**Notes for Lecture on Nations, Nation-States, and Postcolonialism (2020)**

**Introduction**

In this lecture, we will focus on the broad topic of nations, nation-states, and postcolonialism. The lecture will again be structured around two main questions, in relation to a host of core readings on the subject. These questions are:

1. What does imagination have to do with nationhood? and
2. What does it mean to conceptualize nation-ness and nationalism as “modular”?

The core readings which we will review in order to bring these questions into focus include, first and perhaps foremost, Benedict Anderson’s by-now canonical *Imagined Communities*, first published in 1983, later expanded in 1991 and again republished in 2006 by his brother’s publishing company, Verso. We will then turn to consider some of the more influential postcolonial comments on and critiques of Anderson’s classic text, including Homi Bhabha’s rather dense but most suggestive 1990 essay, “DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation;” Dipesh Chakrabarty’s nuanced account of “Nation and Imagination” in his critically-acclaimed book, *Provincializing Europe*, first published in 2000; and Partha Chatterjee’s provocative chapter, “Whose Imagined Community?” in his 1993 book, *The Nation and its Fragments*. We will next consider the critique and adaptation of Anderson’s conception of the modularity of the nation-form as articulated by Manu Goswami in her path-breaking article from 2002, “Rethinking the Modular Nation Form: Towards a SocioHistorical Conception of Nationalism.” We will conclude with a consideration of Anne McClintock’s feminist rejoinder to the rather masculinist discourse characteristic of most of the literature on nationalism, her critique of the absence of attention to the ways in which the nation-form is gendered, in her thoughtful chapter, “No Longer in a Future Heaven: Nationalism, Gender, and Race,” from her 1995 book, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*.

**The Nation as an Imagined Community**

Let us begin with an overview of the main arguments advanced in the most influential book on nationalism of the last generation, Benedict Anderson’s magisterial *Imagined Communities*. In the book, Anderson contends that nationalism is best understood as a deeply-ingrained cultural system rather than a mere ideology. In his words, “[i]t would, I think, make things easier if one treated it as if it belonged with 'kinship' and 'religion', rather than with 'liberalism' or 'fascism'” (p.5). Accordingly, “in an anthropological spirit,” he goes on to “propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (pp.5-6).

Anderson objects to Ernest Gellner’s “ferocious” claim that “Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist,” thereby contrasting invention with imagination. According to Anderson, “the drawback of [Gellner’s] formulation is that [he] is so anxious to show that nationalism masquerades under false pretences that he assimilates 'invention' to 'fabrication' and 'falsity', rather than to 'imagining' and 'creation'. In this way,” Anderson insists, Gellner “implies that 'true' communities exist which can be advantageously juxtaposed to nations. In fact,” Anderson contends, “all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined.” As such, Anderson concludes, “[c]ommunities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined” (p.6).

The basic style of the nation’s imagining is three-fold: first, it is imagined as limited; second, it is imagined as sovereign; and third, it is imagined as a community. “The nation is imagined as limited,” Anderson argues, “because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations” (p.7). Moreover, “it is imagined as sovereign,” Anderson continues, “because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm” (p.7). Finally, “it is imagined as a community,” Anderson posits, “because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (p.7).

Anderson’s proposal is, in sum, that “nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which — as well as against which - it came into being.” In this vein, he contrasts the nation to the cultural systems of “the religious community and the dynastic realm” (p.12).

Anderson emphasises the importance of the rise of the vernacular languages in Europe in the process of emergence of the preconditions for national consciousness. According to him, “the fall of Latin exemplified a larger process in which the sacred communities integrated by old sacred languages were gradually fragmented, pluralized, and territorialized” (p.19).

Likewise, Anderson contrasts the cultural system of the dynastic realm to that of the nation. In his words: “Kingship organizes everything around a high centre. Its legitimacy derives from divinity, not from populations, who, after all, are subjects, not citizens. In the modern conception, state sovereignty is fully, flatly, and evenly operative over each square centimetre of a legally demarcated territory. But in the older imagining, where states were defined by centres, borders were porous and indistinct, and sovereignties faded imperceptibly into one another. Hence, paradoxically enough, the ease with which pre-modern empires and kingdoms were able to sustain their rule over immensely heterogeneous, and often not even contiguous, populations for long periods of time” (p.19).

Crucial to Anderson’s account of this new form of national imagining is the role of a new conception of time, of temporality, what Anderson calls, following Walter Benjamin, “homogenous empty time.” Anderson explains: “Our own conception of simultaneity has been a long time in the making, and its emergence is certainly connected, in ways that have yet to be well studied, with the development of the secular sciences.” He goes on to stress: “But it is a conception of such fundamental importance that, without taking it fully into account, we will find it difficult to probe the obscure genesis of nationalism.”

To this end, Anderson draws a contrast between medieval conceptions of time, characterised by notions of prefigurement and fulfilment, in which simultaneity was imagined as happening along time, to the new conception of simultaneity as temporal coincidence. As he puts it: “What has come to take the place of the mediaeval conception of simultaneity-along-time is, to borrow … from Benjamin, an idea of 'homogeneous, empty time,' in which simultaneity is, as it were, transverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfilment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar” (p.24).

This point about homogenous, empty time is, for Anderson, essential. Indeed, he stresses that “[s]o deep-lying is this new idea that one could argue that every essential modern conception is based on a conception of 'meanwhile'” (p.24).

The new notion of “homogenous, empty time” is exemplified, for Anderson, by the literary forms of the novel and the newspaper. According to Anderson, “the structure of the old-fashioned novel, a structure typical not only of the masterpieces of Balzac but also of any contemporary dollar-dreadful, is clearly a device for the presentation of simultaneity in 'homogeneous, empty time,' or a complex gloss upon the word 'meanwhile'” (p.25). Moreover, Anderson goes on to insist: “[t]he idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history” (p.26).

The contrast between the temporal presuppositions of the plot-line of a novel and the organization of previous literary genres helps Anderson drive home his point. He contends: “Nothing better shows the immersion of the novel in homogeneous, empty time than the absence of those prefatory genealogies, often ascending to the origin of man, which are so characteristic a feature of ancient chronicles, legends, and holy books” (p.26).

Likewise with the newspaper. Anderson here emphasises: “The date at the top of the newspaper, the single most important emblem on it, provides the essential connection — the steady onward clocking of homogeneous, empty time. Within that time, 'the world' ambles sturdily ahead” (p.33).

The emergence of the new concept of simultaneity, so crucial for the birth of national consciousness, Anderson attributes, among other causes, to the impact of European incursions overseas and the encounter with radically different civilizations. Along these lines, Anderson insists: “In the course of the sixteenth century, Europe's 'discovery' of grandiose civilizations hitherto only dimly rumoured — in China, Japan, Southeast Asia, and the Indian subcontinent — or completely unknown - Aztec Mexico and Incan Peru - suggested an irremediable human pluralism. Most of these civilizations had developed quite separate from the known history of Europe, Christendom, Antiquity, indeed man: their genealogies lay outside of and were unassimilable to Eden.” To which he adds, parenthetically: “Only homogeneous, empty time would offer them accommodation” (p.69).

So-called “discovery” and conquest, in turn, led to “a revolution in European ideas about language,” with social “discoveries” leading to scientific advances of a sort – for example, “[a]dvances in Semitics,” which “undermined the idea that Hebrew was either uniquely ancient or of divine provenance. Once again,” Anderson concludes, “genealogies were being conceived which could only be accommodated by homogeneous, empty time” (p.70).

The next step in Anderson’s argument is to link the diffusion of the new conception of temporality to the processes of print capitalism. According to Anderson: “[t]he slow, uneven decline of … interlinked certainties, first in Western Europe, later elsewhere, under the impact of economic change, 'discoveries' (social and scientific), and the development of increasingly rapid communications, drove a harsh wedge between cosmology and history. No surprise then,” he contends, “that the search was on, so to speak, for a new way of linking fraternity, power and time meaningfully together.” Which brings him to this crucial point: “Nothing perhaps more precipitated this search, nor made it more fruitful, than print-capitalism, which made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways” (p.36).

Likewise, he poses the question: “If the development of print-as-commodity is the key to the generation of wholly new ideas of simultaneity, still, we are simply at the point where communities of the type 'horizontal-secular, transverse-time' become possible. Why, within that type, did the nation become so popular?” To which he answers: “The factors involved are obviously complex and various. But a strong case can be made for the primacy of capitalism” (p.37).

Anderson emphasises that “[i]n pre-print Europe, and, of course, elsewhere in the world, the diversity of spoken languages, those languages that for their speakers were (and are) the warp and woof of their lives, was immense; so immense, indeed, that had print-capitalism sought to exploit each potential oral vernacular market, it would have remained a capitalism of petty proportions. But these varied idiolects were capable of being assembled, within definite limits, into print-languages far fewer in number. The very arbitrariness of any system of signs for sounds facilitated the assembling process” (p.43).

Not only did print capitalism give “a new fixity to language, which in the long run helped to build that image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation” (p.44). So too did it “create languages-of-power of a kind different from the older administrative vernaculars. Certain dialects inevitably were 'closer' to each print-language and dominated their final forms. Their disadvantaged cousins, still assimilable to the emerging print-language, lost caste, above all because they were unsuccessful (or only relatively successful) in insisting on their own print-form” (p.45).

Linked to the role of print-capitalism is the rise of commercial and industrial bourgeoisies. As Anderson contends: “If the expansion of bureaucratic middle classes was a relatively even phenomenon, occurring at comparable rates in both advanced and backward states of Europe, the rise of commercial and industrial bourgeoisies was of course highly uneven — massive and rapid in some places, slow and stunted in others.” Even so, he insists: “But no matter where, this 'rise' has to be understood in its relationship to vernacular print-capitalism.” This lies in stark contrast to pre-bourgeois ruling classes, who “generated their cohesions in some sense outside language, or at least outside print-language,” in which “[s]olidarities were the products of kinship, clientship, and personal loyalties.” According to Anderson, “[t]he relatively small size of traditional aristocracies, their fixed political bases, and the personalization of political relations implied by sexual intercourse and inheritance, meant that their cohesions as classes were as much concrete as imagined.” As a result, “[a]n illiterate nobility could still act as a nobility.” Not so with the bourgeoisie: “Here was a class,” claims Anderson, “which, figuratively speaking, came into being as a class only in so many replications. Factory-owner in Lille was connected to factory-owner in Lyon only by reverberation. They had no necessary reason to know of one another's existence; they did not typically marry each other's daughters or inherit each other's property. But they did come to visualize in a general way the existence of thousands and thousands like themselves through print language. For an illiterate bourgeoisie is scarcely imaginable. Thus,” Anderson concludes, “in world-historical terms bourgeoisies were the first classes to achieve solidarities on an essentially imagined basis. But in a nineteenth-century Europe in which Latin had been defeated by vernacular print-capitalism for something like two centuries, these solidarities had an outermost stretch limited by vernacular legibilities” (pp.76-77).

In a nutshell, for Anderson, the emergence of homogenous empty time, “[t]his new synchronic novelty,” could only come about “historically … when substantial groups of people were in a position to think of themselves as living lives parallel to those of other substantial groups of people – if never meeting, yet certainly proceeding along the same trajectory. Between 1500 and 1800 an accumulation of technological innovations in the fields of shipbuilding, navigation, horology and cartography, mediated through print-capitalism, was making this type of imagining possible. It became conceivable to dwell on the Peruvian altiplano, on the pampas of Argentina, or by the harbours of 'New' England, and yet feel connected to certain regions or communities, thousands of miles away, in England or the Iberian peninsula” (p.188).

Which brings us to the last step in Anderson’s argument. If the nation as an imagined community, one imagined as limited and sovereign, could only arise with the hegemony of homogenous empty time, and this in turn was diffused and mediated through the processes of print-capitalism, with the spread of these temporal conceptions and print-capitalist processes came the modular transposition of the nation form. In a word, Anderson emphasises the modularity of the nation form. He partially breaks with a long Eurocentric tradition by locating the origins of the nation not with the French revolution but with the creole revolutions in the Americas, which were, he insists, ***national*** independence movements. The nation form was then transposed and adapted in the wave popular linguistic nationalisms that spread across Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century. It was subsequently transposed and adapted again by British and Russian Empire’s versions of late-nineteenth century official nationalism. And finally, it was transposed and adapted yet again across the colonised world in a last wave peaking in the middle of the twentieth century.

As such, Anderson argues “that the creation of [the nation] towards the end of the eighteenth century was the spontaneous distillation of a complex 'crossing' of discrete historical forces; but that, once created, [it] became 'modular,' capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations” (p.4).

For example, he contends that “[t]he key to situating 'official nationalism' — willed merger of nation and dynastic empire - is to remember that it developed after, and in reaction to, the popular national movements proliferating in Europe since the 1820s. If these nationalisms were modelled on American and French histories, so now they became modular in turn. It was only that a certain inventive legerdemain was required to permit the empire to appear attractive in national drag” (pp.86-87).

Likewise with the last wave. According to Anderson, “[t]he new states of the post-World War II period have their own character, which nonetheless is incomprehensible except in terms of the succession of models we have been considering. One way of underlining this ancestry is to remind ourselves that a very large number of these (mainly non-European) nations came to have European languages-of-state. If they resembled the 'American' model in this respect, they took from linguistic European nationalism its ardent populism, and from official nationalism its Russifying policy orientation. They did so,” he contends, “because Americans and Europeans had lived through complex historical experiences which were now everywhere modularly imagined, and because the European languages-of-state they employed were the legacy of imperialist official nationalism. This is why so often in the 'nation-building' policies of the new states one sees both a genuine, popular nationalist enthusiasm and a systematic, even Machiavellian, instilling of nationalist ideology through the mass media, the educational system, administrative regulations, and so forth. In turn,” he continues, “this blend of popular and official nationalism has been the product of anomalies created by European imperialism: the well-known arbitrariness of frontiers, and bilingual intelligentsias poised precariously over diverse monoglot populations.” Therefore, he concludes, “[o]ne can thus think of many of these nations as projects the achievement of which is still in progress, yet projects conceived more in the spirit of Mazzini than that of Uvarov” (pp.113-114).

He later returns to emphasise again “the profoundly modular character” of twentieth-century nationalisms. They can, and do,” he contends, “draw on more than a century and a half of human experience and three earlier models of nationalism. Nationalist leaders are thus in a position consciously to deploy civil and military educational systems modelled on official nationalism's; elections, party organizations, and cultural celebrations modelled on the popular nationalisms of ninteenth-century Europe; and the citizen republican idea brought into the world by the Americas. Above all, the very idea of 'nation' is now nestled firmly in virtually all print languages; and nation-ness is virtually inseparable from political consciousness.” As such, he concludes, “[i]n a world in which the national state is the overwhelming norm, all of this means that nations can now be imagined without linguistic communality — not in the native spirit of *nosotros los americanos*, but out of a general awareness of what modern history has demonstrated to be possible” (p.135).

In sum, Anderson theorizes the nation form as a uniquely modern type of imagined community, one imagined as limited and sovereign. He emphasizes the role of a new dominant conception of temporality, homogenous empty time, in creating the conditions of possibility for the emergence of national consciousness. He further stresses the processes of print capitalism through which the new conception of temporality as synchronicity would be mediated and diffused. Finally, he contends that once the nation form had emerged by the end of the eighteenth century, it became “'modular,' capable of being transplanted” and adapted across a “wide variety of political and ideological constellations.”

**Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation**

Anderson’s canonical text has provoked an immense amount of academic commentary in the past several decades. Let us now turn to consider some of the most influential comments and critiques coming from postcolonial quarters, beginning with a very dense but highly suggestive essay from 1990 by Homi Bhabha, titled “DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation.” In the essay, Bhabha challenges Anderson’s thesis about the hegemony of homogenous empty time, and its relation to the narration of the nation.

According to Bhabha, the nation is constituted by a “double-time.” In his words, there is “always the distracting presence of another temporality that disturbs the contemporaneity of the national present” (p.295). In turn, he insists, “[s]uch an apprehension of the 'double and split' time of national representation [should] lead us to question the homogeneous and horizontal view familiarly associated with it” (p.295).

Bhabha’s focus is on the margins of the nation, with “colonials, postcolonials, migrants, minorities — 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” (p.315).

Bhabha is concerned to illuminate how “[i]n the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of [what he calls] the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of [what he calls] the performative” (p.297). To this end, he seeks to centre “[c]ounter-narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries — both actual and conceptual — [and] disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities” (p.300). He thus takes up the task of “explor[ing] forms of cultural identity and political solidarity that emerge from the disjunctive temporalities of the national culture. This is,” he contends, “a lesson of history to be learnt from those peoples whose histories of marginality have been most profoundly enmeshed in the antinomies of law and order — the colonized and women” (p.301).

Bhabha takes from Frantz Fanon the point that “‘[t]he knowledge of the people depends on the discovery of a much more fundamental substance which itself is continually being renewed', a structure of repetition that is not visible in the translucidity of the people's customs or the obvious objectivities which seem to characterize the people” (p.302). He continues: “It is from this instability of cultural signification that the national culture comes to be articulated as a dialectic of various temporalities — modern, colonial, postcolonial, 'native' — that cannot be a knowledge that is stabilized in its enunciation, [again quoting Fanon]: 'it is always contemporaneous with the act of recitation. It is the present act that on each of its occurrences marshalls in the ephemeral temporality inhabiting the space between the ‘I have heard’ and ‘you will hear’” (p.302).

From the margins, the subaltern intervene to interrupt the temporal presuppositions of synchronicity, interjecting different temporalities into the sinews of the nation, in the process disturbing its essentializing and totalizing tendencies. Such a focus, at the margins, Bhabha insists, “makes it imperative to question those western theories of the horizontal, homogeneous empty time of the nation's narrative” (p.302).

Likewise, from Julia Kristeva, Bhabha takes again the idea that “[t]he borders of the nation are constantly faced with a double temporality: the process of identity constituted by historical sedimentation (the pedagogical); and the loss of identity in the signifying process of cultural identification (the performative)” (p.304). And again, he emphasises the co-existence and combination of multiple temporalities. In his words: “[t]he concurrent circulation of linear, cursive, and monumental time, in the same cultural space, constitutes a new historical temporality that Kristeva identifies with psychoanalytically informed, feminist strategies of political identification” (p.304).

“Fanon's occult instability and Kristeva's parallel times” both disturb the hegemony of homogenous empty time upon which Anderson insists the nation is founded.

Bhabha accuses Anderson of misunderstanding the significance of the “meanwhile,” of wrongly embedding it within homogenous empty time. According to Bhabha: “The 'meanwhile' is the barred sign of the processual and performative, not a simple present continuous, but the present as succession without synchrony … In embedding the meanwhile of the national narrative, where the people live their plural and autonomous lives within homogeneous empty time, Anderson misses the alienating and iterative time of the sign. He naturalizes the momentary 'suddenness' of the arbitrary sign, its pulsation, by making it part of the historical emergence of the novel, a narrative of synchrony. But the suddenness of the signifier is incessant, instantaneous rather than simultaneous. It introduces a signifying space of repetition rather than a progressive or linear seriality. The 'meanwhile' turns into quite another time, or ambivalent sign, of the national people. If it is the time of the people's anonymity it is also the space of the nation's anomie” (pp.309-310).

As if that weren’t dense enough, Bhabha proceeds to accuse Anderson of misappropriating Benjamin as well. In Bhabha’s articulation: “Anderson fails to locate the alienating time of the arbitrary sign in his naturalized, nationalized space of the imagined community. Although he borrows his notion of the homogeneous empty time of the nation's modern narrative from Walter Benjamin, he fails to read that profound ambivalence that Benjamin places deep within the utterance of the narrative of modernity … Benjamin introduces a non-synchronous, incommensurable gap in the midst of storytelling. From this split in the utterance, from the unbeguiled, belated novelist there emerges an ambivalence in the narration of modern society that repeats, uncounselled and unconsolable, in the midst of plenitude” (p.310).

The full thrust of Bhabha’s postcolonial, postmodern discourse is certainly difficult to follow. What is clear, however, is that he is seeking to champion the view from the margins of the nation, which he argues should lead us to complexify Anderson’s narrative about synchronicity and homogenous empty time. Bhabha would seem suspicious of Anderson’s endorsement of the nation, his alleged reification of its horizontally-imagined community. He champions, instead of national unity, the ideal of hybridity, as embodied in “the way of life of maroon communities of runaway slaves and fugitives,” existing at the margins of the nation, and expressed in the rhetorical strategies of the black “national” text of the Harlem Rennaissance. Likewise, he invokes a film about the black diaspora in Britain, *Handsworth Songs*,shot in the midst of the 1985 Birmingham riots, haunted by memories “flashing up in a moment of danger.” He remarks: “[t]here are no stories in the riots, only the ghosts of other stories” (p.307). In sum, for Bhabha, the temporality erupting and interrupting from the margins of the nation would seem something altogether different from homogenous and empty.

**Nation and Imagination**

Dipesh Chakrabarty, in a chapter titled “Nation and Imagination” in his critically acclaimed 2000 book, *Provincializing Europe*, also takes aim at Anderson’s account of the nation – with a focus on issues of translatability in the Indian context of the key concept of imagination. In a word, Chakrabarty seeks to provincialize Anderson’s notion of imagination. He does so by reading “a global history of the word ‘imagination’.” He begins by acknowledging that Anderson’s book “has made us all aware of how crucial the category ‘imagination’ is to the analysis of nationalism. Yet,” he contends, “compared to the idea of community, imagination remains a curiously undiscussed category in social science writings on nationalism.” Though “Anderson warns that the word should not be taken to mean ‘false’,” [b]eyond that,” Chakrabarty notes, “its meaning is taken to be self-evident.” As such, Chakrabarty takes up the task of “open[ing] the word for further interrogation,” and thereby rendering “visible the heterogenous practices of seeing we often bring under the jurisdiction of this one European word, ‘imagination’” (p.149).

At the same time, Chakrabarty suggests that collapsing different phenomena under the single rubric of imagination entails a certain homogenization of the political field. By contrast, “[t]o breathe heterogeneity into the word ‘imagination’… is to allow for the possibility that the field of the political is constitutively not singular” (p.149).

To make his case, Chakrabarty engages with the writings of the Bengali 1913 Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore. In particular, he explores how Tagore navigated the following problematic: “If the nation, the people, or the country were not just to be observed, described, and critiqued but loved as well, what would guarantee that they were indeed worth loving unless one also saw in them something that was already lovable?” (p.149). The danger was that “[a]n objectivist, realist view might lead only to disidentification” (p.149). Indeed, “a view that was merely realist might not present an India that was lovable. To be able to love India was to go beyond realism, to pierce the veil of the real, as Tagore put it” (p.150).

In Tagore’s writings, Chakrabarty contends, “[t]he prosaic and the poetic … came to share a division of labor.” On the one hand, “[t]he prosaic element spoke of poverty, ill health, factionalism, ignorance, casteism, ‘feudal’ oppression, and so on,” and on the other, “the poetic pictured the Bengali home/village as a place blessed with divine grace and beauty, a peaceful home for the tender Bengali heart, the golden Bengal of nationalist sentiments” (p.153). And crucially, for Tagore, claims Chakrabarty, “[t]he poetic took us outside of historical time.” As such, “[t]ogether, prose and poetry posed and answered the question of the two ways of seeing in Bengali nationalism” (p.153).

Moreover, when a younger generation came to accuse Tagore “that his conception of the poetic lacked ways of handling the miserable realities of everyday life in Calcutta and Bengal,” Tagore responded by inventing a new prose form called *gadyakabita* or prose-poetry” (p.163).

For Tagore, “[t]he function of the poetic was to create a caesura in historical time and transport us to a realm that transcended the historical” (p.166). In this vein, Chakrabarty insists that, according to Tagore, “[t]he realm of the poetic laced the everyday but had to be revealed by the operation of the poetic eye” (p.168). Recourse to the poetic was, in an important sense, “a compensatory move.” Tagore used “the materiality of a language, its sounds, rhythms, and melodies, to reconstitute (not deny) a reality that contained material and other forms of deprivation” (p.172).

From here, Chakrabarty proceeds to pose a difficult question: “Was ‘piercing the veil of the real’—the phrase Tagore used to describe the mode of viewing in which India appeared as already lovable, was this mode of viewing the same as what is conveyed by ‘imagining’ in Benedict Anderson’s book on nationalism?” (p.172).

Chakrabarty suggests that, ultimately, it was not. He points out “[t]here is a family of terms in north Indian languages for this activity of seeing beyond the real, of being in the presence of the deity. One of them is *darshan* (to see) …” (p.173). In so doing, Chakrabarty does “not intend to reduce Tagore’s point about ‘seeing beyond the real’ to practices that preceded British rule in India and thus present Indian nationalism as a site of an unbridgeable difference between the West and the East.” To the contrary, he admits, “Tagore (and nationalism in general) obviously derived much from European romanticism.” To this end, he notes, Tagore’s “idea of the transcendental was unmistakably idealist.” Nevertheless, Chakrabarty goes on to insist, “[m]y point is that the moment of vision that effected a ‘cessation of the historical world’ included plural and heterogenous ways of seeing that raise some questions about the analytical reach of the European category ‘imagination’” (p.174).

Chakrabarty lauds Anderson for having “made an enormously suggestive use of the word ‘imagination’ to describe roles the novel, the newspaper, the map, the museum, and the census play in creating the empty, homogenous time of history that allows the different parts of a nation to exist all at once in some nationalist imaginary of simultaneity.” And yet, Chakrabarty returns to the point that “Anderson takes the meaning of imagination to be self-evident,” even as he “cautions that it should not be read to mean false. Yet,” Chakrabarty insists, “imagination is a word with a long and complex history in European thought. In addition,” he adds, “its status as a criterion for judging literary merit has been questioned in discussions of Sanskrit aesthetics” (p.174).

Chakrabarty then turns to provide a brief sketch of the history of the word. According to him, “the word comes out of seventeenth-century theories of psychology and makes its way through many debates and through Hume, Kant, Schelling, and others into Coleridge’s theories of ‘primary’ and ‘secondary imagination’ in *Biographia Literaria*.In its use in Europeanromanticism,” Chakrabarty insists, “the word has deep connections to Christian conceptions ofthe divine, and even its later secular form cannot quite overcome an olderdistinction between the mind and the senses” (p.174).

From here, Chakrabarty goes on to submit that “[i]magination … remains a mentalist, subject-centered category in Anderson’s thought-provoking account of nationalism” (p.175). By contrast, he emphasizes, “*darshan* or *divyadrishti* (divine sight), names which Chakrabarty uses “for a family of viewing practices —as they occur in modern Bengali nationalist writing are not necessarily subject-centered, mentalist categories” (p.175). Indeed, he continues, “to follow the more contemporary Deleuzian instincts of analysis, one could say that the moment of practice is a moment that bypasses—and not just dissolves—the subject-object distinction” (p.175).

Chakrabarty emphasizes the ambivalence, the undecidability, of “‘imagination’ in its mentalist sense and ‘divine sight’, *divyadrishti*, as something belonging to the history of practice.” According to Chakrabarty, “[t]here is no doubt that the Tagorean move of transcending the historical in order to be able to see an India already worthy of adoration owes a debt to European romanticism and to its mentalist categories.” To this end, he adds, Tagore’s “reference to Keats and his critique of ‘utility’, as well as his spiritual/material distinctions, mix Vedantic thought with European romanticism.” Nevertheless, Chakrabarty contends, “[i]f the moment of ‘seeing beyond’ includes phenomena such as *darshan* or *divyadrishti* that do not necessarily require the assumption of a subject, then there are interesting implications for how the category ‘imagination’ may be addressed in postcolonial histories” (p.176).

Chakrabarty thus draws the conclusion that, “[t]ogether, these modes of perception suggest that ‘imagination’ can be both a subject-centered and a subjectless practice.” He, furthermore, suggests that “[t]his inherent plurality of the category ‘imagination’ is also what in the end makes it impossible to see the political as something that constitutes a ‘one’ or a whole” (p.178).

Chakrabarty ends the article by returning to the functions of prose versus poetry for Tagore. He remarks, “[o]ne was charged with the responsibility to locate the political in historical time; the other created a political that resisted historicization.” And he goes on to surmise that “[t]his constitutional heterogeneity of the political mirrors the irreducible pluralities that contend in the history of the word ‘imagination’” (p.179).

A subtle, but nevertheless, profound critique of the universalizability of the framework of “imagined communities” through which Anderson conceptualises the nation-form.

**Whose Imagined Community?**

Partha Chatterjee, too, questions the universalizing applicability of Anderson’s conceptualisation of the nation-form. In the opening chapter, “Whose Imagined Community,” to his 1993 book, *The Nation and Its Fragments. Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Chatterjee accuses Anderson’s attempt to treat the phenomenon of nationalism “as part of the universal history of the modern world” (p.5) of ending up effectively denying the agency of colonized peoples.

Like Chakrabarty, Chatterjee begins by recognising many virtues in Anderson’s account. According to Chatterjee, “Anderson demonstrated with much subtlety and originality that nations were not the determinate products of given sociological conditions such as language or race or religion; they had been, in Europe and everywhere else in the world, imagined into existence.” Chatterjee also commends Anderson for “describ[ing] some of the major institutional forms through which this imagined community came to acquire concrete shape, especially the institutions of what he so ingeniously-called ‘print-capitalism’.”

Where Chatterjee finds fault with Anderson is with the next step in his argument. As Chatterjee summarizes that next step, Anderson “then argued that the historical experience of nationalism in Western Europe, in the Americas, and in Russia had supplied for all subsequent nationalisms a set of modular forms from which nationalist elites in Asia and Africa had chosen the ones they liked” (pp.4-5).

This leads Chatterjee to present his “one central objection to Anderson’s argument.” In Chatterjee’s provocative formulation: “If nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain ‘modular’ forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine? History, it would seem, has decreed that we in the postcolonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity. Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of our anticolonial resistance and postcolonial misery. Even our imaginations must remain forever colonized” (p.5).

Chatterjee continues by clarifying that he does not “object to this argument … for any sentimental reason.” Rather, he insists, he “object[s] because [he] cannot reconcile it with the evidence on anticolonial nationalism.” According to Chatterjee, “[t]he most powerful as well as the most creative results of the nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa are posited not on an identity but rather on a *difference* with the ‘modular’ forms of the national society propagated by the modern West.” Since this is so, he asks, “[h]ow can we ignore this without reducing the experience of anticolonial nationalism to a caricature of itself?” (p.5).

Part of the problem, Chatterjee contends, has to do with the rather exclusive focus of histories of nationalism on the contest for the state. Such an exclusive focus, Chatterjee insists, misses some of the central dynamics of anticolonial nationalism which precede and in part escape the logic of the explicitly political contest. As Chatterjee sees it, “anticolonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it begins its political battle with the imperial power. It does this by dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains – the material and the spiritual.” On the one hand, Chatterjee argues, “[t]he material is the domain of the ‘outside’, of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology, a domain where the West had proved its superiority and the East had succumbed. In this domain, then, Western superiority had to be acknowledged and its accomplishments carefully studied and replicated.” On the other hand, Chatterjee continues, “[t]he spiritual … is an ‘inner’ domain bearing the ‘essential’ marks of cultural identity.” From this, Chatterjee concludes: “[t]he greater one’s success in imitating Western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctiveness of one’s spiritual culture. This formula,” Chatterjee posits, is “a fundamental feature of anticolonial nationalisms in Asia and Africa” (p.6).

Here is where the creativity, the agency, in anticolonial nationalist dynamics is located, according to Chatterjee. In his words: “here nationalism launches its most powerful, creative, and historically significant project: to fashion a ‘modern’ national culture that is nevertheless not Western.” From this point, he goes on to contend, “[i]f the nation is an imagined community, then this is where it is brought into being.” And crucially, he continues: “[i]n this, its true and essential domain, the nation is already sovereign, even when the state is in the hands of the colonial power.” He therefore concludes: “[t]he dynamics of this historical project is completely missed in conventional histories in which the story of nationalism begins with the contest for political power” (p.6).

Even where Chatterjee proves quite sympathetic to Anderson’s account, for example, in the emphasis on the processes of print capitalism, he nevertheless makes a point of stressing that Anderson is wrong to imply that European patterns of development were somehow simply transposed elsewhere. As Chatterjee formulates the argument: “Anderson is certainly correct in his suggestion that it is ‘print-capitalism’ which provides the new institutional space for the development of the modern ‘national’ language.” Even so, he goes on to add: “[h]owever, the specificities of the colonial situation do not allow a simple transposition of European patterns of development.” To make the case, he brings up Bengal. In his words: “In Bengal, for instance, it is at the initiative of the East India Company and the European missionaries that the first printed books are produced in Bengali at the end of the eighteenth century and the first narrative prose compositions composed at the beginning of the nineteenth” (p.7).

Chatterjee ends his argument by insisting on the distinction between community and state. He contends that “autonomous forms of imagination of the community were, and continue to be, overwhelmed and swamped by the history of the postcolonial state.” In this vein, he emphasizes: “[h]ere lies the root of our postcolonial misery: not in our inability to think out new forms of the modern community but in our surrender to the old forms of the modern state.” By extension, Chatterjee suggests that the theoretical framework provided by Anderson is guilty of conflating the nation form with the state as well. He argues: “If the nation is an imagined community and if nations must also take the form of states, then our theoretical language must allow us to talk about community and state at the same time. I do not think our present theoretical language allows us to do this” (p.11). To carve out such a theoretical space is central to Chatterjee’s efforts in the book – or as he puts it, again provocatively: “[t]he project … is to claim for us, the once-colonized, our freedom of imagination” (p.13).

**Rethinking the Modular Nation Form**

If Chatterjee would thus seek to repudiate Anderson’s argument about the modularity of the nation-form, Manu Goswami attempts a reformulation and adaptation of the notion of modularity in her important 2002 article, “Rethinking the Modular Nation Form: Toward a Sociohistorical Conception of Nationalism.” In the article, Goswami sets out to “critically reconstruct Benedict Anderson's concept of nationalism through the optic of recent calls to mediate the canonical opposition between objectivity and subjectivity” (p.770). She claims that “[a] central task for scholars of nationalism is to fashion a framework that integrates and treats as methodologically inseparable the objective and subjective dimensions of nationalism as a modern social form” (p.771).

To this end, she notes that “historians Geoff Eley and Ronald Suny identify Anderson's *Imagined Communities* as inaugurating a fundamental methodological reorientation from ‘structural and materialist’ to ‘cultural studies’ perspectives on nationalism” (p.771). She further points out that, though “[f]rom an interdisciplinary perspective, his work marks the genealogical locus of contemporary subjectivist approaches to nationalism,” these works nevertheless “have largely ignored or consciously repudiated his argument about the modular character of nationalism” (p.771).

Goswami holds Anderson’s theory in high regard. More specifically, she maintains that, “[w]hatever its deficiencies, Anderson's theory of nationalism sought to elucidate the historically novel discursive structure of national imaginings and embed them within broader historical transformations. It attempted to theorize in tandem shifts in technological institutions, cultural categories, and categorical identities. More particularly,” she continues, “his account of the modular character of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century nationalism directed attention to the transregional circulation and transplantation of nationalist discourses, symbols, and strategies. And in so doing,” she contends, “it underlined the importance of the global and comparative-historical aspects of nationalism.” Goswami further “suggest[s] that the concept of modular nationalism … is central to the attempt to combine the insights of objective and subjective approaches” (p.771). Thus her attempt to rework Anderson’s notion of modularity to address what she sees as the inadequacies of his formulation.

According to Goswami, these inadequacies include “an insufficient specification of the historical specificity and constitution of the modular character of nationalism.” Goswami argues that “Anderson's attempt to close the gap between objectivist and subjectivist approaches is undermined by a central tension between what [she] call[s] sociohistorical versus ideal-typical conceptions of modular nationalism” (p.772).

For Goswami, Anderson goes wrong “[b]y conceptualizing modularity as a universal process of mimesis (of self-identical repetition through time and across space) rather than a historically constituted systemic dimension of the modern nation form.” This allegedly leads “Anderson [to] privilege the subjectivist dimensions of nationalism and [to fail to] pay sufficient attention to dynamic and ‘eventful’ reconfigurations of nationalism” (p.772).

What exactly does Goswami mean by criticizing Anderson for erring on the side of the subjectivist dimension? What is wrong with an excessively-subjectivist approach? Goswami is willing to acknowledge that “[m]any recent subjectivist approaches to nationalism have sharpened our understanding of the internal tensions within nationalist discourse, especially the fraught management of race, gender, and class differences; the dispersed disciplinary regimes that shape nationalist practices; and the interpellation of individuals and collectivities into normative national subjects.” Nevertheless, despite these virtues, she criticizes such works for “hav[ing] paid less attention to the ways in which broader social processes and institutions – such as the dynamics of the modern inter-state system, the universalizing logic of capital, the institutionalized tie between nationhood and statehood – shape the sociopolitical and discursive structure of nationalism” (p.775).

Goswami contends that, though “Anderson does not explicitly elaborate his theory of modular nationalism with reference to the problematic of mediating between objective and subjective dimensions,” his framework nevertheless “contains sustained moments of a challenge both to objectivism … and to subjectivism” (p.776).

Goswami summarizes Anderson’s account as positing “a constitutive nexus between the print-capitalist reconstitution of language, the novel apprehension of temporality it engendered, and the discursive matrix of national imaginings” (p.777). She points out that, according to Anderson, “[t]he modular character of nationalism emerged only in the mid- to late nineteenth century,” after “[t]he accumulated print-memory of the French revolution and nationalist movements in the Americas assumed by the mid-nineteenth century the status of a globally available ‘concept, model, and indeed blueprint’” (p.778).

Goswami contends that “Anderson's narrative about the modular nature of nationalism contains a strong, if implicit, assumption of ‘path-dependency’, that is, the notion that temporally prior nationalist movements significantly shape the dynamic and trajectory of later nationalist movements” (p.778). As she thus puts it: “for Anderson, modular refers to path-dependent and translocal transplantation of particular nationalist models through time and across space” (p.779).

Goswami relays that “Anderson's concept of modular nationalism has been criticized from two closely related perspectives.” On the one hand, “some scholars have claimed that the conception of modular nationalism privileges the role of large-scale structural shifts at the expense of a concrete analysis of which social groups were most invested in discourses of nationhood.” On the other, “various other theorists,” including Chatterjee, “have argued that the idea of modular nationalism erases the specificity of nationalist movements, especially anti-colonial nationalism, and sets up an hierarchical distinction between origin and copy” (p.779).

Both versions of this critique, Goswami contends, “take issue with the homogenizing implications of Anderson's analysis.” At the same time, she insists, both versions of this critique “presuppose, and rhetorically overstate, the particularity of nationalist imaginings” (p.779). Whereas these critics would seek to abolish the notion of modularity, Goswami argues in favour of “a substantive reformulation of the concept” instead (p.779).

Goswami accuses Anderson of espousing an ideal-typical conceptualization of modularity, one that spreads through mimesis and “transplantation.” Such notions, she insists, suggest, “in the manner of diffusion models dear to modernization theorists, reiteration without change, and establish a problematic hierarchy between origin and copy” (p.781).

Perhaps even more importantly, Goswami contends, “insofar as ideal-typical conceptions assume a universal and transhistorical process of mimesis, they are unable to pose, let alone address, questions” such as: “what accounts for the historical clustering of nationalist movements at particular sociohistorical conjunctures such as 1848, the 1870s, 1914-1915, the 1960s, and 1989-1991?” According to Goswami, “[t]hese questions cannot be addressed through abstract theoretical frameworks without doing violence to the realities of multiple causalities, contingent conjunctures, and ‘eventful transformations’ that inform social and political life (p.781).

She further argues, in a vein ironically somewhat reminiscent to that of Bhabha, that “[t]he static assumptions intrinsic to an understanding of modularity as mimesis are especially apparent in Anderson's selective appropriation of Walter Benjamin's account of capitalist historicity as ‘homogenous, empty time’” (p.782). Goswami emphasizes that “Benjamin's quarrel with the conception of a ‘homogenous, empty time’ led him to refashion the motif of imitation as remembering a suppressed past. Acts of collective, critical remembering contain the potential of breaking the perceived homogenous, empty flow of progress, of seizing the possibilities of the present, and mediating between the past and the present, the actual and the possible” (p.782).

Along Benjaminian lines, what Goswami calls “[a] sociohistorical conception of modularity would emphasize the possibility of reconstitution based upon a historically constituted range of possibilities and the contradictory spatio-temporal dynamic of capitalism” (p.783). Goswami thus attempts a reformulation of “the concept of modularity in a way that retains Anderson's insight about the path-dependent character of nationalism, but abandons its teleological and static assumptions” (p.783).

Rather than modularity understood as transplantation, Goswami advocates a conception of modularity understood as transposition. She explains: “[i]nherent to the transposition--as opposed to the transplantation-of social forms is the agentic and dynamic reconfiguration of cultural categories, institutional repertoires, and meanings. A conception of modularity as transposability implies a process of on-going, path-dependent, and ‘eventful’ transformations rather than the static replication of received social and cultural forms” (p.785).

Goswami goes on to argue that “modularity was the discursive counterpart to the changes initiated by the deepening, widening and intensification of multi-scalar and multi-temporal processes of global capitalist and colonial restructuring.” According to Goswami, “[t]he structuration of the nation form as modular during this period was made possible by a range of interlocking processes.” These include: “(a) the increasing ‘superimposition and interpenetration’ of socioeconomic cultural relations, and the competitive rescaling of social relations along national-territorial lines; (b) the formation of states as spatio-temporal frameworks of power in conjunction with the emergence of a dynamic, relational, and structured field of inter-state relations; (c) the discursive co-constitution and the growing intertextuality of nationalist discourse in a range of regional contexts; and (d) the nationalization and naturalization of social and cultural categories of practice and understanding” (pp.786-787).

Goswami’s account of modularity hones in on “[t]he decades between the late 1870s and 1914,” which “marked, for instance, the unprecedented dissemination of nationalist movements in both colonized and imperial-national contexts in Europe, South Asia, and East Asia.” According to Goswami, “[t]hese nationalist movements were distinguished by widely shared particularistic and organic conceptions of nationhood, evinced in the novel emphasis placed on common territory, language, ethnicity, and race as the essential markers of nationhood.” Moreover, she continues, “[l]ate nineteenth- and early twentieth-century nationalisms discursively converged around an invocation of an already existent, internally homogenous, and externally distinctive nation; widely shared historicist claims that sovereign statehood was the culmination of an inner dialectic; and a profoundly statist orientation that reflected the progressive institutionalization of the link between nationhood and statehood” (pp.791-792). Finally, she adds: “During the early twentieth century, [what she calls] the intertextuality of nationalist discourse sharpened with the generalization of the doctrine of self-determination in its Wilsonian and Leninist articulations” (p.792).

Goswami draws two methodological conclusions from her sociohistoric reworking of the concept of the modular nation. These are, first, that “the origins, character, and trajectory of particular nationalist movements cannot be understood apart from a simultaneous focus on their articulation with a historically specific relational and dynamic global field.” Moreover, second, she insists, “the notion of a dynamic and relational field implies both objective and subjective relations of interdependence and formal equivalence” (p.792).

Goswami’s reworked notion of modularity also allows her to make a prediction of sorts – namely, it “suggests the limits of perspectives that view the future of the nation-state and nationalism as one of either imminent dissolution or mechanical reproduction” (p.796). In a word, the nation form is, for now, here to stay, though it is also bound to evolve in perhaps unforeseeable ways.

**No Longer in a Future Heaven**

In the concluding chapter, “No Longer in a Future Heaven: Nationalism, Gender, and Race,” from her 1995 book *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, Anne McClintock takes Benedict Anderson as well as most of his critics to task for ignoring the way in which the nation is always gendered. She begins the chapter by recalling Anderson’s warning against Gellner’s dictum that nationalism invents nations “that Gellner tends to associate invention with falsity rather than with imagining and creation.” She rehearsed Anderson’s view that “nations, in his all too famous phrase, [are] ‘imagined communities’ - in the sense that they are systems of cultural representation whereby people come to imagine a shared experience of identification with an extended community.” From this, she proceeds to emphasise that, “[a]s such, nations are not simply phantasmagoria of the mind but are historical practices through which social difference is both invented and performed.” But then, crucially, she adds: “Nationalism becomes, as a result, radically constitutive of people's identities through social contests that are frequently violent and **always gendered**. Yet,” she concludes, “if the invented nature of nationalism has found wide theoretical currency, explorations of the gendering of the national imaginary have been conspicuously paltry” (p.353).

McClintock emphasizes that “[a]ll nations depend on powerful constructions of gender.” In her words: “Despite many nationalists' ideological investment in the idea of popular unity, nations have historically amounted to the sanctioned institutionalization of gender difference” (p.353). And yet, she argues, “with the notable exception of Frantz Fanon, male theorists have seldom felt moved to explore how nationalism is implicated in gender power” (p.353).

McClintock quotes the path-breaking work of Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias, who “identify five major ways in which women have been implicated in nationalism: (1) as biological reproducers of the members of national collectivities; (2) as reproducers of the boundaries of national groups (through restrictions on sexual or marital relations); (3) as active transmitters and producers of the national culture; (4) as symbolic signifiers of national difference; and (5) as active participants in national struggles” (p.355).

She goes on to sketch the contours of what she thinks the elaboration of a feminist theory of nationalism would entail. According to McClintock, such a theory should be “strategically fourfold: (1) investigating the gendered formation of sanctioned male theories; (2) bringing into historical visibility women’s active cultural and political participation in national formations; (3) bringing nationalist institutions into critical relation with other social structures and institutions; and (4) at the same time paying scrupulous attention to the structures of racial, ethnic and class power that continue to bedevil privileged forms of feminism” (p.357).

In the rest of the chapter, she tries to live up to this fourfold scholarly agenda, by paying extended attention to the writings of Frantz Fanon in particular, before engaging in a critical feminist analysis of the racialized, classed, and gendered trajectories of the nationalisms of the Afrikaner community and of the African National Congress in the South African context.

Let us here, however, focus on the attention she pays to Benedict Anderson in the course of her account. In a preliminary section on “The Gendering of Nation Time,” McClintock quotes Bhabha, who, following Anderson, writes: “Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye.” She goes on to emphasize that “Bhabha and Anderson borrow here from Walter Benjamin’s crucial insight into the temporal paradox of modernity.” She adds: “For Benjamin, a central feature of nineteenth-century industrial capitalism was the "use of archaic images to identify what was historically new about the nature of commodities. In Benjamin's insight, the mapping of Progress depends on systematically inventing images of archaic time to identify what is historically new about enlightened, national progress. Anderson can thus ask: “Supposing ‘antiquity’ were, at a certain historical juncture, the necessary consequence of novelty?” (p.358).

From this point, she goes on to argue: “What is less often noticed, however, is that the temporal anomaly within nationalism – veering between nostalgia for the past and the impatient, progressive sloughing off of the past – is typically resolved by figuring the contradiction in the representation of time as a natural division of gender.” She therefore contends: “Women are represented as the atavistic and authentic body of national tradition (inert, backward-looking and natural), embodying nationalism 's conservative principle of continuity. Men, by contrast represent the progressive agent of national modernity (forward-thrusting, potent and historic), embodying nationalism's progressive, or revolutionary principle of discontinuity. Nationalism's anomalous relation to time is thus managed as a natural relation to gender” (pp.358-359).

McClintock concludes: “National time is thus not only secularized, it is also domesticated. Social evolutionism and anthropology,” she insists, “gave to national politics a concept of natural time as familial. In the image of the Family Tree, evolutionary progress was represented as a series of anatomically distinct family types organized into a linear procession, from the ‘childhood’ of ‘primitive’ races to the enlightened ‘adulthood’ of European imperial nationalism” (p.359).

In the chapter, McClintock also takes aim at Anderson’s emphasis on print capitalism, arguing instead that nationalism relies more on what she calls mass national commodity spectacle. In the course of her account of the trajectory of Afrikaner nationalism, with a focus on the episode of the so-called Second Trek, she comments: “In our time, national collectivity is experienced preeminently through spectacle . Here I depart from Anderson, who sees nationalism as emerging primarily from the Gutenberg technology of print capitalism. Anderson,” she contends, “neglects the fact that print capital has, until recently, been accessible to a relatively small literate elite. Indeed,” she suggests, “the singular power of nationalism since the late nineteenth century has been its capacity to organize a sense of popular, collective unity through the management of mass national commodity spectacle” (p.374).

“In this respect,” she goes on to argue, “nationalism inhabits the realm of fetishism. Despite the commitment of European nationalism to the idea of the nation-state as the embodiment of rational progress, nationalism has been experienced and transmitted primarily through fetishism – precisely the cultural form that the Enlightenment denigrated as the antithesis of Reason. More often than not,” she insists, “nationalism takes shape through the visible, ritual organization of fetish objects – flags, uniforms, airplane logos, maps, anthems, national flowers, national cuisines and architectures as well as through the organization of collective fetish spectacle in team sports, military displays, mass rallies, the myriad forms of popular culture and so on. Far from being purely phallic icons,” she emphasizes, “fetishes embody crises in social value, which are projected onto and embodied in, what can be called impassioned objects.” Yet, she concludes, “[c]onsiderable work remains to be done on the ways in which women consume, refuse or negotiate the male fetish rituals of national spectacle” (pp.374-375).

**Conclusion**

Let us, therefore, conclude. In this lecture, we have brought into focus the topic of nations, nation-states, and postcolonialism, through an extended engagement with the work of Benedict Anderson and his critics – including Homi Bhabha, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Partha Chatterjee, Manu Goswami, and Anne McClintock. In the process, we interrogated the nature of Anderson’s claim that the nation is best conceived as an ***imagined*** community. We also explored in some depth Anderson’s argument about the rise of a new conception of temporality, what he calls, following Walter Benjamin, “homogenous-empty time,” as a condition of possibility for the emergence of national consciousness. We further investigated Anderson’s claim about the role of processes of print capitalism in the diffusion and mediation of national consciousness, as well as his argument about the modularity of the nation-form. We ended with a discussion of the absence of a gender analytic in Anderson’s account.