1 Translingualism and the Locations of Culture

1.1 WHERE IS CULTURE?

It is no longer controversial, if it ever was, to say that culture is a notoriously difficult concept to pinpoint. Given that the topic has been explored in every humanistic and social scientific discipline conceivable, it is perhaps less than productive to provide a survey of the range of definitions available and how they differ across fields and have changed over time. In general, culture is frequently viewed as an aggregate of practices, customs, rituals, languages, speech patterns, belief systems, and the like that differentiate people of one group from another. From this general understanding of culture, these afore-mentioned differences can overlap across different cultures (e.g., it is quite common for people of different cultural groups to speak the same language) and any given person likely belongs to multiple differ-ent cultural groups (a point that will be discussed in fuller detail later in this chapter). In the Introduction, I indicated that the focus of this book is to understand the legibility of culture, or how culture can be seen or *located*, in spaces of semiotic precarity, or those in which the quotidian and unremarkable specificities of cultural difference are either uncertain or called into question and, as a result, come to be both remarkable (in the sense of literally being worthy of remark) and as semiotically *distinct*. As such, for our purposes, I would argue that a definition of culture, even a working definition, could in many ways be counterproductive in that, as we will see, the notion of cultural distinction (the ways in which cultures differentiate themselves from others) is itself not fixed, even though we might arrive at preliminary understandings in spaces of semiotic precarity. In other words, what we will see is that culture is a concept that is best understood retro-actively, in moments in which it can be dialectically delineated as distinct from another culture.

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Michael Silverstein (2013), in his effort to put an end to longstanding questions of "what" is culture, proposes that we instead focus on the question of "*where* is culture?" (p. 328, emphasis in original). For Silverstein, culture is to be found in the signification, circulation, and emanation of discourse, a point that I will return to later in this chapter. This book could also be said to be guided by the same question of "where is culture?" However, while Silverstein's inquiry pertains primarily to aspects of language in which culture can be found, I am also guided by the question in a somewhat more literal sense of where in the world culture can be located. While I am of course not suggesting that I can put an end to the question of what culture is, I do believe that approaching culture from a global perspective might be a useful way forward.

Given that our present focus is on the challenges and nuances of locating the distinguishing features of a given culture across global space, a logical starting point might be Homi Bhabha's (1994) classic work, *The Location of Culture*. One of Bhabha's (1994) most enduring arguments situates understanding the particularities of culture within sites of hybridity, defined as places "where the construction of a political object that is new, *neither the one nor the other*, properly alienates our political expectations, and changes, as it must, the very forms of recognition of the moment of politics" (p. 37, emphasis in original). In Bhabha's case, "politics" is a mechanism by which peoples of different cultural origins or groups can be categorized according to predetermined criteria premised on the intention of taxonomizing and ranking different cultures in a vertically stratified manner. Meanwhile, cultural hybridization subverts these existing logics of subordination themselves while facilitating opportunities for alternative, horizontally distributed forms of group identification not bound to the hierarchizing logics of "politics" as such. For Bhabha's purposes, questions of cultural distinction matter not unto themselves but come to be relevant as frames of reference that render unintelligible new forms of cultural hybridity. The point to emphasize here is that this question of unintelligibility likewise becomes an issue only when approached from the assumption that there is such a thing as culture as a pure, unadulterated entity.

Of course, in the context of sociolinguistics, the notion of hybridity has been critiqued for a variety of reasons. Such reasons include its "conceptual ambiguity," its presumption of cultural purity prior to hybridization, its associated negative connotations, and its neglect of questions of power and inequality (Rubdy & Alsagoff, 2014, pp. 8–9). These concerns being noted, I would like to emphasize

that I am not treating hybridity as a rubric by which to make sense of translingual practice. In other words, I am not suggesting that a hybridized communicative practice combining aspects of culture X and culture Y is somehow politically subversive. Indeed, scholars have increasingly problematized the uneven and unequal distribution of and access to language in the context of globalization (Blommaert, 2010; Dovchin, Pennycook, & Sultana, 2018; Dovchin, Sultana, & Pennycook, 2016; Kubota, 2016; Lorente & Tupas, 2013; Piller, 2016; Tupas, 2015). Relatedly, by invoking hybridity I am not trying to highlight the benefits of ostensibly "hybrid" cultural practices, including linguistic practices. Put differently, this is not an attempt to ascribe value to translingual practice as inherently superior to "monolingual" practices (see Introduction) but to approach it as a rubric by which to make sense of the certitude of cultures prior to their purported hybridizations.

If we return to Bhabha (1994), cultural hybridity "constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (p. 55). Cultural hybridity, from this perspective, is productive not for understanding how multiple, ostensibly homogeneous and stable cultures and their respective practices (including linguistic practices) transform one another via contact. Instead, quite the opposite might be true if we approach culture from what Bhabha (1994) calls a "contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation" (p. 55). While cultures can never exist in an isolated vacuum, simultaneously, it is through moments of contact with or juxtaposition to others that the representational discreteness of a given culture can be optimally observed. Put simply, hybridity enables us to see what was presumed to be distinctive about a particular cultural category to begin with. I am, of course, not merely aiming to provide a mere reinstantiation of Bhabha's thesis. Instead, by attending to the wide array of elements within translingual ecologies in which cultural discreteness is reiterated, we can move toward a more comprehensive (though perhaps never entirely complete) understanding of the semiotic attributes that enable categorical assumptions around culture and language. In short, it is not a matter of how a particular "culture" or even "language" is transformed as a result of their relocations across global space; instead, it is a matter of trying to understand the features that are considered to be constitutive of such cultures in the first place.

1.2 *TRANSLINGUAL INVERSION*

In order to arrive at a fuller sense of the various ways in which culture can be "located" across global space, it is necessary to both understand how semiotically salient features of a culture can be subject to change over time but also make sense of the ways in which such emblems can come to be enregistered (Agha, 2007) as representative of a given culture. Of course, this approach to culture, in particular the treatment of culture as "semiotic," is indebted to a longstanding history of ethnographic accounts of cultural distinction (see Geertz, 1973, p. 5). For my purposes, I want to focus on understanding the semiotic emblems as they are encountered across global space, in contexts representative of semiotic precarity. I refer to this phenomenon by which semiotic resources come to be enregistered as emblematic of a given culture as *translingual inversion*. The heuristic of translingual inversion reflects the possibility that what is deemed to be representative of a given culture needs to be understood not only in relation to what are assumed to be the core, distinguishable features of culture but also in relation to how the very phenomenon of representation calls into question our assumptions about what we assume the culture is supposed to look like to begin with. My use of "inversion," thus, draws primarily from Miyako Inoue's (2004) notion of indexical inversion, which enables us to historicize the sedimentation of a given indexical order (e.g., how certain semiotic resources have come to be associated with a given culture) while also understanding their indexical capacities in situ. Meanwhile, my use of "translingual" aims to develop one of the points invoked in the Introduction, which is that a translingual orientation to language understands that communication need not be treated as limited to "language" but as inviting attention to the wide range of semiotic resources and spatial elements that are constitutive of a communicative moment or phenomena.

One of the fundamental premises to my inquiry is the notion that semiotic aspects of cultural distinction, or in other words the ostensibly discrete features of a particular culture by which it can be distinguished from other cultures, are not fixed but rather continually reimagined. In regards to this premise, a useful starting point is perhaps Ludwig Wittgenstein's (1953) theorization of family resemblance. The famous example presented by Wittgenstein is the case of games, including "board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on" (§66). It is indeed difficult to settle on an all-encompassing and categorical definition of something as expansive as a "game," but according to the notion of family resemblance, we are

not able to conclude that "there must be something in common, or they would not be called 'games'." However, the very concept of the "game" exists because instead "we *look* and *see* ... family resemblances," that is, "similarities, relationships, and a whole series" of corresponding features, rather than sufficient criteria in every activity we call a "game" (Wittgenstein, 1953, §66).[1] Certainly, there is an inherently diverse denotative range within the concept of the "game," but the point is that we tend to categorize and taxonomize things according to an imaginary checklist of features, but we hardly ever expect the checklist to be complete.

A similar point might be made about the notion of culture. Approaching the semiotically salient features of a given culture as a family resemblance is productive for understanding how various cultural entities *look* in the context of globalization. I am of course not trying to make the simple point that by comparing different cultures we can locate family resemblances with respect to analogous cultural practices among many (to determine, for instance, that most all cultures have some form of a dumpling in their culinary repertoire and to locate the essential feature in each cuisine that makes it categorically a dumpling). I am referring instead to identifying various semiotic iterations of a given culture and trying to determine if there are any shared corresponding traits among them as a family resemblance (what various semiotic objects are chosen to represent a given culture and what, if anything, do they have in common?). This approach is useful because, on the one hand, it is assumed that any cultural entity will undergo changes as a result of movements across geographic spaces and contact with other cultures. Approaching the semiotics of culture as family resemblance could then potentially enable us to take stock of how such changes can be rendered visible. However, such an approach runs the risk of assuming the semiotic fixity of a given culture prior to the changes it is purportedly expected to undergo in response to the cultural flows of globalization. For instance, to continue with the example of "games," when trying to determine how the Japanese "adapt" the sport of baseball one would need to assume to a certain degree that a) baseball is played according to a uniform set of conventions and guidelines across all prefectures, cities, neighborhoods, leagues, schools, and teams in the entire nation of Japan, and b) it is also played uniformly across all states, counties, cities, neighborhoods, leagues, schools, and teams in the entire United States. Such an inquiry would need to rely on a set of unproductive and

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[1] See also Rosch (1973) on "natural prototypes."

unjustifiable generalizations for both national contexts and would provide, at best, a snapshot in a given moment in time because the sport, in any context, like any sport or game, will invariably undergo some form of change over the years. There is still work to do, in other words, to understand what we believe cultural entities are supposed to look like prior to their transformations across global space.[2] Rather than simply accepting what they look like as fixed givens, examining their iterations across global contexts affords us a unique opportunity to pursue such a line of investigation: to understand what we expect culture to look like in the first place.

The instability but also malleability of cultural semiosis (i.e., the fact that semiotic features associated with a given culture are not fixed and can undergo change, sometimes logical or predictable, sometimes irrational or unexpected, over time) is of course not a controversial point. Iedema's (2003) notion of resemiotization, for one, serves as a reminder of "how meaning making shifts from context to context, from practice to practice, or from one stage of a practice to the next" (p. 41). Silverstein's (2013) framework of three intersecting dimensions of signification–circulation–emanation is an additionally useful way of making sense of such semiotic change. In this framework the three dimensions are conceptualized as such:

a. a regime of evenemential signification immanent in the very experience of situated social practice,
b. a regime of implied paths or networks of circulation of signifying value across such event-nodes in an intuited socio-spatio-temporal structure, and
c. a regime of multiple centers and peripheries – polar-coordinated geometries – of circulatory emanation of signifying value always, inevitably, in flux. (Silverstein, 2013, p. 328)

Silverstein illustrates the phenomenon of cultural signification through an interaction between two law school students in which a complex network of indexical presuppositions shapes their ability to identify with one another. Even in a short interaction, details such as their regional upbringing (Chicago, Illinois vs. Iowa) or connections between their respective undergraduate alma maters (Loyola

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[2] Perhaps a notable exception is Wierzbicka (1992), who has written on semantic primitives in various cultures, such as "soul," which can be translated into Russian as "duša," but not the other way around. While the focus of Wierzbicka's work is to provide a "culture-independent analytical framework" through "universal" semantic concepts across cultures (p. 26), it is noted that various primitives decline in given cultures as a result of linguistic contact.

University of Chicago and Georgetown University, which are both Jesuit institutions) are representative of how cultural knowledge can be "made flesh" (Silverstein, 2013, p. 333). The circulation of cultural signification, meanwhile, is made possible by the inherently intertextual nature of communication, whereby "communicative events creatively referenc[e] other communicative events" (p. 334). Circulation here is a reminder of not only how signification in communication depends on reference to prior or subsequent events but also how the semiotically salient features of culture are subject to change across social, spatial, and temporal contexts. Finally, emanation is illustrated through the example of "wine talk," or what Silverstein terms "oinoglossia." Wine talk is a compelling case study in semiotic emanation in part because it is both associated with a particular class standing but also regularly lampooned for its snobbery. The culture of wine talk also has come to be adopted to frame the discourse around other comestibles, "turning them into metaphorical wine" (p. 349), so to speak. In Silverstein's words:

> the institutional world of wine has become a center point of "emanation" of ways of constructing prestige throughout a whole world of construable comestibles, edible and potable commodities that are brought into the stratified precincts in which wine has long had a social life. So today, just as one can be admired/reviled, imitated/shunned for being a "wine snob" (a folk term of opprobriousness from outside the fold), so also can one find a parallel place in the universe of experiencers of coffee, beer, cheese, ice cream, olive oil, vodka, et cetera. (p. 349)

In sum, the framework of signification–circulation–emanation enables us to understand how semiotic features of a given culture come to be salient, how they both index expected features and serve as the foundational point for emergent features of a given culture, and how they can shape semiotic regimes of signification beyond the given culture. Whether we adopt Silverstein's framework or the principle of resemiotization, to borrow Iedema's (2003) term, which facilitates inquiries into "socio-semiotic histories and transitions" (p. 48), acknowledging the inherent flexibility of semiosis is a productive starting point to approach cultural signification as a resemblance concept. This acknowledgment enables us on the one hand to account for what is something of a contradiction: while cultures can be represented semiotically, such semiotic representations are at best a mere snapshot of culture in a given moment of time. But more importantly, it allows us to understand how cultural entities are constituted by a subset of traits akin to what Agha (2007) describes as "enregistered

emblems," which come to be iconically representative of culture across a range of global contexts.

In the Introduction, I described how I conceive of the translingual turn in sociolinguistics and how its theoretical affordances (namely, the focus on space as central, rather than peripheral, to communication) are relevant to my inquiry at hand. Stepping now into the question of "inversion," I proceed with Inoue's (2004) notion of indexical inversion, which describes the contingency of indexicality on ideological priorities, developing Silverstein's (1996, 2003) concept of indexical orders and Irvine and Gal's (2000) concept of iconization. As we know, the meanings and values of specific words derive not from their linguistic structure but are attributed to them by social actors and institutions. In this sense, returning to Silverstein's (1996, 2003) notion of indexical order turns out to be particularly instructive. For Silverstein, indexical orders, which can be represented as the nth order, n+1st order, etc., can direct us to how meanings afforded to semiotic resources can be on the basis of either "presupposition" or of "entailment." As an example, a word that is determined to be "creative" does not inherently signify creativity but can be determined to do so according to "an already constituted framework of semiotic value" (Silverstein, 2003, p. 194). Nevertheless, the relationship between the nth vs. the n+1st orders, or the "presupposition/entailment relationship is not simply linear or one-dimensional, like a temporal 'before' and 'after' to an indexical event," but rather "a complex and mediated one" (p. 196).

Additionally central to the notion of indexical inversion is Irvine and Gal's (2000) concept of iconization, a framework for understanding "linguistic features that index social groups or activities [that] appear to be iconic representations of them, as if a linguistic feature somehow depicted or displayed a social group's inherent nature or essence" (p. 37). A compelling historical case in point is to be found in the linguistic mappings of sub-Saharan Africa during the mid-1800s, coinciding with the early years of European colonization of the continent. As we know, in many regions around the world, the *national* as a cultural category, along with the nation-state as a political entity, simply did not exist prior to colonial occupation by Western powers. The designation of peoples and territories according to national boundaries was facilitated by the consolidation of peoples according to their language. Irvine and Gal (2000) use the example of how Senegalese "languages" (Fula, Wolof, and Sereer) were mapped onto the region in accordance with newly formed territorial boundaries. Along the way, languages and linguistic variations that did not fit this

new linguistic–political mapping were simply ignored, reflective of what Irvine and Gal term "erasure." Further, assumptions about these languages were in turn treated as iconic of their speakers: speakers of Fula were considered "delicate," speakers of Wolof "less intelligent," and speakers of Sereer as having "primitive simplicity" (p. 55).[3]

Inoue (2004) develops the premises of indexical order and iconization in her theory of indexical inversion, which is illustrated through the engineered pathologization of Japanese "women's language." As Inoue demonstrates, by locating the origins of such speech in the past, "its primordial existence is permanently deferred" to the extent that subsequently any encounter can only be conceived of in terms of "linguistic corruption" (p. 40). This point is illustrated through the case of "school-girl speech," also known as "*teyo-dawa* speech" due its frequency of "*teyo*" and "*dawa*" verb endings, which was deemed "unpleasant to the ears" by male educators at the turn of the twentieth century, a moment which coincided with the opening of new high schools for women (p. 45). Ironically, in the late twentieth century, when larger numbers of women entered the labor force and gained economic independence, men began to complain about women who would speak "like a man." They bemoaned the "corruption" of women's speech and the "source of women's linguistic contamination" was pursued "temporally as the consequence of degeneration from the imagined first-order of indexicality, the archaic existence of pristine feminine speech in the past" (p. 51). In short, the very features of speech (such as "*teyo*" and "*dawa*" verb endings) would be retroactively positioned as indexing ideals such as purity or elegance, even if they were, just decades prior, representative of linguistic corruption. The notion of indexical inversion is not only useful for understanding how meaning making of linguistic variables occurs in accordance with a predictable sequence of indexical orders but also within what Penelope Eckert (2008) describes as the indexical field, or the "constellation of ideologically related meanings, any one of which can be activated in the situated use of the variable" (p. 454).

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[3] This example also illustrates Irvine and Gal's (2000) notion of fractal recursivity, which "involves the projection of an opposition, salient at some level of relationship, onto some other level" (p. 38). In the case of the linguistic colonization of the Senegalese region: "The multilingualism was supposed to have been introduced, along with religious and political complexity, through a history of conquest and conversion that paralleled the European conquest and the hierarchical relationships thought to obtain between Europeans and Africans – relationships of white to black, complex to simple, and dominant to subordinate. That is, relationships between Europeans and Africans were the implicit model for a history of relationships within Africa itself" (p. 55).

Further, while the notion of indexical inversion is a means to understand the role of "temporality and historicity in the *linguistic* analysis" (Inoue, 2004, p. 52, emphasis added), for my purposes I adopt and apply it in a broader sense to understand indexical signification into the larger domain of the semiotics of a culture's enregistered emblems more generally. While I do focus on language in a more conventional linguistic sense in Chapter 3, overall I treat indexical inversion as a productive way of approaching the dynamics of indexical signification as it occurs and plays out both linguistically and also semiotically and spatially. In short, I adopt a translingual orientation to language that sees the semiotic and the spatial as central to communication, which I hope enables us to attend to the wide range of elements that could potentially play a role in understanding the logics of indexical inversion (see Introduction).

By harnessing the above insights, the concept of translingual inversion treats cultural entities as resemblance concepts whose ability to be semiotically represented hinges on a series of emblems that are deemed to share similarities. However, such emblems, even if they can effectively represent a culture in a given moment of signification, are subject to change or resemiotization. Further, the similarities between and among such emblems are not inherent or a priori givens but enregistered as such in ideologically mediated and socially negotiated contexts of meaning making, understood as such only in a given moment of time. In this sense, this phenomenon can begin to be made sense of when approached through the framework of indexical inversion as offered by Inoue insofar as their cultural emblematization is contingent on the assumption of a temporal regime that is "permanently deferred." However, to clarify, this is not only about the manipulation of indexical orders but also about the complex interplay of linguistic/semiotic resources, and spatial elements that are inevitably at work in the semiosis of culture (i.e., determining what culture "looks like" in global space).

Further, the notion of inversion is applicable in somewhat of a figurative sense that deviates from the usage in Inoue's original conceptualization of indexical inversion. In the Introduction, I noted the importance of approaching culture not only from above but obliquely. My proposed approach to culture is in some senses an inverted one: I am looking to understand cultural semiosis not only from the expected sites of cultural production (e.g., the originary homeland) but also from spaces of semiotic precarity where there is an added imperative to semiotize culture and render it legible.[4] In other words, what can we learn about

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[4] This point is illustrated in Chapter 4 through an engagement with Billig's (1995) theory of banal nationalism, which argues that in contemporary democratic

the semiotically salient features of a culture such as Korea that in turn render it transposable to other cultural entities not based on what we encounter in Korea but in a "derivative" space such as a Koreatown in a different part of the world?

While translingual inversion as a theoretical heuristic can be applied to a broad range of cultural contexts, in this book I focus on the national imaginary of Korea and its global iterations. Further, while the notion of translingual inversion helps us to identify, and therefore better understand, the particularities of cultural difference, there is a wide range of political, ideological, and historical considerations that we need to attend to in order to understand the shifting contours of national imaginaries in particular (Heller, 2011). The affordances of (and limitations to) focusing on the global Korean context will be described in fuller detail in the following chapter. For now, I will first describe some of the complexities related to understanding the representability not only of cultural entities generally but of *national* imaginaries specifically.

1.3   NATIONAL IMAGINARIES AND REPRESENTATIONAL PRECARITY

The nation continues to be imagined, certainly in the sense of "community" according to Benedict Anderson's (1983) now timeless expression of the "imagined community," but also frequently as the site of departure for scholarly inquiries into the *global*. Such is the case with inquiries framed phenomenologically in terms of globalization or cosmopolitanism or, more explicitly, in terms of trans*nation*alism and post*nation*alism.[5] In such inquiries, the global, as an outcome, a framing, a process, or as a method, is presumed to be derivative of the national, as something that follows the national (to use the same example again: there is an original Korea and a global iteration such as a Koreatown in Los Angeles that is derivative of the original). While it does indeed seem commonsensical to understand the global as the space across which the national can be reiterated, this premise becomes

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societies national identification is achieved through innocuous or inconspicuous ways.

[5] Darian-Smith and McCarthy (2017), in their foundational work *The Global Turn*, are correct to frame global imaginaries as discrete from international imaginaries and even transnational imaginaries. I address this question, particularly the one considering the global as distinct from the transnational, in further detail in Chapter 2.

complicated when we attend to the challenges inherent to representing any national imaginary.

Following Anderson's (1983) work, the expression "national imaginary" has come to be employed ubiquitously throughout numerous academic fields and is indeed frequently used synonymously with the term "nation." It derives from Anderson's key argument, which is that nations are "imagined communities" in that, without the establishment and development of "print-capitalism," or "print-as-commodity," and the subsequent stabilization and distribution of vernacular languages in stabilized print form, the very idea of national consciousness would not have been possible (p. 37). Anderson proposes that the capacity of print capitalism to forge national consciousness reflects an epistemic shift away from Messianic time, or "a simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present" (B. Anderson, 1991, p. 24), to that of homogeneous, empty time.[6] In homogeneous, empty time, it is possible to conceive of a nonfinite number of events occurring in a given moment through a shared synchronization not only through technologies such as newspapers or history textbooks but also through a temporal epistemic shift toward the "meanwhile" and the subsequent possibility of other events happening "meanwhile" (p. 24). Anderson illustrates this point through the example of a hypothetical timeline of events involving a man (A) who is married to a woman (B) but has a mistress (C) who in turn also has a lover (D):

Time:	I	II	III
Events:	A quarrels with B C and D make love	A telephones C B shops D plays pool	D gets drunk in a bar A dines at home with B C has an ominous dream

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[6] Walter Benjamin (1968) writes: "Historicism rightly culminates in universal history. Materialistic historiography differs from it as to method more clearly than from any other kind. Universal history has no theoretical armature. Its method is additive; it musters a mass of data to fill the homogeneous, empty time. Materialistic historiography, on the other hand, is based on a constructive principle. Thinking involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well . . . A historical materialist approaches a historical subject only where he encounters it as a monad. In this structure he recognizes the sign of a Messianic cessation of happening, or, put differently, a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past. He takes cognizance of it in order to blast a specific era out of the homogeneous course of history – blasting a specific life out of the era or a specific work out of the lifework" (pp. 262–263).

All four people, especially A and D, "can even be described as passing each other on the street, without ever becoming acquainted, and still be connected" (B. Anderson, 1991, p. 26). Further, A's infidelities can occur without the knowledge of B, D, and even of C, assuming, of course, that C is unaware of A's marital status. Time, thus, comes to be understood not only progressing horizontally in linear fashion, but also having a vertical capacity to the extent that, even if we do not meet every single individual within our particular national imaginary, we have "complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity" (p. 26). As we see in the case of the hypothetical persons A, B, C, and D, the certainty of an event having occurred is possible in spite of our precise knowledge of specific details of or bearing direct witness to others' "simultaneous activity." Certainly, while homogeneous, empty time is a critical precursor to the imaginability of the nation, because it is so ubiquitous today it is difficult to imagine the alternative to Messianic time. The takeaway from this is that the temporal contingency of the nation (i.e., that national consciousness depends on a series of discrete moments of communal synchronization) is closely related to the contingency of the national on semiosis, a point which I will return to shortly.

When we attend to the range of social, ideological, and political considerations that have emerged within the scholarly literature of nations and nationalism, one of the most immediate observations is that the very question of the national has itself always been subject to considerable revision and renegotiation. Much has been written on the origins of nations, considering whether nations are extensions of premodern societies (Geertz, 1973; Smith, 1986), or whether nations are better conceived of as inventions of modernity (B. Anderson, 1983; Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1990). Geertz (1973), writing specifically about "new" postcolonial states, argued that such societies were constitutive of a "primordial attachment" based on

> the "givens" – or, more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed "givens" – of social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices. (p. 259)

Human societies have, according to Geertz, always had the capacity for identification on the basis of various "givens," and as such nationalisms scarcely represent anything different from analogous protonational

forms of political belonging and coalition. Similarly, Anthony Smith (1986) has proposed that nations are, at their core, evolved formations of premodern ethnic groups. In short, according to the primordialist perspective, national belonging and identification are merely timeless forms of community with a new "face" or under a new "brand" of the "nation."

According to the modernist perspective, however, the nation, and particularly the political doctrine of nationalism, are relatively new developments. As Ernest Gellner (1983) has argued in his *Nations and Nationalism*, nations do not merely coincide with the advent of Western industrialization but also could not have existed in nonindustrial societies, including agroliterate societies. And while various scholars have attempted to identify specific historical moments from which different nations derive, as Walker Connor (1990) notes in his influential essay "When Is a Nation?":

> A key problem faced by scholars when dating the emergence of nations is that national consciousness is a mass, not an élite phenomenon, and the masses until recently isolated in rural pockets and being semi- or totally illiterate, were quite mute with regard to their sense of group identity(ies). Scholars have been necessarily largely dependent upon written word for their evidence, yet it has been élites who have chronicled history. Seldom have their generalities about national consciousness been applicable to the masses, and very often the élites' conception of the nation did not even extend to the masses. (p. 100)

For Connor, there is a larger problem of relying upon historical evidence as representative of the emergence of a particular thing or phenomenon (i.e., nation or nationalism). While he cautions against the conclusiveness of such inquiry, he nonetheless does align himself with the consensus of the modernist perspective: "In any event, claims that a particular nation existed prior to the late-nineteenth century should be treated cautiously" (Connor 1990, p. 100). As Eric Hobsbawm (1990) argues in his *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, nations are relatively new entities that have been formalized if not outright invented by nationalism itself. As he notes in his memorable adage: "Nations do not make states and nationalisms but the other way around" (p. 10). To illustrate his point, he offers the anecdote of the manufacture of Italian nationalist sentiment following Il Risorgimento (Resurgence), the political movement that led to the unification of Italy in the nineteenth century: "In the days of the Mazzini it did not matter that, for the great bulk of Italians, the Risorgimento did not exist so that, as Massimo d'Azeglio admitted in

the famous phrase: 'We have made Italy, now we have to make Italians'" (p. 44).[7]

Bhabha (1994) argues that the historicism of the nation is compounded by the fact that it exists along two contradictory temporal coordinates:

> the people are the historical "objects" of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin *in the past*; the people are also the "subjects" of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principles of the people as contemporaneity: as that sign of the *present* through which national life is redeemed and iterated as a reproductive process. (p. 208)

In other words, even if there can be agreement on the historical origins of the nation, in order for the nation to survive, it must be continually resignified and performed, and as such the nation's fixity in historical time is effectively negated. This, then, places an additional layer of strain on the already tenuous grounds of national derivation. There can be an official national history by which a people conceive of themselves as a collective entity, but peoples of the present will either challenge or uphold that history, which is invariably irretrievable in its definitive form, according to the more immediate ways in which people talk about, write about, or "narrate" (Bhabha, 1990) the nation.

Certainly, the problem of derivation is not one limited to the question of nations and nationalism but arguably applicable to politics more generally. Such a problem is alluded to in Kevin Olson's (2016) exploration of the problem of the political revolution writ large:

> Consider the following series of numbers: 1649, 1688, 1776, 1789, 1848, 1871, 1917, 1956, 1968, 1989. We are predisposed to look for a mathematical relationship, yet something else stands out. We parse these numbers as a set of dates representing iconic punctuations in the fabric of "normal" politics. The Eurocentrism of this list is problematic. Yet it also illustrates my broader point, that we select particular, often iconic moments of political exceptionality to represent the political in its purest form. (p. 10)

While certainly not all of the dates above are related to nationalism particularly, Olson's point is nonetheless instructive in foregrounding the lure of the "representative" origins of political thinking which can

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[7] *Il Risorgimento* (Resurgence) refers to the political unification of the different states of the Italian peninsula in the nineteenth century.

in turn "obscure the longer lines of continuity across eras, societies, and cultures" (p. 11). But it is also important to stress that with national imaginaries the question of derivation (i.e., where a nation comes from, what its origins are) is especially tantamount while also reflective of an added layer of representational uncertainty. Within this question of derivation, we additionally see that the "facts" of derivation are not usually bound to questions of historical accuracy. Admittedly, there is also the very real consideration of historical amnesia or indifference by everyday people. As Benedict Anderson (1991) notes, in his discussion of the origins of nationalism in Southeast Asia, "no one imagines, I presume, that the broad masses of the Chinese people give a fig for what happens along the colonial border between Cambodia and Vietnam. Nor is it all likely that Khmer and Vietnamese peasants wanted wars between their peoples, or were consulted in the matter" (p. 161). When it comes to the nation, it is no secret that historical facts are constantly subject to renegotiation and recirculation, even if they are understood to be, in the back of the minds of even those who are minimally rational, simply false. Indeed, even the aforementioned perennialist and modernist approaches to nationalism more generally are essentially questions of derivation in the sense that they collectively aim to understand what historical factors shaped social and political consciousness in a measurable, impactful way, in turn leading to the possibility of nationalist thinking. Certainly, perennialist and modernist perspectives are not diametrically opposed and it could be said that they "are both right to a degree" (Kerr, 2019, p. 106). Nonetheless, all theories of nationalism, whether perennialist, modernist, or otherwise, appear to be bound to questions of derivation, even if they may fundamentally disagree on the *terms* of derivation.

The preoccupation with the question of derivation, while reflective of a larger problem of historicity more generally, serves as a simple reminder that the category of the national, and its respective specificities, has always been subject to contingency and reconsideration via discourse. It might be useful to turn to Ernest Renan's landmark 1882 lecture "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?" and to consider how it has shaped the discourse of nationalism more generally. In the lecture, Renan insisted that, beyond linguistic, racial, religious, or geographical factors, central to the nation's existence is historical amnesia, or forgetting: "Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for [the principle of] nationality" (Renan, [1882]1990, p. 11). In Benedict Anderson's earlier

iteration of his imagined community thesis, the capacity to "forget" was requisite to the individual's capacity to imagine a communal relationship with a stranger within the political rubric of the nation. Here is Anderson in the first (1983) edition of *Imagined Communities*:

> [The nation] is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. Renan referred to this imagining in his suavely back-handed way when he wrote that "Or l'essence d'une nation est que tous les individus aient beaucoup de choses en commun, et aussi que tous aient oublié bien des choses." (p. 15)[8]

The capacity for imagining community was sustained, it was implied in the 1983 version of the text, in spite of the community's ability to both selectively remember but also forget historically significant moments: Renan uses the examples of "la Saint-Barthélemy" and "les massacres du Midi au XIIIe siècle."

   To complicate matters further, in the preface to the second (1991) edition, Anderson would later acknowledge that he had misunder-stood Renan:

> The origin of the second "appendix" [the "Memory and Forgetting" chapter] was the humiliating recognition that in 1983 I had quoted Renan without the slightest understanding of what he had actually said: I had taken something easily ironical what was in fact utterly bizarre. (p. xiv)

As Benedict Anderson (1991) explains in the "appendix," the possibility of having forgotten such events is illogical not only because Renan invokes examples of historical events that his readers could not have forgotten (he mentions them as if the readers must or should know what he is referring to) but also because of how Renan frames the "obligation" to forget almost as a "civic duty." In other words, "Renan's readers were being told to 'have already forgotten' what Renan's own words assumed that they naturally remembered!" (p. 200).

   There is something not insignificant about the fact that Anderson's self-declared *misreading* of Renan was so central to his thesis of the imagined community, if anything because it remains among the most influential scholarly texts by which we understand what nations are and where they come from. The fact that the very notion of the nation

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[8] This line in Renan might be translated as "However, the essence of a nation is that all of its individuals have much in common, and also that all have forgotten many things."

as *imagined* is based on a fundamental misreading of Renan points also to a potential problem of intellectual *derivation*: many theses of nationalism specifically and social practice more generally derive from *Imagined Communities*, which itself is derived from dubious origins. Therefore, there are many places where the historical and material contours of the nation remain contested: not only in the minds of Renan's 1882 audience but in the pages of arguably the most influential scholarly treatise on nationalism. As of 2020, Anderson's work has been cited well over 100,000 times, according to Google Scholar metrics. As a point of comparison, Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism*, which was published in the same year, 1983, and posits its own theory for the origins of nationalist thought though not the beneficiary of serendipitous intellectual uptake and influence (cursed in part, no doubt, from being published in the same year but without as catchy a title), has been cited a "mere" 23,000 times. In sum, the question of derivation that surrounds a foundational text of nationalism is analogous to the multilayered complexities surrounding questions of derivation within the nation itself.

To complicate matters a bit further, while Anderson's work is frequently referenced as the key text on the origins of national consciousness, its unstated assumption of the nation as a "universal" political ideal has been called into question, adding another layer of complexity around the issue of derivation. Partha Chatterjee's (1986) *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* in particular questions the assumption that nationalisms of the Global South are derivative of a post-Enlightenment European ideal. Certainly, while nationalism initiated a new form of political thinking (what Chatterjee refers to as the "moment of departure"), it evolves in postcolonial contexts to the extent that the end result is no longer derivative of a European original (referred to as the "moment of arrival"). The subject of Chatterjee's ire is Anderson's treatment of nationalism as a consequence of "sociological determinism" (p. 21), in which it is viewed as a merely "modular" political movement and an "anthropological fact" (p. 22). He is especially critical of the implied proposition of Anderson's "modularity" thesis with respect to twentieth century third-world nationalisms. While those familiar with postcolonial theory are certainly aware of Chatterjee's argument, an especially memorable excerpt of his polemic from his follow-up work, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, is worth repeating in full:

> I have one central objection to Anderson's argument. 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? History,
> it would seem, has decreed that we in the postcolonial world shall only
> be perpetual consumers of modernity. Europe and the Americas, the
> only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only
> the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of
> our anticolonial resistance and postcolonial misery. Even our
> imaginations must remain forever colonized. (Chatterjee, 1993, p. 5)

There is of course little to debate in Chatterjee's argument, and by now concerns over the ubiquitousness and dominance of Eurocentric, or in this case Euroamerican-centric, epistemologies have been well documented and extensively problematized. But there is a very minor detail around Chatterjee's book that I believe is relevant to the conversation at hand: the question mark in the subtitle of the book, *A Derivative Discourse?*, does not appear on the book's cover. The fact that this is an error can be confirmed by the fact that the question mark additionally remained missing on the title page of the book through its initial printing and through numerous reprintings.[9] While it is of course in all likelihood a mere oversight introduced at some stage during the book's production process, I can't help but view it as nonetheless having larger implications, if anything since the question mark is key to the book's central thesis: are you saying that nationalist thought in the colonial world is a derivative discourse? Let me show you how it's not. The absent/present question mark is also, more generally, an apt metaphor, even if incidental, of the sheer uncertainty surrounding the question of the national in relation to derivation that I have been describing.[10]

Further, it is important to note that while Chatterjee criticizes Benedict Anderson for locating the origins of nationalist thought in "Europe *and* the Americas" (emphasis added), Anderson himself made it a point to emphasize that it emerged from the Americas, not Europe. Relative to his contemporaries, Anderson was something of an outlier in

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[9] It is difficult to determine in which printing the question mark was properly included. My personal copy is a sixth printing from 2008, and I have only been able to see the first and second printings, both of which do not include the all-important question mark.

[10] One could even make the argument that the absent/present question mark is also a metaphor for the inherent uncertainty surrounding the utopian aspirations that undergird Chatterjee's (1986) project, from Mahatma Gandhi's utopian vision of the postcolonial nation-state whose foundation would be the moral investment in the nation, secondary to "*political* practice" (p. 117, emphasis in original) to Jawaharlal Nehru's "utopia, a realist's utopia, a utopia here and now," (p. 160) that "could be realized here and now, in the rational life of the state" (p. 161).

making this point, and he himself would bemoan how his readers and critics would assume that he was locating the origins of nationalism in Europe. He in fact complains that it was part of the "original plan to stress the New World origins of nationalism," but that the chapter in which he discusses this point, "Old Empires, New Nations," was "largely ignored" (B. Anderson, 1983, p. xiii). He thus made the decision to rename the chapter in question to "Creole Pioneers" in the revised 1991 edition (p. xiii). Of course, this does not alleviate Chatterjee's concerns entirely, for the presumption that nationalist thought originated in the Americas nonetheless implies that nationalisms of the postcolonial world were derived elsewhere. But it adds just one more, if not again minor, moment of misreading and misunderstanding to the sequence of inaccuracies in derivation.

In summary, there are numerous complications facing any attempt to locate and represent culture generally and the nation particularly, which is in turn complicated by uncertainty surrounding the question of derivation as it pertains to the national both as object of inquiry and within its respective discourses. As I have attempted to show in this section, it is widely acknowledged that nations are dependent on dubious historical facts. On top of this, even leading accounts of nationalism are not only contradictory to others (this is to be expected in any scholarly debate) or subject to considerable scholarly revision (any respectable scholar should be able to acknowledge misguided thinking in their previous works), but also fraught with uncertainty. In short, it is not a matter of nations as contingent on "historical error" as described by Renan, but on one key scholar, Anderson's, self-acknowledged "error" about this "error," which in turn sets off a chain of events: a widely referenced theory of nationalism whose foundations are based on an "error," which coincidentally generates "errors" in reading (locating the origins of nationalist thought in Europe). Therefore, while the question of derivation (i.e., the origins of nations) is central to the subject of the national, both in terms of the object of study and within its respective discourse, it is also what makes the national so difficult to both conceptualize and represent.

1.4 NATIONAL IMAGINARIES AND THE LOGIC OF SERIALITY

So where do we go from here? As suggested so far in this chapter, I have been stressing the challenges of conceptualizing and representing the national not as an exercise of surrender (i.e., the national is notoriously difficult to pinpoint, even for its leading historians and

theorists, so we might as well not try) but instead partly as a disclaimer and as a move toward a solution. If we return briefly to the notion of nation as imagined community, significant is the fact, in spite of the criticisms it has been subject to, it has actually served to be key to understanding how people perform community belonging and identification across global space contrary to the political paradigm of nationalism per se. An influential case in point is Arjun Appadurai's (1996) theory of "scapes" as describing "dimensions of global cultural flow," including ethnoscapes (flows of people), mediascapes (flows of information/media), technoscapes (flows of technologies), financescapes (flows of money), and ideoscapes (flows of ideologies and knowledges) (pp. 33–36). Appadurai's theory was offered as an alternative to the then dominant (and arguably still dominant) area studies paradigm, which privileges research focused on phenomena within a fixed geographic region, oftentimes with minimal regard to various aspects of transcultural flow to and from the region in question. Instead of analyzing "trait" geographies, which assume that certain areas "rely on some sort of trait list – of values, languages, material practices, ecological adaptations, marriage patterns, and the like," Appadurai (2001) argues for area studies "based on process geographies[, which] sees significant areas of human organization as precipitates of various kinds of action, interaction, and motion – trade, travel, pilgrimage, warfare, proselytization, colonization, exile, and the like. These geographies are necessarily large scale and shifting, and their changes highlight variable congeries of language, history, and material life" (pp. 7–8).

Appadurai's description of the game of cricket in India is particularly memorable. He describes cricket as representative of a "hard cultural form," or "those that come with a set of links between value, meaning, and embodied practice that are difficult to break and hard to transform" (p. 90). In the postcolonial Indian context, the game is an interesting case for it is not merely a sport but also because it was intended as a means of proselytizing participants to English moral and cultural values. However, as Appadurai argues, the decolonization of cricket, rather than a mere "dismantling of colonial habits and modes of life," is the "product of collective and spectacular experiments with modernity, and not necessarily of the subsurface affinity of new cultural forms with existing patterns in the cultural repertoire" (p. 90). Significant is Appadurai's argument that in the end cricket becomes effectively localized as Indian, resulting in "the appropriation of agonistic bodily skills that can then further lend passion and purpose to the community so imagined" (p. 112).

Appadurai's theory of "scapes" has had a substantial impact on research on the sociolinguistics of globalization (see Dovchin (2017, 2018) on "linguascapes," Tian Li (2019) on "lingualscapes," Pennycook (2010b) on "graffscapes," and Pennycook and Otsuji (2015a) on "smellscapes").[11] As this research shows, cultural and linguistic practices in the era of globalization need not be viewed only in terms of top-down "cultural homogenization" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 11) but also as capable of occurring in "multiple, simultaneous origins of locality" (Pennycook, 2010a, p. 86).

However, at this juncture, I would like to draw attention to a point made by Appadurai while developing his argument about the decolonization of cricket that has remained largely overlooked. In the 1890s, cricket matches would be played between English and Indian teams, though the latter would be a team whose roster consisted primarily of Englishmen. By the 1930s, the level of skill in cricket among Indians themselves had developed to the point where an Indian team composed entirely of Indian players could be created. As Appadurai (1996) writes:

> This process, whereby Indians increasingly came to represent India in cricket, follows not surprisingly the history of the evolution of Indian nationalism as a mass movement. Cricket in the Indian colonial context thus casts an unexpected light on the relationship between nationhood and empire. Insofar as England was not simply identical with the empire [in the 1890s], there had to be other parallel entities in the colonies against which the English nation-state could play: thus "India" had to be invented, at least for the purposes of colonial cricket. (pp. 98–99)

Appadurai goes on to describe how the independence of an Indian cricket team was not merely an inadvertent metaphor for the possibility of Indian national sovereignty but would go on to make national independence conceived of as within the realm of possibility even

[11] In my previous work (Jerry Won Lee, 2017), I attempted to theorize the concept of "semioscape," attempting to move beyond the spatio-material limitations of physical territory prevalent within linguistic/semiotic landscape research, which had and has continued to treat communities as bound to a particular place, while also symbolically merging the "semiotic" and "landscape" in order to emphasize their necessary inextricability. Thurlow and Aiello (2007) also use the expression semioscape, imagined as "falling somewhere between" ideoscapes and mediascapes, to "bring into focus the non-mediatized but globalizing circulation of symbols, sign systems and meaning-making practices" (p. 308). My usage, on the other hand, was an attempt to focus more explicitly on the semiotic production of social identification prefigured in relation to the political apparatuses of the nation-state.

though cricket was at one point, ironically, a colonially introduced enterprise: "nationally organized cricket was an internal demand of the colonial demand and thus required cognate national or protonational enterprises in the colonies" (p. 99). An independent Indian cricket team was therefore in many ways the beginnings of an independent Indian nation.

However, what is additionally intriguing about this historical anecdote for our purposes is not only the inspiration of independence or even the affirmation of the national imaginary as subject to ideological invention, which was alluded to earlier in this chapter, but the implication that the materialization (even if via invention) of the national can be witnessed, crucially, from a global view, so to speak. As we know, in the context of British colonial rule, the colonized subject was constructed as both British but simultaneously different and chronically subordinate: as Bhabha (1994) notes, "almost the same but not quite" (p. 122), or "almost the same but not white" (p. 128). But in an effort to facilitate categorical transposability between nation X and nation Y, "India" needed to become a discrete and independent entity for the moment. Therefore, through a global locus, or a view from above where the category of the national is necessarily smaller and thus able to be seen in relation to other categories of the national, we are not only able to account for the national with regard to its respective global cultural flows but, more importantly, how the category of the national is contingent on its continual manipulation and resedimentation in order to be legible in global space.

The affordances of approaching the question of the national from the vantage point of the global can be further understood through what Benedict Anderson (1998) describes as the "logic of seriality." In *The Spectre of Comparisons*, Anderson describes two contrasting types of seriality by which collective subjectivities are conceptualized:

> Unbound seriality, which has its origins in the print market, especially in newspapers, and in the representations of popular performance, is exemplified by such open-to-the-world plurals as nationalists, anarchists, bureaucrats, and workers. It is, for example, the seriality that makes the United Nations a normal, wholly unparadoxical institution. Bound seriality, which has its origins in governmentality, especially in such institutions as the census and elections, is exemplified by finite series like Asian-Americans, *beurs*, and Tutsis. It is seriality that makes a United Ethnicities or a United Identities unthinkable.

The obvious difference is that bound serialities are tied to forms of race or ethnicity and as such are an either/or or a yes/no consideration.

Continuing with Anderson's example of Asian Americans, it is a panethnic political category that one can either belong to or not. This, of course, does not preclude the possibility of becoming Asian American by, say, migrating to the United States from Asia. Further, it does not preclude the possibility of identifying with other racial or ethnic groups, as in the case of a multiracial individual who could be both an Asian American and, say, an African American. And while many important theorizations of ethnicity as socially performed have been offered, as in John Maher's (2005, 2010) notion of metroethnicity, they are not particularly applicable for the purposes of bound serialities. This is not to deny the almost universally accepted idea of the social constructedness of categories of race and ethnicity, but to acknowledge that a census is not really designed to account for whether you opt to perform belonging in one group or another. This is of course not to ignore the fact that the aforementioned yes/no considerations can change in accordance with various shifts in census categories: in the United States, for instance, the category of Asian was introduced for the 1870 census and remained stable until 2000, when it was expanded to include Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders. Regardless of shifts in census categories, however, the point is that while categories of bound serialities can certainly be flexible in this way, they are different from unbound serialities, which are not restricted to considerations of biology or birthright. Unbound serialities, in this sense, reflect the fact that individuals can belong to certain categories that are subject to a higher degree of change and unpredictability. One can be a "nationalist" or an "anarchist" at a given moment in time but the very next day, whether due to enlightenment or disillusionment, not be. Ultimately, they do not pose a contradiction to the organizing unit of the nation.

The logic of seriality also offers some insight into the imperative to distinguish the national specifically in relation to the global, distinct from other categories of the national. Consider, for instance, Anderson's use of the example of the United Nations: it is only through the scale of the supranational that serialization at the level of the national comes to be meaningful, whether we are talking about the United Nations, other supranational entities including international organizations such as the Arab League, the European Union, or the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). Through the logic of seriality, nation X needs to be distinguished from nation Y only when conceptualized in relation to nation Y. Indeed, insofar as a cricket team composed of a group of players from India becomes an Indian cricket team at the moment it needs to compete with (be categorically transposable to) the English cricket

team, we might go so far as to say nation X is simply an unnamed entity (i.e., an entity that need not be named) until it is considered in juxtaposition with nation Y. It is therefore from the vantage point of the global (i.e., from Apollo's eye) that we can make sense of how national categories are subject to reinvention and negotiation for the purposes of becoming transposable to other national categories.

1.5   TRANSLINGUAL INVERSION AND THE LOCATION OF NATIONAL IMAGINARIES

In the previous pages, I outlined a theory of translingual inversion that can function as a heuristic to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of how culture can be "located" across global space, particularly in sites of semiotic precarity. Translingual inversion (1) adopts a capacious view of language not limited to the "linguistic" as such, acknowledging a wider range of communicative agents including semiotic resources and spatial elements, (2) attends to the inherently flexible nature of cultural semiosis, and (3) treats cultural legibility as an "inverted" phenomenon: subject to continual "deferral" to a prior site of indexicality and rendered legible when approached obliquely. Given that the focal point of this book is a specific subset of a cultural form, a national imaginary, I afterwards delineated some core problems related to the conceptualization and representation of the nation, not only due to their dubious histories but also due to the series of "misreadings" or "errors" in the respective discourse of nations. Finally, I noted that the global represents a vantage point from which the category of national can be visibilized, insofar as from such a view it can be conceptualized as an entity transposable to other nations, a point that I attempted to affirm via the logic of seriality.

Bringing this all together, we are now in a position to try and see what the national looks like in the context of the global, guided by the prospect that there is something new we might learn by approaching the national from this perspective. To clarify, I do not mean to suggest there is anything inherently misguided about presuming the national as having an a priori ontological status. I am merely suggesting that there is still work to be done to understand what the national might look like and what new things we might learn about it when approached in this manner. One way to think about this approach would be in relation to Hobsbawm's memorable declaration: "Nations do not make states and nationalisms but the other way around." While

I would not go so far as to argue that "nations do not make the conditions of representational legibility but the other way around," my inquiry might be described as such: "nations do indeed make the conditions of representational legibility but *also* the other way around." The conceptualization of translingual inversion is premised on the fact that it is not an either/or but maybe a both/and: the nation can both be iterated globally but also the global is what renders legible that which is iterated in the first place. Another way of posing the question might be as an extension of Rey Chow's (2014) question, developing Derrida's ([1996]1998) point about prosthetic monolingualism: "What would coloniality look like if and when it is recast as prosthetic rather than assumed as essentially originary – especially in terms of language politics and practices?" (Chow, 2014, p. 33). My question, on the other hand, might be described as such: what would *the nation*, and perhaps culture more generally, look like if and when it is not merely assumed as essentially originary – especially in terms of *global* politics and practices? Like the wager of the bird who encounters a caterpillar that might be a snake, trying to understand what is the head and what is not, or what is the authentic and what is the derivative, along with trying to figure out what helps guide us to make such determinations, even if such determinations are just momentary, is also the wager of translingual inversion.