



4-2008

Linear and Nonlinear Identities: Problematic Identity, History, and the European Union

John Arrington Woodward
Florida State University

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.13023/disclosure.17.09>

Follow this and additional works at: <https://uknowledge.uky.edu/disclosure>



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 License](#).



Recommended Citation

Woodward, John Arrington (2008) "Linear and Nonlinear Identities: Problematic Identity, History, and the European Union," *disClosure: A Journal of Social Theory*. Vol. 17 , Article 9.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.13023/disclosure.17.09>

Available at: <https://uknowledge.uky.edu/disclosure/vol17/iss1/9>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Social Theory at UKnowledge. It has been accepted for inclusion in *disClosure: A Journal of Social Theory* by an authorized editor of UKnowledge. For more information, please contact UKnowledge@lsv.uky.edu.

John Arrington Woodward

**Linear and Nonlinear Identities:
Problematic Identity, History, and the European Union**

The massive transnational flows, flows of goods, people, and even people as goods, which determine the contemporary state of 'globalization' are but aspects of previously unsatisfied discourses on identity. This ossified concept of identity is one that is bound to the nation in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, only to be cast outwards in the post-World War Two 'age,' disseminated along lines of immigration, rapidly increasing mobility of populations, and compressed in the contemporary critical catchword of 'hybridity.' And while hybridity is the ability to exist in a multilayered socio-cultural field, in terms of Europe it is one normally reserved for the 'cultural other.' It is certainly a concept that seems central to theorizing a space for these displaced and mobile populations; yet, it is one that is itself bound inextricably to the old ossified concept of identity, or a stable locus wherein the subject can position herself in relation to the social whole. Yet identity is inherently unstable and indeterminate, and therefore a contradiction develops in hybridity, one of transnational flow and ossified connections.

One way of approaching this contradiction is, strangely enough, through identity formation. The examination of identity has shifted throughout the last few decades from 'immanent' explorations of the drives to subjectification (e.g. Žižek through Lacan through Hegel, etc.) to examinations of the 'realia' of identity, its placement in the constellation of nation, state, community and so forth, and its representation in memory narratives (e.g. Andreas Huyssen's work on East German identity, just to name one example). In the context of the European Union, the question of identity is rapidly becoming a political point of contention for all concerned, especially considering the recent turn throughout Europe towards language and culture requirements as an integral aspect of immigration procedures.

In the following pages I would like to exam the development of what has been termed postnational identity, a political space wherein the modifier of 'hybridity' neatly fits. This is a concept emerging in European sociology and political circles that postulates a unified and culturally transcendent socio-political public sphere, and one espoused most prominently, perhaps, by Jürgen Habermas. Postnationalism is seen as a respite from nationalism while a means of utilizing social energies that are

normally diverted into feelings of nationalism. It is, for Habermas, a manner of combating nationalism as a negative and racialized feeling. I would like to situate such a notion in relation to questions of and calls for national identity and nationalism in postcolonial critics such as Partha Chatterjee and Homi Bhabha. In this context, especially in Chatterjee, nationalism works as an alternative to the homogenizing powers of global capital. Finally I would like to draw out the relationship between these discourses, and how they relate to the development of some form of 'identity' within the European Union, by examining briefly Balibar's concept of 'European Apartheid' as part of a critical discourse within Europe that can be found both within and without academia.

The general question I would like to pose is, if there is such a social formulation as the 'postnational' that can be located in the intersubjective rather than the fictional subjective, i.e. as a guiding principal of social and political interaction, would such a concept offer a crucial respite for the 'migrating' workers within the EU? Can we theorize mobility, displacement or hybridity without relying on ossified notions of identity? Balibar's concept of a 'European Apartheid' offers serious criticism of such a possibility. Finally, are these concepts of postnationalism, nationalism, and 'apartheid' mutually exclusive or imbricated to a point of inseparability? My theory is that the juxtaposition between what one could call linear (idealized) and non-linear (realized) identities represents an essential dialectic within European society and offers evidence of the emergence of a problematic within the mainstream, wherein the 'liberating' assumptions of Western liberal ideology are called into question.

I.

Before it is really possible, or before it should be possible, to map out a 'psychophysical' location of European identity it seems necessary to address the question of history. While this is a critical issue that has taken on many forms in the past several hundred years, none of them completely satisfactory, I do not hope to solve it here in one fell swoop. Rather, preliminarily, I would merely suggest that the very concept of identity, however it is construed, interpreted, developed or manipulated is inherently historical and is inseparable from a 'historical praxis' or repetition and reconstitution of such. There can be no critical examination of identity in its many forms without addressing the place of history in such a construction. I wish to address specifically the development of national identity, and thus am forced to turn to its historical development. But I also have a certain critical point to this exercise that I hope to make clear below.

To begin the examination of history and its complex relationship to the European 'national' narrative I would like to turn to Benedict Anderson. In his *Imagined Communities*, Anderson speaks of the ideological function in the construction of the colonial national space in the census, maps, and museums of the colonizing power.¹ This ideological function confirmed, for Anderson, the colonizers' oligarchic power structures by supporting teleological explanations of human, cultural and social evolution, and founding the basis of such a power structure in 'reason' and rationality. They were able to imagine themselves as positioned at the pinnacle of this great narrative, looking synchronically across societies while 'seeing' the diachronic development of human society. As Benjamin's angel of history, the Europeans looked back on their own past and saw it 'repeated' in other pasts around them. According to this Darwinist narrative, the archeological / anthropological evidence suggested that the western world had reached a 'higher evolutionary plane' than the colonized—the Europeans were, to paraphrase Montaigne, the adults of the world, protecting their poor relatives' children.² While Anderson is careful to limit his examination to south-east Asia specifically, there is an inevitable double movement in the function of these ideological constructs that reflects meaning back onto colonizing Europe. The European borders, the limits of its own 'self-generating' understanding of itself reflected in the intersubjective, cultural exchanges, were defined by the presence of the 'other' culture—if one understands this 'otherness' purely in its signification of non-European. That is to say that the self-understanding of Europeans in the modern age was to some large extent based on the ability of the European subject to (re)present itself as 'European-rather-than.'

Anderson works through the lens of European rationalism and focuses on its physical and metaphysical construction of the colonial world, through cartography, anthropology, archaeology, and Enlightenment classification and collection; however, the function of this structuration and, especially, its physical counterpart the museum, was to strengthen Europe's hegemonic position in the world by providing empirical (preconditioned) evidence to support its cultural-hegemonic claims. One vector of this evidence was the very historical / teleological vector that postulated Europe as having reached a higher evolutionary-social plane.³

¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 163-64.

² See also Tzvetan Todorov, *The Morals of History*, trans. Alyson Waters (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1995).

³ Cf. Todorov's reading of Montaigne (Todorov, *op. cit.*).

Clearly there is an innate 'postnational constellation' in a configuration wherein Europeans are converted to a clannish race of people, distinct from those primitive brothers persisting on the periphery. This positioning of the European as a 'clan' in a fashion that elides essential differences within Europe I would call the linearization of non-linear identities. Linearization in mathematics is a process that reduces complexity in non-linear formulas. Complex formulas, those where there is more than one unknown integer, are 'reduced' in their complexity by substituting possible integers for those which are unknown. Non-linear differential equations are (so far) impossible to solve; thus the manner of approximation, i.e. linearization, allows for the approximate solutions of these equations, an important step in such fields as engineering.. In my use of the term, the concept of linearization is roughly similar, though not as an isomorphism. Society is inherently complex and filled with contradictions and paradoxes, as is the concept of identity. The linearization of this concept occurs on the scale of the national as a means of 'solving' this problematic through approximation and substitution. Thus the implication being that, when presented with the non-linear, rational systems such as the rationalizing Western society tend to reduce such complexity by substitution and approximation. This reduction in complexity masks problematical issues and works its way into a foundation for a linear, fully causal narrative of history. The disjunction between these levels, linear ideology and non-linear social systems is wherein the frictions that make up 'real existing' society take place.

In explanation of such a tension we could see Anderson's examination of the development of nationalism (as an emotive-social state), while distinguishing between American nationalism and that of Europe, as explaining the differentiation of one form of nationalism from another, at the same time as establishing a 'partnership' in the very *Weltanschauung* of nationalism. This can also be seen as an ideological linearization of various nonlinear identities into 'isomorphic' groups, e.g. France is similar to Germany in the very structuration of ideological nationalism. That is to say that 'nationalism' becomes one aspect of the linear narrative of History, which the very reduction of social difference worked to produce.

A specific difference between the European form of nationalism and its transatlantic counterpart is, according to Anderson, the figuration of 'awaking' that ran through European nationalist discourse: "In Europe, the new nationalism almost immediately began to imagine themselves as

'awaking from sleep,' a trope wholly foreign to the Americas."⁴ This trope of 'awaking from a slumber' is mirrored according to Anderson in post-colonial, nationalist discourse (Anderson calls this 'mimicry'); but importantly it reflects a drive within that new European nationalism to seek out some autochthony within Europe, binding the search for the 'Urkultur' into the search for the 'Ursprache.' The dream masked a basic bond to be found retroactively as existing between 'originary' figures of nationalism. The 'dream' from which they were awakening had been the supposed forgetting of this European autochthony—a binding to the earth that comes to a head in Nazi Germany's infamous *Blut und Boden* concept. As Anderson suggests the 'awakening' "opened an immense antiquity behind this epochal sleep."⁵ In other words, the awakening, which took the political form of a return to something innate, a deep autochthony (or supposed cultural autarky, as the case may be), something found deeper than the intersubjective world of society; and stemming from a society *ab origine*, it revealed a grander historical narrative, a narrative of world historical import. This historical narrative was bound to language and archeological knowledge ("wherever the lamp of archeology casts its fitful gleam")⁶, both of which lent credence to the existence of classifiable, cultural European autochthony, an original spatio-temporal location of European claims to hegemony. The development of such a chain of history raised the 'specters' of historical agents buried in the distant past of European nations, and ground their bones under the wheels of national furor: "Michelet [makes] it clear that those whom he was exhuming were by no means a random assemblage of forgotten, anonymous dead. They were those whose sacrifices, throughout History [sic], made possible the rupture of 1789 and the selfconscious appearance of the French nation, *even when those sacrifices were not understood as such by the victims.*"⁷

By 'waking' from this slumber, the nations of Europe transitioned into a new phase of ideology, a phase wherein the dead themselves are seen to speak their desires through the mouthpieces of the ideological apparatuses of the nation-state, and where the specters of capital haunt the relaxation of socio-cultural restrictions on the middle classes. In other words, the state (in the form of the king and Church) went from speaking for some higher moral essence (God) to speaking for ghosts (the noble dead), all the while simply transmogrifying the ideological essence to be voiced—the

⁴ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 193.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, 205

⁷ *Ibid.*, 198

source of its power—and distributing the centrality of state power over a network of corporatized power relations.

A fundamental discursive action in this awakening is the turn to the past, and the reconfiguration of homogenous, mythic history into the 'World Spirit' (Hegel) of homogeneous historical progress. This movement was 'progressive' not only due to the reconstruction of a splintered, heterogeneous and multifarious past into a causal continuity, but also as a means of repositioning these post-revolution societies as 'freeing' themselves from a particular past (the slumber from which they awoke), and thus moving into a 'new' future. The awakening produced a pseudo-rupture in history by making all things which preceded it a part of a dark, troubled, dream-riddled past.

Of course, the figuration of awakening also subsumed many cultures, regional differences, communal particularities and the like under the one umbrella of national ideology. The pragmatic *realpolitik* which brought about, for example, the creation of nationalistic Germany is always already masked by Fichte-esque projections of telos-oriented national identity, a generic narrative of sorts. The figuration of awakening then casts the intersubjective foundation of social cohesion into the form of the national within the bounds of European nations as an isomorphism—the microcosm as the form for the macrocosm.⁸ The binding of intersubjectivity and nationality works in much the same manner as the inscription of Western ideologies and concepts onto the new worlds they discovered. Nationalist intersubjectivity becomes the social doxa necessary for all social communication and the linearized relationship between nationalism and autochthony is cast onto borderless parts of the 'new world.'

History is only truly historical, as Jan Patočka reminds us, in its problematic state.⁹ Meaning that the truly historical only comes into being as a vector within a social problematic, retroactively as it were, and as a critical problematization of social and political normativity. And, as Jürgen Habermas has suggested, the development of a truly postnational public sphere is inherently problematical and problematizes the stable relationship

⁸ An excellent example of this would be the situation of the German Sorbs, who were forced during both World War I and II to 'germanize'. To that point Sorbs existed as 'Germans' among their "German brethren" while preserving their non-Germanic 'identities.' See e.g. Josef Páta, *Aus dem kulturellen Leben der Lausitzer Serben nach dem Weltkrieg*, trans. Jan Skala (Bautzen: Koło Serbskich Spisowacelow, 1930).

⁹ Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, trans. Erazim Kohák and ed. James Dodd (Chicago: Open Court, 1996).

between liberal society and nation-state.¹⁰ Now, the configuration of waking in European nationalism places it in a direct relationship with history *qua* the intersubjectively constituted social narrative, and orients the European nation-states synchronically—that is to say in direct or indirect relationship to the alternative forms on which they border. It is, though, at the same time a problematization of traditional, historical social order. It is not a stretch to suggest, then, that the emergence into the problematical relationships of the postnational in Europe constitutes a new phase of 'history' *qua* intersubjectively constituted social narrative.

It could be suggested, as well, that the problematic nature of nationalism inheres in its development, or prefigures its development, for it masks differences within the community that could otherwise work to fray the edges. The linearization of this problematical nature under the deep, ideological structures of the historical imaginary lays the groundwork for what Etienne Balibar would call apartheid. Heuristically, I would propose that the process of development of nationalism is and was dialectical in nature, not in the sense of the Hegelian dialectic, but in the sense as it is beginning to emerge in Jameson and others, i.e. as a process in and for itself, one that constantly subsumes the telos of critical thought—or rather one whose telos becomes an aspect of each production, where each intersubjectively generated telos quickly buries the one before. That is to say that a teleology of the national historical imaginary would reveal a *fata morgana* as the end point, always shifting meaning, appearance, representation, surely, but continually drawing the wayfarer into the shimmering heat of the future. This seems to come through in Anderson's postulation of the imagined community as 'synchronic', being, as it were, based in the communal conglomeration of information into contemporaneity. This therefore formulates an inherently problematic space for the development of a concept of living-with rather than living-among: in other words, people only see themselves within the nation as it disappears on the horizon of temporality at that dialectical moment between Same and Other. The question becomes, who is the other?

II.

Critiques of Anderson's work have come from all sides. However, certain postcolonial theorists offer a way of reconsidering the ideological underpinnings of western hegemony from within their own framework, by returning the postcolonial to its position within the hegemony. While

¹⁰ Habermas, *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays*, trans. Max Pensky (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001).

Anderson's concept of a community developing within a 'homogeneous, empty time,' is essential to his model, his insistence on both mimetically mapping this aspect of modernity onto the rest of the world, and that the European mode of nationalism is 'borrowed' by postcolonial nationalisms, seems rather too constrictive. Partha Chatterjee has criticized Anderson by pointing out that, "if nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain 'modular' forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine?"¹¹ Chatterjee's critique is oriented around exploding the mapped relationship seen to exist between the colonizer and the postcolonial state, by exploring the fragments of subaltern political discourse which remain within the nation-state form of the postcolonial world.¹² Chatterjee's move in this direct critique of Anderson is an attempt to develop a broader basis for a heterogeneous universalism such that "'Western universalism' no less than 'Oriental exceptionalism' can be shown to be only a particular form of a richer, more diverse, and differentiated conceptualization of a new universal idea."¹³

This does not mean, for Chatterjee, that European historiography has not developed and propagated the concept of the nation and the 'people' and then 'mapped' this concept into the minds of the educated colonized. In fact, Chatterjee's discussion of the relationship between historiography and the development of the nation as chthonic concept mirrors Anderson's examination of the same.¹⁴ However, Chatterjee's focus is not on demonstrating the relationship between the autochthonous 'other' and globalized capital as demonstrative of the development of modernity in the postcolonial world, à la Anderson. Rather, Chatterjee wishes to bring out the *conflictual* nature which defines and characterizes the relationship between the postcolonial world and European modernity, by locating a "universal community" in the globalized world: "There does exist a level of social life where laboring people in their practical activity have constantly sought in their 'common sense' the forms, mediated by culture, of such a community."¹⁵ The struggle is not only one with the homogenization of community but with *historical linearization*, and the communally-constituting conflict, which is essential to Chatterjee, approaches both of these imaginary vectors.

¹¹ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nations and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 5.

¹² Ibid, 13.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid. 95-115.

¹⁵ Ibid. 199.

It is, indeed, on the grounds of community that Chatterjee places his search for an ethical lifeworld. In this way, there is a striking resemblance between Chatterjee and Habermas; though, Chatterjee does not go so far as to work through the construction or dynamics of such a universal community as an expression of intersubjective experience. Indeed, for the most part, this community remains an idealized space, its relationship to politics ambiguous and unstable. Capitalism's narrative conversion of "the violence of mercantilist trade, war, genocide, conquest and colonization into a story of universal progress, development, modernization and freedom," can only take place in the absence and abnegation of community.¹⁶ He sees this community, though, as one based in praxis and not history; thus, it can and should break free of the historical ties that bind and bring itself into the political discourse of the nation.

In the end, Chatterjee dehistoricizes the political potential of the community (as an autochthonous and yet de-bordered entity) for its immediate political value, and in so doing restructures the colonizing relationship suggested by Anderson. He does not emphasize a return to some autochthonous cultural ideal for the discovery of temporal supports for the concept of community; rather, he asks for a further extension of a true homogeneous time. This critique of Anderson establishes the figuration of an idealized 'universal community' as a 'postnational' counterpart to the national subjectivity of the postcolonial world; but at the same time it empties it of political specificity. This, by its nature, 'postnational' subjectivity reflects to some large extent the very same discourse on postnationalism in Europe, especially in relationship to the EU. That is not to suggest, however, that Chatterjee along with many other postcolonial scholars does not invest some critical potential in the development of nationalism in the postcolonial world; it does seem clear, though, that this form of nationalism is fundamentally altered from that of the nineteenth century. This alteration is particularly telling, in that it positions nationalism as inter-nationally oriented, and leads to questions about mobility or migration when the temporal homogeneity of the community takes precedence over the realia of state-sponsored identity.

Neither Anderson nor Chatterjee go so far as to reconfigure the relationship between modernity / capitalism (seen as one and the same) and autochthony as one that is mutually dependent and interwoven. In other words, the march of capitalism across the globe is innate to its ideological teleology ("making the world a better place") and cannot continue without

¹⁶ Ibid. 235.

some pagans to convert. It is the 'third world' that has kept alive the conquering teleology of capitalism. Chatterjee, in his latest work, does explore this interface as *representing* the reality of heterogeneous time, rather than the 'utopian', capitalistic (modernistic), homogeneous, empty time.¹⁷ He believes that the view of capital / modernity as unified and forming a "time-space of modernity" is wrong because "it looks at only one dimension of the time-space of modern life. People can only imagine themselves in empty homogeneous time; they do not live in it. Empty homogeneous time is the utopian time of capital. It linearly connects past, present, and future, creating the possibility for all those historicist imaginings of identity, nationhood, [and] progress..."¹⁸ His suggestion that the 'other' times (read: 'primitive remnants of time' as seen by western rationalism) "are not mere survivors from a pre-modern past: they are new products of the encounter with modernity itself," offers a means of reflecting the disturbances of such a production back into the Western sphere of cultural interest.¹⁹ The mode of resistance to the homogenizing processes of capital, then, are to be located in the praxis of community, for Chatterjee. But this praxis of community must bear some normative relationship to that of the state and cannot transcend the normative processes within the state that determine the limits of community, the boundaries between the local and the national, and the global for that matter. The current migration of communities into Europe poses this very problematic.

III.

For Chatterjee there is an important distinction between the homogeneous state and the heterogeneous community; civil society appears in his writing "as the closed association of modern elite groups, sequestered from the wider popular life of the communities, walled up within enclaves of civic freedom and rational law."²⁰ Clearly, the presence of the heterogeneous community is essential to the generation of the nation and an aspect that he considers under-theorized. The integration of the heterogeneous community into the nation, however, is related to the utopian time of capital (homogeneous empty time) and also the normative 'narration' of the state by and for the people. If we wish to see history as problematical in nature, and its narrativization as bound to the development of a historical imaginary whose function it is to homogenize the

¹⁷ Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 1-10.

¹⁸ Ibid. 6.

¹⁹ Ibid. 7ff.

²⁰ Chatterjee, *Politics of the Governed*, 4.

heterogeneous nation, then the question of the narrative construct of nation as corollary to this process seems inevitable and unavoidable. The concept of the nation as narrative figures into the discussion of the formation of a European public sphere in that there seems to be a fundamental distinction to be made between the national narrative and the intersubjective realm of the public sphere—a distinction that could be defined, again, as a distinction between linear and nonlinear identities.²¹ For this I turn to Homi Bhabha's masterful description of the nation in temporality as represented through narrative.

Homi Bhabha, in much the same fashion as Anderson, constructs the nation as a function of a particular temporal state (i.e. flux). This temporal state is portrayed, in Bhabha, as a split between a homogeneous, empty time and a more heterogeneous time, thus setting the ground for Chatterjee's formulation discussed briefly above. However, Bhabha sees this split between a pedagogic (historical / homogeneous) and performative (heterogeneous) time as running through a hegemonic structure, separating a set of competing narrative strategies that, together, generate the "ambivalence of modern society," which then "becomes the site of *writing the nation*."²² For Bhabha, the performative nature of the national narrative offsets the pedagogic (historical) construction of the people (autochthony). This division, however, also institutes a temporal division, a "double time": "The performative intervenes in the sovereignty of the nation's *self-generation* by casting a shadow between the people as 'image' and its signification as a differentiating sign of Self, distinct from the Other or the Outside. In place of the polarity of a prefigurative self-generating nation itself and extrinsic Other nations, the performative introduces a "temporality of the 'in-between' through the 'gap' or 'emptiness' of the signifier that punctuates linguistic difference."²³ In other words, the generation of the nation is not so much related to the establishment of an 'Other' nation or the self-generated differentiation of nation from nation, but is internally generated by the performative conglomeration of a liminal 'people' in the ideal of the 'nation'; and this liminality is itself derivative of the very creation of the double-time instituted by the nation. Anderson also distinguishes between a 'mythic' 'Messianic time' and the 'homogeneous empty time' (both terms borrowed from Benjamin). Bhabha's clarification on

²¹ A true distinction between the homogeneity / heterogeneity binary and that of linear / nonlinear remains to be formulated, but can be assumed for the sake of this paper.

²² Homi Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Nation," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi Bhabha (New York: Routledge, 1990), 291-392; 297.

²³ *Ibid.* 299.

these points is to associate the 'Messianic time' with the national narrative and divide the 'homogeneous empty time' into double-time, where one is performative and the other pedagogical.

Bhabha admonishes Anderson, as well, for not realizing that the essential division within signification-as-an-act (basing his argument on a Derridean conceptualization of signification) contributes to the generation of the national narrative; and this contribution is the division between, what Chatterjee would call, a 'utopian' time (that construct associated with the idealized time-structure of global capital) and the heterogeneous time of social praxis thus bound up with the internal differentiation which is at the heart of the nation: "In embedding the *meanwhile* of the national narrative, where the people live their plural and autonomous lives within homogeneous empty time, Anderson misses the alienating and iterative time of the sign. [...] The 'meanwhile' turns into quite another time, or ambivalent sign, of the national people. If it is the time of the people's anonymity it is also the space of the nation's anomie."²⁴ Clearly, by inscribing the people into the liminality of the nation, as Bhabha claims to do, he is seeking to generate a division between a hegemonic / ideological concept of the narrated nation (the nation as narrated *for* the people) and a heterogeneous concept of the nation (the nation as performed *by* the people). He does not, however, clearly lay out in this essay a methodology or heuristics for the exploration of what essentially amounts to the exploration of cultural praxis (other than to suggest that his examination satisfies Raymond Williams's requirements for a 'non-subjectivist' and 'non-metaphysical' mode of explanation for the dynamic between the residual and emergent modes of society).²⁵

His mode of turning the heterogeneity of the nation into a generative factor for the national narrative is, though, essential to an examination of the dynamics of the formation of the national (and international) public sphere. Bhabha's insistence on 'literary' narration, as well, does not reflect the 'realism' of visual narration in *seeming* to represent realistically the heterogeneous, performative community (and thus 'familiarize' its 'defamiliarizing' structuration). The ideological interests in this representation doubles the national narrative (pedagogy) and the performative nation (spectatorship) into the interstice of reception.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 390.

²⁵ Cf. Bhabha, "Nation," 390, and Raymond Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980).

Though Bhabha works far too closely to the very autochthonous nature of the nation which he criticizes as historical (pedagogical), by turning the nation's construction back onto its internal self-differentiation, Bhabha and Chatterjee both dehistoricize the nation in its everyday social praxis by generating a model of nation that is continuously (circularly) synchronic rather than diachronic. This allows both to locate cultural resistance (the praxis of 'emergent' social action) in the very 'mimicry' of colonial narrative forms. Thus, instead of seeing the colonized as just that, completely colonized and absorbed into the dominant culture, they establish an ahistorical realm that can rework the historical narrative (filled with binaries) through the filter of the synchronic social praxis of the colonized (filled with ambivalence). In other words one strategy of resistance against the colonizer is the very 'mimicry' of form derived from the colonizers, yet filled with synchronic social meaning for the colonized: i.e. the representation of a heterogeneous time. As such, the historical narrative, viz. the historical imaginary, is reworked in this Bhabhian 'resistance' into a heterogeneity informed by the synchronic conception of society.

The question of History always figures prominently into the establishment of homogeneous empty time as a utopian time, a figure of modernity, and is a utopian space for discourse about the nation. It is, then, on this level that the work of the historical imaginary takes place. What Bhabha and Chatterjee's work suggests is that 1) there is what could be called an ideological division between the homogeneous empty time of the nation and the heterogeneous time of social praxis; and 2) that the relationship between the emergent social practices and the residual social practices informs and reforms hegemony in some specific and, perhaps paradoxically, ambivalent ways.

The theoretical problematic for Europe that arises with this general model is perhaps obvious: does it imply that Europe is progressing to a new manner of nation? It is through the question of History that this problematic can begin to be addressed, at least as it is reflected in European culture. Eventually, I think we will be able to formulate a critical concept of 'postnationalism' as both stratified between an idealization and a realization, and as informing the intersubjective basis of European identity formation. Indeed, Tzvetan Todorov, himself a strong proponent for the EU and the European Constitution, suggests that "human beings have always been able to draw a distinction between civic (or administrative) identity and cultural identity..."²⁶ For Todorov this means the de facto preservation of regional

²⁶ Todorov, *New World Disorder*, 71.

identity, while reorienting politics towards the 'public sphere' (Habermas) or towards a notion of 'constitutional patriotism,' insures the success of the European project. The concept of 'constitutional patriotism' is one that is gaining ground throughout Europe as a means of bypassing questions of 'ethnic nationalism' and still retaining the political community of national discourse. The conflict that arises, according to critics in Balibar's camp, is that this 'constitutional patriotism' will most likely retain many of the same features of nationalism, especially the exclusion of the 'other' culture within the bounds of the European geo-political space. One way past this theoretical impasse would be a political and socio-cultural engagement with the delimited and delimiting nature of the internal borders of Europe, the liminal space wherein the development and praxis of the nation as fictive ethnical unit competes with the nation as utopian gateway for immigration, through a 'performative' relationship with history, borders, citizenship and nation.

To summarize some of the disparate points here: We can view the evidence on nationalism presented above as suggesting two distinct concepts 1) nationalism as imposed form of identity (the 'top-down' form of nationalism); and 2) nationalism as performative resistance and 'synchronic' communal configuration (the 'bottom-up' form of nationalism). Both of these assume the dissemination of 'nationalism' in its ideological form from a cultural center, i.e. Europe. It also seems that one common aspect of the development of 'postnationalism' is the return to a problematical, dialectical process of emergent and residual social practices. This would seem to satisfy Habermas's requirement for problematization of the staid socio-political debates in the face of globalization and neoliberalism as well as Bhabha and Chatterjee's interest in heterogeneous praxis. Such a problematization removes the subject from the safe cover of the historical imaginary and thrusts them into the process of intersubjective social praxis, the very real(ized) horizon of emergent social praxis. There is also evidence of a conflict between the linearization and homogenization of identity and praxis-oriented heterogeneity and non-linearity—such a conflict constitutes community and the dialectic of nation stabilizing the form if not the content. This remains, however, largely descriptive, historical in itself, and does not address the inherently residual nature of such emergent praxis. To this, I turn to Etienne Balibar.

IV.

While I have written to some length about postcolonial identity in reference to the construction of European identity, I should now make clear what has always been considered the distinction between them. One of the

deeply productive aspects of postcolonial theory is in the eradication of fixed borders within the rationalization of the world system, running the gauntlet between universalism and 'postmodern' individualism with adroitness. Whereas the identity and communal structure of the postcolonial inherits and engages with the remnant of the dominant culture both within the bounds of the community and in the world market in the form of the mode of production, the presence of the postcolonized other within the borders of the European Union also signals a particular 'problematic' for European identity. We should speak, in short, of an inversion of postcoloniality within the sphere of Europe. The defining nature of the colonies, elevating the Europeans to positions of educated, mature guardians for the rest of the world, inverts in the postcolonial world and continues to define even when European "axiological globalism" (Todorov 1995) shifts into universalism and particularism. Many of the shifts, political corrections, social transitions and the like that have taken place in the twentieth century occurred as a result of new ethical readings of colonialism and the colonizers' continuing social, political and economic 'responsibility' to the colonized.

How does this change the formulation, then, for the immigrant / postcolonial other? The immigrant and postcolonial other in Europe is placed into the double bind of determinant (non-European) and mnemonic (the *memento coloniarum*). This destabilizes the performative nature of identity in that the communal settings for such a performance are determined not by the imposition of an 'axiological globalism' and its historical remnants into the autochthonous lifeworld—an imposition which insembrates a temporal problematic, i.e. the figuration of 'rupture,' and thus brings forth the specter of history—rather, this relationship is oriented around mimetic assimilation. The route to Europe and *into* Europe is an Aristotelian act of mimesis, a act which is preconditioned as determined by distance, and is seen as such by the dominant culture.

Moreover, for many immigrants throughout Europe the question of performative political engagement is outside of the bounds of reason and legality. The *sans-papiers* in France, immigrants who are, normally, waiting for paperwork, applications of asylum and appeals, makes it very difficult to manifest some form of political unity and resistance in the face of pending exile; the generation of a '*sans-papiers*' identity is normatively determined by criminality. And it must be remembered that this 'performative' engagement is always engendered by the dialectical relationship with the (self-generated) border, according to Bhabha. In the case of immigration, instead of generating the border the immigrant actually represents the physical border, bears it within their very social existence.

It is from this perspective that Balibar brings his intentionally confrontational formulation of the European Apartheid. For Balibar the separation of the European from the non-European within the public sphere, within European society and European normativity, is the inexorable development of a European apartheid which reflects a curious relationship between Europe and globalization. This apartheid is spawned by the incursion of the European market into new parts of the world, the opening of the services market of Europe to non-Europeans, and the continual inscription of non-Europeans as just that, thus both inside and outside of the European public sphere, driving its economic stability, while being excluded from its political, social, and ethical construction. Indeed, Balibar speaks of this in terms of both an 'apartheid' and a recolonialization of labor power: "European unification, far from counteracting tendencies toward recolonialization of labor power resulting from the globalization of competition, seems rather to be the instrument of their intensification."²⁷ Balibar's concurrent emphasis on *droits de cité* as a real political solution offers the potential for the problematization of the issue in a manner such that the resolution can only be through the structural change of the rights and obligations of citizens.

Where Balibar differs from Habermas, as voice of postnationalism, in the representation of a problematization of European politics, is in the telos. Habermas encourages the development of postnationalism in that it problematizes the nation and the non-nation, a problematic which is to be addressed, for Habermas, in the public sphere of socio-political discourse. For Balibar the problematization alone is not enough and must lead to a sense of civil disobedience. Both, however, see this initial problematic as essential, as well as its critical working through—for Habermas to a social consensus; for Balibar to an essential social reconfiguration. Indeed, Balibar sees some deep-reaching potential in the European project as a 'vanishing mediator' so he has little interest in abandoning the project altogether. The difficulty is in the historical accretion of colonial ideologies and modes of production, which Balibar sees as being reproduced in the current economic orientation of European identity.

I think it becomes clear that the link to be forged between what are otherwise mutually exclusive theoretical formulations in Balibar and Habermas is precisely in the development of a problematic. For both, the inception of problematic history must come into play, must be worried out as a vector whose essence, itself, is problematic. The critical evaluation of

²⁷ Etienne Balibar, *We, the People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*, trans. James Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 44.

this history (these histories) then broadens the problematic and does not offer solutions to it (for Habermas this could be seen as a division between instrumental and communicative action)—rather, they expose the insoluble nature of such a discourse. Once history loses this problematic nature, once it normalizes, then it moves into the ideological realm of the historical imaginary, wherein problematics are reduced to solvable puzzles according to the emotional economy of mainstream discourse.

V.

In conclusion, I would like to address the issue of linearity and non-linearity I brought up at the opening of this essay. I feel that it is within this configuration that one can witness the attempt at working out the problematic of European identity rather than working through it—thus a smoothing over of the historical problematic into a normatized discourse on Europe rather than a continual readdressing of the problematic itself.

For immigrant communities and enclaves in Europe, the question of political activism is restricted to one of initial legality and rights. A 'natural born citizen' (*jus soli*) has the right to involve him or herself in the public sphere, a right granted by the state. For an immigrant, however, this right is the result of a bureaucratic process of acceptance in the eyes of the state, an acceptance that is always bordered by linguistic, phenotypical, and cultural difference. The immigrant must continually prove not simply his legality in relationship to the moral legal system of Europe, but also to the normative legal system of citizenship—she must always wear the badge, carry the papers of legality, of personhood, of acceptance.

In the context of Bhabha and Chatterjee and performative resistance, the situation is reversed for the European immigrant. There is no autochthony to which to turn, no primal communal life on which to model this resistance. Outside of the hierarchical structure of immigrant discrimination, immigrants are, traditionally, grouped into large enclaves of decentered communal life, hovering on the border of legality within the very center of European cities. The performance of these communities is skewed by the question of ownership—these are largely rental housing. Thus, these members do not work towards actively formulating that liminal people (Bhabha) nor even a heterogeneous community, locked as they are within a half-way space of legality / illegality. Yet, they do formulate the bifurcated remembrance of a Romanesque multiculturalism and forced imperialism—they are the *memento coloniarum* on the one hand and the remembrance of the power and attraction of the European economy on the other. Even members of the new European states are relegated to immigrant status

within the core countries.²⁸ And yet, the problematic of immigration and postnationalism is in danger of being linearized.

What does this mean for Europe? The linearization of the problematic entails the reduction of complexity for the sake of demonstrating a singular answer to the problem. This process is currently taking place in the political sphere of Europe, where a division is occurring within mainstream political discourse over the rights of immigrants.²⁹ Such a linearization employs a particular concept of history as linear, teleological—a mode of history that I have called above the 'historical imaginary' or the manner of narrativizing history outside of its intersubjective foundations. Such a linearization eradicates the problematical nature of history, which Patočka sees as its essential aspect. It also eradicates the very problematizing nature of postnational discourse which Habermas sees as critical. In other words, addressing the nature of citizenship in the form of the postnational is also a means of addressing the situation of the immigrants themselves, something that Balibar sees as essentially effected by the turn towards the *droits de cité*.

So, the problematic of citizenship and immigration is not a linear problem to be solved. Rather, it is the defining problematic of the new Europe. Its resolution drives the processes of identity construction within the European public sphere. And it must, indeed, continue or Europe will again be reduced to an economic force and the apartheid that Balibar sees developing will continue unabated. The central identity structure within this problematic is that of the immigrant—in yet another determining moment. The dialectic between citizen and non-citizen drives the processes of European identity formulation. There would be little questioning of the nature of European citizenship were it not for this postcolonial, postsocialist other within their midst. And, as such, there would be no Europe.

²⁸ Cf e.g. European Industrial Relations Observatory On-Line, 'Workers from new EU member states undeterred by restrictive policy,' <<http://www.eiro.eurofound.eu.int/2005/07/feature/nl0507103f.html>>.

²⁹ Nicholas Sarkozy is now infamous (as of August 2006) for having his men march into a Parisian school and take two children into custody in preparation for their expulsion from France.