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Spring 2014

### The National Imagination (Spring 2014)

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Clark University  
Comparative Literature 130  
**The National Imagination**  
Spring 2014  
Monday and Wednesday, 12:00-1:15  
Jefferson 218

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What images make people think of the United States of America? Cowboys? The flag? And are there similar icons in other cultures that help define cultural identity? The National Imagination explores the concept of a national community as constructed and critiqued through literary and cinematic narratives, as well as other cultural texts.

Our underlying premise is that national languages and cultures promote the identity of particular communities. We are interested in examining those subjective expressions of culture—images, symbols, narratives—that lead people to feel that they are members of the communities we call nations. We are also interested in discovering points of resistance to national identity.

Students are trained to examine the nature of the national imagination as a seminal idea that has shaped modern cultures. They explore a variety of cultural texts and contexts—such as architecture, painting, journalism, film, and literature—that may be said to embody the national.

Some of the goals of the course include:

- developing the ability to discuss the concept of the national. What makes a nation a nation? Where does nationalism come from? How does it differ from patriotism, regionalism, globalism, localism?
- increasing our sophistication in discussing national characteristics and differences in a way that avoids crude stereotypes, yet recognizes cultural distinctiveness.
- learning the specifics of the emergence of a national tradition in three different areas of the world (this year, Austria and Colombia).
- becoming familiar with basic comparative methods.
- becoming aware of multiple layers of culture, including popular and folk genres as well as less accessible and elite cultural forms.
- becoming better close readers of texts of various kinds.
- practicing collegial discussion in large and small groups, both real and virtual.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Regular attendance at all class sessions. More than one unexcused absence will adversely affect your grade. When you know you will be absent, please have the courtesy of contacting one of us in advance by e-mail.
2. Preparation of all assigned readings and viewing of all assigned films prior to class.
3. Participation. Although this is a large class, we expect participation in both the small sections and, when possible, the larger group meetings.
4. Weekly Moodle forum postings. Generally, each student should post at least one comment by midnight of the Monday preceding each class.
5. Frequent Quizzes and Small Assignments
6. In-class written exams:
  - January 29: Richard Blanco and theories of the nation
  - March 12: Austria and Variations on a Theme of Nationhood
7. Final Exam, consisting of one hour on Gabriel García Márquez and the Imaginary Nation and one hour on the course as a whole.

## GRADING

Final grades will be based on the following percentages:

Participation	20%
Moodle Posting	10%
Quizzes and Assignments	10%
In-Class Written Exams	30%
Final Exam	30%

The faculty will collaborate on the grading—no single professor will be responsible for a single grade.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarized papers will result in a grade of 0 for the unit in question, and may result in a grade of F for the class as a whole. We will report plagiarism to the Dean of Academic Advising. A second report of plagiarism may result in expulsion from the university. Please become familiar with Clark's policy on Academic Integrity, found here: <http://www.clarku.edu/offices/aac/integrity.cfm>

**Disabilities:** If you need accommodations for a disability, please let us know, and contact Disability Services ([disabilityoffice@clarku.edu](mailto:disabilityoffice@clarku.edu)) early in the semester to make any necessary arrangements.

## DAY BY DAY

### **Richard Blanco and the Poetics of the Nation**

#### **Monday, Jan. 13**

Introductions. National Stereotypes

#### **Wednesday, Jan. 15**

Richard Blanco, For All of Us, One Today  
Selection of Blanco's poetry

#### **Monday, Jan. 20, Martin Luther King Day**

Richard Blanco reading, 4 pm, Razzo Hall

#### **Wednesday, Jan. 22**

Renan, "What Is A Nation?"  
Anderson, "Imagined Communities"  
Berlant and Freeman, "Queer Nationality"

#### **Monday, Jan. 27**

Continued discussion of theories of the nation.

#### **Wednesday, Jan. 29**

In-class written exam on Blanco and the poetics of the nation.

### **Austria: Variations on the Theme of the Nation**

*Weekend Screening of The Magic Flute, time and location to be determined.*

#### **Monday, Feb. 3**

Mozart, The Magic Flute, The Nation before the Nation

#### **Wednesday, Feb. 5**

Mozart, The Magic Flute: Patriarchy and the Nation

#### **Monday, Feb. 10**

Stifter, Maroshely: Unifying and colonizing the nation

**Wednesday, Feb. 12**

Fin de siècle Vienna: Klimt, Schiele, Kokoschka

**Monday, Feb. 17**

Freud, Civilization and its Discontents: Bonding the Nation

*Tuesday evening screening of "Jud Süß," time and place to be determined.*

**Wednesday, Feb. 19**

Harlan, Jud Süß: Reading the fascist nation through Freud

*Weekend screening of "The Piano Teacher," time and place to be determined.*

**Monday, Feb. 24**

Haneke, The Piano Teacher (or Jelinek, The Piano Teacher): The Modern Nation

**Wednesday, Feb. 26**

Haneke, The Piano Teacher (or Jelinek, The Piano Teacher): Europe

**Monday, March 3**

Spring Break

**Wednesday, March 5**

Spring Break

**Monday, March 10**

Eurovision

**Wednesday, March 12**

Austria In-Class Midterm

## Envisioning Latin America

### **MARCH**

#### **Monday 17:**

Inca Garcilaso de la Vega: Foundation of Cuzco in *The Royal Commentaries of the Incas*, available here:

<http://www.sunnyhills.net/ourpages/auto/2012/8/9/59175766/Inca1.pdf>

Fowler: Prologue; Chapter 1, "The late colonial period and the wars of independence." Read pages 7-17; 22-25; 27-28.

In your Harper Perennial edition:

About the Author; About the Book;

Study the Buendía family tree: Naming patterns? Honorary titles? Marriages?

Gender ratio? Read out loud some of these names. What do they "sound like"?

#### **Wednesday 19:**

First section of novel, pages 1-101, ending with "Now I'm Colonel Aureliano Buen Día."

#### **Monday 24:**

Fowler: Chapter 2, "Early national period." Read pages 33-46. Spanish majors: also read Exhibit 2.1, "Bolívar's letter from Barranquilla," p. 55

Esteban Echeverría, "The Slaughter House"

#### **Wednesday 26:**

Second section of novel, pages 103-201, ending with "...he married her in Macondo with a noisy celebration that lasted twenty days."

#### **Monday 31:**

Fowler: Chapter 3, "The rise of the neocolonial order." Read pages 59-66.

Juan Rodríguez Freyle, "A Deal with Juana García"

### **APRIL**

#### **Wednesday 2nd:**

Third section of novel, pages 203-313, ending with "I'm sure now that they were everybody who had been at the station."

**Monday 7:**

Fowler, Chapter 4: "The development and fall of the neocolonial order." Read pages 85-89; 91-96; 104-105.

Jorge Luis Borges, "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quijote" and "The Aleph"

**Wednesday 9:**

Fourth section of novel, pages 315-417, the End. Congratulations.

**Monday 14:**

Fowler, Chapter 5, "Reaction and revolution." Read pages 109-119; 120-123; 128-130. Spanish majors: also read Exhibit 5.2, "Fidel Castro's Primera declaración de La Habana," on page 131.

In-class work with Cuban artwork.

**Wednesday 16:**

Gene Bell-Villada, "The History of Macondo" (in Bloom's *Interpretations*)  
Philip Swanson, "*One Hundred Years of Solitude*" (in *Cambridge Companion*)

**Monday 21:**

Fowler, Chapter 6: "Dictatorship and democracy since 1970." Read pages 133-142; 148-153; and 156-157, the End. Congratulations.

Fuguet, "Generación McOndo"

Movie: Either *Love in the Time of Cholera*, or *Of Love and Other Demons*, OR documentary "La magia de lo real"

**Wednesday 23**

"Envisioning Latin America" summary discussion

**Monday 28**

Review of the entire course

**FINAL EXAMINATION (Registrar's Office Will Notify Us about Date)**



**Questions for Richard Blanco Poems  
National Imagination, January 15, 2014**

**América:**

Why the accent? How does it relate to the rest of the poem? To the rest of the book?  
What are the symbols of America/América, and how are they deconstructed?  
Who speaks? How does the poetic "I" morph throughout the poem, if at all?  
How is humor deployed? What purpose does it serve?

**What We Know of Country:**

What role does TV and America pop culture serve in the poem and the rest of the book?  
How does one "love" a country?  
Does the poem imply that assimilation is ever complete? Why/how?

**Mother Country:**

What is the symbolic value of some objects that Blanco mentions? How is poetry built on "stuff,"  
not merely ideas?  
How does food relate to identity?  
How does one "love" a country?

**One Today:**

Why do you think the selection committee chose this poem to be the inaugural poem?  
Which images struck you as unusual and distinctive? Why?  
Link this poem to the "chiva" discussed in the first class.  
How does Blanco become "a celebrity"? How is this "American"?

**Queer Theory:**

How does a "theory" of gender arise from the objects that Blanco and his grandmother  
mention? Puzzle that theory together.  
What's the interplay of gender, race and ethnicity? How does food relate to identity?  
How does pop culture work in this poem?

## Freud and Mozart

I:

"At the height of being in love the boundary between ego and object threatens to melt away": the love story between Papageno/Papagena and Tamino/Pamina

II:

What do people want? "They strive after happiness; they want to become happy and remain so."  
Papageno, for sure ... Monastatos also ...

III:

"This replacement of the power of the individual by the power of a community constitutes the decisive step of civilization. The essence of it lies in the fact that the members of the community restrict themselves in their possibilities of satisfaction, whereas the individual knew no such restrictions."  
Sarastro and the "Ordained" decide who gets to have a mate and who doesn't.

"it is impossible to overlook the extent to which civilization is built up upon a renunciation of instinct, how much it presupposes precisely the non-satisfaction (by suppression, repression or some other means?) of powerful instincts." The insistence on the Ordained that Tamino and Papageno can't talk, can't be with their beloveds until they pass the test.

"love as one of the foundations of civilization": Papageno/Papagena; Tamino/Pamina

"Women represent the interests of the family and of sexual life. The work of civilization has become increasingly the business of men, it confronts them with ever more difficult tasks and compels them to carry out instinctual sublimations of which women are little capable. Since a man does not have unlimited quantities of psychical energy at his disposal, he has to accomplish his tasks by making an expedient distribution of his libido. What he employs for cultural aims he to a great extent withdraws from women and sexual life. His constant association with men, and his dependence on his relations with them, even estrange him from his duties as a husband and father. Thus the woman finds herself forced into the background by the claims of civilization and she adopts a hostile attitude toward it."  
Queen of the Night vs. Sarastro and the Ordained.

"In this respect civilization behaves towards sexuality as a people or a stratum of its population does which has subjected another one to its exploitation. Fear of a revolt by the suppressed elements drives it to stricter precautionary measures." Control of Papageno

V:

"it summons up aim-inhibited libido on the largest scale so as to strengthen the communal bond by relations of friendship" (the Ordained)

VI:

"civilization is a process in the service of Eros, whose purpose is to combine single human individuals, and after that families, then races, peoples and nations, into one great unity, the unity of mankind." The centrality of love to this story

VII:

"What means does civilization employ in order to inhibit the aggressiveness which opposes it, to make it harmless, to get rid of it, perhaps?" Perhaps think about Monostatos, and the efforts to control him.

"Consequently, such people habitually allow themselves to do any bad thing which promises them enjoyment, so long as they are sure that the authority will not know anything about it" (Papageno)

"Since civilization obeys an internal erotic impulsion which causes human beings to unite in a closely-knit group, it can only achieve this aim through an ever-increasing reinforcement of the sense of guilt" (The Temple)

VIII:

"...keeping a watch over the actions and intentions of the ego and judging them ... The sense of guilt, the harshness of the super-ego, is thus the same thing as the severity of the conscience." (The self-control that Papageno and Tamino have to learn)

"It would almost seem as if the creation of a great human community would be most successful if no attention had to be paid to the happiness of the individual" (The attitude of the Ordained to Papageno)

"It issues a command and does not ask whether it is possible for people to obey it. On the contrary, it assumes that a man's ego is psychologically capable of anything that is required of it, that his ego has unlimited mastery over his id. This is a mistake; and even what are known as normal people the id cannot be controlled beyond certain limits." (The rule that Papageno can't talk.)

## Civilization and its Discontents

Spring 2014

- I. Oceanic Feeling: "It is a feeling which he would like to call a sensation of 'eternity,' a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded—as it were, 'oceanic'" (36). Related to the sense of belonging to a nation.  
Flexibilities of boundaries between the self and the other.  
Why does he compare the psyche with an imperial city, Rome?
- II. Happiness—our sole purpose in life, but at odds with the universe. How do we try to achieve it?
- III. Civilization, although it may seem to cause us unhappiness, is actually trying to achieve these goals—protect us from nature and adjust their mutual relations (73).  
What do civilized countries do? (76-80)  
Specifically, what do they do for human relations? Limit freedom in an effort to protect the group (81-82)  
"it is impossible to overlook the extent to which civilization is built upon a renunciation of instinct, how much it presupposes precisely the non-satisfaction (by suppression, repression or some other means) of powerful instincts" (84).
- IV. Civilization emerges out of the family, which emerges out of sexuality; society, however, quickly needs to exert control over love

## Questions for Stifter's "Maroshely" ("Brigitta")

How is Hungary described? How is it similar to Italy? What does the narrator mean when he says that it's not a German landscape?

What is the past and the future of Hungary?

What are the nations in the country?

Describe the nationality of the characters and their relationship to the nation:

- The Major (where is he from? What his home like now?) How doe
- The Narrator (where is he from? What does he do at the end?)
- Brigitta (where is she from? What does she look like?)

What about the more minor characters, Gustavus and Gabrielle?

When do the characters (both the main characters and the others) speak German and when Hungarian?  
When do they wear Hungarian clothes and when German clothes?

What kinds of activities are the Major, Brigitta and Gömör undertaking on the Puszta?

What is the role of beauty in the novella?

What is the role of love? What is the psychology of love in the novel? Describe the kinds of love between the main characters?

Do these concepts have anything to do with questions of the nation? (For this last question, think of some of the Blanco texts, as well as the love story in the Magic Flute.)

# National Imagination

Spring 2014

## Discussion questions "The Piano Teacher"

1. What is the role of classical music in "The Piano Teacher"? Is it redemptive? Do the Schubert Lieder (songs) somehow transcend all the sordid awfulness of the rest of Erika Kohut's world? How would you relate "The Piano Teacher" to "The Magic Flute"?
2. How many of Erika's problems result from her gender? How do traditional gender roles seem to impinge upon Erika's life? How does she resist them? How does Erika compare to the women we've seen in Mozart, Stifter and Freud?
3. Walter Klemmer is a handsome, friendly, athletic, cultivated man from a good family. He's studying to be an engineer, but is apparently also a world-class pianist. He can appreciate Schönberg's twelve-tone music, while deeply loving Schubert's song cycles. Why wouldn't Erika leap at the offer of his love? How does Walter compare to the men we've seen before in this unit?
4. What's going on between Erika and her mother? Does her relationship compare at all with the familial structures we've seen before?
5. The Holocaust isn't mentioned in "The Piano Teacher," but it is a historical reality for any thinking post-war Austrian. If Elfriede Jelinek's novel is a bitter critique of Austrian society, how do you think the legacy of fascism, anti-Semitism and genocide fits into her account?

## Mozart's Magic Flute: Gender, Rationality, Nation

1. Assume for a moment that this opera—whatever else it might be—is a political allegory. Compare the ideology and the political structures of the realm of the Queen of the Night with those of Sarastro.
2. Why is the one world so female and the other world so male? What do you make of the depiction of masculinity and femininity? Is the opera misogynist? How and why does Mozart manipulate our sympathies, first directing us toward the Queen of the Night and then seeming to side with Sarastro? But does the opera completely side with Sarastro?
  - 2a: Why does the masculine seem to triumph over the feminine in the end? What does the masculine come to represent, politically? Does the elegant enlightened rationality of Sarastro rely on the monstrous rapaciousness of Monostatos? Does that underscore the seeming liberality of Sarastro's benign monarchy?
  - 2b: Who are the "Initiated"? How does this masculine society bond together?
  - 2c: Does the masculine really triumph over the feminine? What does the feminine represent, politically? If the feminine is hysterical, emotional, bitter and angry—why is the opera named after the Magic Flute, a gift from the Queen of the Night? Explain why the two magical gifts from the realm of the feminine enable the hero to accomplish his tasks?
  - 2d: What's the emphasis on "talking" and "chatting" about? First it's Papageno who talks too much, then we hear that women talk too much—what gives?
  - 2e: A final thought on gender: Really, do you think anyone in the audience ever prefers Sarastro to the Queen of the Night?
3. But maybe we've been emphasizing opposites too much: maybe the opera is about the masculine and the feminine coming together to create a more perfect union. Discuss the scenes that praise the union of man and woman. How does the family serve as a metaphor for the state?
4. What role does class play in the plot? What about race? (Look at Monostatos in the original libretto.)
5. Why is this opera set in a land where the chief religion is apparently the worship of Isis and Osiris? How does that relate to the Roman Catholic Habsburg Empire?
6. Identify the folktale elements of the opera. How does local culture seem to play a role in constructing the narrative?
7. The Magic Flute is one of the most frequently produced operas in the world. The production that we watched was performed at Covent Garden in the United Kingdom. There is a famous Swedish film version by Ingmar Bergman (which the library owns, both in VHS and as a DVD). Talk about the transition from the local origins of the piece to its international accessibility. Conversely, can a small country lay claim to an international work of art?