



The Heart of Whiteness

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THE HEART OF WHITENESS*

By Arjun Appadurai

Post-Discursive Colonies

For those of us who grew up in the elite sectors of the postcolonial world, nationalism was our commonsense and the principal justification for our ambitions, our strategies and our sense of moral well-being. Now, almost a half century after independence was achieved for many of the “new” nations, the nation form is under attack, and that too from many points of view. As the ideological alibi of the territorial state, it is the last refuge of ethnic totalitarianism. In important critiques it has been called the “postcolony” (Mbembe “Banality”), and its discourses have been shown to be deeply implicated in the discourses of colonialism itself. It has frequently been a vehicle for the staged self-doubts of the heroes of the new nations—Sukarno, Kenyatta, Nehru, Nasser—who fiddled with nationalism while the public spheres of their societies were beginning to burn. So, for postcolonial intellectuals such as myself, the question is: does patriotism have a future?

To answer this question requires not just an engagement with the problematics of the nation form, of the imagined community (Anderson), of the production of the “people” (Balibar), of the narrativity of nations (Bhabha) and of the colonial logics of nationalist discourse (Chatterjee). It also requires a close examination of the discourses of the state, and of the discourses that are contained within the hyphen that links nation to state (Appadurai; Mbembe “Belly”). The essay that follows is an exploration of one dimension of this hyphen.

There is a disturbing tendency in the Western academy today to divorce the study of discourse forms from the study of other institutional forms, and the study of literary discourses from the mundane discourses of bureaucracies, armies, private corporations and non-state social organizations. This essay is, in part, a plea for a widening of the field of discourse studies: if the postcolony is in part a discursive formation, it is also true that discursivity has become too exclusively the sign and space of the colony and the postcolony, in contemporary cultural studies.

To widen the sense of what counts as discourse demands a corresponding widening of the sphere of the postcolony, to extend it beyond the geographical spaces of the ex-colonial world. In raising the issue of the *postnational*, the central concern of this essay, I will suggest that the journey from the space of the ex-colony (a colorful space, a space of color) to the space of the postcolony is a journey that takes us into the heart of whiteness. This essay ends therefore with some thoughts on plurality, diversity and democracy in the United States.

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The Trope of the Tribe

In spite of all the evidence to the contrary, these are hard times for patriotism. Maimed bodies and barbed wire in Eastern Europe, xenophobic violence in France, flag-waving in the political rituals of the election year here in the United States, all seem to suggest that the willingness to die for one's country is still a global fashion. But patriotism is an unstable sentiment, which thrives only at the level of the nation-state. Below that level it is easily supplanted by more intimate loyalties; above that level, it gives way to empty slogans rarely backed by the will to sacrifice or to kill. So when thinking about the future of patriotism, it is necessary first to inquire into the health of the nation-state.

My doubts about patriotism are tied up with my father's biography, in which patriotism and nationalism were already diverging terms. As a war correspondent for Reuters in Bangkok in 1940, he met an expatriate Indian nationalist, Subhas Chandra Bose, who split with Gandhi and Nehru on the issue of violence. Bose had escaped from British surveillance in India, and with the active support of the Japanese, established a government-in-exile in South-East Asia. The army Bose formed from Indian officers and enlisted men whom the Japanese had taken prisoner called itself the Indian National Army. This Indian army was roundly defeated by the British Indian army in Assam (on Indian soil, as my father never tired of noting) in 1944, and the Provisional Government of Azad Hind (Free India), in which my father was Minister of Publicity and Propaganda, soon crumbled with the defeat of the Axis powers.

When my father returned to India in 1945, he and his comrades were unwelcome heroes, poor cousins in the story of the nationalist struggle for Indian independence. They were patriots, but Bose's anti-British sentiments and his links with the Axis made him an embarrassment both to Gandhi's non-violence and Nehru's Fabian anglophilia. To the end of his life, my father and his comrades remained pariah patriots, rogue nationalists. My brothers and I grew up in Bombay wedged between ex-patriotism, Bose-style, and bourgeois nationalism, Nehru style. *Our* India, with its Japanese connections and anti-Western ways, carried the nameless aroma of treason, in respect to the cozy alliance of the Nehrus and the Mountbattens, and the bourgeois compact between Gandhian non-violence and Nehruvian socialism. My father's gut distrust of the Nehru dynasty (and his whispers of unholy affections between Nehru and Lady Mountbatten) predisposed us to imagine a strange, deterritorialized India, invented in Taiwan and Singapore, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur, quite independent of New Delhi and the Nehrus, the Congress Party and mainstream nationalism.

So there is a special appeal for me in the possibility that the marriage between nations and states was always a marriage of convenience, and that patriotism needs to find new objects of desire. The many explosions of ethnicity, anti-government riots, refugee flows, and state-generated atrocity we see around the world are evidence that this is a marriage on the rocks. Our deep attachment, as Americans, to what we call our "country," has so far contained the tension between our deep fervor about the nation and our deep suspicions of the state. This attachment also has generated the widespread (and unthinkingly racist) image of *tribalism*, which dominates the media, in analyses of Los Angeles and New York, Sarajevo and Sri Lanka, Iraq and Miami.

It used to be that words like "tribe" and "tribalism" were parts of the technical vocabulary of anthropology, used in textbooks to refer to kin-based societies, contrasted

equally with hunter-gatherer bands, peasant communities, monarchies, urban societies, nomadic groups and modern nation-states. But in the last year or two, tribalism has become the buzz word in much media coverage of urban riots in the United States, of ethnic violence in Eastern Europe and elsewhere, of separatist militance in Africa, Asia and Latin America. In analyzing the recent, ethnically based nationalisms, especially in Europe, we have found the misleading image of tribalism all too comforting. It allows us to see various minorities in our own society as well as all sorts of ethnic others around the world as still caught in a past which we have left behind. It indulges our tendency to distinguish *our* violence from *their* violence by seeing it as somehow more mindless, more mob-like, more bloody, less moral, less heroic, in a word, as *tribal*. Our violence, on the other hand, is always seen as more purposive, more organized, more skilled, more deliberate, and thus, implicitly somehow both more civil and more civilized, even when it is mercenary and massive. We need to revise our notion that ethnic and nationalist stirrings around the world, and in our urban backyards, are a throwback to something deep, biological, bloody and ancient (Comaroff).

This is not just a plea for politically correct anthropology, however. Recent letters to the editors of several prominent magazines, on both sides of the Atlantic, have pointed to the invidiousness of describing light-skinned groups as ethnic and dark-skinned ones as tribal, and there are signs that the Western media might clean up this obviously racist double standard. The loose use of the image of tribalism certainly revives our deepest racial images of black Africans and native Americans, of blind loyalties and arcane rituals, of cannibals and kings. Worse, the image of tribalism seduces us to focus on a few powerful images of violence, terror and displacement which surround ethnicity and the nation-state. But we have lost track of what may be going on less dramatically behind the mayhem on the front pages and our television screens, and that is a steady erosion of the values and commitments that guarantee the future of the nation-state.

One major fact which accounts for strains in the marriage of nation and state is that the nationalist genie, never perfectly contained in the bottle of the territorial state, is now itself a diasporic. Carried in the repertoires of increasingly mobile populations of refugees, tourists, guestworkers, transnational intellectuals, scientists, and illegal aliens, it is increasingly unrestrained by ideas of spatial boundary and territorial sovereignty. This massive revolution in the foundations of nationalism has crept up on us virtually unnoticed. Where soil and place were once the key to the linkage of territorial affiliation with state monopoly of the means of violence, key identities and identifications now only partially revolve around the realities and images of place. In the Sikh demand for Khalistan, in French-Canadian feelings about Quebec, in Palestinian demands for self-determination, images of a homeland are only part of the rhetoric of popular sovereignty and do not necessarily reflect a territorial bottom line. The considerable violence and terror surrounding the breakdown of many existing nation-states is not a sign of reversion to anything biological or innate, dark or primordial. What then are we to make of this renewed blood-lust in the name of the nation?

Modern nationalisms involve communities of citizens in the territorially defined nation-state who share the collective experience, not of face-to-face contact or common subordination to a royal person, but of reading books, pamphlets, newspapers, maps and other modern texts together (Calhoun; Habermas; Warner). In and through these collective experiences of what Benedict Anderson calls print capitalism (Anderson), citizens

imagine themselves to belong to a national society. The modern nation-state, in this view, grows less out of natural facts—such as language, blood, soil and race—and more as a quintessential cultural product, a product of the collective imagination. This is very far from the views of the dominant theories of nationalism, from Herder to Mazzini and since then to all sorts of right-wing nationalists, who see nations as products of the natural destinies of peoples, whether rooted in language, race, soil or religion. It has recently been argued that historical conjunctures concerning reading and publicity, texts and their linguistic mediations, nations and their narratives, can usefully be considered together to understand the internationalization of mass-mediated public spheres (Lee).

The leaders of the new nations formed in Asia and Africa after World War II—Nasser, Nehru, Sukarno—would have been distressed to see the frequency with which the ideas of tribalism and nationalism are conflated in recent public discourse in the West. These leaders spent a great deal of their rhetorical energies in urging their subjects to give up what they saw as primordial loyalties—to family, tribe, caste and region—in the interests of the fragile abstractions they called India, Egypt and Indonesia. They understood that the new nations needed to subvert and annex the primary loyalties attached to more intimate collectivities. They rested their ideas of their new nations on the very edges of the paradox that modern nations were intended to be somehow open, universal, modern and emancipatory by virtue of their special commitment to citizenly virtue but that *their* nations were nonetheless, in some essential way, different from and even better than other nations. In many ways these leaders knew what we have tended to forget, namely that nations, especially in multi-ethnic settings, are tenuous collective projects, not eternal natural facts. This much seems uncontested, even orthodox.

But the idea of the recent nationalisms as being the products of some longstanding ethnic ooze—as tribal—also distracts us from the extent to which the new ethnicities are direct products of and responses to the policies of various nation-states over the last century or more. Much of the force of and the sense of what it is to be Serbian or Kurdish, Tajik or Armenian, Sinhala or Samoan, are the products of *modern*, state-sponsored censuses and ethnologies, surveys and folklore, atlases and settlement policies. Slovak conflicts with Czechs, Croat conflict with Serbs, are impossible to imagine without the peculiar state structures into which these peoples were placed after World War I, in the wake of the collapse of the Hapsburg, Ottoman and Russian empires. Much of the intensity of communal terror between Hindus and Muslims in India can be traced to the special ways in which religious communities were put into separate electorates by the British in the early part of the twentieth century. The divide between Sinhala and Tamils in Sri Lanka owes at least as much to decisions about the Sinhala language as the exclusive medium of instruction in the post-colonial university system in Sri Lanka and to the exploitation of religious hatreds in the context of electoral politics there. As Eric Hobsbawm has recently noted (Hobsbawm), it was Stalin who gave Lithuania its capital city (it was previously in Poland) and Tito who created a bigger Serbia with a much larger Serbian minority in his effort to *contain* Serbian nationalism.

The modern nation-state, in its preoccupation with the control, classification and surveillance of its subjects, has often created, revitalized or fractured ethnic identities that were previously fluid, negotiable or nascent. Of course the terms used to mobilize ethnic violence today may have long histories. But the realities to which they refer—Serbo-Croatian language, Basque customs, Lithuanian cuisine—were most often crystallized in

the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Constructed traditions for nascent nationhoods, rather than natural facts waiting for political expression. Nationalism and ethnicity thus feed each other, as nationalists construct ethnic categories which in turn drive others to construct counter-ethnicities, and then, in times of political crisis these others demand counter-states, based on newfound counter-nationalisms. For every nationalism that appears to be naturally destined, there is another that is a reactive by-product.

While violence in the name of Serbs and Mollucans, Khmer and Latvians, Germans and Jews, tempts us to think that all such identities run dark and deep, we need only turn to the recent riots in India occasioned by the report of a Government Commission which recommended reserving a large percentage of government jobs for certain castes defined by the census and the constitution as "backward." Much rioting and carnage, and not a few killings and suicides, took place in North India over such labels as OBC ("Other Backward Castes") which come out of the terminological distinctions of the Indian census and its specialized protocols and schedules. How astonishing it seems that anyone would die or kill for entitlements associated with being the member of an "Other Backward Caste." Yet this case is not an exception, but in its macabre bureaucratic banality shows how the technical needs of censuses and welfare legislation, combined with the cynical tactics of electoral politics, can draw groups into quasi-racial identifications and fears. The matter is not so different as it may appear for such apparently "natural" labels as Jew, Arab, German and Hindu, each of which involves people who choose these labels, others who are forced into them, yet others who through their philological scholarship shore up the histories of these labels or find them handy ways of tidying up messy problems of language and history, race and belief.

Thus, minorities in many parts of the world are as artificial as the majorities they are seen to threaten: "whites" in the United States, Hindus in India, Englishmen in Great Britain, all are examples of how the political and administrative designation of some groups as "minorities" (blacks and hispanics in the United States, Celts and Pakistanis in the United Kingdom, Muslims and Christians in India) helps to pull majorities (silent or vocal) together under labels with short lives but long histories. The new ethnicities are often no older than the nation-states which they have come to resist. Ethnic nationalisms are frequently reactive and defensive rather than spontaneous or deep-rooted, as the tribalist model would have us believe. The Muslims of Bosnia are being reluctantly ghettoized though there is fear among both Serbians and Croats about the possibility of an Islamic state in Europe. Minorities are as often made as they are born.

Recent ethnic movements often involve thousands, often millions of people, spread across vast territories and often separated by vast distances. Whether we consider the linkage of Serbs separated by large chunks of Bosnia-Herzegovina; or Kurds spread across Iran, Iraq and Turkey; or Sikhs spread through London, Vancouver and California, as well as the Indian Punjab—the new ethno-nationalisms are complex, large-scale, highly coordinated acts of mobilization, reliant on news, logistical flows and propaganda across state borders. They can hardly be considered tribal, if by this we mean that they are spontaneous uprisings of closely bonded, spatially segregated, naturally allied groupings. In the case we find most frightening today, what we could call Serbian "tribalism" is hardly a simple thing since there are at least 2.8 million Yugoslav families who have produced about 1.4 mixed marriages between Serbs and Croats (Hobsbawm). To which tribe could these families be said to belong? In our horrified preoccupation with the shock-

troops of ethno-nationalism, we have lost sight of the confused sentiments of civilians, the torn loyalties of families which have members of warring groups within the same household, and the urgings of those who hold to the view that Serbs, Muslims and Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina have no fundamental enmity. What is harder to explain is how principles of ethnic affiliation, however dubious their provenience and fragile their pedigree, can mobilize large groups into violent action very rapidly.

What does seem clear is that the tribal model, insofar as it suggests pre-packaged passions waiting to explode, flies in the face of the contingencies that spark ethnic passion. The Sikhs, until recently the bulwark of the Indian army and historically the fighting arm of Hindu India against Muslim rule, today regard themselves as threatened by Hinduism and seem willing to accept aid and succor from Pakistan. The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina have been forced, reluctantly, to revitalize their Islamic affiliations. Far from activating long standing "tribal" sentiments, Bosnian Muslims are torn between their own conception of themselves as European Muslims (a term recently used by Ejub Ganic, vice-president of Bosnia) but transnational Islam is already actively involved in Bosnian warfare. Wealthy Bosnians who live abroad, in countries such as Turkey, are already buying weapons for the defense of Muslims in Bosnia.

The Heart of Whiteness

These global considerations have much to do with my own views about Americanness. Until a few years ago, I was content to live in that special space allotted to "foreigners," especially Anglophone, educated ones like myself, with faint traces of a British accent. As a black woman at a bus-stop in Chicago once said to me with approval, I was an *East* Indian. That was in 1972. But since that happy conversation two decades ago, it has become steadily less easy to see myself as somehow immune, armed with my Indian passport and my Anglophone ways, from the politics of racial identity in the United States. Not only is it that after two decades of being a "Resident Alien" in the United States, married to an Anglo-Saxon American woman, the father of a bi-cultural teenager, my Indian passport seems like a rather slight badge of identity. The net of racial politics is now cast wider than ever before on the streets of the urban USA.

I knew that things had changed one day in downtown Philadelphia in 1990, when my wife, my in-laws, my son and I were driving towards the Benjamin Franklin bridge, in a posh part of the city called Society Hill. Driving in caravan, we stopped to pick up my son's Choir Director, who was joining us on a trip to New Jersey. Double-parked on a one-way street for a brief moment, we heard a scream behind us. We turned to see an enraged white male poking his head out of the sun-roof of the car behind us, purple-faced, ready for action, enraged that his car (driven by another man) should have been momentarily slowed down by ours. I stepped out, as did my father-in-law from his car, to greet a stream of invective, in which the punchline, directed to me was: "Wipe that dot off your head, asshole" or words to that effect. The incident ended shortly thereafter, as we all walked up to the Rambo car, and with a few suitably middle-class expressions of shock and outrage, muted the screamer and shamed his companions. The fact that we were on a patrician street, rather than on, for example, a back street in Elizabeth, New Jersey, helped us turn the moral tables.

The screamer was probably from New Jersey, and his reference to wiping the dot off my head was an allusion to a hate-group in and around Jersey City, which has seen it come into considerable prominence. It has attacked Indians in the area (even killed one) and calls itself the Dotbusters. Their name refers to the mark that Indian women often wear as a mark of beauty and auspiciousness on their foreheads. The Dotbusters clearly intend their epithet to be not only racist but feminizing as well, since they do not know that in traditional India men too wore this sort of mark. My wife and I talked about the incident and realized that something historic, even if small-scale, had happened to me. I, and my fellow migrants from India, had arrived. Someone out there hated me. The stakes of my own diasporic existence here had somehow changed: I was certainly American now. I have since been wondering about the ugly side of Americanness and the special status of diasporic groups.

I am now well advanced on the road to becoming a person of color. It's not exactly that I thought I was white before, but as an anglophone academic born in India and teaching in the Ivy League, I was certainly hanging out in the field of dreams, and had no cause to think myself black. As a child brought up with a profound sense of color in a Brahmin household in Bombay, I was always aware of the bad marriage prospects of my darker female relatives, of the glorious "milky" skin of my father's dead father, of the horrible "blue" blackness that my mother swore I acquired when I played in the mid-day sun in Bombay. So even though I was as hip as the next person to the fact that black was beautiful, I preferred to stay brown myself.

My own complexion and its role in "minority" politics, as well as in street encounters with racial hatred in Philadelphia, prompt me to re-open the links between America and the United States, between bi-culturalism and patriotism, between diasporic identities and the stabilities provided by passports and green cards. Postnational loyalties are not irrelevant to the problem of diversity in the United States. If indeed a post-national order is in the making, and Americanness changes its meanings, the whole problem of diversity in American life will have to be re-thought.

This brings us back to the pervasive idiom and image of tribalism. Applied to New York, Miami and Los Angeles (as opposed to Sarajevo, Soweto or Sri Lanka) it both conceals and indulges a diffuse racism about those others (Haitians, Hispanics, Iranians and African-Americans) who have insinuated themselves into the American body politic. It allows us to maintain the idea of an Americanness which precedes (and subsists in spite of) the hyphens that contribute to it, and to maintain a distinction between "tribal" Americans (the black, the brown and the yellow) and other Americans. It facilitates the fantasy that civil society in the United States has a special destiny in regard to peaceful multiculturalism. Intelligent multiculturalism for us, bloody ethnicity or mindless tribalism for them.

There has developed a special set of links between democracy, diversity and prosperity in American social thought. Built on a complex dialogue between political science (the only genuine made-in-America social science without obvious European counterparts or antecedents) and vernacular constitutionalism, a comfortable equilibrium was established between the ideas of cultural diversity and one or another version of the melting pot. Swinging between the *National Geographic* and the *Reader's Digest*, this anodyne polarity has proved remarkably durable and comforting. It accommodates, sometimes on the same page or in the same breath, a sense that plurality is the American genius and that there is an Americanness that somehow contains and transcends plurality. This second, post-Civil War accommodation with difference is now on its last legs, and the PC / multiculturalism

debate is its peculiar, parochial Waterloo. Parochial because it insistently refuses to recognize that the challenge of diasporic pluralism is now global and that American solutions cannot be seen in isolation. Peculiar because there has been no systematic recognition that the politics of multiculturalism is now part and parcel of the extra-territorial nationalism of populations who love the United States but are not necessarily attached to America. More bluntly, neither popular nor academic thought in this country has come to terms with the difference between being a land of immigrants and being one node in a post-national network of diasporas.

In the post-national world we are seeing emerge, diaspora runs with, and not against, the grain of identity, movement and reproduction. Everyone has relatives working abroad. Many people—Muslims in Bosnia and Croats in Bosnia are only two recent examples—find themselves exiles without really having moved very far. Yet others find themselves in patterns of repeat migration—Indian indentured laborers who first went to East Africa in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and then found themselves pushed out of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania to find fresh travails in England and the United States. Chinese from Hong Kong buying real estate in Vancouver, Gujarati traders from Uganda opening motels in New Jersey and newspaper kiosks in New York, Sikh cab-drivers in Chicago and Philadelphia, Turkish guestworkers in Germany—these are all examples of a new sort of world in which diaspora is the order of things and settled ways of life are increasingly hard to find. The United States, always in its self-perception a land of immigrants, finds itself awash in these global diasporas, no longer a closed space for the melting pot to work its magic but yet another diasporic switching point to which people come to seek their fortunes though no longer content to leave their homelands behind. Global democracy fever and the breakdown of the Soviet Empire have meant that most groups who wish to re-negotiate their links to their diasporic identities from their American vantage points are free to do so: thus, American Jews of Polish origin undertake Holocaust tours in Eastern Europe, Indian doctors from Michigan set up eye clinics in New Delhi, Palestinians in Detroit participate in the politics of the West Bank.

There is a widespread sense that the “mosaic,” the “rainbow,” the “quilt” and other images of complexity-in-diversity are growing rapidly threadbare. Whether in debates over immigration, bilingual education, the academic canon, or the “underclass,” these liberal images have not come to terms with the tension between the centripetal pull of Americanness and the centrifugal pull of *diasporic diversity* in American life. The battles over affirmative action, quotas, welfare and abortion in America today suggest that the metaphor of the mosaic can no longer contain the contradiction between group identities, which Americans will tolerate (up to a point) in cultural life, and individual identities, which are still the non-negotiable principle behind American ideas of achievement, mobility and justice.

The Form of the Trans-Nation

The formula of hyphenation (Italian-Americans, Asian-Americans, and African-Americans) is reaching the point of saturation in the United States, and the right hand side of the hyphen can barely contain the unruliness of the left hand side. Even as the legitimacy of

nation-states in their own territorial contexts is increasingly under threat, the idea of the nation flourishes transnationally. Safe from the depredations of their home-states, diasporic communities become doubly loyal to their nations of origin, thus ambivalent about their loyalties to America. The politics of ethnic identity in the United States is inseparably linked to the global spread of originally local national identities. For every nation-state that has exported significant numbers of its populations to the United States, as refugees, tourists or students, there is now a delocalized, *transnation*, which retains a special ideological link to a putative place of origin, but is otherwise a thoroughly diasporic collectivity. No existing conception of Americanness can contain this large variety of trans-nations.

In this scenario, the hyphenated American might have to be twice hyphenated (Asian-American-Japanese or Native-American-Seneca or African-American-Jamaican or Hispanic-American-Bolivian) as diasporic identities stay mobile and grow more protean. Or perhaps the sides of the hyphen will have to be reversed, and we become a federation of diasporas, American-Italians, American-Haitians, American-Irish, American-Africans. Dual citizenships might increase, if the societies from which we came stay or become more open. We might recognize that diasporic diversity actually puts loyalty to a non-territorial, trans-nation first, while recognizing that there is a specially American way to connect to these global diasporas. America, as a cultural space, will not need to compete with a host of global identities and diasporic loyalties. It might come to be seen as a model of how to arrange one territorial locus (among others) for a cross-hatching of diasporic communities.

The question is: can a post-national politics be built around this cultural fact? Many societies now face influxes of immigrants and refugees, wanted and unwanted. But America may be alone in having organized itself around a modern political ideology in which pluralism is central to the conduct of democratic life. Out of a different strand of its experience, this society has also generated a powerful fable of itself as a land of immigrants. In today's post-national, diasporic world, America is being invited to weld these two doctrines together, to confront the needs of pluralism *and* of immigration, to construct a society *around* diasporic diversity.

What is to be done? There could be a special place for America in the new, post-national order, and one which does not rely either on isolationism or global domination as its alternative bases. The United States is eminently suited to be a sort of cultural laboratory and a Free Trade Zone for the generation, circulation, importation and testing of the materials for a world organized around diasporic diversity. In a sense this experiment is already under way. The United States is already a huge, fascinating garage sale for the rest of the world. It provides golf vacations and real estate for the Japanese, business management ideologies and techniques for Europe and India, soap opera ideas for Brazil and the Middle East, Prime Ministers for Yugoslavia, supply-side economics for Poland, Russia and whoever else will buy, Christian fundamentalism for Korea, post-modern architecture for Hong Kong and so on. By also providing a set of images (Rambo in Afghanistan, We are the World, Bernard Shaw in Baghdad, Coke goes to Barcelona, Perot goes to Washington) which links human rights, consumer style, anti-statism and media glitz, it might be said that the United States is partly accountable for the idiosyncracies that attend struggles for self-determination in otherwise very different parts of the world. This is why a University of Iowa sweatshirt is not just a silly symbol in the jungles of Mozambique or on the barricades of Beirut. It captures the free-floating yearning for

American style even in the most intense contexts of opposition to the United States. The rest is provided by authoritarian state policies, massive arms industries, the insistently hungry eye of the electronic media, and the despair of bankrupt economies.

Of course, these products and ideas are not the immaculate conceptions of some mysterious American know-how, but are precisely the product of a complex environment in which diasporic ideas and intellectuals meet in a variety of special settings (such as labs, libraries, classrooms, music studios, business seminars and political campaigns) to generate, re-formulate, and re-circulate cultural forms that are fundamentally post-national and diasporic. The role of American musicians, studios and record companies in the creation of "world beat" is an excellent example of this sort of down-home but off-shore entrepreneurial mentality. Americans are loathe to admit the piece-meal, pragmatic, haphazard, flexible and opportunistic ways in which these American products and re-products circulate around the world. We like to think that the Chinese have simply bought the virtues of free enterprise, the Poles of the supply-side, the Haitians and Filipinos of democracy, and everyone of human rights. We rarely pay attention to the complicated terms, traditions and cultural styles into which these ideas are folded, and thus transformed beyond our recognition. Thus, during the historic events of Tiananmen Square in 1989, when it seemed as if the Chinese people had become democratic overnight, there was considerable evidence that the ways in which different groups in China understood their problems was both internally varied and tied to various specificities of China's history and cultural style. Reflecting a venerable Chinese tradition of protest through expressions of supplication, a popular big character poster said "kneeling, we plead for democracy, crying we plead for freedom." Americans would find it difficult to associate this mixture of anger and pleading with their own sense of the naturalness of democratic rights. While the student leaders at Tienanmen Square used Chinese terms for "dialogue" which were egalitarian and colloquial, party leaders continued to use terms which implied asymmetry, appropriate to speech directed at inferiors. Thus, at the heart of the student movement in China lay debates about the meaning of democratic dialogue which were themselves products of semantic distinctions and linguistic ideologies alien to American usage.

When we see such transformations and cultural complications of vocabulary and style, if we notice them at all, we are annoyed and dismayed. In this misreading of how others handle what we still see as *our* national recipe for success, we perform a further act of narcissistic distortion: we imagine that these peculiarly American inventions (democracy, capitalism, free-enterprise, human rights, etc.) are automatically and inherently interconnected, and that our national saga holds the key to the combination. In the migration of our words, we see the victory of our myths. We are believers in terminal conversion.

The Western "victory" in the Cold War need not necessarily turn pyrrhic. The fact is that the United States is already, from a cultural point of view, a vast Free Trade Zone, full of ideas, technologies, styles and idioms (from MacDonald's and the Harvard Business School to the Dream Team and Reverse Mortgages) that the rest of the world finds fascinating. This FTZ rests on a volatile economy, the major cities of the American borderland (Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Detroit) are now heavily militarized, and the American public shares a rather deep sense of despair about the candidates that the two major parties have offered to it. But these facts are of little relevance to those who come, either briefly or for more extended stays, to this Free Trade Zone. Some, fleeing vastly greater urban violence, state persecution and economic hardship, come as permanent

migrants, legal or illegal. Others are short-term shoppers for clothes, entertainment, loans, armaments, or quick lessons in free-market economics or civil society politics. The very unruliness, the rank unpredictability, the quirky inventiveness, the sheer cultural vitality of this Free Trade Zone is what attracts all sorts of diasporas to the United States.

For the United States to play a major role in the cultural politics of a post-national world has very complex domestic entailments. It may mean making room for the legitimacy of cultural rights, rights to the pursuit of cultural difference under public protections and guarantees. It may mean a painful break from a fundamentally Fordist, manufacture-centered conception of the American economy, as we learn to be global information-brokers, service-providers, style-doctors. It may mean embracing as part of our livelihoods what we have so far confined to the world of Broadway, Hollywood and Disneyland: the import of experiments, the production of fantasies, the fabrication of identities, the export of styles, the hammering out of pluralities. It may mean distinguishing our attachment to America from our willingness to die for the United States. That is, it may mean rethinking mono-patriotism, patriotism directed exclusively to the hyphen between nation and state, and allowing the real problems we face—the deficit, the environment, abortion, race, drugs and jobs—to define those social groups and ideas for which we would be willing to live...and to die.

The queer nation may only be the first of a series of new patriotisms, in which others could be the retired, the unemployed and the disabled, as well as scientists, women and hispanics. Some of us may still want to live—and die—for the United States. But many of these new sovereignties are inherently post-national. Surely they represent more humane motives for affiliation than statehood or party affiliation, and more interesting bases for debate and cross-cutting alliances. Ross Perot's volunteers gave us a brief, intense glimpse of the powers of patriotism totally divorced from party, government or state, during the election campaigns of 1992. Scary as many of us found the Perotistas, the way they came into being and their profound capability to mobilize very different sorts of voters should suggest that the American body politic is full of surprises and can bring together all sorts of coalitions, at large scales and short notice. America may yet construct another narrative of enduring significance, a narrative about the uses of loyalty after the end of the nation-state. In this narrative, bounded territories could give way to diasporic networks, nations to trans-nations, and patriotism itself could become plural, serial, contextual and mobile. Here lies one direction for the future of patriotism in a postcolonial world.

The nation form thus presents itself as a special site for work on post-colonial discourse, work which goes beyond the archaeology of this discourse. Such work cannot be confined to the colored and colorful sites and boundaries which mark the history of colonialism. Nor can it be confined to those social forms that invite the gaze of "theory" because of their sheer discursivity. In looking at human rights movements as well as new literatures, migration as well as third world cinema, refugee camps as well as nationalist speeches, we can begin to construct a set of theoretical practices that are not only post-colonial but also post-discursive. Such practices might shift the academic gaze beyond the discourses of nation, to the space where post-colonial (and post-national) social formations are being incubated.

Postcolonial discourse studies need to be alert to the ever present danger that they might become another way to contain the unruliness of the postcolony while satisfying the endless appetite of the Western academy for colorful topics. One way to avoid this danger

is to ensure that the study of postcolonial discourse should include the United States, where debates about race, urban violence and affirmative action index more general anxieties about multiculturalism, about diasporic diversity and thus about new forms of transnationality. As to America, we need to explore and inhabit the elliptical space between it and the United States, so that the heart of whiteness can engage its true colors.

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