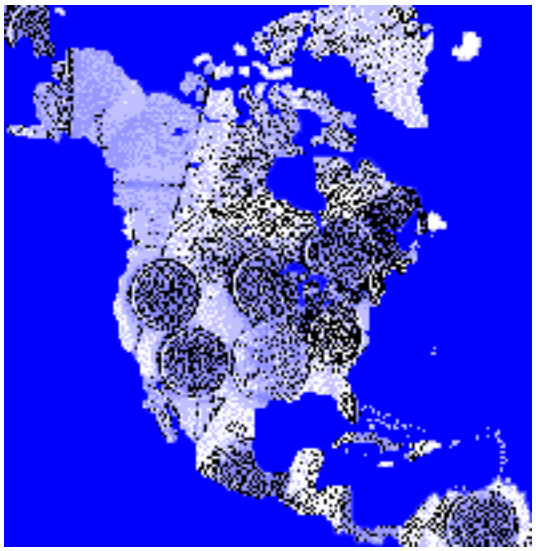
It's All Within Your Reach: Globalization and the Ideologies of Postnationalism and Hybridity

Kanishka Chowdhury



". . . there was an extra festival on the calendar, a new myth to celebrate, because a nation which had never previously existed was about to win its freedom, catapulting us into a world which, although it had five thousand years of history, although it had invented the game of chess and traded with Middle Kingdom Egypt, was nevertheless quite imaginary; into a mythical land, a country which would never exist except by the efforts of a phenomenal collective will--except in a dream we all agreed to dream . . . a collective fiction in which anything was possible, a fable rivaled only by the two other mighty fantasies: money and God." (Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 129-130)

"What is this thing--a nation--that is so powerful it can make songs, attract sacrifice and so exclusive it drives into hiding the complex and skeptical ideas which would serve it best." (Eavan Boland, *Object Lessons*, 69)

As an oil company, we can't always pick and choose the places where we go to find this often elusive energy source. In search of this fossil fuel, we have to go where the dinosaurs died. That sometimes means jungle heat, arctic cold or stormy seas. The good news is, if we're successful, many developing nations find themselves better off than if we just stayed at home." (Mobil A15)

Welcome to the Brave New Globalized World! Let me offer a couple of scenarios.[1] The first is of Planet Reebok, a planet with no rules; a planet where the "roam" button on your cellular phone allows infinite access--but not really. A planet where, according to the media propagandists, ordinary children in Senegal, India, and Indonesia watch MTV and the Chicago Bulls. A planet in which Pepsi and Coke and Marlboro can be marketed in China and East Europe. In this much heralded new world order proclaimed by George Bush in 1991, as he sent his bombers over Baghdad, history, in Francis Fukuyama's words, has come to an end; the forces of Western capitalism have proven to be the dominant logic of the world; market economy, the operative word for globalization, has triumphed. Indeed, to quote another slogan from a shoe company, it is not merely individuals who can "just do it," but nations can just do it now that they are no longer encumbered by socialisms, nationalisms, fundamentalisms. All kinds of trade barriers will soon dissolve in this WTO (World Trade Organization) regulated world as the "Just do it" ideology takes over. The multinational dream of a deregulated global space is almost a reality. In this sunny scenario, globalization heralds the rise of a common culture, one which provides common opportunities and brings unity to a world of consumers with common dreams and hopes. As a way to celebrate this brave new world a new generation of children in Chicago schools are now shown videos celebrating Globalization; these videos are sponsored by Virtual Trade Mission, a corporate-financed plan to introduce high school students to the "wonders" of globalization.

Now for the second scenario: a planet in which basic nourishment, education, health care, and employment are denied to millions of people; a planet in which war, bloodshed, and genocide continue; a world in which social inequities and the gap between the rich and the poor are increasing every day. If it is the end of history, let us examine the one fundamentalism--globalization--which is being celebrated unproblematically by liberals and conservatives alike. The ideology that is being presented as a finality, as the logical culmination of "market forces." But first, we ought to take a glimpse at a few global citizens who are unwilling participants in this brave new world, this revolutionary global landscape: the Warao Indians in Venezuela whose homelands have been invaded by a billion dollar drilling rig operated by British Petroleum; Mexican workers who risk their lives to earn minimum wages in the United States as trade barriers collapse between the two countries; young, non-unionized, uneducated teenage girls, kept to their task by US trained armies, making cheap goods that they will never own, in the sweat shops of Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand; desperate pensioners, teachers, ordinary people in the Ukraine buying dollars from small time hoods in the street of Kiev; street hawkers in Calcutta forcibly removed by the police so that new multinationals can set up shop.

Clearly, there are five levels of citizens who are affected by globalization. The first are those who are fully integrated into this "new" economy (such as owners, executives, landowners, those with disposable capital and reasonably secure financial positions) and control most of the capital and wealth. In the second group are those who serve the global economy in more precarious employment; these people, especially in the third world, have increased access to the privileges of consumption; they are the global middle class (managers, urban professionals, small business owners) who are not fully integrated into the global system; their economic positions are precarious, yet they are ideologically

affiliated to globalization. The third group consists of those whose claim to being "middle class" is increasingly under threat as housing, education, and health care become unaffordable; in this group are the teachers, clerks, and government workers; as governments cut back on social programs and denationalize industries, these individuals find themselves on the margins of their class position. The fourth group can be characterized as the urban working class, most of whom are increasingly dispensable and replaceable; their diminished prospects cause them to be generally opposed to globalization. The fifth and final group consists of those who are completely outside the scope of the global economy, the marginal, the superexploited that I have named earlier. Included in this group are an increasing number of the rural poor, the landless laborers. The gendered face of poverty is also evident in this group. Whole sections of Africa, Asia, and South America fall into the fifth category. This last group is the largest by far.2

What is significant about the government and media rush to ritualize globalization is that there is a concomitant valorization of "global" or transnational metaphors in the western academy. These metaphors--and I refer primarily to the postnational, posthistorical impulses that I mentioned earlier--have been adopted and are echoed by the academy, especially in their postmodern incarnations. These impulses are particularly evident in the postmodern and postcolonial celebration of paradigms such as disjuncture, hybridity, migrancy, and diaspora. Obviously, many theorists have correctly denounced constructs such as nationalism and Afrocentrism for excluding minority voices. Contemporary theorists such as Anthony Appiah, Homi Bhabha, Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, and Gayatri Spivak, for instance, have pointed out that national constructions invariably exclude minority populations and occlude the transnational character of personal and collective histories. Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, for instance, writes against English and African American versions of cultural studies that "share a nationalistic focus that is antithetical to the rhizomorphic, fractal structure of the transcultural, international formation. . . call[ed] the black Atlantic" (4). Homi Bhabha, similarly, claims that the "anti-nationalist, ambivalent nation-space becomes the crossroads to a new transnational culture" ("Introduction," 4). Finally, Stuart Hall points out that "it is very important the way in which some people now (and I think particularly of the colonized subject) begin to reach for a new conception of ethnicity as a kind of counter to the old discourses of nationalism or national identity" (118).

The entire notion of cultural identity and nationalism, then, has been put into crisis in this age of global capital. Although there are some versions of the endlessly performative self that are celebrated in postmodernism, the anti-essentialist critique of ethnic, national, or racial identity has become the predominant logic of contemporary postcolonial criticism. Bart Gilbert-Moore in *Postcolonial Theory* points to a precise historical moment--1990-when such critiques became firmly implanted in the academy. This moment, not coincidentally, collides with the claims for "postideology" (the collapse of State Communism in Eastern Europe) and the rise of Globalization (heralded by the sanctions on Iraq and the subsequent US led destruction of that country):

> [t]he model which has been most influential since 1990 at least has stressed the plurality and differentiality of identity and, through various versions of the concept of hybridity, it has emphasized the complementaries which exist between the different aspects of postcolonial formation - and other groupings outside - and tries to build upon them. Not only is this the favored approach in a wide variety of other postcolonial criticism . . . , it is also the vision which predominates in postcolonial theory" (192).

Therefore, while it is necessary to question particular critics and their claims, it is equally important to interrogate the institutional validation of these claims and to contextualize the locations from which they emerge. I am not, however, about to replay the somewhat tedious arguments regarding authenticity (who is more politically qualified to speak) and language (academic vs. "real"); rather, I want to examine the privileging and universalizing of such metaphors as border crossings, hybridity, migrancy, and diaspora and understand them within the current historical moment. Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan point to a need for such analysis in the face of a general universalizing of theory: "We mean to address precisely this construction of inert, ahistorical generalizations. The relationship between 'transnational,' postcolonial,' 'center-periphery,' and 'diaspora' in contemporary usage can be found in the way modernity masks particularities in favor of the appearance of universal categories" (16). For the purpose of this analysis, I will examine Arjun Appadurai's theories of disjuncture and postnationalism in *Modernity at Large: The Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* and Homi Bhabha's celebration of hybridity in *The Location of Culture*. My goal will be to highlight some of the political and pedagogical dangers of ritualizing these paradigms.

Appadurai claims that "the world that we live in now seems rhizomic, even schizophrenic, calling for theories of rootlessness, alienation and psychological distance between individuals and groups, on the one hand, and fantasies (or nightmares) of electronic propinquity on the other" (29). In this scenario, the United States is no longer the primary economic and social force, but is only one element in a "complex transnational construction of imaginary landscapes" (31). According to Appadurai, "the image, the imagined, the imaginary--these are all terms which direct us to something critical and new in global cultural processes: the imagination as a social practice . . . the imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order (31). This new global order, argues Appadurai, is characterized by disjuncture and scapes: "the critical point is that the global relationship among ethnoscapes, technoscapes, and financescapes is deeply disjunctive and profoundly unpredictable . . . even an elementary model of global political economy must take into account the deeply disjunctive relationships among human movement, technological flow, and financial transfer" (35).

Appadurai insists that these disjunctures in global economy result in a separation of institutionalized spheres of control and a breakdown in the apparatus of the state: "Because labor, finance, and technology are so widely separated, the volatility that underlie movements for nationhood grind against the vulnerabilities that characterize the

relationships between states" (40). He reiterates his faith in the postnational world whose demise is hastened by the countless and unstable circuits of culture and capital: "We are looking at the birth of a variety of complex, postnational social formations. These formations are now organized around principles of finance, recruitment, coordination, communication, and reproduction that are fundamentally postnational and not just multinational or international" (167).

However, postnationalism for Appadurai is not a harbinger of a more controlled form of neocolonialism, and he certainly is not willing to launch a wholesale critique of transnationalism. He believes that the electronic media, especially, creates ways in which progressive alliances can be forged, and argues, in the end, that global culture has had both negative and positive consequences (43). Appadurai's faith that the "global flow of images, news, and opinion now provides part of the engaged cultural and political literacy that diasporic persons bring to their spatial neighborhoods" is reiterated in different ways throughout his work and minimizes most of the what he has to say about the negative consequences of these disjunctures (197).3 Indeed, he is more interested in the need to develop new methodologies to comprehend the apparently chaotic scapes we inhabit. Appadurai believes that "mechanical metaphors" can no longer interpret the world "predicated on disjunctive flows" (46). Consequently, "in a world of disjunctive global flows, it is perhaps important to start asking them [questions]in a way that relies on images of flow and uncertainty, hence chaos, rather than on older images of order, stability, and systematicness" (47).

Appadurai's views on postnationalism are echoed by Home Bhabha in his introduction to the collection, *Nation and Narration*. In this piece, Bhabha not only points out the impossibility of granting the nation any representational legitimacy, but he also refuses to recognize any distinctions between liberatory and conservative claims to nationhood. According to Bhabha, as long as the people are constantly in the process of being made and remade, there can be no absolute moment rooted in the notion of the pure originary. Bhabha explains the methodology which "[can engage] the insights of poststructuralist theories of narrative knowledge . . . in order to invoke [the] ambivalent margin of the nation space. To reveal such a margin is, in the first instance, to contest claims to cultural supremacy, whether they are made from the 'old' post-imperialist nations, or on behalf of the 'new' independent nations of the periphery" ("Introduction," 4). Bhabha cleverly collapses distinctions between old post-imperialist nations and new independent ones. The ideology of the nation-state becomes at once both unstable and discontinuous. We then celebrate the inevitable breakdown of a constructed politicosocial space.

Homi Bhabha proclamations on the nation are echoed in his many elaborations of his theory of cultural hybridity; both theories are dependent in some measure on his image of a world that is characterized by disjunctures in the global economy. It is important to remember, however, that Bhabha does not see hybridity as a new configuration, but rather as a factor in previous historical moments that is potentially able to counter historical claims of identitarian, colonial, or national politics. In an early essay, "Signs Taken for Wonders," for instance, Bhabha argues that "Hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist

disavowal, so that the other denied knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority - its rules of recognition" (114). Hybridity, in this case, "reverses the formal process of disavowal so that the violent dislocation of the act of colonization becomes the conditionality of colonial discourse" (114). Colonial authority, then, is unsettled by expressions of hybridity: "The display of hybridity - its peculiar 'replication'- terrorizes authority with the ruse of recognition, its mimicry, its mockery" (115).

In another essay on historical insurgency, "By Bread Alone: signs of violence in the mid-nineteenth century," Bhabha examines the chapati (unleavened flat bread) story circulated during the Indian insurrection of 1857 as a way to understand how the site of rebellion becomes the site of cultural hybridity. The symbol of the chapati as a signifier of rebel insurgency disrupts the frozen authority of colonial political discourse: "The margin of hybridity, where cultural differences 'contingently' and conflictually touch, becomes the moment of panic which reveals the borderline experience. It resists the binary opposition of racial and cultural groups, sipahis and sahibs, as homogeneous polarized political consciousness" (207).

The liberatory and unsettling potential of these margins of hybridity are also emphasized in Bhabha's analysis of contemporary texts. I will point to two such instances. Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* is a work that demonstrates for Bhabha the migrant's "empowering condition of hybridity; an emergence that turns 'return' into inscription or redescription; an iteration that is not belated, but ironic and insurgent" (227). Gibreel Farishta, the migrant on Britain's shores, disrupts Britain's nationalist attempts to assert political and cultural homogeneity: "If the lesson of Rosa's narrative is that the national memory is always the site of the hybridity of histories and the displacement of narratives, then through Gibreel, the avenging migrant, we learn the ambivalence of cultural difference" (169). The novel and its protagonist, for Bhabha, exemplify many forms of blasphemies of which one is Gibreel's disruptive presence; Gibreel signals "the emergence of a hybrid national narrative that turns the nostalgic past into the disruptive anterior and displaces the historical present - opens it up to other histories and incommensurable narrative subjects" (167).

In a piece on contemporary art, Bhabha again proclaims the liberatory potential of the hybrid: "Cultural contradictions, disjunctive historical spaces, identifications created on the crossroads---these are the issues that the arts of cultural hybridization seek to embody and enact rather than 'transcend'" ("On Hybridity," 4). Bhabha looks at Peter Blake's The Meeting" or "Have a Nice Day, Mr. Hockney" as a "transnational staging of both art history and cultural history, an edginess that suggests that these very 'English' artists find themselves culturally or exploratory an innovative space between the national and the international" (4). For Bhabha, "Hybridity is a gesture of translation that keeps open . . . these questions of home, identity, belonging" They are "always open to negotiation, to be posed again from elsewhere, to become iterative, interrogative processes rather than imperative, identarian designations" (5).

Appadurai and Bhabha's arguments and paradigms are important and relevant for

postcolonial cultural studies, especially since they historicize the construction of the nation space and point to the latent conservatism that characterizes both postcolonial and imperial states. Both theorists are particularly critical of these states' attempts to marginalize their minority populations. Furthermore, they recognize the many unsettling and context-specific features of cultural products that make their local/global reception unstable and indistinct. However, I want to acknowledge some of the dangers of embracing the twin ideologies of postnationalism and hybridity that these critics ignore, especially as these ideologies affect the fifth category of those influenced by globalization: the nameless, the voiceless, the unrepresented. In that interventionary spirit, then, I would like to offer some cautionary remarks regarding these critics' hasty and problematic celebration and universalization of disjuncture, postnationalism, and hybridity.

First, I want to comment on what Appadurai claims is the predominant face of globalization, its seeming randomness; to use Appadurai's words, "disjuncture." The "economists" on CNN constantly draw attention to such disjunctures in the global scape: there is a financial crisis in Indonesia, one in South Korea and Japan; the ruble falls dramatically in Russia; the Dow falls and rises; meanwhile, however, they forget to mention that the capitalist bosses continue to make record profits. If one follows the path of ex-Treasury Secretary, Robert Rubins', travels around the world, one will notice no randomness or "disjuncture" in his ideological agenda to promote multinational interests. On a 1998 five-nation Africa Trip, for instance, Rubin stopped in South Africa "to encourage policies that Washington and international lending agencies endorse: austere budgets, open markets, vigorous business competition and the sale of state owned companies" (McNeil C5). Clearly, the age of finance capital is a "new" phase in capital accumulation, but as Fredric Jameson reminds us, "Capitalism's movement must be seen as discontinuous but expansive. With each crisis, it mutates into a larger sphere of activity and a wider field of penetration, of control, of investment, of transformation" (248). Marx and Engels said something along these lines in the *Communist Manifesto*:

> Modern industry has established the world market, for which the discovery of America paved the way. . . . [The] need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere. . . . The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. . . . The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all the instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian nations into civilization. . . . In a word, it creates a world after its own image" (475-77).

So, while it would be naive to assume that capitalism operates in the same way it did in the age of Marx, Appadurai does not offer us an economic basis for understanding why the disjunctures in the new transnational economy indicate an actual shift in the

productive ends of capitalism. Alberto Moreiras, for instance, argues that "Neoliberalism, understood as either the moment of real subsumption of labour into capital or as the highest stage of capitalism under the form of capital, is an intensification, not a paradigmatic shift" (382).

Second, and this point is obviously connected to the first, I would like to propose that even as we acknowledge the chaotic consequences of capital or the fact that we live in a technologically different world, we must also remember that the fundamental goal of neo-colonialism, that of wresting surplus value from the labor of poor third world workers has not been transformed; indeed capital, as Marx and Engels point out, has been successful in shifting to more profitable forms of production; the income gap between the so-called first and third worlds has, in fact, risen dramatically in the last fifteen years. While Appadurai and other postcolonial critics embrace newness and disjuncture, let us pause to admit that the unequal relation between third world labor and first world capital remains constant in this seemingly random economic order. Paul Smith comments on this relation with a great deal of insight: "the formations of 'integrated' global capitalism still depend upon the extraction of surplus value and the exploitation of labor; and at the same time capitalism's ideologues, its discursive formations, as well as its everyday practices, still cover up and deny the very fact of that dependence" (57).

Third, even if we concede that "national economies" are no longer independent of international intervention, we must also acknowledge that the the nation as an ideological formation can still be exploited by western and postcolonial governments. After all, the western nation state is the one that gains most by the crisis of the third world "nation." The so-called international monetary organizations--the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO, for instance--are organized to benefit the rich nations. Moreover, western economies are interested in sustaining third world economies as long as they serve the interests of global capital. Consequently, there exists the paradoxical demand of capitalism: multinationals need the political apparatus of nation states to regulate the flow of capital, but they also require a complete breakdown of the sovereign nation state in order to achieve that end. Third world political nationalisms, for example, are encouraged by the West only if national economic boundaries collapse.[4] Western capital in the form of investments can then negotiate a space from which they can supervise the unequal flow of goods and services. Russian nationalism supervised by Vladimir Putin, for instance, is quite acceptable as long as it is under the aegis of Western capital. Recently, within minutes of lifting the trade embargo against Vietnam, Pepsi-Cola began production in this once shunned nation. Armand Mattelart's pronouncements in 1983 seem even more true today: "the idea that it is necessary to smash the nation-state, the last obstacle to the new phase of world-wide expansion of transnational capital and transform it into a simple management state in an interdependent world, is becoming naturalized" (2). This transnationalization of economics requires the disruption of national economies and its accompanying political and cultural apparatus. Anything that constitutes an obstacle to the integration of national economies is seen as hostile to the interests of the West, and as a bulwark against market reform.[5] The entire construction of development for the third world has been and now more than ever is built around "this assertion that development, progress, and modernity are neutral concepts, universally accepted" (Mattelart 2).

Clearly, in a world where nations are made to bow down to the logic of seven wealthy nations, there is a political and economic cost in proclaiming the end of the nation. A recent vote regarding the operation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) highlights the significance of retaining some notion of the nation state as a political entity. Developing countries, in an alliance against a US-led campaign, managed to temporarily stop a move to increase "the cost of borrowing from the International Monitory Fund and the World Bank" (Kahn C1). So much for the US being unimportant in Appadurai's world of disjuncture and so much for postnationalism. Indeed, the determining force of rich nations highlights the need for the postcolonial nation to be redefined and recuperated against prevailing western and postcolonial ideologies and interests. A remarkable example of this ideology and its accompanying bourgeois ethnocentrism is found in Robert Kaplan's discussion in the *New York Times* on Central Asia: "Central Asia looks more like a medieval map, in which geography and ethnicity--defined by highly ambiguous and ever-shifting centers of power--will matter increasingly more and fixed borders will matter less." Kaplan adds that "in the new Central Asia, power will not be defined by a country's borders. Influence will not be exerted as much within states as within enthnicities and clans, and no ethnic group may be strong enough to dominate. If a balance among weak groups can emerge, however, perhaps some semblance of a normal economy can establish itself" (A15).

As far as Kaplan is concerned, traditional nation-states function primarily to serve the interests of the state or the market. Kaplan's "medieval map" is not very different from the colonialist vision of Africa as the heart of darkness.[6] These maps only make sense if they are drawn in order to simplify the unequal exchange of goods and labor. According to Kaplan, shifting borders are a threat to "normal economies." Samir Amin has an appropriate reaction to such claims: "The crisis of state must be viewed as a manifestation of the increasing contradiction between the transnationalization of capital (and behind this of the economic life of all countries in the capitalist world) and the persistence of the state system as the exclusive political pattern in the world" (21). Nafta, for instance, which was created with the ostensible motive of promoting wealth across borders, was essentially constructed to fatten the coffers of American corporations.

Another reason to protest Appadurai's easy dismissal of the nation state as an interventionary paradigm is because he neglects to note that national boundaries, though more fluid, are very real for most inhabitants of the world. Citizens of specific countries are restricted travel due to their national origins and are routinely denied entry visas to western nations. Of course, these are the lucky ones, travelers who have a certain degree of access to other nation states. Most of the migrants who cross the globe have no access to official documents; we have all heard the stories, especially of women "guest" workers, in various parts of the world. Meanwhile, Fortress Europe, with the help of the Schengen agreement, has made it even more difficult for asylum seekers to find refuge. Clearly, nation spaces in the West are protected with a fervor that belies the hypocritical talk about a global or transnational family.

Moreover, while we acknowledge Appadurai's theory of scapes, national origin, for

most people, remains a powerful marker of identity. As various struggles confirm, nationalism, in its many incarnations, will not go away. Even as intellectuals dismiss the nation-space as a metaphysical concept, a transcendent notion, countless people across the world die and kill in the name of a nation. And, truly, are we to equate the longings of the many disenfranchised non-citizens with the shrill invocations of hegemonic state nationalisms in the West? As Hannah Arendt once asked, what happens to the people without nations, without territories? Are they human beings if they are not citizens? As theorists of postcolonial spaces, perhaps it may be useful to reexamine the validity of the nation-space. Terry Eagleton has pointed out that to wish away "essential" categories such as class or nation is to play into the hands of the oppressor.

Indeed, revolutionary movements in the Third world (Vietnam and Cuba are prime examples) have often concluded that emancipation must sometimes begin with a specific cause, such as nationalism, which can then be modified as the people moved towards creating an equal society within the nation. One does not have to read very far into Fanon to find a similar understanding: "if you really want your country to avoid regression, or at best halts and uncertainties, a rapid step should be taken from national consciousness to political and social consciousness" (203). Fanon also warned against the intellectual appropriation of the nation. Nationalism, without the participation of the people, for Fanon, was tantamount to bourgeois nationalism. The classic case of the male intellectual desiring liberation, but also wanting someone to carry his books for him.

Appadurai, Bhabha, and other postcolonial critics are accurate in their denunciation of these sorts of exclusivist national narratives; however, their representation of nationalist possibilities only recognize and replicate bourgeois nationalisms or western imaginings of the nation. If we are to accept the Eurocentric perceptions of western critics such as Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm--who argue that non-western nationalisms are merely imitative of successful western nationalisms--then we have very limited ways of thinking about the nation. One of Anderson's main points in his now canonical work, *Imagined Communities*, is that national longings can only be realized through the spread of print capitalism. If that were the case, then a very select population would ever have access to nationalism. Indeed, C.L.R. James in *The Black Jacobins* shows how that is very far from the truth.

Obviously most postcolonial critics are against a nostalgic bourgeois transnationalism, perhaps best exemplified by Julia Kristeva in *Nations Without Nationalism*. Kristeva, struck by the enormity of various extreme national movements calls for a "universal, transnational principle of Humanity . . . a symbolic dignity for the whole of humankind [that is] . . . a rampart against a nationalist, regionalist, and religious fragmentation whose integrative contractions are only too visible today" (27). These critics also recognize the dual aspects of decolonization. Mere political decolonization (or flag independence, in Ngugi's words) is never adequate. The break from colonization has also to be an epistemological one, where the newly emergent nation would achieve full representational legitimacy. However, postcolonial critics are unwilling to grant this legitimacy due to the understandable fear of repressive regimes of the state, but as I have said before, we need to reimagine the nation outside the ideologies of European nation

building and neo-liberal economics.7 If for no other reason than that it serves as a point of resistance against western hegemony. After all, capitalism is quite content to promote an adherence to the politics of disjuncture. A perception of the world as chaotic and random successfully elides the systematic framework of trade rules and practices that ensure that the ruling elite of nations retain and protect their economic and cultural strength.

I want to turn now to the parallel notion of hybridity which is clearly connected to the ideology of postnationalism. If nationalism has all the connotations of fixity and repression, then hybridity, for Bhabha, captures the liberatory potential of resistant cultures. Hybridity, according to Bhabha, counters the dominant logic of authoritarian discourse and opens up the third space, the interstices where meaning is always in-between, never stable, never rigid. However, I want to add a cautionary note to Bhabha's general celebration of hybridity.

First, as we recognize the liberatory potential of hybridity, we have to be circumspect about whose interests these hybrid enunciations serve. I want to argue, along with Moreiras, that "hybridity might in the present come close to becoming, on its performative side, a sort of ideological cover for capitalist reterritorialization - and even a key conceptual instrument for the very process of naturalization of subaltern exclusion" (376-77). In short, hybridity can produce a conceptual fixity in its disavowal of any kind of politics of subjectivity. Let us take for a moment Bhabha's assertion that hybridity keeps open questions of home and identity, and that such claims of subjectivity are always open to interrogation rather than frozen as essential designations. The problem that arises, however, with the politics of disavowal and interrogation is that they cannot be applied in any meaningful way toward building and sustaining political alliances. Every alliance, according to Bhabha's argument, is open to disruption and interrogation. How then does one negotiate or claim these contested sites in the service of political practice?

Second, let us examine the universalizing paradigm of the disruptive migrant presence in the imperial center. Does Gibreel's presence in the metropolitan have any real impact on the devastating war that the Thatcher/Blair governments have waged on the Asian and Caribbean populations in Britain? Does Rushdie's critique of institutional racism in Britain negate the appalling Caribbean stereotypes he presents in *The Satanic Verses*? What of the many problematic representations of women, especially the happy prostitutes of the Jahalia bordello? These questions are not intended to provoke a discussion of the relative merits of the novel, but to recognize that hybridity, while evoking endless openness, can simultaneously put closure on specific forms of subjectivity. Is it possible that certain expressions of hybridity are more significant than others? Moreover, we have to remember that the truly voiceless, the subaltern worker does not find space in Rushdie's world. Are Rushdie's cosmopolitan protagonists similar to the millions of migrant workers who traverse the globe in search of economic survival? No! Consequently, we cannot collapse specific migrant experiences into an universal utterance about the nomad, the migrant. The interstitial space may be occasionally disruptive of hegemonic articulations, but it can also represent the economic and cultural

powerlessness of the unwilling migrant.

Third, we must remember that cultural hybridity always has the potential to be assimilated and thus negated by the dominant culture. We see this tendency particularly in mediums such as film and music. In the United States we have witnessed the gradual whitening and deradicalizing of hip-hop as it found its way into suburban white homes. Even so-called radical groups such as Rage Against the Machine attract primarily white male listeners. Another example would be the case of Faudel, the Algerian rai musician, who has become widely popular among the French. Rai, which primarily began as the voice of frustrated youth in Algeria and of immigrants in France has become diluted as it enters the French pop mainstream. The same can be said of the many Indi-pop bands in Britain who have "crossed over" in their hybrid incarnations. In short, hybridity, though potentially disruptive of homogeneous narratives, is inevitably implicated in the capitalist commodification of culture.

Finally, even as we celebrate hybridity as critical of hegemonic claims to power and of assumptions of authority, it is important to stress that hybridity "remains excessively entangled in a modernizing or progressive idealism which, as such, is not only insufficiently materialist, but always already Eurocentric in its historical conditions of possibility" (Moreiras 395). Postcoloniality or resistant practices (particularly in the metropolis), after all, are not outside of western hegemony and cultural systems, and Bhabha clearly acknowledges this fact; however, an understanding of this relation makes the production of resistant practices that much more imbricated in western forms of value coding and problematizes its ultimate naming as liberatory.

My attempt in this paper has been not only to interrogate current academic paradigms, but also to point to the potential losses that can be incurred as we reject so-called essentialist identity markers. Let us, for instance, take the case of postnationalism and disjuncture as described by Appadurai. Although nationalism in its current incarnation seems to be operating as a repressive system, there are currently many revolutionary forms of micronationalism that remain active.[8] Revolutionary micronationalisms like these have the potential to recognize that nation-spaces are complex arenas where questions of race, class, gender, and nation are in constant collision. Indeed, these movements have rejected traditional notions of statehood and actively work against obscurantist politics based on a history of origins. They also function as an oppositional force against the machinations of the national bourgeoisie and the ravages of global capital. Moreover, by asserting the vitality, autonomy, and diversity of local practices and cultures, they can quell some of the damaging effects of local and global imperialisms.[9] Finally, and this is particularly true in the "third world," land reform and distributory justice are essential components of these movements. These claims--claims that were betrayed by the bourgeois nationalists--are at the heart of many of these micronationalist movements in the third world. Mahasweta Devi reminds us in the case of India that "by the time the country reaches the 21st century, most of the tribals who have land today will be landless. If that happens, the smaller tribal groups would be completely wiped off the map of the country" (80).

Consequently, while the transnational distribution of Western capital has forced us to reconceptualize pure national spaces, it is necessary to investigate micro nationalisms and other modes of articulation as a way of examining the complexity of resistant practices in postcolonial societies. Although caste, class, gender, and ethnic configurations interrupt totalizing narratives of nation, these very same considerations offer us a way to rearticulate the significance of national spaces. Micronational narratives as articulated by diverse communities in India, Kenya and Great Britain, then, must be reevaluated in light of their socio-historical positions, what Fanon once called the zones of "occult instability." I am not suggesting that a petrified past can be embraced, nor am I claiming that there is a pure national space; I am merely calling for a reevaluation of what are potentially liberatory narratives of micronationalism, whether they be from tribal communities in Bihar or working-class Kashmiri immigrants in Bradford. I believe that the seemingly irrational logic of the national can still promote everyday alliances and popular mobilizations. Most of us who believe in radical democratic systems would probably accept that micro-national units can organize around collective ideas which can then shape a wider, international struggle. These alliances are valuable and do not necessarily suggest a faith in a coherent, unitary experience or a mystical belief in origins.10

It is possible, then, to recognize along with Appadurai and Bhabha that the nation-state is a politicoconceptual space marked by contestations, but also to concede that this space can be resurrected to serve the causes of the underprivileged. Here in the United States we have seen the classic case of the aggrandizement of national pride coupled with the not so contrary erosion of national/federal social services. As Ann McClintock points out, "nations are contested systems of cultural representation that limit and legitimize peoples' access to the resources of the nation-state." (353). The cutbacks in the last twenty years were precisely those around which a nation-state can be established: Medicare, unionized jobs, educational subsidies, public transportation, public hospitals, public libraries. In this hemisphere, both Nicaragua and Cuba succeeded to a large extent in improving the social conditions of its people as a result of a national struggle. Both revolutions were initiated as wars of liberation, wars of national renewal. In this light, it may be more useful to critique nationalism from a different perspective, by proposing a critical nationalism, one which acknowledges its repressive manifestations but also recognizes its revolutionary potential:

> I refuse to accept that nationalism is the determinate, dialectical opposite of imperialism; that dialectical status accrues only to socialism. . . . What role any given nationalism would play always depends on the configuration of the class forces and sociopolitical practices which organize the power bloc within which any particular set of nationalist initiatives become historically effective. [This position] implies at least two things. It recognizes the actuality, even the necessity, of progressive and revolutionary kinds of nationalism, and it does not characterize nations and states as coercive entities as such. . . . Some nationalist practices are progressive; others are not. (Ahmed 11)

I would like to conclude by reclaiming the nation-space as a possible site for social change. If the nation-space can become a reactionary, nostalgic structure based on the concept of a unique national identity (promoting racism, xenophobia, and bigotry), it can also be reclaimed by progressive, diverse, social forces. Here also hybridity can be turned into a more radical concept rather than a mere celebration of difference or a negation of fixity. Indeed, people do live in the intersections, or spaces, between cultures, thus the fluidity of the national imaginary can be stressed rather than some inherent totality. Radhakrishnan points out that the "the concept of 'totality' should not be understood as a pregiven horizon but as a necessary and inevitable 'effect' or function of the many relational dialogues, contestations and asymmetries among the many positions . . . that constitute the total field" (81). It is then possible to imagine alternative spaces where the demands of a liberatory nationalism can be negotiated on and against its obvious limitations. As hybridity and disjuncture become enshrined as dominant critical modules and as postcolonial critics reject any claims based on nation and identity, we must pause to examine the political costs of arguing that all nations are imagined communities and all subjects open to endless negotiation.

Notes

1 I first presented an earlier version of this paper at Chicago to the Marxist Literary group. I would like to thank the participants for helping me think through many of these ideas.

2 Clearly, none of these groups are distinct, and their configurations are determined by their specific economic and national contexts. Migrant populations, for instance, can move between the fourth and fifth group. Moreover, there are obvious differences within groups based on race, gender, religion, etc. White workers in Ohio do not have the same social or economic positions as their black counterparts in Birmingham. Middle class women in France have a very different life from Algerian women in similar economic positions, and so on. These five levels are merely intended as a general economic profile.

3 Appadurai's faith in a technology-inspired spread of political literacy is belied by the realities of the digital divide. The technologies that Appadurai celebrates are, after all, accessible to very few people. In India, for instance, one billion people only own 4.3 million computers. Even in a wealthy country such as the US, the digital divide is growing. White households are "twice as likely (40.8%) to own a computer than Black (19.3%) or Hispanic (19.4%) households" (Lockard 186).

4 One has only to see the different way in which the US regards the nationalism of Mexico's compliant Vincente Fox and the more independent Hugo Chavez of Venezuela.

5 The Bush "axis of evil"--Iran, Iraq, and North Korea--, to some extent, are off limits not only because they sponsor terrorists, but rather because they refuse to participate in the American way of doing business: allowing their resources to be used by US companies and providing an "open" market for US goods.

6 Of course, no one embodies this colonialist mentality better than the *New York Times*' guru of globalization, Tom Friedman. Here is a typical example: "Africa's only hope is that through globalization its coastal cities might one day become the sort of export platforms, tourism and service centers that China's are today. . . . By inhibiting global trade expansion they [anti-globalization activists] are choking the only route out of poverty for the world's poor" (A23).

7 As an illustration of this predilection, let us for a moment examine a nationalist statement made by Tamil nationalists in 1951: "The Tamil-speaking people in Ceylon constitute a nation distinct from that of the Sinhalese by every fundamental test of nationhood, firstly that of a separate historical past in the island at least as ancient and as glorious as that of the Sinhalese, secondly by the fact that of their being a linguistic entity entirely different from that of the Sinhalese, with an unsurpassed classical heritage and a modern development of language which makes Tamil fully adequate for all the present-day needs, and finally by reason of their territorial habitation of definite areas". The Tamil nationalists, once again, were arguing for nationhood on the basis of origin, language, and space. Consequently, national possibilities in this instance are limited by replicating traditional western bourgeois norms of nation-making.

8 Currently, many such revolutionary micronational movements exist across the globe: the Zapatistas in Mexico have captured the imagination of people in this country, but revolutionary groups are active in Columbia, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Peru, and the Philippines, to name a few. The recent demonstrations by Nigerian women against western oil interests is an excellent example of such micro movements. These groups, despite the brutal opposition of the state, continue to struggle against corrupt and repressive regimes.

9 The forces resisting global capitalism--Nigerians against Shell, Aachee Indonesians against Mobil, Medha Patkar and the Narbada Bachao Andolan against the World Bank sponsored construction of the Narbada dam in Western India--are primarily grassroots movements asserting their rights over transnational corporations and corrupt postcolonial governments.

10 Subcomandate Marcos's response to questions about his identity best exemplifies this hope: "Marcos is gay in San Francisco, black in South Africa, a Chicano in San Ysidro, an anarchist in Spain, a Palestinian in Israel, a Mayan Indian in the streets of San Cristobal . . . a dissident amid free-market economics, a writer without books or readers, and, of course, a Zapatistas in the mountains of south-east Mexico."

Works Cited

Ahmed, Aijaz. *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*. London: Verso, 1992.

Amin, Samir. *Class and Nation: Historically and in the Present Context*. Trans. Susan Kaplow. New York: Monthly Review P, 1980.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.

Appadurai, Arjun, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996.

Bhabha, Homi. "Narrating the Nation." *Nation and Narration*, eds. Homi Bhabha New York: Routledge, 1990: 1-7.

---. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

---. "Homi Bhabha on Hybridity." http://artforum.com/bhabha.html: 1-6.

Boland, Eavan. *Object Lessons: The Life of the Woman and the Poet in Our Time*. New York: Norton, 1995.

Devi, Mahasweta. *Dust on the Road: The Activist Writings of Mahasweta Devi*. Seagull: Calcutta, 1997.

Fanon, Frantz. The Wretched of the Earth. Trans. Constance Farrington, New York: Grove, 1963.

Friedman, Thomas. "Protesting for Whom?" *New York Times*. April 24, 201: A23.

Gilbert-Moore, Bart. *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics*. London: Verso, 1997.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1993.

Grewal, Inderpal and Caren Kaplan. (1994) 'Introduction: Transnational Feminist Practices and Questions of Postcoloniality', in Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (eds.) *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 1-33.

Hall, Stuart. "Minimal Selves." *Black British Cultural Studies*, eds. Houston A. Baker, Jr. et al. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1996: 114:19.

Jameson, Fredric. "Culture and Finance Capital." *Critical Inquiry*. 24.1 (Autumn 1997): 246-65.

Kahn, Joseph. "An Effort by U.S. to Change the IMF Is Set Back." *New York Times*. Aug. 8, 2000: C1.

Kaplan, Robert D. "Countries Without Borders." *New York Times*. Oct. 22, 1996: A15.

Kristeva, Julia. *Nations Without Nationalism*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1993.

Lockard, Joe. "Babel Machines and Electronic Universalism." *Race in Cyberspace*, eds., Beth Kolko et al. New York: Routledge, 2000: 171-90.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. Ed. Robert C. Tucker. New York: Norton, 1978.

Mattelart, Armand. *Transnationals and the Third World: the struggle for culture*. Trans. David Buxton. South Hadley, Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey, 1983.

McNeill, Donald. "Visiting South Africa, Rubin Sides With the Free-Marketers." *New York Times*. July 15, 1998: C5.

Mobil. "Going Where the Dinosaurs Die." *New York Times*. March 26, 1996: A15.

Moreiras, Alberto. "Hybridity and Double Consciousness." *Cultural Studies*. 13.3 (July 1999): 373-407.

Radhakrishnan, R. "Nationalism, Gender, and the Narrative of Identity." *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, eds. Andrew Parker et al. New York: Routledge, 1992: 77-95.

Rushdie, Salman. *Midnight's Children*. New York: Penguin, 1980.

Smith, Paul. *Millennial Dreams: Contemporary Culture and Capital in the North*. London: Verso, 1997.