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Translating Nations: Botany, Organicism and Diaspora

Cairns Craig

The term diaspora, as recent accounts of the nature of diaspora rarely fail to inform us, derives from the Greek verb *speirein*, meaning 'to scatter' and *dia*, 'through' or 'across', used originally of seed – a diaspora is a people scattered like seeds through the world. This agricultural derivation should remind us that the diasporas of early modern and modern times, that casting abroad of peoples brought about by the discovery of the Americas and Australasia, by the exploration of Africa and the colonisation of large portions of Asia, was preceded by a diaspora that travelled in the opposite direction – the diaspora of seeds sent back from those newly explored parts of the world. These seeds that were to be sown and cultivated, becoming – like the potato that allowed the Irish population to increase so rapidly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and whose blighting produced the Famine of the 1840s – integral parts of the culture and the agriculture of the Old World.[1] The migration that followed on the Famine in Ireland is emblematic of how a vegetable diaspora could provide the impetus for a human diaspora. As, indeed, was the surreptitious acquisition of the cinchona plant from South America by the Dutch and the British in the mid-nineteenth-century. The quinine that it produced in plantations in India and Java allowed Europeans to explore and to settle in areas of Asia and Africa which would otherwise have been made deadly by malaria.

In the Anglophone world that plant diaspora was, from the 1760s, organised and inspired by the botanic zeal of the scientists and gardeners of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, presided over from the mid-1770s till 1820 by Sir Joseph Banks, who had made his reputation as a botanist when on Captain Cook's *Endeavour* expedition to Australia (1768–71). From Kew, seeds and plants would be gathered from and then redistributed to the botanic gardens that became a key part of the British imperial establishment throughout the

[1] See Londa Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge MA, 2004), chs 1, 2; Lucile H. Brockway, *Science and Colonial Expansion: The Role of the British Royal Botanical Gardens* (New York, 1979), and John M. MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and the Natural World* (Manchester, 1990).

world, there to be tested for their usefulness in 'alien' climates. Kew is often presented as an icon of English culture, but it was in fact a Scottish creation, established as a consequence of the interest in botany of John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute (1713–92), a favourite of George III and first Scottish Prime Minister of the United Kingdom in 1762–3. Bute was a keen plant collector and turned what had been a private royal garden at Kew into a major botanic garden. In 1759 he appointed as head gardener William Aiton (1731–93), who was not only a Scot (from Hamilton) but had been trained in London by another Scot, Philip Miller (1691–1771), who, as superintendent of the Chelsea Physic Garden and author of a famous *Gardener's Dictionary* (1731), was a dominant figure in horticulture in London, in part because of the number of new plants which he introduced for British cultivation. Miller's herbarium was bought by Banks in 1774[2] and became the basis of what was later to be the British Museum's collection. William Aiton's son, William Townsend Aiton (1766–1849), took over as Director of Kew on Banks's death and was succeeded by William Jackson Hooker (1785–1865), who had previously held the Chair of Botany at Glasgow University. In 1865, Hooker would in turn be followed in the post of Director by his son, Joseph Dalton Hooker (1817–1911), who, like his father, was English by birth, but had been brought up and educated in Glasgow, attending Glasgow High School and graduating in medicine from Glasgow University in 1839. Father and son applied to Kew the lessons that they had learned in establishing Glasgow University's gardens as among the first rank of the world's botanic gardens.

From its foundation to its dominant role among botanic gardens in the latter part of the nineteenth century, Kew had thus been profoundly shaped by Scots and by Scottish influences. This was the result of a unique intersection between the demands of medical training, the practical development of gardening, and the emerging science of botany in the Scottish universities in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The importance of herbs to seventeenth-century medicine was signalled in the development of 'physic gardens' attached to medical schools. As it happened, the most noted herbalist in France in the mid-seventeenth century was a Scotsman, Robert Morison (1620–83), who had been forced into exile after fighting in the royalist cause in the 1640s. In France Morison trained in medicine with such success that he became physician to the French nobility and developed a herbal garden at the Chateau of Blois in the Loire valley, home to many of the kings and queens

[2] Harold B. Carter, *Sir Joseph Banks 1743–1820* (London, 1988), 127.

of France. Morison returned to Britain with Charles II at the Restoration in 1660 and was subsequently appointed the first Professor of Botany at the University of Oxford. At Blois, however, he had been visited by other Scots training in medicine on the Continent, amongt whom was Andrew Balfour (1630–94), born at Denmylne, near Newburgh in Fife, in 1630 and educated at St Andrews.[3] Balfour later studied at Paris and Caen and, after setting up practice in Edinburgh, he and Robert Sibbald (1641–1722) established in 1670 what was to become Edinburgh's botanical garden, on which Glasgow University's was modelled in 1704.[4]

These botanic gardens were to become a meeting point for medical students, who were expected to have a practical knowledge of the nurturing of the plants they would prescribe to their patients; gardeners, who were able to attend the lectures in botany that formed part of the medical degree; and botanists, exploring the potential of the new plants imported from across the world. The open nature of the Scottish university system, that allowed students to pay for a course without necessarily taking a degree, meant that many who would never have had access to the new sciences at Oxford and Cambridge were able to train in botany at the Scottish universities. Equally the practical emphasis of Scottish medical training–in terms of anatomy as well as botany–produced physicians who had more than a merely theoretical knowledge of both biological and botanic life forms. The most significant figure in this context was John Hope (1725–86), Professor of Botany in Edinburgh from 1761 to 1786, who made the study of plants an essential component of the medical degree. He worked closely with Banks at Kew and established Edinburgh as a centre for the exchange of plants from around the world.

The consequence was a steady stream of gardeners with a sophisticated knowledge of botany, individuals like John Claudius Loudon (1783–1843), whose *Gardener's Magazine* and various encyclopaedias of gardening and building design exerted such a powerful influence over public taste in Victorian Britain that his biographer entitled the work *Mr Loudon's England*.[5] And there were also physicians with a practical knowledge of plants–like Archibald Menzies (1754–1842), who is credited with introducing the monkey puzzle tree to Britain, and William Roxburgh (1751–1815), superintendent of the Calcutta Botanic Garden for twenty years from 1793–that made them ideal

[3] A. D. Boney, *The Lost Garden of Glasgow University* (London, 1988), 28–9.

[4] Ibid., 27.

[5] John Gloag, *Mr Loudon's England: The Life and Work of John Claudius Loudon, and his influence on architecture and furniture design* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1970).

ship's surgeons on voyages of exploration. At sea, they were doctors; on land, they were plant hunters. The same training also produced the founders and developers of many of the world's botanic gardens, the first British imperial garden being established on the island of St Vincent in the West Indies by General Robert Melville (1723–1809), a graduate of both Glasgow and Edinburgh universities.[6] In India, Robert Kyd (1746–93), from Forfar, proposed to the East India Company the development of a botanic garden to provide the navy with teak timber. Kyd died shortly after the founding of the Calcutta Botanic Garden in 1787, and was succeeded by Roxburgh, who not only produced the first account of Indian plants (the first volume of his *Flora Indica* was published five years after his death in 1820), but also proved the properties of jute that were to provide the basis for Dundee's industrial development after 1840.

The international role that Scots played in the development of botanic gardens is underlined by the network that grew from the appointment of Ninian Niven (1799–1879) as curator of the Botanic Gardens in Dublin in 1834. Niven, born in Glasgow, was one of the earliest to use seeds sown 'broadcast' rather than in strict lines, and, as Keith Lamb and Patrick Bowe point out in their *History of Gardening in Ireland*, 'such was Ninian Niven's genius that in 1993 two gardens designed by him were chosen as worthy of restoration by the European Union under the "Gardens of Historic Interest" scheme. These were the Iveagh Gardens, Dublin, laid out for the Great Exhibition of 1865, and that at Hilton Park, County Monoghan'.[7] Niven's successor at Glasnevin was David Moore (1808–79), who had been apprenticed to the Earl of Camperdown's gardener and worked at James Cunningham's nurseries at Comely Bank in Edinburgh. Moore had arrived in Ireland as assistant to another Scot, James Townsend Mackay (1775–1862) from Kirkcaldy, who was the first manager of Trinity College's botanic gardens and who documented the plant life of Ireland in his *Flora Hibernica* (1836). The global reach of these Scottish networks is indicated by the fact that Moore's brother, Charles (1820–1905), was responsible for the development of the Botanic Gardens in Sydney, Australia, which had started as the garden of the Governor's demesne, and was the product of two remarkable Scottish gardeners and botanists. One was Charles Fraser (1792–1831), from Blair-Atholl in Perthshire, who arrived in Australia in 1816 at the age of twenty-four as a soldier guarding

[6] Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, tropical island Edens and the origins of environmentalism, 1660–1860* (Cambridge, 1995), 269.

[7] Keith Lamb and Patrick Bowe, *A History of Gardening in Ireland* (Dublin, 1995), 116.

convicts. He had, however, trained as a gardener and was quickly identified as the man to take charge of the governor's garden. The other was Alan Cunningham (1791–1839), whose family was from Renfrewshire, and who, after explorations in South America, was sent by Banks to Australia in 1816 as the King's Botanist. Fraser took charge of the practical development of the botanic garden, while Cunningham not only searched the unexplored Australian interior for plants but drew up an agenda for the botanic garden as an experimental test bed for the development and transfer of Australian plants to other parts of the world, as well as for the importation of plants which might be of advantage to the Australian economy.

On Fraser's death, Cunningham, who had returned to Britain because of ill-health, arranged for his brother Richard (1793–1835) to be appointed Superintendent in 1833–an appointment which proved disastrous for both. In 1835, on an expedition along the Bogan river, Richard strayed from the rest of the expedition in search of plants, became ill and delirious and was killed by a group of Aborigines into whose camp he had wandered. When the news reached Britain, Allan Cunningham decided to return to take up the role of Colonial Botanist, but he quickly came into conflict with the local Governor over the role of convicts in the garden, resigning in 1837 to undertake an expedition to New Zealand. Already suffering from tuberculosis, Allan himself died shortly after his return to Sydney in June 1839.[8] Through some turbulent years of short-lived Superintendents, the garden's progress was maintained by James Kidd, a gardener from Fife who had arrived as a convict in 1830. He retired as an 'overseer' in 1866. The fortunes of the Sydney botanic garden were transformed, however, with the arrival of Charles Moore in 1848 at the age of twenty-seven. Despite much local opposition, Moore organised the garden both as a centre for scientific research and as means of public education through his popular lectures on botany. During his forty-eight-year tenure, the structure of the garden as it now exists was established, and Moore oversaw the development of Hyde, Victoria and Wentworth Parks as well as a succession of major international exhibitions.[9] British-founded botanic gardens exchanged plants with each other on a massive scale. Sydney, for instance, sent out annually over 3000 packets of seeds and 500 plants.[10] They

[8] See W. G. McMinn, *Allan Cunningham: Botanist and Explorer* (Melbourne, 1970).

[9] See Lionel Gilbert, *The Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney: A History 1816–1985* (Melbourne, 1986).

[10] Donal P. McCracken, *Gardens of Empire: Botanical Institutions of the Victorian British Empire* (London, 1997), 101.

also tested imported plants for their ability to thrive in local conditions, which is how James Hector (1834–1907), originally from Edinburgh and responsible for establishing the botanic garden in Wellington, New Zealand, discovered that the Monterey pine, normally a stunted tree in its native California, grew with impressive speed in New Zealand and provided an ideal way of reversing the country's rapid deforestation.

These networks of botanic gardens were supplemented locally by the development of nurseries devoted to providing plants for commercial growers and for domestic use. In Britain, Scots were again in the forefront. The most important nursery in eighteenth-century London was that of Lee and Kennedy at Fulham, established in 1745. Both were Scots and Lee (1715–95), who was from Selkirk, became a personal friend of Banks, and Banks's assistant, Jonas Dryander (1748–1810), made weekly visits to the Lee and Kennedy nursery to inspect Lee's latest acquisitions.[11] Lee was responsible for employing many Scottish gardeners and for recommending them to Sir Joseph Banks as plant explorers, as in the case of Thomas Blaikie (1750–1838) who, after an expedition to collect plants in the Alps, settled in France and became the leading garden designer of the period. He introduced the *jardin anglais,* which would become the fashion of the French aristocracy through the Revolution and into the Restoration, both of which Blaikie witnessed.[12] In London, Lee was responsible for introducing over 130 plants to cultivation in Britain,[13] including the *fuchsia coccinea*,[14] while his compatriot, James Gordon (1710–80), from Aberdeenshire, was introducing camellias and azaleas from his nursery at Mile End, also in London.[15] Both were to be overshadowed, however, by the success of the Veitch Nurseries at King's Road, Chelsea, in the early nineteenth century. John Veitch (1752–1839), born in Jedburgh in 1752, set up his first business at Killarton in Devon, but then opened his premises in London which were to be the foundation for five generations of the Veitch family to contribute to the development of British horticulture.[16]

The consequence of these naturalisations of plants from across the globe was the transformation of the British landscape, whether by the

[11] Harold B. Carter, *Sir Joseph Banks 1743–1820*, 160.

[12] See Patricia Taylor, *Thomas Blaikie: The 'Capability' Brown of France, 1751–1838* (East Linton, 2001).

[13] Ibid., 16.

[14] Forbes W. Robertson, *Early Scottish Gardeners and their Plants 1650–1750* (East Linton, 2000), 205.

[15] Ibid., 204.

[16] Ibid., 209.

planting of new garden species, such as the geraniums and gladioli sent back by Aberdonian Francis Masson (1741–1805) from South Africa, or by the exploitation of the new landscaping opportunities made possible by trees such as the Douglas Fir and Sitka Spruce sent back from British Columbia by David Douglas (1799–1834), one of Hooker's students from Glasgow.[17] This diaspora of plants reshaped ecosystems across the globe, producing landscapes in which the native and the exotic were mingled in defiance of 'natural' ecological development. Indeed, John Claudius Loudon inspired a fashion for what he described as the 'gardenesque'–the imitation in the domestic garden of the juxtaposition of plants from diverse climatic regions and geographical backgrounds that had become typical of the layout of the botanic garden.

Whatever the rigours of the Scottish climate, Scottish gardeners, plant-collectors and botanists had been key contributors to this transformation, with the botanic gardens at Edinburgh and Glasgow, along with the Scottish-dominated gardens at Kew, central to the distribution system which made it possible. The sense of the continuity of this Scottish tradition was marked in August 1828, when Robert Brown (1773–1858), who had been a student at Marischal College, Aberdeen in the 1780s, paid a visit to the Chateau at Blois. By 1828 Brown was the most famous botanist in Europe, a result not only of his botanic discoveries in Australia during the Flinders expedition of 1802–5 (another of Banks's suggestions) but also from his discovery, during his microscopic investigation of plant structure, of what came to be known as 'Brownian motion'–the apparently random movement of particles in liquid which was satisfactorily explained only by Einstein in the early 1900s. Brown was no mere tourist at Blois: he had made the visit specifically to inspect the garden established by Robert Morison, graduate of his own university, and to pay homage to the work of his great predecessor, coming away surprised at how small the garden was and disappointed that none of its original trees remained.[18] Morison's achievement in introducing a wide range of new herbs into French and then into British medicine had, however, provided the model on which Scottish medicine and Scottish gardening had developed to make possible Brown's emergence as the leading theorist in the science of botany, theories on which Brown's friend Charles Darwin was to draw in developing his account of the origin of species.

[17] See Ann Lindsay, *Seeds of Blood and Beauty: Scottish Plant Explorers* (Edinburgh, 2005), chs 3 and 9.

[18] D. J. Mabberley, *Jupiter Botanicus: Robert Brown of the British Museum* (London, 1985), 282.

II

It is ironic that it was in the very period of this vast plant diaspora that nations began to describe themselves in what they thought of as 'organic' terms, and to conceive of themselves as single, plant-like, unified entities. As Anthony D. Smith describes it, the nineteenth-century conception of the nation was based on the idea of a cultural community which was immemorial, rooted, organic and seamless,[19] characterised, in other words, by a unity which was at once spatial, social and temporal. In this national unity 'a stratified national population', as Liah Greenfeld describes it, 'is perceived as essentially homogeneous, and the lines of status of class as superficial'.[20] It is a notion associated with German romanticism and with the emergence of an historicism which saw each nation as a unique contributor to the history of humanity, a uniqueness which could only be maintained if it was defended from external corruption. 'Romantics', according to John Hutchinson, 'prescribed a duty to recover and sustain all such cultures, for the loss of one was a loss to humanity'.[21]

It was against such 'organic' conceptions of the nation that the so-called 'modernist' version of the nation was developed in the 1960s and 70s by theorists and historians such as Ernest Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm. For them, the 'immemorial' roots of nationalism were simply ideology: nations were the product of modernisation, specifically resulting from the consequences of the French Revolution. Nations' constant appeals to their ancient lineages were no more than a means of co-opting the passive masses to the purposes of an elite which could only maintain its local power by resisting the developmental pressure coming from the more advanced European economies. The political unification of linguistically distinct areas provided closed economies that could be developed and exploited to the advantage of a local bourgeoisie that would otherwise have been overwhelmed by the economic advances and the cultural achievements of its more powerful neighbours. Nations did not perennially exist and were not natural unities but were created – 'invented' became the key term – from above, with the mass of the people then provided with a national historical justification for their 'identity' which was little more

[19] Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A critical survey of recent theories of nations and nationalisms* (London, 1998), 23.

[20] Liah Greenfeld, 'Types of European Nationalism', in Anthony D. Smith and John Hutchinson (eds), *Nationalism* (Oxford, 1994), 165.

[21] John Hutchinson, *Nations as Zones of Conflict* (London, 2005), 47.

than a fabrication. The 'nation' and the 'nationalism' which justified it was no more than the 'false consciousness' necessary in the economic drive towards modernisation: nations claimed to be ancient only to provide themselves with the resources to catch up with their neighbours and so become truly modern (or, from the perspective of the masses, truly but happily exploited).[22]

For modernists, however, the nation still retains, no matter how fictional its origin or how arbitrary its creation, an instrumental unity. As Gellner puts it, 'modern loyalties are centred on political units whose boundaries are defined by the language (in the wider or in the literal sense) of an educational system: and that when these boundaries are made rather than given, they must be large enough to create a unit capable of sustaining an educational system'.[23] The nation *unifies* itself (through its educational system) in order to produce the *appearance* of precisely that 'immemorial, rooted, organic and seamless' identity which is assumed to be the characteristic of nations. This theory of the modern creation of an apparently ancient unity found its ultimate expression in Benedict Anderson's influential conception of the nation as an 'imagined community': the nation, according to Anderson, is '*imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members';[24] and what is imagined is the notion of '*community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship';[25] and that sense of community is evidenced by the fact that 'in the minds of each lives the image of their communion',[26] a communion made manifest in moments of what Anderson describes as 'unisonance':

> … there is a special kind of contemporaneous community which language alone suggests – above all in the form of poetry and song. Take national anthems, for example, sung on national holidays. No matter how banal the words and mediocre the tunes, there is in this singing an experience of simultaneity. At precisely such moments,

[22] See Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, 1990), and Hobsbawm's review of Tom Nairn's *The Break-up of Britain* in *Politics for a Rational Left* (London, 1989), 119ff.

[23] Ernest Gellner, 'Nationalism and Modernization', in Smith and Hutchinson (eds), *Nationalism*, 59.

[24] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991; 1983), 6.

[25] Ibid., 7.

[26] Ibid., 6

> people wholly unknown to each other utter the same verse to the same melody. The image: unisonance … How selfless this unisonance feels! If we are aware that others are singing these songs precisely when and as we are, we have no idea who they may be, or even where, out of earshot, they are singing. Nothing connects us but imagined sound.[27]

'Unisonance' is a condition of linguistically-produced unity, even though it is no more than 'imagined sound'.

Anderson's concept had an enormous influence on cultural analysis in the period of recrudescent nationalisms that followed the collapse of communism in 1989, its success based on providing a new version of the 'modernist' thesis to explain why nationalism had survived when Marxism had expired. Anderson offered an historical explanation of nationalism as the secular successor to the salvific religion that had united Europe until the Reformation. Despite his own scepticism about the value of nations, Anderson's concept invoked the positive connotations associated with the concept of the imagination as the source of creativity, implying a fundamental parallel between the workings of the nation and the workings of the creative imagination – as described, for instance, in Coleridge's famous account of how it 'dissolves, diffuses, dissipates in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still, at all events, it struggles to idealize and to unify'.[28] The nation exists only in the process of idealization and unification: its fulfilment is, in a word which implies how resistant it has proved to the supposedly rational history of Marxism, 'communion' rather than 'communism'. The nation is not a place of conflict but of the dissolution of conflict, which is perhaps why Anderson quickly dropped the middle term in his initial definition of the nation as an 'imagined *political* community'.[29] A 'political' community would be a community of potential conflict: Anderson's 'imagined' community is one in which conflict is transcended into 'unisonance'.

It is of the very nature of diasporas, however, that they disrupt the unity of the nation – both the unity of the homeland from which the migrant is severed, leaving behind the ghost of a lost potential, and the unity of the nation s/he joins, in which s/he remains an alien, an incomer, one who is not rooted there. Diasporic migrants may be fully citizens of their host country,

[27] Ibid., 145.

[28] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. George Watson (London, 1956), Ch. XIII, 167.

[29] Anderson, *Imagined Community*, 6.

but they remain attached, in their own or in their neighbours' eyes, to the ancestral territory they have left behind, thereby rupturing the 'organic unity' of both homeland and hostland. A diaspora which continues to see itself as part of the nation from which it originated extends the boundaries of that nation beyond the territorial integrity on which the modern nation-as-a-state is based; a diaspora which exists within the body of another nation negates the integrity of the nation-as-cultural-whole on which twentieth-century notions of the self-determination of peoples are based. A diaspora brings into conflict notions of the nation as a unified cultural community and notions of the nation as a bounded political territory. For some, this has always represented an ambiguity that reveals the slippery ways in which nationalists invoke what are, in fact, contradictory conceptions of the nation. As John Breuilly has put it, 'what happens is that nationalist ideology operates with three notions which are mutually incompatible but, if not properly examined can seem powerfully persuasive':

> First, there is the notion of the unique national community. Second, there is the idea of the nation as a society which should have its own state. But in this understanding the basic distinction between state and society is accepted in a way that contradicts the historicist view of community as a whole. Finally the nation is thought of as the body of citizens – that is, a wholly political conception – and self-determination justified in terms of universal political principles. Nationalist ideology never makes a rational connection between the cultural and the political concept of the nation because no such connection is possible. Instead, by a sort of sleight of hand dependant on using the same term, 'nation', in different ways, it appears to demonstrate the proposition that each nation should have its nation state. In this way it can superficially appear to have provided an answer to the problem of the relationship between state and society.[30]

Here, I suggest, the 'sleight of hand' is on the part of the modern commentator who attributes to nationalists the notion of a 'unique national community', as though that were identical with, in Anderson's terms, a 'unique national *communion*', a seamless and unbroken unity. Community, however, does not need to be taken in this sense.

[30] John Breuilly, 'The Sources of Nationalist Ideology', in Smith and Hutchinson (eds), *Nationalism*, 109.

First, almost all modern nations are the products of, or the survivors of, civil wars: the 'community' which they enclose and which they claim to represent is a community divided by alternative, competing and often antagonistic cultural traditions. The divided nature of national cultures is clear in 'new' nations such as New Zealand, however much they may be meliorated by institutional commitments to bilingualism and to an acceptance of the equality between Pākehā and Maori cultures. But in the oldest nations, like France and Britain, the national polity has been no less fractured: in France the conflict between the secular republican state and the inheritors of hierarchical Catholic traditions has amounted to an ideological civil war throughout much of the Republic's history; in Britain, Protestantism may have been, as Linda Colley has argued, what bound the archipelago's peoples into a new, British 'national' community, but the conflict between its 'established' religions and their dissenting opponents was deep enough to amount, on occasion, almost to civil war. It was, after all, a sermon by 'a non-conforming minister of eminence', that provoked Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, a sermon which recalled, for Burke, precisely the days of civil war: 'That sermon is in a strain which I believe has not been heard in this kingdom, in any of the pulpits which are tolerated or encouraged in it, since the year 1648'.[31] And what were the events of 1843, when the Scottish Church split into competing confessions, each claiming descent from the true principles of the Reformation, but a spiritual civil war? Nations which survive do not dissolve conflicts. They institutionalise them, and allow competing traditions to claim that each of them is an authentic voice of the nation. The success of a nation lies not in its ability to produce harmony – this is the illusion of totalitarianism – but in its ability to maintain dialogue between opposing conceptions of the national past and the national future. It was because of those dialogues that nineteenth-century nationalisms were so often the foundation for, or the prologue to, democratic political systems.

Second, the conception of the nation as a 'community' does not need to invoke notions of 'organic unity', as something singular and resistant to outside influence: it did not do so for Herder, often cited as the source of romantic nationalism. For Herder nations developed by a process of 'grafting' and cross-fertilisation, and therefore by the same kind of cultivation that produces new forms of life in nature.[32] What he rejected was the political

[31] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, in Marilyn Butler (ed.), *Burke, Paine, Godwin and the Revolution Controversy* (Cambridge, 1984), 37.

[32] See F. M. Barnard, *Herder's Social and Political Thought: From Enlightenment to Nationalism* (Oxford, 1965).

imposition of the 'alien' forms of culture – such as French *liberté* – which had no natural relationship with, and no natural interaction with, local – in this case, German – culture. The nation, for Herder, develops by organic interaction; what it resists is mechanical imposition. Nor, indeed, did 'community' imply 'organic unity' within Scottish traditions of thought. Robert Morrison MacIver, first exponent of sociology in a Scottish university (at Aberdeen, before the First World War), and later, after a period at the University of Toronto, Professor of Sociology at Columbia University, devoted his first book, published in 1915, to a study of 'community'. The basis of his argument, however, was the rejection of any notion of a transcendent 'unity' over and above the individuals who participated in a community:

> There is one essential difference between a community and an organism which destroys all real analogy. An organism is or has – according as we interpret it – a single centre, a unity of life, a purpose or a consciousness which is no purpose or consciousness of the several parts but only of the whole. A community consists of myriad centres of life and consciousness, of true autonomous individuals who are merged in no such corporate unity, whose purposes are lost in no such corporate purpose.[33]

For MacIver, unity is the product of human beings' *dependence* upon one another and of the *interdependence* within a society which makes it possible for the individual to develop as a distinct personality. Personality, however, requires difference, because difference is the ontological foundation of our world – 'we cannot reject difference without rejecting also the common in the universe' – and difference is what makes democracy superior to totalitarianism, because 'for all its defects democracy does accept the fact that we live in a complex world that teems with difference'.[34] The ultimate unity of the nation, therefore, can be discovered only in and through the recognition of opposition and conflict: 'It will appear as the result of our investigation that while oppositions of interests are necessary and ubiquitous they are yet subsidiary to a still more universal unity of interests. The deepest antagonisms between interests are not so deep as the foundations of community.'[35] For MacIver, the

[33] Robert Morrison MacIver, *Community* (London: Macmillan, 1920), 73.

[34] R. M. MacIver, 'Unity and Difference: The Ordering of a Multigroup Society' (1941) in David Spitz (ed.), *Robert M. MacIver: Politics and Society* (New York Press, 1969), 190,).

[35] MacIver, *Community*, 117.

index of the development of community is its ability to produce and sustain individual personality, not as the common expression of a shared identity, but as an increasing degree of diversity. The test of a community's real unity will be the degree of its internal differentiation, the level of its internal debate.

Accounts of the nation as the generator of 'unity' respond to only one dimension of certain stages of certain kinds of nationalism – those which seek unification, either territorial (Italy) or spiritual (Ireland), in order to recover a lost national heritage – ignoring the fact that even within such nationalist movements there will always be discord, amounting often to conflict, about the ends to be achieved. More importantly, those accounts ignore the fact that nationalisms are often the product of the diasporic imagination: it was in London, on Primrose Hill in 1792, that Iolo Morganwg (Edward Williams) and his friends in the Gwyneddigion Society held a bardic ritual, a Gorsedd,[36] which would eventually be integrated into and set the pattern for the Welsh national eisteddfod – and so for Welsh national self-consciousness – in 1819.[37] It was in London – a fact which his Irish opponents did not hesitate to point out – that W. B. Yeats developed in the 1890s the cultural nationalism which would inform the Irish Revival movement. It was in Oxford in the mid-1960s that Scottish philosopher H. J. Paton wrote *The Claim of Scotland*,[38] the first serious defence of modern Scottish nationalism. The dreams of diaspora become the lived realities of the nation. Modern nationalisms are as often the product of the memories of the displaced, seeking ways of reshaping a homeland they may not even intend to revisit, as they are the 'expression' of an underlying national unity awaiting its moment to achieve independent statehood.

It is an irony inscribed in the work of Benedict Anderson through the figure of José Rizal, whose first novel, *Noli Me Tangere* (1887), established him as the 'Father of Filipino Nationalism', and whose execution at the order of the Spanish governor of the Philippines in 1896 was prologue to the collapse of Spanish power in the Pacific. Within two years of his execution, the nationalist government which briefly controlled the Philippines – before the country was sold by the Spanish to the United States – declared the date of Rizal's execution to be a day of mourning for the country's National Hero.

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[36] Prys Morgan, 'Iolo Moranwg and Welsh Historical Traditions', in Geraint H. Jenkins, *A Rattleskull Genius: The Many Faces of Iolo Morganwg* (Cardiff, 2005), 262

[37] Branwen Jarvis, 'Iolo Morganwg and the Welsh Cultural Background', in Jenkins, *A Rattleskull Genius*, 37.

[38] H.J. Paton, *The Claim of Scotland* (London, 1968).

Readers of *Imagined Communities*[39] or of Anderson's next book, *The Spectre of Comparisons* (1998), became familiar with Rizal, since in the former he is one of several novelists whose work Anderson invokes to illustrate what he means by describing the nation as an 'imagined community'; and in the latter the title itself derives from a phrase in Chapter 8 of *Noli Me Tangere—el demonio de las comparaciones*.[40] Rizal, whose final poem of farewell before his execution is also quoted in *Imagined Communities*, has haunted Anderson's work since the 1980s and his changing presentation seems to mark Anderson's evolving conception of nationalism and its imaginations.

In *Imagined Communities* we are told that *Noli Me Tangerei* is typical of 'many other nationalist novels' in its geography, for although 'some of the Filipino characters have been to Spain (off the novel's stage), the circumambience of travel by any of the characters is confined to what, eleven years after its publication and two years after its author's execution, would become the Republic of the Philippines'.[41] From this we might deduce that Rizal, an indigenous writer whose characters are limited in their journies to the boundaries of an emergent nation, was himself not only a nationalist writer but one whose life is circumscribed by the geography of what would eventually become his nation. What we learn from Anderson's later book, *Under Three Flags* (2005),[42] however, is that far from being a writer limited by national geography, Rizal wrote his major works during nearly ten years when he was travelling and living in France, Germany and England, with briefer forays to Japan and the United States. His biography is an example of what Anderson calls 'The Age of Early Globalisation'.[43] And his execution, too, was a consequence of global forces, since it was ordered in the fear of a nationalist uprising in the Philippines to take advantage of the fact that the Spanish were already engaged in suppressing resistance to their rule in faraway Cuba.

In *Under Three Flags* Rizal the nationalist is also Rizal the globalist—corresponding in several languages, influenced by French and German

[39] All references to *Imagined Communities*, unless otherwise specified, are to the revised edition: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991).

[40] Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, South-East Asia and the World* (London, 1998)

[41] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 115.

[42] Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (London, 2005).

[43] Anderson, *Under Three Flags*, 233.

literature, working with other Filipinos and Philippine specialists who are resident in Spain, France, Germany or Belgium. The Rizal of *Under Three Flags* is very different indeed from the Rizal to whom we thought we had been introduced in *Imagined Communities*: his nationalism is not the product of the circumscribed life of someone bounded by the territory, both physical and intellectual, of the nation whose freedom he demands, but the outcome of the experience of migration, of becoming part of what, in the course of time, would become a Philippine diaspora. Nationalism is not, in Rizal's case, or in the case of many nationalist movements, the result of an upsurge of emotion 'rooted' in its own national territory or the 'expression' of an underlying reality which has only been awaiting its historical moment to assert itself: it is the product, instead, of migration, of cultural boundary crossing, of the experience of precisely those cultural environments which, in many accounts of nationalism, represent the 'cosmopolitan' antithesis to the parochial introversions of national self-consciousness.

Nationalism, in other words, is not the 'organic' product of the fundamental 'nature' of the national territory and national history: it is, instead, the product of those who have encountered and rejected its antithesis – a metropole which assumes its own values to be universal. It was not by accident that the shaping presences in the development of the Irish Republic were London-based W. B. Yeats and New York-born Eamon de Valera, or that those involved in the establishment of the National Party of Scotland in 1928 included Robert Bontine Cunnighame Graham, known as Don Roberto in the Argentina in which he made his fortune, a traveller in North Africa, Spain and the American South before becoming a Liberal MP and then Britain's first socialist MP in the 1880s, and Compton Mackenzie, born in London as mere Edward Montague Compton, whose ancestral links to the clan Mackenzie were of dubious provenance. A homeland can only be recognised as an end to be strived after by those, like Rizal, for whom 'nostos' has become 'nostalgia' – a place left behind, a place usurped by an alien culture, a place that can only be returned to when it is itself turned back to what it was or might have been.

Diaspora, in other words, is not an accidental adjunct to a homeland history in which nationalism flourishes as a native product: diaspora is the extreme version of the displacements – the internal displacements of population from country to city, and the external displacements produced by encounters with 'developed' cultures and metropolitan centres – on which nationalism is founded. If Anderson is right in seeing the American Revolution and its

Declaration of Independence as a key historical model for later nationalisms, then it is so not because it represents an 'organic', 'native' society reclaiming its rights, but because it is a diasporic society coming to terms with its displacement and transforming its New England – a mere copy of a homeland left behind – into a new, American homeland.

III

Anderson's version of the nation as imagined community comes into existence, he argues, with print capitalism, which produces new 'vernacular' communities to replace the old 'universal' communities defined by a sacred language which, like medieval Latin, belonged to no particular place. It is the boundaries of these new vernacular language systems that then shape the territory of the new social formations we call nations, which is why language has been such a crucial element both to the cohesion of established nations and to the demands of incipient nations. A distinctive language is the sign of a possible nation which can only fully exist if it has a state committed to protecting and developing that language as the medium of its public life. Alternatively, in colonial territories where English and French have been imposed as the medium of public life, the state must produce a nation by educating its population into adopting and acknowledging that (originally alien) language which now defines a shared identity transcending the divisions of local vernaculars.

For Anderson, the important issue in the emergence of the nation is the emergence of this new unity, a vernacular language in which a population can communicate with one another uniformly across a particular territory. And this was why, for Gellner, a nation has to be of a scale sufficient to support an effective educational system, because it is only through education that the nation can ensure its citizenry speak the same language. This is an idea which seems to derive from the work of Canadian theorist Marshall McLuhan, who had argued in *Understanding Media* (1964) that,

> Of the many unforeseen consequences of typography, the emergence of nationalism is, perhaps, the most familiar. Political unification of populations by means of vernacular and language groupings was unthinkable before printing turned each vernacular into an extensive mass medium. The tribe, an extended form of a family of blood

> relatives, is exploded by print, and is replaced by an association of men homogeneously trained to be individuals. Nationalism itself came as an intense new visual image of group destiny and status, and depended on a speed of information movement unknown before printing.[44]

The nation itself becomes a 'mass medium', a circuit for the rapid exchange of information. That information circuit, however, does not, for McLuhan, produce 'unified fields of exchange', each locked in the separation of its own inner realm: at the same time that it produces nations, typography 'extended the minds and voices of men to reconstitute the human dialogue on a world scale that has bridged the ages'.[45] What typography made possible was not only the consolidation and expression of a new unified vernacular consciousness – it was *translation*, it was the exchange of texts between cultures. 'Until 1700', McLuhan notes, 'more than 50 per cent of all printed books were ancient or medieval'.[46] The establishment of vernacular print cultures required, by the very limitation of their cultural reach both in time and in space, the translation into them of all the knowledge that they lacked: the Bible, the classics, the sciences and literatures of other cultures. The 'imagined community' of belonging, of 'unified fields of exchange', is also, and necessarily, the environment of exchange between fields which are *not* unified, which are now separated by historical (Greek, Latin) or linguistic (French, German, Spanish) boundaries. The language which is the medium of national unity is also, at the same time, the medium that makes inevitable the awareness of *non*-unified fields of exchange. The very singularity of national vernaculars requires their engagement in a process of cultural translation and cultural exchange in which print capitalism is every bit as dynamic in the exchange of goods across borders as was capitalism itself. Far from being closed environments, those vernacular print cultures were precisely, for increasing masses of people who had been excluded from the world of Latin learning in the Middle Ages, the medium by which they could encounter that which did not belong within, and was not native to, their own vernacular environment. The emergence of national cultures, drawing into literacy larger and larger proportions of their populations, makes possible a previously undreamed of exchange of cultural information. Far from being an information circuit contained within and limited to its own boundaries, cultivating its own roots, the nation is an

[44] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (London, 2001; 1964;), 192–3.
[45] Ibid., 233
[46] Ibid.

information circuit making possible the re-routing—like the re-rooting of plants in botanic gardens—of information from cultures anywhere in time and space.

The nation has to be understood as the medium that makes possible *both* a new sense of shared cultural identity and an unprecedented level of cultural exchange. Which is why nationalisms begin not from the inspiration of their own local cultures but in imitation, in the search for a local equivalent of what has been encountered previously only through translation. James Macpherson's Ossianic poems provide the perfect instance of this process, for they begin not only as the translation into English of a supposedly ancient Gaelic poetry but as a translation of those Gaelic epics into a poetic mode that conforms to eighteenth-century taste and eighteenth-century morality. A linguistic translation becomes a cultural translation, one that makes Ossianic heroes 'at home' in the eighteenth century. The translation is also undertaken, however, in the expectation that the reader will recognise in the poems a Gaelic equivalent of ancient Greek epic literature, and recognise, therefore, that Greek literature is not a unique, time-transcending universal but only one expression of the common cultural situation of early human societies. The translation is thus an 'imitation' in a double sense: first, it imitates ancient literature in a style which fits with contemporary aesthetic expectations; at the same time, by its conformity with the principles of Homeric narrative, it reveals that all ancient works and all ancient cultures are mutually comprehensible, and so can be appropriately understood as alternative 'translations' of a shared, underlying experience. This double translation was undertaken, however, at the behest of a Scottish intelligentsia which was itself engaged in an equally radical 'translation'—the 'translation' of a Scots-*speaking* people into an English-*writing* people. It is as though the translation of Scots speakers into English writers requires a radical counterbalance—the discovery of an ancient Gaelic epic which *can* be translated into English but which, at the same time, establishes that the Scots are not the same in origin as the 'English' into which they have been translated. Instead, they are the inheritors of an alternative, classical culture, a modern translation of a culture as ancient and as distinguished as the Greek. Thus does Scottish culture, in the mid-eighteenth century, become a culture of translation, an anglicising culture which could also celebrate Burns's translation of the fine feelings of the Enlightenment into the language of the Ayrshire peasantry, a translation that Burns comically symbolised in the 'The Brigs o Ayr':

(That Bards are second-sighted is nae joke,
And ken the lingo of the sp'ritual folk;
Fays, spunkies, kelpies, a', they can explain them,
And ev'n the vera deils they brawly ken them).
Auld Brig appear'd of ancient Pictish race,
The vera wrinkles Gothic in his face:
He seem'd as he wi' Time had warstl'd lang,
Yet, teughly doure, he bade an unco bang.
New Brig was buskit in a braw new coat,
That he, at *Lon'on*, frae *Adams* got.[47]

Burns's Scots presents itself, here, as the medium through which is translated the voice 'of ancient Pictish race' and of a voice – and accent – that comes from '*Lon'on*' in a 'braw new coat'. 'Bards' are translators of 'the lingo of the sp'ritual folk', and, like the bridges which his poem celebrates, poems are the crossing places of cultures – one leading back to a 'Pictish' past, one pointing forward to an anglicised (*Lon'on*-oriented) future. What the poem celebrates, however, is precisely that there are two bridges, and therefore a multiplicity of crossings between alternative cultural possibilities.

Poetry, in Burns as in Macpherson, is acknowledged and exploited as a crossing place – which is, perhaps, what made both poets so *translatable*. No poet, other than Shakespeare, has been as translated as Burns,[48] and Macpherson's work, as Howard Gaskill has shown, developed its enormous influence through the translation of translations. Not only was Macpherson's own text a translation but many of the translations of his work were themselves translations of the work of his translators – so Montengón's *Fingal* (1800), the only complete translation of Macpherson's poem into Spanish, is based not on Macpherson's English but on Cesarotti's Italian version,[49] which was itself an attempt to transform Italian poetry by vernacularising a 'classic' into a new kind of Italian. By holding out the possibility that every culture could recover, from its own fragmented past, epics that were the equivalent of the classical Greek, Macpherson's poetry gave an enormous impetus to the search for and the assertion of independent national cultures, but this was achieved precisely

[47] Andrew Noble and Patrick Scott Hogg, *The Canongate Burns* (Edinburgh, 2001), 179–80.

[48] For an up-to-date list of Burns translations, see the Bibliography of Scottish Literature in Translation, http://boslit.nls.uk/.

[49] Howard Gaskill, 'Ossian in Europe', *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, XXI, 4 (1994), 652–3.

through the translation of translations. The aesthetic issue of the 'authenticity' of Macpherson's poetry – does he deserve credit, as an author, for effectively 'faking' (and faking effectively) an ancient epic? – has distracted historians from the importance of its cultural form. Macpherson's work inaugurates the era of nationalism as self-conscious translation – translation from heroic past to banal present, translation from an 'original' tongue into the shared medium of a standard modern lexicography, translation from someone else's culture into one's 'own'. Macpherson's work was translated, and translated many times, into most of the major languages of Europe until well into the nineteenth century, long after his work had been 'discredited' in Britain: the longevity of its historical influence depended precisely on the ambiguity which allowed it to point towards the recollection and recovery of a lost ancient origin while, at the same time, inviting, by its status as a translation into a modern idiom, another translation, another modernising, another recontextualisation. The modern nation, Ossian teaches us, is born not out of the discovery of native 'authenticity' but out of the always fragile process – because it can never be certain, can never be absolutely accurate, and is always open to a new version – of translation; the nation is not an ultimate truth to be rediscovered, whatever some nationalists and some nation theorists may say, but an ongoing act of translation.

That conceptions of the nation based on unity, harmony and linguistic purity have continued to shape modern discussions of the nation are indicative of the extent to which our understanding of the nation and national culture has been dominated by the dominant cultures of the Western tradition, for whom it has been ideologically convenient to regard translation as a minor activity within the total cultural economy of the nation. Raymond Williams's *Culture*, published in 1981, is symptomatic, since it is written by a confessedly radical author born in what he called 'Border Country', but for Williams translation and cross-border cultural exchange is an after-thought to the analysis of 'culture' as a single-nation category. Cultural exchange is a 'function of relative political or commercial dominance, with especially clear cases in the political empires' but, most importantly, a function of modern processes in 'cinema and television production [where] conditions of relative monopoly, not only internally but internationally, have led beyond simple processes of export to more general processes of cultural dominance and then of cultural dependence'.[50] Exchange is, in other words, a *modern* phenomenon in terms

[50] Raymond Williams, *Culture* (London, 1981), 230.

of its cultural significance, at least for major cultures such as England's: it is a product of a new globalised capitalism that has broken down the boundaries of what was previously a self-contained cultural entity. That self-containment is clear in Williams's major studies of 'culture' in Britain, which, from *Culture and Society* in 1958 to *The Country and the City* in 1973, presented not only a single culture version of British society – there is only the barest acknowledgment of internal cultural difference, and Joyce's *Ulysses* is invoked as the ultimate version in 'our literature' of the fragmentation brought about by the 'city',[51] as though cities had no national context – but also a conception of British culture as an 'export' which required no balancing 'import'. The experience of 'country and city' as a product of capitalism 'began, specifically, in the English rural economy, and produced, there, many of the characteristic effects … which have since been seen, in many extending forms, in cities and colonies and in an international system as a whole'.[52] Cultural transmission is directed outwards by the internal dynamics of an English development which can be analysed in isolation because it is fundamentally autonomous: its values are transferred to other cultures, its language translated into other languages but it remains immune from any inward cross-fertilisation, either from those cultures with which it is directly adjacent or through any counterflow from the territories it dominates.

The same was true in the same period of the influential sociology of Pierre Bourdieu in France. Despite his own early experience of Algeria, and despite claims that what he analyses will be true of all class societies, Bourdieu's analysis of culture in *Distinction*[53] is insistently 'national' by virtue of the very invisibility of the concept of the nation. Claims are constantly made about the influence of 'the specific history of an artistic tradition',[54] or the taste of 'working-class people' – who refuse 'any sort of formal experimentation and all the effects which, by introducing a distance from the accepted conventions … tend to distance the spectator'[55] – as though these were not French traditions, French working-class people or the views of a French analyst. Bourdieu assumes that what is true of France is true of all modern societies because he assumes that all modern societies can be understood in terms of their own autonomous inner organisation. The 'art for art's sake' aesthetic of the French bourgeoisie

[51] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (1973; London, 1993), 242.
[52] Ibid., 292.
[53] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction* (1979; Cambridge, MA, 1984), xii.
[54] Ibid., 4.
[55] Ibid.

may derive from Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (*Kritik der Urteilskraft*), but the fact of the translation of German theory into French culture is never raised by Bourdieu, because the Kantian aesthetic is assumed to be *internal* to French cultural traditions. Translation, like the nation, has disappeared in a universal structure shared by all, allowing the specific culture of France to be assumed true of all nations. And yet the very existence of a study of *distinction* in France tells us something that is itself distinctive about French culture: the importance to France – to its government, to its intellectual elite, to its tourist industry, to its agricultural and industrial exports – of a distinctive and distinguished culture, a culture distinctively different from those of its neighbours. The 'distinction' which Bourdieu attributes to the accumulation of 'cultural capital' by the upper classes in France depends, in fact, not merely upon their access to the top schools and to the élite higher education establishments – that is, to their power within the French class system – but to their access to the cultural capital of France as a nation. This makes their activity, whether as writers, artists, film makers, historians or literary critics, more *translatable* than the work of equivalently upper class and culturally endowed individuals from smaller, less well-endowed nations. 'Distinction' within France is enhanced and magnified by the lens which legitimises France as a capital of culture, and therefore as the country in which cultural capital has more value than in any other.

Cultural capital in France, one might say, has more exchange value than similar cultural capital in Ireland or in Scotland: translation is disproportionate and French culture has greater presence in Ireland and Scotland than Irish or Scottish culture has in France. For Bourdieu, 'cultural capital' is about accumulation: the accumulation achieved through the family's investment in itself and in the choice of school and university by which its culture can be reproduced from generation to generation. What this ignores is that what is accumulated is only, ultimately, of value if it can also be exchanged and that the exchange value of French culture is very high; it is worth accumulating cultural capital in France precisely because it has a very high translatable value throughout the rest of the world. Joyce's *Ulysses* establishes itself as the great modernist novel not because it is 'about' Dublin but because it is published in Paris and is given the cultural credit that comes from recognition by the French cultural capital. Bourdieu ignores translation because he ignores, equally, the value that comes from translatability, a translatability that continually enhances and enriches French cultural capital.

These versions of an autonomous 'nation-state-culture', it might be thought, would have been overthrown by the rise of 'postcolonialism',

with its emphasis on 'writing back' to the old colonial centres,[56] and on the 'contrapuntal reading' of the colonial centre by its colonised margins,[57] but what has emerged most strongly from the postcolonial analyses as an alternative to the autonomous national culture is the concept of 'hybridity'. Taking its inspiration from Bakhtin's conception of 'hybridization' as 'a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor',[58] postcolonialism has been constructed as the conflict between traditional, homogeneous cultures and the new cultures produced by the impact of colonialism on local cultures or on the impact of migrants within the body of traditional societies. So Homi Bhabha suggests that contemporary criticism needs to learn from the experience of 'those who have suffered the sentence of history – subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement',[59] and who therefore inhabit a hybrid culture, one which is, as Wilson Harris has suggested, constantly struggling to free itself from a past which stressed ancestry, and which valued the "pure" over its threatening opposite, the "composite"'.[60] Equally, Declan Kiberd applauds Davis's description of the Irish as 'a composite race' because 'What had been billed as the Battle of the Two Civilizations was really, and more subtly, the interpenetration of each by the other: and this led to the generation of the new species of man and woman, who felt exalted by rather than ashamed of such hybridity'.[61] 'Hybridity' is the antithesis of the autonomous 'culture-nation-state' that organises the analyses of Williams and Bourdieu, but the problem with hybridity is that it *requires* the ongoing reality of that 'pure' notion of culture to have any purchase: the hybrid can only be the product of the contamination of the pure; the pure has to exist and has to continue to exist if the hybrid is to have any relevance as a category. But if the original purity was no more than an illusion, what then is hybridity? If, as seems to be the case, all cultures of the modern world are 'hybrid' – in the sense that they are the products of ethnic, linguistic and cultural crossings – then the concept of hybridity becomes redundant: its only

[56] See Bill Aschcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds), *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures* (London, 1989).

[57] As proposed by Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London, 1993), 78ff.

[58] Mikhail Bakhtin, ed. Michael Holquist, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin, Texas, 1981), 358.

[59] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York, 1994), 172.

[60] Quoted in *The Empire Writes Back*, 35–6.

[61] Ibid., 162.

purpose is to act as an ideological tool for challenging dominant cultures, a tool which obscures the real nature of the relationship that it seeks to describe. Indeed, it was precisely against the self-evident *hybridity* of modern nations that notions of cultural purity were promoted in the nineteenth century by theorists of race such as Robert Knox in Scotland,[62] and by theorists of the 'Celtic' such as Ernest Renan in France. Ironically, in the light of modern developments in Ireland, Renan regarded Irish culture as one of the few cases in the world of a cultural *purity* based on unmixed blood,[63] and, even more ironically, Robert Knox developed the concept of hybridity in order to prove that miscegenation would undermine any culture's ability to survive in the world. The 'mixed', for Knox, was the weak.

The 'hybridity' proposed by postcolonial theorists is a hybridity which ignores the history of the concept as part of the theory of race purity, a history which underlines that 'hybridity' involves 'fusion' between two 'purities' and therefore drastically simplifies the much more complex process of translation, adoption, adaption and projection which are actually involved in cultural exchange. Thus the hybridity which recent Irish criticism has celebrated is a hybridity only of Ireland and England – 'Ireland was soon patented as not-England',[64] Kiberd observes – but in doing so entirely erases the presence in Ireland of the very different 'fusion' which produced the 'Scots-Irish' who have come to be seen as such a powerful force in the shaping both of American independence and of American popular culture. 'Hybridity', in other words, assumes a relationship between two purities, but the reality of both Irish and Scottish cultures is that they are the outcome of multiple origins, of diverse exchanges, of dynamic intersections which result not in 'fusion' but in the translation and juxtaposition of many different cultural resources which can never be simply *combined*. John Claudius Loudon's conception of the 'gardenesque' (as the juxtaposition of plants from entirely different environments) is, we might suggest, a much more appropriate image for the modern nation than Robert Knox's conception of the 'hybrid'. The nation is a series of cultural juxtapositions, requiring a continuous process of translation, out of which arises neither unity nor hybridity but only the trajectory of an ongoing debate which the participants

[62] Robert Knox, *The Races of Men: A Philosophical Enquiry into the Influence of Race over the Destinies of Nations* and *An Inquiry into the Laws of Human Hybridité* (London, 1862). See 503 for a summary of Knox's theory of race difference and its relation to hybridity.

[63] See Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London, 1995),

[64] Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland* (London, 1995), 9.

agree to continue, whether out of necessity ('we share the same space and neither of us is going to go away'), or out of loyalty to the past ('these are the inheritances we share despite our differences'), or even out of loyalty to the future ('this is the nation we wish to create whatever the differences in our conception of it'). When translation between these different value systems breaks down, civil war ensues, because the 'nation' has ceased to be the context in which one set of values can be recognisably translated into the language of another set of values. What Ireland and Scotland represent is the nation as translation, the nation in translation, nations which require a very different conception of the nation to those provided by recent nation theory.

IV

'Diaspora', Greek for the scattering of seeds, is a word whose implications have been defined largely by the history of Jewish experience. This translation is itself significant, for the Greeks had another word for the diasporic experience – *xeniteia*, which implies not the exile from a homeland to which one wishes to return but the carrying forth of the values of the *polis* from which one sets out, of the *khora* in which one's cultural values were formed, and their re-establishment in a new place, a place of exile but one which is not a place of suffering and alienation, continually posited on the possibility of a return home, but a place of fulfilment through the recreation and re-establishment of the values of the homeland.[65] Diaspora in the form of *xeniteia* represents the ability to scatter the seeds of the homeland in a foreign environment and make them grow into a new version of the culture from which one set out. Exile is not loss but recovery, the re-enactment and repetition of the establishment of the *polis* and its values.

Modern discussions about 'diaspora' have been hampered by the etymological and historical connotations of the term, since it assumes that all diaspora must share the same experience of exile and loss, the same desire to return to a homeland, that was inscribed in Jewish experience. This is clear, for instance, in Robin Cohen's influential account of diaspora, which stresses 'the wish to return to the home country' as a key feature of diasporic

[65] Minna Rozen (ed.), *Homelands and Diasporas: Greeks, Jews and Their Migrations* (London, 2008), 46ff.

consciousness.[66] But to the xeniteian consciousness there is no such need because the home country has been rebuilt in a new location: no ultimate return is required since no ultimate rupture has taken place. (One might recall 1950s adverts that presented New Zealand as a 'Better Britain'). What we have is not a lost nation, maintaining consciousness of a homeland to which it wishes to return, but a refounded nation, running in parallel with its place of origin.

Key moments in Irish and Scottish history – the Famine, the Clearances – have been constructed in terms of the victimhood which produces a diaspora suffused with nostalgia for a homeland that remains a potential place of return. But many Irish, Scots and Scots-Irish migrants travelled with no such sense of victimhood; they were xeniteian migrants, seeding their old culture in new places, the desire for return transformed into the casual wish to revisit. They were a people translated (in its original sense of moved to another location) rather than dispersed, and thus the desire to impose the names of the homeland on their new territory. On the coastroad from San Francisco to Monterey there is a sign that points you to 'Bonny Doon', a place of hills and lochs (one is even called Loch Lomond) which is sufficiently conscious of its Scottish heritage (despite the fact that its contemporary population is of predominantly Italian origin) that its local newspaper is titled *The Highlander*. It is easy to read this as the nostalgia of exile, but the Scottish migrant who first logged these wooded hillsides carried his Robert Burns with him as the language of a homeland he was constructing rather than a homeland to which he wished to return. Spanish America renamed became Scotland refounded.

In these xeniteian communities, since there is no desire for a return to a 'lost' homeland, there is no need to 'live apart' in order to maintain the purity of the culture for its future reintegration into the body of the nation. National identity is maintained over generations, therefore, by its ritual performance, performance that ranges from distinctive religious observation shaping the texture of daily (or, perhaps, weekly) life, to the ritual enactment of national identity on national 'days' such as St.Patrick's or St Andrew's. Such ritual performances restate national communal values both to the community itself and to its neighbours, assuring both of its continuing existence and distinctive purpose, and reminding the 'hostland' that it is also a 'homeland'. These ritual xeniteian performances of national identity

[66] Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: an Introduction* (London, 1997).

produce forms of 'national' culture which may be quite distinct from, or have a very different tenor to, the culture of the nation from which they derive. That secular St Patrick's day celebrations were long established in North America[67] before being taken up in Ireland, and that the demand for St Andrew's day to be acknowledged in Scotland came from North American Saint Andrew's societies, is symptomatic of the ways in which xeniteian identity celebrations not only change the nature of the culture in their own territory but produce a backflow which reshapes the culture of their original homeland. The homeland is translated by its translations.

In the language of organicist or single-culture models of the nations, such translations prove the nation – or certain nations, such as Ireland and Scotland – to be at best an invention, at worst a fiction or a fraud; in the language of postcolonial theory, they prove the nation to be composite, its 'hybridity' the distinctive outcome of a violated purity. Neither is adequate to the dynamic of ongoing transformation which the nation, both in its homeland and in its xeniteian doubles, initiates. National culture is not something which simply accumulates from the past into the present, nor is it the outcome of a once and for all coupling of two purities: it is the product of a continuous process of exchange in which a self-consciously asserted national distinction is itself part of the cultural capital which is available for exchange. So Irish and Scots migrants carried their cultures with them as a capital that could be invested or as a credit in which others would be prepared to invest; so Irish and Scots at home adopted and promoted those markers of distinction – from folk song and military prowess to education and religion – which would be recognised and valued elsewhere as national cultural capital, thereby offsetting the unequal exchange which had forced them into the adoption of English as the language of their daily cultural transactions. Translated into English speakers, they became, like their xeniteian migrants, performers of their cultural difference, always translating anew their past translations; like their gardeners and botanists, they were forever discovering ways in which the alien could be made to flourish in native soil.

That flourishing of foreign seeds suggests, however, another relation between 'diaspora' and the modern nation, since one of the sources of modern nationalism, it has been suggested, was the parallel that the national churches of the Reformation encouraged 'between the election and persecution of the children of Israel with their own lot, their Old Testament interpretation of

[67] As early as 1737 in Boston and 1766 in New York.

their sufferings at the hands of hostile state authorities'.[68] The 'reformed' were not at home in their native lands, but were on a journey through spiritual exile. The diasporic seed of the Word had made exiles of all of the elect, urging them towards the remaking of their homeland as the promised land. Contemporary Israel may be a late-comer among modern nations, a forced replica of the homeland as a nation state, but Israel may have been, in its earlier diasporic experience, the very foundation of the modern nation and of modern nationalism. The desire to return home of those who have been cast out, the desire of the exile to refind and to refound the promised land, was a model on which the longing for national fulfilment in the early period of nationalist development was based. Nationalism is the expression of the sense that even those who inhabit the 'homeland' are exiles, are a diaspora seeking a return to the home from which they are outcast. The diasporic imagination has been able so powerfully to reshape national cultures because the very notion of a national culture is itself founded on the model of the original, Biblical diaspora. Modern diasporas are not a consequence of the existence of the nation and of national nostalgia; rather the nation itself is the outcome of diasporic experiences, whether literal, spiritual or allegorical. Diasporas are, in effect, the creators of nations. In the beginning was homelessness – here, there, or elsewhere.

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[68] John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism,* 'Introduction', 6.