another, contradictory, register he argues that 'national (liberation) identities, the basis of civic nationalism, 'were clearly linked to...Enlightenment themes.'²⁴¹

In addition, his argument that capitalist globalization, the establishment of a global free market system, constitutes the only available form of future development vitiates his suggestion 'That political and economic nationalism is, very generally a

²³⁷ Naim, 'The Owl of Minerva,' p. 50.

²³⁸ Naim, 'Internationalism and the Second Coming,' p. 295.

²³⁹ Naim, 'Demonising Nationalism,' p. 66.

²⁴⁰ Naim, 'Globalization and the Unchosen: Leaving America Behind,' p. 47.

²⁴¹ Naim, 'Post-2001 and the Third Coming of Nationalism,' p. 81-2.

good thing.²⁴² Here Nairn seems to be advocating an impossible synthesis between capitalist globalization and economic nationalism. Nationalism, it can be argued, is compatible with free markets but in the context of capitalist globalization, nationalism, in this sense, can only appear as a form of what Marxists have termed 'false consciousness'. This is because the nation-state, as Nairn elsewhere suggested, has been divested of conventional notions of 'independence'.²⁴³ Nairn appears to register the incompatibility of free markets and nationhood when he argues that 'late-modernizing' national states will demand 'development' on their own terms 'but now both against and with globalization'.²⁴⁴ However, this view is dissonant with his assertion that small-scale nation-states, free markets and democracy constitute the concordant 'triple Entente' of the 'end of history.' Nairn is correct to assert that national identity has endured beyond capitalist globalization but it is not clear that post-history identity politics will always be civic and compatible with democracy and free markets, as his own critique of American nationalism proved.

Given the tensions within his current analysis of the national question what constitutes Nairn's vision of a nationalist post-modernity? Clearly, he has overthrown both cosmopolitan socialism and nationalist socialism, both of which clash with his perspective on the inevitability of free-market development. Given his virulent critique of Great British socialism, it is also unlikely that he would assent to social democracy's management of capitalist globalization, Blairism's 'third way'. Nairn also clearly rejected ethnic nationalism as an alternative to capitalist globalization.²⁴⁵ In the context of his own national question, his nationalist politics have always been civic rather than ethnic, despite his primordialist critique of the modernist conception of nations and nationalism. Thus notwithstanding his view that national identity is a product of 'human nature,' Nairn believes in the political veracity of 'chosen identities' which reject the appeal to 'blood and soil'. In any case, ethnic nationalism, Nairn has suggested, disappeared along with communism and fascism at the end of history, making it ultimately unfeasible as an alternative to capitalist globalization – ethnic nationalist survivals like those he surveyed in his essay 'Race and Nationalism', according to him, constituted revenant illusions of a by-gone era. At times Nairn has

²⁴² Nairn, 'Demonising Nationalism,' p. 63.

²⁴³ Nairn, 'Micro-States,' p. 147.

²⁴⁴ Nairn, 'Globalization and the Unchosen: Leaving America Behind,' p. 60.

²⁴⁵ See his 'Race and Nationalism,' pp. 113-121.

promoted, in line with the fragmentation induced by global economic order, a vision of post-modern nationality politics based on the vitality of 'city-states'. In this prospective political imaginary, however, the place of nationalism remains obscure. Such city-states might well be civic - but nationalist? Not nationalist as it was understood by either Mazzini or Maurras. Indeed, given his own vision for a post-Britain polity, based as it was on the concept of a Council of British Nations, we might wonder just how nationalist Nairn's nationalism now is. Perhaps, along with Marxist interlocutors like Hobsbawm and Anderson, Nairn has decided that in the future capital's hegemony is likely to be post-national.

Nationalism and the End of History

The road out of Marxism is now covered with the footprints of countless intellectuals. Few journeys along this well-worn path have proved more spectacular than that traveled by Nairn between the early nineteen sixties and the beginning of the new century. Mediated by what now appears a temporary commitment to socialist nationalism in the nineteen seventies, Nairn has journeyed from cosmopolitan socialism to a straightforward nationalist politics. Few scholars of the national question have moved between these extremes.²⁴⁶ Nairn's attachment to nationalism, however, does not necessarily constitute evidence of explicit anti-Marxism. On the contrary, the Marxist paradigm is largely rendered *anachronistic in his nationalist register*. Once imagined by Nairn as variously representative of the interests of the proletariat, students and colonial peoples, Marxism is now figured in his discourse as antediluvian.

Thus Nairn's most recent analyses of the national question have been premised on the view that Marxism and socialism constitute archaic remnants of a transcended history. The 'post-Marxism' characteristic of *Faces of Nationalism* and his other recent work has been manifest in an interrogation of nationalism where national consciousness trumps class, where the Marxist idea of the constructed character of

²⁴⁶ But for other examples see M. Canovan, *Nationhood and Political Theory* (Cheltenham, 1996), pp. 86-92. The most famous example is Ernest Renan who, like Nairn, began life as a cosmopolite who maintained that his fatherland was the 'human spirit'. See James, *Nation Formation*, pp. 88-9.

national identity has been replaced by the authenticity, longevity and enracinement of ethnicity, and where the homespun appeal to particular realities has been substituted for hope of a world beyond capitalism and *ethnic discord*. With geometric precision, Nairn's current interpretation of nationhood represents a thoroughgoing repudiation of the cosmopolitan socialism limned by 'The Left Against Europe'. What have been the gains and losses?

It might be suggested that Nairn's most recent work has the merit of candour and realism. Refusing aspiration beyond the present system of production, his strident aversion to Marxism flows with predominant trends inside the university. His hard-headed assessment of capitalism would also draw the applause of those on Fleet (and Wall) Street. Thus Nairn shares in the general hostility to class politics and the revolutionary transformation of society that is the most remarkable feature of the contemporary republic of letters.²⁴⁷ In addition, his intransigent nationalism appears to accord well with the ethnic temper of the times. Identity politics has completely subsumed universalist aspiration in Nairn's most recent work, imitating, once again, dominant trends within cultural and political studies. If fulmination against internationalism still characterizes Nairn's thought, the target of his nativist discontent is now barely perceptible amidst the overwhelming number whose politics is based on particularism.

But the grim meter of realism can be turned against Nairn's current perspective on nation and nationalism. Neo-liberalism rules the age, class not ethnicity has been most crucial to its hegemony, and identity politics has constituted an inadequate challenge to its systematicity. In this global context, existing nationalisms are just as likely to be ethnic as civic, oligarchic as democratic, regressive as progressive. Whatever its nature, it can be argued that nationalism in any case will constitute a declining matrix of future determination, if not identity. It cannot offer a framework for the reconstitution of global order. If an alternative is to be imagined to the current order of things, imagination will have to be global not local, based on humanity not ethnicity. However, if such a cosmopolitan vision is to emerge, it has been argued, it is unlikely to be socialist, for some of the reasons that Nairn illuminated. Nationalism perhaps now shares cosmopolitan socialism's apparent fate. In *Faces of Nationalism*,

²⁴⁷ See Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*, pp. 341-346.

Nairn argued, that 'the true subject of philosophy'²⁴⁸ was nationalism. In a world rendered increasingly homogenous by global commodity production, a world where neo-liberalism rules without challenge, nationalists, like cosmopolitan socialists, more than ever require the consolations of philosophy.

²⁴⁸ Nairn, 'Introduction: On Studying Nationalism,' p. 1.

Conclusion

In the view of one commentator, 'the complex historical relationship between nationalism and socialism...forms a major explanatory problem which has not received adequate analytical treatment, and, as such, remains a challenge for the History of Ideas.'¹ This has certainly been the case with Britain after 1945. Eric Hobsbawm, E.P. Thompson, Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn – all these figures were joined by a concern with the nexus between socialism and nationhood, but their collective response as Marxists to the challenge of nationalism has been neglected. This thesis has attempted to fill this gap in the historiography of Marxism's encounter with the national question.

What were the results of that encounter? In many respects, British Marxists answered the national question well. As a whole, the British Marxists consistently underscored the modernity of nationhood and nationalism. Repudiating the obfuscating myths of nationalist ideology, the British Marxists well understood that nations were not eternal and that national identity was not the product of human nature. Just like Ernest Gellner, they dismissed the idea 'that the "nations" are there, in the very nature of things, only waiting to be "awakened" (a favourite nationalist expression and image) from their regrettable slumber, by the nationalist "awakener".'² From this perspective, the British Marxist engagement with nationalism deserves respect. Eric Hobsbawm undermined the idea of the social ontology of nations, Raymond Williams castigated nationalists for their commitment to the metaphysical categories of nationalism and Stuart Hall challenged a 'racialized' or 'essentialised' conception of national identity, insisting that it constituted a historical construction. Instances could be multiplied where the British Marxist tradition challenged and undermined central tenets of nationalist ideology,³ in the process reinforcing a general consensus that the 'discourse of nationalism is distinctively modern.'⁴ In a current

¹ P. Lekas, 'The Supra-Class Rhetoric of Nationalism: An Introductory Comment,' *East European Quarterly*, 30, 3, 1996, p. 1.

² E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, 1983), p. 48.

³ For a description of those tenets, see A. Vincent, 'Power and Vacuity: Nationalist Ideology in the Twentieth Century,' in M. Freeden, ed., *Reassessing Political Ideologies: The Durability of Dissent* (London and New York, 2001), pp. 142-143.

⁴ C. Calhoun, 'Nationalism and Ethnicity,' *Annual Review of Sociology*, 19, 1993, p. 212. Also, see C. Taylor, 'Nationalism and Modernity,' in R. McKim and G. McMahan, eds., *The Morality of Nationalism* (New York, 1997), p. 43.

conjuncture where all sorts of national fundamentalisms rule unchecked, this stress on the modernity of nationhood and nationalism is significant.

Better yet, the British Marxists emphasized the link between the development of nationhood and nationalism and the evolution of the capitalist mode of production. By emphasizing the nexus between political economy and ethnicity, the British Marxists demonstrated the veracity of the now widely-held view that 'nationalism cannot be understood outside the context of the capitalist world-economy or the rise of modern polities.'⁵ Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn, in particular, illuminated the relationship between capitalist globalization and nationhood. Anderson tracked the rise of nations through the evolution of European state-building, while Nairn uncovered important links between the rise of nationalism and the process of uneven capitalist development. Although neither thesis was free from ambiguity, they each clarified important dimensions of the rise of nation-states and nationalist ideology. In addition, Anderson's historicization of nationhood uncovered the determinative role of states in the production of nations, effectively contesting the view that nation-states were simply the product of pre-existing ethnicities.⁶ The nexus between nationalism and capitalist globalization was also a crucial feature of Eric Hobsbawm's conception of the national question. His consistent engagement with globalization, like Anderson's, allowed illumination of Marx's prescient contention that the capitalist world-system rendered national cultures, national economies and national states vulnerable to dissolution. To alter a famous maxim of Theodore Adorno, the British Marxists understood that if you wanted to talk about nationhood then you must be prepared to talk about capitalism.

Did the British Marxists underestimate the power of nationalism, as so many scholars have argued Marxists in general have?⁷ They certainly did not. How then did they explain nationalism's persistence and the persistence of nationalism's power? The British Marxists constructed two answers to this question. On the one hand, they argued that nationalism was an instance of pernicious false consciousness, a mind-

⁵ G. Jusdanis, 'Beyond the National Culture?,' *boundary 2*, 22, 1, 1995, p. 27.

⁶ C. Tilly, *Capital, Coercion and European States, AD 900-1990* (Oxford, 1990), p. 2 makes a similar argument.

⁷ M. Löwy, 'Fatherland or Mother Earth? Nationalism and Internationalism From a Socialist Perspective,' *Socialist Register 1989*, (London, 1989), p. 217.

forged manacle that had effectively obscured both national and transnational class conflicts. In this view, a range of 'ideological state apparatuses' – national schools, national welfare states, national mass media and even national labour movements – bound 'national' working classes to the nation-state.⁸ Perhaps with the exception of Stuart Hall, this interpretation of nationalism's power was evident, at various times and in various degrees, in the work of all the British Marxists discussed in this thesis. On the other hand, in a related explanation, they argued that nationalism's power derived from the degree to which the nation-state represented the real interests of the proletariat. In this view, the working-class did have a stake in national prosperity, in the maintenance of national labour laws, and in the regulation of national labour markets. After all, proletarians have experienced 'nationalism' more authentically than the bourgeoisie who have more readily lived globalization – capital is cosmopolitan, labour is not.⁹ Each explanation has a part to play in explaining nationalism's continued force, and the British Marxists illuminated well the role of both.

Linked to the British Marxists' awareness of nationalism's strength, was their key insight that national identity was an important factor in the production and maintenance of what Antonio Gramsci termed hegemony. In this view, nationhood and national identity were contested concepts, open to inflection by a range of political ideologies, including socialism. E.P. Thompson's analysis of the language of 'the freeborn Englishman' and Stuart Hall's conception of the nation as a cultural artefact that was open to discursive transformation – both pre-empted the view that nationhood is an imagined community that can be imagined in different ways. The British Marxists crucially illuminated the amorphousness of nationhood; they understood that '[n]ationalism forms a bedrock out of which political ideologies define themselves seeking to achieve legitimacy by association with the apparently "natural" nation.'¹⁰ Thus, in the Gramscian language they sometimes favoured, the British Marxists acknowledged that the nation was a crucial framework or structure through which people defined their relation to social existence, and, as such, was

⁸ An overview of this argument can be found in M. van der Linden, 'The National Integration of European Working Classes (1871-1914): Exploring the Causal Configuration,' *International Review of Social History*, 33, 1988, pp. 285-311.

⁹ For this point, consult B. Jenkins and G. Minnerup, *Citizens and Comrades: Socialism in a World of Nation States* (London, 1984), pp. 22-23.

¹⁰ A. Finlayson, 'Ideology, Discourse, Nationalism,' *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 3, 1, 1998, p. 100.

absolutely vital to political hegemony. An emphasis on the contested nature of national identity potentially opened up nationalism to socialist inflection. The potential was fulfilled in the politics of the British Marxists. So well did they understand the force of nationalism and the importance of national identity they often melded nationalism with their socialism. Thus contra the broad consensus on Marxism's encounter with the national question, the British Marxists were well aware of nationalism's potency –indeed so aware that in some moments they become nationalists themselves.

In addition, the British Marxists established a useful distinction between different varieties of nationalism. Sensitive to historical context, they refused to reduce all nationalisms to a supposed ideal-type. Most often they maintained that there were two distinct kinds of nationalism – in theory, and sometimes in practice. For instance, Eric Hobsbawm drew a helpful contrast between a 'revolutionary' nationalism and a 'reactionary' nationalism in his tetralogy of the modern world, while Stuart Hall made a distinction between 'open' and 'closed' forms of national identity, a distinction that was also present in Raymond Williams's conception of Welshness. In addition, Perry Anderson illuminated different forms of national state in his account of bourgeois revolution, that is, how the form of national states was determined by the maturity of industrial capitalism and the strength of the industrial proletariat. Thus the British Marxists, for the most part, understood that the nationalism of Mazzini and the nationalism of Mussolini could not be conflated. Maintaining a distinction between different types of nationalism has become a leitmotiv of contemporary nationalism studies.¹¹ In their encounter with the national question, the British Marxists reinforced this scholarly consensus.

Best of all, the British Marxists avoided some of the more obvious mistakes which are said to have attended Marxism's encounter with the national question in the past. Rarely did they reduce ethnicity to class, as Marxists of the Second International, for example, often did.¹² More helpfully, they explicated the complex nexus between nation and class, and between race war and class conflict. In addition,

¹¹ Although this consensus has been disputed. For the contrary view, consult J. Cocks, 'From Politics to Paralysis: Critical Intellectuals Answer the National Question,' *Political Theory*, 24, 3, 1996, p. 518.

¹² See T. Purvis, 'Marxism and Nationalism,' in A. Gamble et al., eds., *Marxism and Social Science* (London, 1999), p. 226.

the British Marxists seldom assumed that socialism would automatically conquer nationalism in practice. The sublime confidence of early-twentieth century Marxists that socialism was inevitable, and hence that the withering away of particularisms was guaranteed, was alien to the British Marxist mind. In contrast, they were well aware that nationalism most often trumped socialism in practice. Eric Hobsbawm, for example, argued that class consciousness was probably secondary to other forms of consciousness, particularly national consciousness. However, if they could admit that national identity often trumped class consciousness, the British Marxists were well aware that there were material reasons for this – they didn't seek analytical solace in human nature to explain why most workers have chosen their nation over their class. In any case, as the British Marxists sometimes argued, there was one class which often did put its class interests before its 'national' interests. If the working class had not always put their class before their nation, the bourgeoisie for the most part had.

Thus the British Marxists encounter with nationalism could indeed be impressive. However, like all ideological paradigms, the Marxist approach to nationalism has been visited by antinomies and ambiguities.¹³ The British Marxists exemplified many of these contradictions in their encounter with nationhood. If it could be agreed that there was a relationship between nationhood and capitalism, British Marxists argued over the exact nature of that nexus. In this respect, their work as a whole replicated a contradiction that has plagued Marxism more generally. On the one hand, they argued that the result of capitalist globalization was the proliferation of particularisms. This was the view of both Tom Nairn and Stuart Hall. In their opinion, capitalist globalization did not render 'national one-sidedness and narrow mindedness ... more and more impossible'¹⁴ as Marx had supposed. Rather global capitalism, in their opinion, proliferated difference, whether it be the hybrid identities emphasized by Hall or the territorial particularisms underscored by Nairn. This empowered the view that nationalism and national identity would continue to play a significant part in world history – a view, which in the case of Nairn and Hall, led to their rejection of socialism. On the other hand, British Marxists argued that capitalist globalization doomed nationhood. Both Eric Hobsbawm and Perry

¹³ For an account, see S. Avineri, 'Marxism and Nationalism,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 26, 3/4, 1991, pp. 637-657.

¹⁴ K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London, 1967, org. 1848), p. 84.

Anderson, for example, argued that capitalism's transnational reach dissolved national economies, national cultures and national markets, while consumerism had displaced nationhood as the key legitimating ideology of the leading capitalist states. In this view, a global economy, a homogenous planetary culture and a global market represented determinative features of the contemporary conjuncture - a view which led to the suggestion that nationalism constituted a declining vector of historical change. There is truth in both views, but a synthesis of the two perspectives has so far escaped Marxism's dialectical reach.

How did the British Marxists respond when faced with nationalism in practice? In short, their response to the challenge of nationalism was marked by contradiction. British Marxists oscillated between repudiation of nationalism and appropriation of nationhood. Nationalism and anti-nationalism were simultaneously present in the political thinking of all the British Marxists considered in the thesis. Hobsbawm rejected Nairn's separatist nationalism in the context of 'the break-up of Britain' but counseled socialist patriotism as an antidote to Thatcherism. Thompson rejected national narrow-mindedness in the context of the transnational struggle against the proliferation of nuclear weapons but at other times argued that socialism must reconcile itself to national traditions, especially English national traditions. Williams rejected nationalism as an instance of false consciousness in the context of the hysteria surrounding the Falklands War but funded socialism's appropriation of nationhood when it came to his own nation, Wales. Like Hobsbawm, Hall sought to appropriate patriotism for socialist ends during the Thatcher era but at other times dismissed nationalism as inimical to progressive politics. And Nairn sung the virtues of socialist cosmopolitanism in the context of European integration but later proclaimed himself a socialist nationalist in the context of the rise of the separatist nationalist movement in Scotland. Indeed in some instances they condemned specific sorts of nationalisms while supporting other forms - condemned British nationalism say, while proclaiming the virtues of Welsh nationalism, as Raymond Williams did. Most disturbingly perhaps, they sometimes argued that specific nations were commensurate with socialism. Thus, for example, Williams argued that a certain conception of Wales, Thompson a certain understanding of the English national tradition, and Nairn that the Scottish nation were uniquely at one with an international socialist project.

Empowered as it was by the national realities of the twentieth century, the socialist nationalism of the British Marxists often appeared an appropriate response to a world of nations. Embedded in nation states, labour movements have always relied on nationhood to embody a socialist political economy – the working class's historic objective of the 'nationalization' of the means of production revealed the geographical intent of socialism. It was in this context that Raymond Williams emphasized the necessity of reconciling socialism to 'love of place' and 'warmth of community,' that E.P. Thompson stressed the need to ground socialism in the national tradition, and that both Hobsbawm and Hall urged a rapprochement between socialism and patriotism. The British Marxists well understood the fact that you had to position yourself somewhere to say anything at all – although for each of them that somewhere differed. In addition, socialist nationalism sanctioned a vigorous internationalism, if not an anti-national cosmopolitanism, evident in E.P. Thompson's socialist humanism, in the *May Day Manifesto*, and in the *New Left Review's* commitment to the international trade in ideas. In this view, the proletariat's national ascendancy would ensure cooperative and fraternal relations between (socialist) nations, something already pre-figured in the British Marxist's support of socialist struggles in other nations, whether in Hungary during 1956 or Vietnam in 1968. Yet in other respects the British Marxist's socialist nationalism imperiled their socialism. For a start, it obfuscated nationalism's class collaborationist potential, undermining Marxism's belief in (international) class conflict. Also, socialist nationalism forgot that national liberation often empowers the domination of other peoples. But, most disturbingly, socialist nationalism was buttressed by the notion of 'socialism in one country,' a notion which in more lucid moments the British Marxists understood as redundant, and something that the history of actually existing socialism had proved.

Above all, however, the British Marxist commitment to socialist nationalism clashed and undermined their anti-nationalist register, an anti-nationalist register that at some points implied a belief in socialist cosmopolitanism. This anti-nationalism deserves our fullest sympathy. National identity does mask class division, operating, as Rosa Luxemburg put it, as a "misty veil" obscuring classes with antagonistic

interests and "rights".¹⁵ In this anti-nationalist register, the British Marxists understood national traditions as forms of false consciousness designed to occlude social conflict, understood nationhood as a historical artefact vulnerable to dissolution by the operation of a genuinely global capitalist mode of production. Just as important, this register enabled the British Marxists to illuminate the need for socialism to mimic the geographical reach of their capitalist foe. Best of all, this anti-nationalist socialism reinforced Marx's conception of a 'universal socialist humanism,'¹⁶ a notion of human solidarity funded by a conception of a global species being.¹⁷ However, unfortunately like Marxists before them, the British Marxists had no idea how this anti-nationalist socialism would be constituted in practice on a world-scale. Nevertheless, no matter how unimaginable it is surely preferable to the all too prosaic politics of difference.

A contemporary conjuncture where nationhood is rendered impotent in the face of capitalist globalization, but where national identity continues to constitute a key site of political meaning, has doubly disabled Marxism. On the one hand, capitalist globalization has doomed the nation-state, depriving Marxism of a key arena of political struggle. On the other hand, capitalist globalization has multiplied particularisms, disabling Marxism's class politics. Given this nightmare conjuncture what response might be counseled? The British Marxist tradition has provided various responses from which guidance might be drawn. One solution they offered was socialist nationalism. Problematic when possible, this solution has been rendered toothless by globalization. A capitalist world-system has rendered impossible socialist nationalism (or 'socialism in one country') in either its communist or social-democratic guise. Stuart Hall and Tom Nairn, in different ways, counseled identity politics as a solution to our globalized present. After the death of Marxism, socialists, they argued, must accept capital's triumph and seek solace in a politics of difference. This solution has pragmatic merit. Although practical, it provides, however, no barrier against the savageries of less palatable forms of identity politics. In addition, it undermines socialism's universalism. From the perspective of a commitment to

¹⁵ R. Luxemburg, *The National Question: Selected Writings*, ed., H. B. Davis (New York, 1976), p. 161.

¹⁶ A.W. Wright, 'Socialism and Nationalism,' in L. Tivey, ed., *The Nation State* (Oxford, 1981), p. 151.

¹⁷ Illumination of this vision can be found in R.N. Berki, 'On Marxian Thought and the Problem of International Relations,' *World Politics*, 24, 1, 1971, p. 93-94.

human solidarity, identity politics are indefensible. Yet another solution that can be found in the British Marxist tradition is anti-nationalist or cosmopolitan socialism. Yet however persuasive in theory, socialist cosmopolitanism appears impossible in practice. As John Dunn has suggested, 'Even at its most ideologically pretentious the species has not yet *conceived* a practical form in which to transcend the nation-state.'¹⁸

Socialist nationalism, cosmopolitan socialism, and nationalism – each appears an inadequate response to our current conjuncture. Forced to elect a favourite among today's ideological contestants, we might conclude with Perry Anderson that global capitalism is preferable to global capitalism's fundamentalist and parochial enemies. At least this response to our current conjuncture avoids a slide into nationalism, while still holding out the prospect of a future global socialism. A defeated but unbowed socialist cosmopolitanism, that might be the appropriate Marxist response to a world characterized by an unopposed global capitalism and seemingly endless ethnic conflict.

¹⁸ J. Dunn, 'Nationalism,' in R. Beiner, *Theorizing Nationalism* (Albany, 1999), p. 34.

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This bibliography is broken up into two sections – primary sources and secondary sources. However, in the context of this thesis the primary sources are the texts of the British Marxists. For convenience, I have listed the works of the British Marxists – the primary sources - in the order they appear in the thesis. Hence the works of Eric Hobsbawm appear first, the works of Tom Nairn last. The secondary sources of the thesis follow and are listed alphabetically in accord with convention.

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