

New Keywords

A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society

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**Blackwell
Publishing**

Country

and disk recorder, and MP3), have radically undermined the privileged value given to the "auratic" original work. The effect of the mass reproduction of representations is to make them, in John Berger's words, "available, valueless, free" (Berger, 1972: 32). We might question the extent to which this revaluation has in fact happened, as the value of originality has, if anything, been strengthened in the regimes of mass reproduction of art. Yet it is clear that in many areas of practice the dependence of copies upon originals has weakened or even been reversed, and that a more positive notion of copying as increase, generosity, abundance has entered deep into popular consciousness. The widespread downloading of music files from the Internet is perhaps the clearest example of this change. This shift away from the Platonic schema, which so influentially organized Western modes of thinking about the structure of the real, has extended to many of the ways in which we think about representation in general. Popular disrespect for the protected status of originals has come to converge with the poststructuralist argument that it is, in principle, impossible to make any absolute distinction between a singular origin and its secondary repetition.

John Frow

See: *ART, REPRESENTATION, WRITING.*

Country

The word **country** comes into modern English from L (*contrata*), through oF (*contrée*), giving us a root sense of *opposition*: "that which lies opposite or fronting the view, the landscape spread out before one." The idea of country as opposition (to self, to city) is crucial to the formation of the kinds of specular and intrepid attitudes to landscape and unknown countries which were to dominate the centuries of European empire. By way of contrast, indigenous attitudes to country are more ones of nurturing and ancestral connection.

Yet one of the two broad meanings of country ("native land") is congruent with this indigenous sense; the other (the "rural or agricultural parts of it") is more in contrast to the urban (R. Williams, 1976: 71). The first meaning is heavily loaded with affect and ideology: in war, for instance, one "dies for one's country." In this respect there is a strong overlap between "country" and "nation," because "nation" is where the state stockpiles its cultural and historical investments. "Country" is where the heart is, so it is most often with this word in mind that homesickness is felt (one does not miss one's nation), and it is in a **new country** that the migrant strives to recreate a sense of belonging.

The link between affective investment and country is made even more easily with the second meaning of "the rural parts" Williams refers to as everything that is not the city or suburbs (R. Williams, 1973: 9). Fueled by ancient bucolic or pastoral genres, and finally intensified as a huge wave of collective nostalgia in the wake of the upheavals of the

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European Industrial Revolutions, the idea of country as a primal paradise is nearing its final days in these times of environmental disaster and mad cow disease. So Stephen Greenblatt is almost *obliged* to ironize the pastoral as he stops to take a picture in a beautiful Tuscan valley of a farmer plowing behind a team of white oxen: "Filled with the beauty of the scene, which seemed to leap directly from a painting by Piero della Francesca, I shouted to the farmer in my primitive but enthusiastic Italian, 'What beautiful countryside!' He looked up and, from his vantage point in the field shouted back, 'It's better in the city!' " (Greenblatt, 1996: 26). Opposition once again, of the type made explicit by Raymond Williams (1973). But this peasant's unromantic view is often shared by the bulk of the world's population, for third world ambitions (less so indigenous ones) have lead to massive demographic movements out of rural poverty into the overcrowded cities.

These erstwhile peasants, now city folk, might well identify generations later with their home countries, provinces, and localities, addressing those with whom they have this affinity with the term equivalent to **countryman**: *compatriotes* (F), *paesano* (It), *paisano* (Sp), *landsmann* (G). This, then, constitutes the base community unit defining a people's relationship to its country, and is the closest to the sense of "native." Only by gathering such communities together can the "imagined" community of a nation be formed (B. Anderson, 1983).

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The case of Aboriginal Australia can be used to extend the sense of "native" country to its stronger indigenous sense. Most indigenous Australians identify with country via interpersonal relations, including rights and responsibilities for its upkeep, without any sense of country as alienable possession. When asked about their country, indigenous Australians are more likely to talk about "Finke River" than "Australia," even if they are asked this question in New York. They do not circumscribe country in a bounded cartographic way: "Country, to Aborigines, is designated by a track across the land. It is a series of nameable geographical locations interconnected as the itinerary of ancestral travels. The totem identity – that is, the identity with a plant, animal or natural form – designates a track (a song line) and one's country" (Gill, 1998: 299). Clearly such a conception of highly developed interpersonal connections with country – country as kin – runs counter to the capitalist conception of country as alienable and exploitable for purposes of agriculture or mining. In consequence, some of the more interesting problems posed for international law in recent years have concerned indigenous struggles for land rights and water rights ("country" can include waterways and coastal seas).

The pitching into the public arena of these indigenous ideas about country and its management has been joined by the alternatives of the green movement. But the indigenous-green alliances have not always been clear cut. They can often part ways over such issues as the definition of wilderness and the utility of national parks. "Wilderness" can too easily link up with the romantic conception of a primal paradise, where human presence – including indigenous ancestral occupation – is effaced. National park managers

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have begun to use the vocabulary of "multiple stakeholders" of country where different users may have contradictory practices in the country; such contradictions might, for instance, allow indigenous people the exclusive right to hunt certain native animals.

Legal struggles over country are accompanied by adjacent cultural representations (W. J. T. Mitchell, 1994a), which are a secondary source of its value (its primary one being the source of raw materials). This secondary valuing is nevertheless the source of all knowledge about country, including its cartography and guidelines for its treatment. This knowledge is objectified as cultural representations of country, which can often be called landscapes. Such representations can appear in any medium: *framed* as a landscape painting or photograph; conceived of as a suitable *site* for building (as in landscape architecture); or captured as a *moving image* in the cinema. The aesthetics of such landscapes are politics carried out by other means, for what one learns to *value* in landscape enables one to "culture" forms of life in any site where a "good" way to live is being sought. In the comfort of our homes a "picture window" thus domesticates the "landscaped" country outside, or in a hotel a clichéd painting on the wall reminds us of the aesthetic function supposedly intensifying our relationships to country, creating feelings of homeliness or, indeed, of alienation.

Stephen Muecke

See: *CITY, HOME, NATION*.

Culture

There is now a good deal of hesitancy over the value of the word **culture**. "I don't know how many times," Raymond Williams once said, "I've wished that I'd never heard the damned word" (R. Williams, 1979: 154), registering his frustration that its complexity defied the tasks of ordinary analysis. Adam Kuper (1999) is of much the same mind. The term is now so overused, he argues, that is better to break it down into its component parts and speak of beliefs, ideas, art, and traditions rather than expect to find a set of shared characteristics which brings these together as part of a wider field of culture. Yet the consensus of opinion probably lies with James Clifford when he says that culture is "a deeply compromised idea," but one he "cannot yet do without" (Clifford, 1988: 10).

For at the same time as difficulties have been expressed regarding the value of the vocabulary of culture, the range of contexts in which that vocabulary now figures has multiplied extraordinarily in recent years. Earlier qualified uses of the term – such as **high culture**, **folk culture**, **mass culture**, and **popular culture** – remain, albeit that the judgments these implied in the context of class divisions have been weakened. References to **national cultures** and to **regional cultures**, whether at the subnational or supranational levels, remain, but with the added complication that the boundary lines between what is to count as national and what as regional have become increasingly contested. However,

there is also now an extended range of uses relating to forms of difference that operate both within nations and across the relations between them. **Gay culture, lesbian culture, black culture, ethnic cultures, diasporic cultures, and transnational cultures** are all cases in point. The strong association that has been established between the concept of culture and the notion of lifestyles has generated another range of extensions – from **subcultures** and **counter-cultures** to **club cultures, street cultures, and drug cultures. Body culture, consumer culture, prosthetic culture, material culture, sports culture, media culture, and visual culture** similarly point to a proliferation of usage, while **culture shock** indicates a distinctively modern condition arising from an overexposure to cultural stimulation.

Use of the adjectival **cultural** has, if anything, grown more rapidly. We now live, we are told, in a **cultural economy**; **cultural policies** are an increasingly important field of government activity, with **cultural diversity, cultural pluralism, and cultural access and participation** important policy objectives. Inner cities are constantly being revived through **cultural development, cultural regeneration, or cultural animation** programs. **Cultural rights** are now a significant aspect of contemporary citizenship entitlements, while **cultural heritage, cultural property, and the cultural landscape** are to be preserved and protected. **Cultural imperialism, cultural genocide, cultural tourism, cultural materialism, and cultural capital** all indicate an extended use of the adjectival form in more specialist and academic languages. And whole fields of knowledge are now described as cultural. If **cultural studies** and **cultural critique** led the way here, the fields of **cultural psychology, cultural history, cultural geography, and cultural evolution** have followed in short order as a part of the more general **cultural turn** in the humanities and social sciences.

The unqualified use of culture as a normative standard – still best evoked by Matthew Arnold's description as "the acquainting ourselves with the best that has been known and said in the world" (1876) – has, however, become rarer. Its champions, moreover, now typically write in an embattled and militant tone. Harold Bloom's (1995) defense of "great literature" as an improving force in the context of the US **culture wars** is perhaps the most striking example. By and large, however, the belief that a particular canon of literary, music, or artistic works can claim a monopoly of **cultural value** is no longer widely supported. This partly reflects the increased role of democratic and egalitarian sentiment, which has made it harder for intellectual elites to claim any special value for their preferred cultural activities over those of other social groups. The resentment such claims occasioned is evident in the long tradition of satirizing elite claims to cultural superiority that we see in such terms as **culture vulture, culture hound, and culchah** (or **kulcha** in Australia).

Equally, the waning use of culture as a normative standard reflects the unraveling of the associations which had earlier sustained the meaning of culture as, in Williams's summary, "a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development" and – as the most evident fruits of this process – "the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity" (R. Williams, 1976: 80). With its most immediate roots in L *cultura*,

referring to the processes of cultivation, caring, or tending, culture implied growth and improvement. This was evident in early horticultural usage where it could refer to both the process of tending for plants and animals ("Such a...plot of his Eden...gratefully crowns his Culture...with chaplets of Flowers" [Boyle, 1665-9]) and the result of such husbandry ("The erth...by...dylygent labour...ys brought to maruelous culture and fertylite" [Starkey, 1538]). The same is true of later scientific usage to refer to the artificial development of microscopic organisms and the growth of plant and animal cells and tissues, where culture can refer to a particular method of growth – that of **tissue culture**, for example – or the chemical substance in which growth is effected, as in **culture medium** or **culture fluid**. This usage was also later extended to the practices through which individuals might seek to develop or improve themselves. This might refer to physical development through the training of the body, as in Hobbes's observation that among the Lacedaemonians, "especially in the culture of their bodies, the nobility observed the most equality with the commons" (1628). Or it might refer to the cultivation of intellectual or spiritual attributes. "The education of Children," Hobbes claimed, comprised "a Culture of their minds" (1991 [1651]).

It is, however, with the transfer of this set of meanings from the nourishment and growth of individuals to that of society that the most decisive change underlying modern usage occurs. In this history, beginning in the IC18 and eC19 and progressing through to the mC20, culture comes to stand for a general process of social improvement. Functioning, initially, as a term more or less interchangeable with civilization in this regard, its IC19 and eC20 development is conditioned by the emergence of an increasing tension between these two terms. Worked through first in German Romanticism, this history was produced and sustained by a set of antagonisms between, on the one hand, civilization as a standard of material progress best indexed by the development of industrial production and, on the other, culture as the embodiment of a set of higher standards in whose name material civilization might be indicted for its shallowness, coarseness, or incompleteness, when viewed from the higher standards of human wholeness or perfection that the notion of culture increasingly came to represent.

This set of oppositions has proved a productive one. It has sustained a distinctive form of social commentary developed, first, in the German as *Kulturkritik*, and continuing into the present as **cultural criticism** or **cultural critique**, in which works of culture serve as the occasion for the identification of the failings and shortcomings of society. The mixing and mingling of the concepts of culture and aesthetics were important in this regard, especially in the role that aesthetics played in locating in the work of art those higher standards of perfection that the emerging concept of culture proposed as an alternative to the standards of industrial civilization. Friedrich Schiller's *Letters on the aesthetic education of man* (1967 [1795]) proved especially important here. Schiller defined the encounter between the person and the work of art as one in which the former was confronted with their imperfections and inadequacies when judged from the higher standards of the art work.

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This meant that the experience of art could be transformed into one of self-improvement, as the person would aim to close the gap between their rough empirical self and the poise and harmony represented by the work of art.

If culture thus supplied a set of standards through which industrial civilization might be called to account before a higher court of appeal, it also supplied a means of overcoming the shortcomings that such a court might pronounce. The material and institutional history of culture is important here. Culture, in this specializing and improving sense, existed not just as a set of ideas: in the mC19 development of public libraries, museums, concert halls, and art galleries, it also informed the practices of a new set of **cultural institutions** which aimed to combat the shortcomings of civilization by diffusing the higher standards of culture throughout society. While these shortcomings included the values of industrialism, they also, and more particularly, included the ways of life of the urban working classes and the need to enfold these classes within the improving force of culture if the threat of anarchy were to be averted.

The whole material layout of the C19 city was radically affected by this conception of culture and its mobilization as a moral force through which individuals might be enabled to improve themselves to achieve the kinds of poise, balance, and self-perfection that Schiller spoke of. Arnold captured this sense when he wrote that "culture indefatigably tries not to make what each raw person may like, the rule by which he fashions himself; but to draw ever nearer to a sense of what is indeed beautiful, graceful, and becoming, and to get the raw person to like that" (Arnold, 1971 [1869]: 39). The C18 had been a "display city" (P. Joyce, 2003: 151) where, in promenades and assembly rooms, the well-to-do exhibited their civility and enlightenment without any regard to either their own moral interiors or those of the subordinate classes. In the C19, the transference of the religiously inspired associations of Gothic architecture to libraries, museums, and galleries incorporated a moral address into the built forms of the urban environment, as they beckoned the urban population with the prospect of spiritual and cultural uplift and improvement.

Such conceptions continued to be influential in the C20, informing the development of public broadcast systems and with an ongoing, albeit diminished, impact on cultural policies. The period from the mC19 to the eC21 has, however, witnessed serious challenges to the singular normative view of culture which underlies the culture-civilization opposition. This reflects the challenges that have come from the varied social movements – old and new – which have refused to accept the negative evaluation of their own cultural pursuits that the Arnoldian usage entailed. The socialist and labor movements, feminism, the struggles of indigenous peoples and of minority ethnic cultures, and the identification of the African-American contributions to the cultures of modernism have all taken issue with the classed, gendered, racial, and Eurocentric biases that undermined the universalism of culture's claim to be the best that has been known and said. The increased commodification of all forms of **cultural production** and **cultural consumption** has also blurred any sense of a single division between "real culture" and "the rest." In what are now highly

segmented **cultural markets** with their own internal distinctions of value, high culture looks more and more like one cultural market among others.

The use and interpretation of culture within academic debates have both been affected by and contributed to these developments. Williams's own writing on culture has proved important here. By showing how the supposedly universal standards of perfection associated with the normative view of culture turned out, in practice, to have strong connections with the particular values of ruling groups and classes, he extended our sense of what might count as culture. This made it possible for the symbolic aspects of everyday life to be included as well as the products of high culture – and, just as important, to be included on the same terms without any sense of an essential and embattled distinction between “real culture” and “the rest.”

As a result of these developments, the view of culture as a standard of perfection has tended to give way to the third of Williams's senses of culture, referring to the “particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group” (R. Williams, 1976: 80). Edward Tylor, a key figure in the development of IC19 social anthropology, has often been credited with the responsibility for this view of culture. Williams sees him as a link between Johann Gottfried von Herder's IC18 critique of the Eurocentric values implicit in “universal” histories of culture and civilization, and eC20 forms of **cultural relativism**. The key text here is the passage where Tylor says that culture “is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Tylor, 1874: 1). However, the seeming even-handedness that is implied here is, as George Stocking Jr (1968) notes, belied as Tylor proceeds to arrange different cultures into evolutionary stages, in which each stage represents progress from one state of culture development between the twin extremes of “savage and cultured life” (Tylor, 1874: 26).

Yet it is still with good reason that the view of culture as a way of life is referred to as the ethnographic or anthropological definition of culture. For it owes its most influential contemporary formulation to the work of Franz Boas. Trained in German anthropology in the IC19, Boas translated the non-evolutionary assumptions of German anthropology into the first fully developed statement of the principles of cultural relativism during his later work in America. As different cultures set their own standards of value, Boas argued, only serious misunderstanding and social harm can result from attempts to arrange cultures into evaluative hierarchies or evolutionary sequences. As the first social scientist to speak of **cultures** in the plural (Menand, 2002: 384), Boas's work contributed to the broader criticisms of American society as a melting pot in which differences were to be extinguished that was evident in the writings of pragmatists like John Dewey. Boas's sense of the social and relational nature of cultures, defined in terms of their differences from one another, was also evident in William Du Bois's use of the term “double-consciousness” to describe the identities of African-Americans, caught in the relations between white and black cultures.

It is this sense of culture as a set of flows and relations that lies behind some of the misgivings that Arjun Appadurai (1996) expresses regarding the continuing value of the ethnographic concept of culture as a "way of life." For this has often led to a tendency to taxonomize cultures by providing a means of dividing societies into separate groups identified in terms of their distinctive beliefs and behaviors. As such, its history has been closely bound up with the development of modern forms of administration. Theodor Adorno was perhaps the first to notice this when he noted that "the single word 'culture' betrays from the outset the administrative view, the task of which, looking down from on high, is to assemble, distribute, evaluate and organise" (Adorno, 1991: 93). It is, however, the uses to which culture has been put in association with the development of colonial forms of administration that have most exercised more recent criticisms of this administrative logic. Used as a way of dividing colonized populations into separate groups identified in terms of their ways of life, the ethnographic concept of culture was integral to the development of colonial systems of rule which aimed to segregate populations along racial and ethnic lines (Dirks, 2001).

There is accordingly, in current usage, a move away from the view that cultures can be described as fixed and separate entities. The terms **cultural hybridity**, **cultural flows**, **transculturation**, **cross-cultural dialogue**, and **cultural in-betweenness** thus all draw attention to the fluidity and impermanence of cultural distinctions and relationships. The change of emphasis that is involved here is best captured by the shift from speaking of **different cultures** to a stress on **cultures in difference**, with the implication that cultural activities are caught up in processes of differing rather than being simply different from the outset. The emphasis on processes of racializing or ethnicizing culture points in the same direction.

Distinctions between nature and culture now also have a weaker force as a result of the increasing sense that the relations between these are best thought of as porous and permeable. Developments in human genetics, biology, biotechnology, genetic medicine, and biotechnology have been especially important here, leading to a series of technological interventions into the human body and nature – from *in vitro* fertilization to genetically modified (GM) crops – which have called into question their separation from cultural processes. The new vocabulary of **cyberculture**, **nanoculture**, **somatic culture**, and **technoculture** reflect these concerns, which are equally central to contemporary popular culture – the *Terminator* movies, for example.

It is a moot point, however, whether, in spite of all these changes, current ways of thinking about and engaging with culture have entirely escaped the pull of the eC19 to mC20 construction of the relations between culture and civilization. However, this now increasingly appears to be best thought of as a historically specific set of mechanisms for sorting populations into groups and managing the relations between them. There was, William Ray (2001) argues, a clear **logic of culture** at work here in the sense that culture, by posing itself as a challenge to, and opportunity for, individual self-improvement seemed

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to offer a means for individuals to sort themselves into different groups. Culture thus offered an important means for regulating societies by suggesting that their key divisions resulted from the ways in which individuals seemed naturally to differentiate themselves according to how far they did (the respectable middle classes) and did not (the feckless poor) respond to the cultural imperative of self-improvement. This mechanism did not operate in colonial contexts, where the logic of culture as a "way of life" was annexed to the more coercive forms of management associated with "the ethnographic state" (Dirks, 2001). Nor, in other contact histories, has it proved to be easily transportable. The mixture of incomprehension and opposition that resulted from attempts to mobilize (as newly invented terms) art (*bijitsu*) and culture (*bunka*) in the programs of civilization and enlightenment (*bunmei kaika*) characterizing the Meiji period in Japan (Figal, 1999) testify to just how far this logic of culture has been bound and limited to the West. The spread, more generally, however, of differentiated cultural markets and lifestyles, each with its own distinctive styles of consumption and ways of fashioning behavior, has proved a more adaptable way of reshaping social distinctions by virtue of the groups into which individuals seem naturally to sort themselves through the cultural activities they pursue.

Tony Bennett

See: *AESTHETICS, ART, CANON, CIVILIZATION, COLONIALISM, ETHNICITY, RACE.*

Nation

are thus a part of the diegesis. However, as soon as an author steps out of that frame and speaks directly to the reader (or a character directly addresses the camera in a film), for example, what is occurring is non-diegetic, although still a part of the reader/viewer's experience of the narrative as a whole.

The reader/viewer is sometimes called the **narratee**, but there may also be a narratee — in the sense of the person to whom the story is told — within the narrative. Miranda listening to her father's story at the beginning of *The Tempest* is a case in point. It is often difficult to distinguish such a narratee from the *implied reader*, who, as Umberto Eco has argued, is implicit in every text, which he sees as "a lazy machine asking the reader to do some of its work" (Eco, 1994: 3). The implied reader is a *model reader*, a "sort of ideal type whom the text not only foresees as a collaborator but also tries to create" (p. 9). The actual or *empirical reader* is different and does not necessarily follow the text's or the narrative's instructions. An early example of the role of the reader at work in dialogue with a **narrative text** is offered by Roland Barthes in his account of reading in *S/Z* (1975), a study of Balzac's short story *Sarrasine*.

This critical vocabulary has been incorporated into the analysis of all kinds of spoken and written narratives, visual, film, and media texts in a broad-ranging literature (Hartley, 1982; Heath, 1983; Metz, 1981; Silverstone, 1985) which, by engaging with the analysis of storying in a mass-mediated society, has demonstrated how necessary the continued understanding of the link between narrative and myth — and the deconstruction of the apparent naturalness of both — still are.

Terry Threadgold

See: *SIGN, TEXT, WRITING*.

Nation

"Bonaparte made kings; England makes nations." William Bentinck's proclamation (*cit.* Peabody, 1996: 209) on landing with his forces at Palermo in 1811 had the immediate aim of fostering the growth of Italian **nationalism** and enlisting its support in the British campaign against French and Austrian power in the Italian peninsula. But it also appealed to the romantic view of **nations**, as having a life of their own and a right to manage their own affairs, which had been influential in, and actively promoted by, the French Revolution in the years before Napoleon seized power. The abbé Sieyès (1789) defined "nation" as "a union of individuals governed by one law, and represented by the same law-making assembly" — which implied not only that every nation should have a state of its own (or at least a substantial measure of self-government) but also that it could be seen as a legitimate source of political authority. The suggestion that this earlier French commitment to self-determination for all nations had been betrayed gave added force to

Bentinck's claim that the French suppressed the rights of nations while the British aimed to set them free.

The word itself derives from the *L. nasci* (to be born) through *nationem* (a breed or stock), and its early usage referred to a distinct aggregate of people associated with each other by common descent or history, or to a number of persons drawn from such an aggregate. In medieval universities, for example, it referred to a body of students from a particular region, country, or group of countries. By the end of the C18, the more political connotations invoked by Bentinck and Sieyès had come to the fore. In some more recent uses – **the Nation of Islam** or **Queer Nation** – the term has lost much of its earlier association with common descent.

The claim that nations had a right to self-determination was often regarded as a matter of principle. It could also be seen as seeking to undermine the legitimacy of the large **supranational states** which dominated much of continental Europe in the C19 and eC20 or, more simply perhaps, as a pragmatic response to the threat to peace and security posed by the existence of powerful and unsatisfied national aspirations. While not advocating self-determination for all nations, the Covenant of the **League of Nations** nevertheless called for "the prescription of open, just and honorable" relations between them. The Allied powers that founded the League at the end of World War I also recognized that many of the states created by the peace settlements contained significant **national minorities** for whom self-determination would not be practicable. Accordingly, they established a minorities protection regime, consisting of treaties overseen and guaranteed by the League, designed to prevent discontent among these minorities from escalating into a cause of war.

To say that nations have a right to self-determination is to acknowledge that nations and states are distinct. The conflation between them nevertheless persists in various contexts – for example, in the conventional usage of the word "international" or in the name of the **United Nations**, which is an organization of states. There have been many attempts to define nations in terms of the possession of a common language, culture, or descent, a distinct territory, and so on. In an influential lecture, "What is a nation?," delivered in 1882, Ernest Renan argued that definitions based on such objective attributes would never be able to distinguish all the groups we recognize as nations: the examples of Belgium and Switzerland were sufficient to undermine the claim that nations are defined by a common language. What ultimately holds a nation together, Renan insisted, is "the fact of sharing, in the past, a glorious heritage and regrets, and of having, in the future, [a shared] program to put into effect": the very existence of the nation is therefore "a daily plebiscite" (Renan, 1996 [1882]: 53). This image of the nation as "a large-scale solidarity" reflects an aspiration which has played a significant role in many **nationalist movements**, but, since people who belong to the same nation often have radically different views about its past and its future, it is no more successful in defining a nation than the objective attributes which Renan disputes.

A different version of the idea that nations exist in the minds of their members appears in Benedict Anderson's observation (1983) that nations are "imagined communities": nations, like other large collectivities, must be imagined because they exist on too large a scale to be directly experienced by their members. They differ from imaginary communities of other kinds in being imagined as sovereign communities, each with a well-defined population and territory distinct from those of other nations. Where Renan stresses commitment to a common heritage, Anderson focuses on the mundane experiences of common membership. This focus invites us to examine not just the work of **nation states** and **nationalist movements** in promoting their own preferred vision of the nation and **national heritage**, but also the broad range of conditions which serve to promote a sense of shared **national identity**: the vernacular languages, the fabricated rituals and traditions, the newspapers and journals, shared time-zones, the administrative and tax-gathering apparatuses, border controls, currency, maps, postage stamps, and other artifacts which seduce and cajole the most diverse individuals and groups into imagining that they belong together in the one nation. Nothing in these conditions requires those who experience themselves as members of the one nation to have the same image of the imagined community to which they all claim to belong.

If the nation is an imagined community, then nationalism is a project which aims to adapt the social and political order to the requirements of some preferred **national imaginary** through a process, often contested, of **nation building**. It might, for example, promote the interests of an established nation, foster the growth of a **national consciousness** where it had not existed before, fight to secure an independent state or some lesser measure of self-government, campaign for the expulsion or assimilation of alien elements in the nation's midst or to recover lost **national territories**, defend the nation's language or culture against foreign intrusions, or fashion a **national tradition** by incorporating elements of folksong into musical compositions. Nationalist political movements have taken diverse political forms, some of them being relatively liberal and cosmopolitan in character and others distinctly less so; many of the differences between them reflect contrasting perceptions of the nation or nations concerned. On the one hand, a nation could be seen in the manner of the abbé Sieyès's definition, that is, as one *sovereign* people among a number of others. On the other hand, as Renan's discussion would suggest, it could be seen as a *unique* or *distinctive people* held together by more exclusive ties of blood, language, or religion. The fact that these opposed views may be held by different members of the one nation, leading to correspondingly different views about who belongs to the nation and who does not, suggests that there is no straightforward relationship between a nation and the character of the nationalist movements which claim to act in its name.

Nationalists frequently appeal to the long and distinguished past of their own nation. Thus, when indigenous peoples in North America insist on their status as **First Nations** they are certainly drawing on long-standing linguistic practice – the OED cites references to **Indian Nations** from as early as 1650 – but they are also asserting their right, as nations,

to self-determination and laying claim to an historical existence stretching back to a period preceding the European invasions and well before the emergence of most European nations. Nevertheless, historians and social scientists generally agree that, like the states whose legitimacy they sometimes support and sometimes undermine, nations are artifacts of the modern system of states, and that their national traditions are either newly invented or substantially reworked versions of established traditions.

From the time of their first appearance, nations and nationalisms have been subject to the play of geopolitical conflict. Thus, during the Napoleonic Wars, the British deployed the claim that nations had a right to self-determination both in their dealings with the rest of Europe and in their covert attempts – for fear of offending Spain – to wean independence movements in Spanish America away from their alliance with France. This claim also supplied an emancipatory gloss to British imperial maneuvers in India. In all three cases, British policies were represented as promoting conditions in which nations suppressed by alien rule – by the French, the Spanish, or the Marathas – could re-emerge and flourish. The growth of nations has been fostered by established states working to **nationalize** their own populations or to destabilize their geopolitical opponents, by the practices of imperial governments, and by nationalist movements seeking to create or to enlarge states of their own. The successful construction of nations inevitably disrupts other imagined communities which have the misfortune to cut across or to fall within their boundaries, some of which, like the Basques, the Kurds, and the Palestinians, might themselves lay claim to national identity.

Barry Hindess

See: **COLONIALISM, GOVERNMENT, HERITAGE, STATE.**

Nature

Raymond Williams (1983: 219) assessed that **nature** is "perhaps the most complex word in the [English] language" and that there is an "extraordinary amount of human history" (1980: 219) embedded in this term. He traced the evolution of the descriptive form (**natural**) into an independent noun, as a shortened version of the L phrase *rerum naturum* (**nature of things**). In its earliest (C13) usage "nature" referred to an inherent or essential quality or character of something. The power in this sense of "nature" and of "natural" as inherent, fundamental, universal, and/or necessary is in the attribution of fixity, with the implication of immutability. In the eC21 this remains the most generalized and possibly the most persistent sense of these terms. Closely linked to it is the contemporary sense of "natural" meaning "appropriate" or "fitting," often contrasted with that which is considered artificial, contrived, and/or inappropriate.

Generalized usage of "nature" developed from the C14 in Europe into a designation of "the inherent force which directs...the world" (sometimes including human beings)