

Racial identity and nationalism: a theoretical view from Latin America

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Abstract

The empirical intersection of ideas about race and nation are well-established, but theoretical explanations for this are less developed. Some ideas are advanced about how and why ideologies of race, nation, gender and sexuality intertwine. This leads on to a consideration of the tensions between sameness and difference that are argued to be constitutive of national identities. From here, an argument is developed about dynamics of appropriation and the maintenance of hegemony in racially diverse and multicultural nations. These theoretical ideas are illustrated with material from Latin America, particularly Colombia, with reference to Colombian popular music as an important cultural form in nationalist expression.

Keywords: Race; nation; sexuality; hegemony; Latin America; Colombia.

Introduction

It is some time now since Anderson contended that ‘The dreams of racism actually have their origins in ideologies of *class*, rather than in those of nation’ (Anderson [1983] 1991, p. 149). Anderson implied a conceptual split between ideologies of nation and those of race, even if he argued that colonial racism could serve the domestic purposes of upper-class official nationalism (Anderson 1991, p. 150). In fact, by also arguing that nationalism should be understood ‘as if it belonged with “kinship”’ rather than with political ideologies such as liberalism (Anderson 1991, p. 5), Anderson implied a deeper connection between ideas of nation and race: both, like kinship, work with notions of sameness and difference within the domain of human relatedness (see Williams 1995). In addition, with a turn towards the notion of identity and the shifting, multiple processes of identity formation and reformation, different axes of difference and inequality are now seen as ‘intersecting’ in varying, indeterminate and often unpredictable ways. Empirically and historically, ideologies of race and nation have worked hand-in-glove, as much

research in Latin America demonstrates – not to mention work in Europe, New Zealand, and elsewhere.¹ These detailed and complex treatments inevitably go beyond race and nation to include gender and sexuality.

In this article, I cannot encompass all this varied material. Instead, I explore some underlying theoretical ideas about why and how ideologies of race and nation (and sexuality and gender) intersect. I also examine the tensions that exist between sameness and difference in ideologies of the nation and relate these to processes of appropriation. I make use of a range of authors, including sociologists such as Gilroy and Hall, philosophers such as Balibar, cultural studies critics such as Bhabha, and anthropologists such as Williams and Stoler. I make special reference to the Latin American context and use the case of popular music in the region – specifically in Colombia – to illustrate my points. The choice of music is determined partly by my own recent interests, but also because, in modern Latin America and elsewhere, music has played an important role in constructing and representing not only nationhood, but also race, gender and sexuality.²

‘Living’ nation through race

The interpenetration of ideologies of race and nation was noted early on by Foucault (1980) as part of his analysis of sexuality. He argued that nineteenth-century European bourgeoisies attempted to control sexuality in order to properly manage nations: such control and management were also directed at racially purifying the national population, threatened as it was by racial degeneration and contamination from within – and without (Stoler 1995). Mosse (1985, ch. 7) also arrived at the intersection of race and nation through sexuality in modern Europe; the ‘outsider’ needed to define the nation – even if this ‘outsider’ were physically within the nation, as were Jews and homosexuals – was defined as racially different as well as sexually deviant.

Paul Gilroy’s work on post-war Britishness (1987; 1993) attacked the problem from a different perspective, less concerned with the scientific racisms of earlier periods. His analysis was based in part on the oft-quoted snippet associated with his peer Stuart Hall that ‘race is the modality in which class is “lived”’ (1980, p. 340). Gilroy argued that the overall crisis of post-war society was evident in inner-city decay, poverty, unemployment, bad housing, and problems in the education system. This crisis was often ‘lived through a sense of “race”’ (Gilroy 1993, p. 23). National problems were seen as caused or aggravated by ‘immigration’ (understood as a ‘black’ problem even though half of the immigrants to post-war Great Britain have been white). Inner-city problems were spoken of as related to the presence of black minorities, just as discourse about difficulties in the education system often focused on immigrant

children who did not speak English as a first language, had a 'different culture', or 'under-achieved'. Crime and general feelings of insecurity might be blamed on black muggers and drug dealers.

The point which bears repetition today is that the maintenance of a racial hegemony happens through the complex articulation of specific projects which are not necessarily coherently or intentionally racist or anti-immigrant or nationalist. Although one can identify an explicit and even official anti-immigration discourse in Britain – as one can identify explicit discourses of racial, national and sexual purity and propriety in pre-1950s Europe – there is also a less obviously racialized domain of everyday action that needs attention. People in schools and city administrations pursue their goals with the resources (material and symbolic) at their disposal; they understand the problems confronting them in ways influenced by ideas of nation and of race, but not necessarily with these ideas at the forefront of their minds. They are dealing with a classroom resources problem, or a community law-and-order problem, or with the way to bring up their own children. The upshot of their activities, viewed in the slightly longer term and collectively, is the reproduction of a sense of Britishness as fundamentally white. This is derived from seeing the supposed decline of the nation as attributable to post-colonial immigration.

This analysis owes something to the influence of Gramsci on the British school of cultural studies. Hall, a central figure in this school, has made extensive use of Gramscian theories of hegemony for the study of race and ethnicity (Hall 1996a). He emphasizes how the complex combination of ideological elements present in a given social context can be read and re-read in different ways, with particular people and groups of people gaining dominance in their own readings and articulations of elements through the power they have and through the particular projects they pursue (in education, in economic policy, in the mass media). This kind of non-essentialist reading of Gramsci also owes a good deal to the work of Laclau and Mouffe (1985) who emphasize that elements in ideological discursive formations do not have a pre-determined or fixed character.

This overall approach helps us to see how racial and national ideologies 'intersect' in a way that has broad usefulness: one can apply these ideas to Britain or Latin America. A more general question is why racism and nationalism seem to link together so frequently.

Racism and nationalism: universalism and particularity

Etienne Balibar argues against a view that sees racism and nationalism as basically opposed and/or interacting by historical accident: 'racism is not an "expression" of nationalism . . . but [is] always indispensable to its constitution (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991, p. 54). Historically,

Balibar points out that former colonizing nations dealt with internal class problems by creating racialized immigrant or underclass spaces where these problems were most acute. Also official nationalisms of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe often used anti-Semitism as a scapegoat in trying to weld together racially pure national societies.

On a more theoretical plane, Balibar argues that racism is intertwined with nationalism from the time that nation-states tried to control population movements within a given territory and to produce 'the people' as a political and especially ethnic entity (that is, an entity sharing a common origin, history and culture). Nationalism involves exclusion and inclusion just as racism does; they are not just complementary but 'presuppose' each other. In this sense it is wrong to see nationalism as a 'normal' ideology which might become 'abnormally' racist in particular cases (Nazism is typically adduced as an example of this 'perversion'). The two ideologies are connected in a more fundamental way. In fact, nationalism is always caught between *universality* and *particularity*. It is universalist because it upholds the notion of uniform citizenship as a human right; everyone is or has a right to be a national; all nations have a right to exist. In this sense, nationalism is liberatory. On the other hand, it is particularist because it always also focuses on a specific nation, excluding and perhaps oppressing other nations, and also minorities and other 'potential nations' within the nation. In this sense, nationalism is repressive.

Racism refigures and exaggerates this ambivalence. It may seem odd to claim that racism has a humanist, universalist dimension, but Balibar argues that within racism there exists the same ambiguous tension between universality and particularity. Racism, or more precisely 'theoretical racism', involves universalism in various ways. It involves a process of classification of humanity, dividing and hierarchizing the species, but also thereby questioning where unity lies. It invokes certain universals such as 'natural' human aggression or tendencies to marry 'one's own'. In sum, theoretical racism poses the question of the nature of the human species, its origins and its destiny. On the other hand, racism is also particularist in the way it answers this question and in its consequent exclusion and oppression of specific categories of people.

Racism can therefore present itself as a form of 'super-nationalism' refiguring notions of national heritage and culture into more powerful and virulent ideas of national inheritance, the national body, national purity and aesthetic ideals of national men (and women). Racism can thus integrate with the aspect of nationalism that oppresses minorities within the nation. As Mosse also notes: 'racism was a heightened nationalism: the differences between peoples were no longer perceived as chance variations, but as immutable, fixed in place' (1985, p. 133). One might quibble with the idea that human difference had ever been seen as 'chance variation' and with the idea that racism always defined difference as 'immutable', but the basic argument is clear.

The symmetry that Balibar seems to establish between nationalism and racism seems questionable: the universalism of nationalism which contends that everyone has a right to citizenship does not seem parallel to the 'universalism' of racism which hardly holds out the right to 'racial purity' to everyone. Yet for Latin American nations, the analysis is actually quite helpful. The central notion of *mestizaje* – roughly translatable as race mixture, i.e., mixture of both human substance and culture – has been widely analysed as a trajectory for the formation of many of these nations and it is, in some ways, a universalist notion. As I have argued for Colombia, there is a democratic inclusive aspect to this ideology which holds out the promise of improvement through race mixture for individuals and for the nation: everyone can be a candidate for mixture and hence moral and social uplifting. At the same time, of course, it is a deeply discriminatory ideology and practice, since it is based on the idea of the inferiority of blacks and indigenous peoples and, in practice, of discrimination against them (Wade 1993; see also Stutzman 1981). *Mestizaje* was, and is, often viewed as an international phenomenon, something that links Latin American nations (and to some extent non-Latin Caribbean nations); yet there is also a hierarchy of mixed nations, according to the degree of mixture and where this places each nation on a global scale of whiteness.

In an innovative article, Williams (1995) has a broader argument about why racism and nationalism interpenetrate with such facility. She looks at these ideologies as systems of classification, alongside kinship and Hindu notions of caste: they all involve the differentiation of an invented sameness or unity of human substance in order to create categories of relatedness which define access to shared resources. Nature – or human substance – is not self-evidently present to be worked on, but is socialized and constructed by people. Consubstantiality and conviviality or sharing are mutually constructing. Races and nations can both be constructed as sharing a unity of substance, e.g., 'blood', which is, however, subject to complex processes of hierarchical classification in terms of greater or lesser purity (read as equivalent to moral value). Complex ideas about propriety define interactions (e.g. sex, marriage, friendship) between different categories as approved or disapproved: disapproved interactions lead to contamination or loss of purity. In this rich and complex account, to which I cannot do full justice here, the intersection of race and nation, and kinship, is due to their common basis in the classification of human relatedness. In all three cases, 'history took a turn through nature' (Williams 1996a, p. 6); that is, people seek to ground cultural ideas on the realm of nature.

There can be conflict between ideologies of race and nation however. Williams argues that in the USA ideologies of race saw 'races' as naturally different, despite all being grounded on a unitary notion of humanity. This classificatory system lacked the overarching unity of the

Hindu caste system in which all physical substance ultimately derived from Brahma. Racial diversity thus posed a problem for US nationalists (1985, p. 226). Here Williams diverges from Balibar's view of racism as having a universalist aspect, although this could be resolved by emphasizing Williams's recognition that racism still posits a common humanity at some level – which is what makes possible sex between 'races' that is humanly productive, even if severely disapproved in particular historical contexts.

Race, sex and nation

Balibar points out that 'racism always presupposes sexism' (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991, p. 49). Foucault (1980) shows that the overlapping of nationalism and racism goes back to the moment when nation-states strove to control populations in territories, and manage the health, vigour and moral fibre of populations and the sexuality and morality of individuals. Mosse (1985) argues that sexuality became central to European definitions of respectability which were in turn basic to definitions of nationality. Sexual reproduction was the linking theme between the collective and the individual. Recent work on both racial and nationalist ideologies have illustrated their deeply gendered and sexualized nature.³ Given the richness of this literature, I can only give one illustrative example which focuses specifically on race and sexuality.

Stoler (1995) takes up Foucault's approach and focuses on what she calls the moral re-armament that was going on in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe, linking this – in ways that she contends Foucault neglected – to what was going on in the European colonies. European nation-states were engaged in programmes of liberal reform to inculcate ideals of civic responsibility as part of a national project. There was a great focus on 'proper' upbringing, schooling and health, combined with widespread fears of (racial) degeneration. In France and Holland, such programmes targeted the poor and 'internal aliens' at home, but also poor whites in their colonies, along with the native population of the colonies to some extent (or more likely a privileged elite of them), and, to varying extent, the colony-born whites, the mixed-bloods offspring of white colonials and natives. 'Proper' (and 'white') sexual morality was restrained and continent, taking place within the family. There were fears that the colonial environment would contaminate and weaken Europeans, especially the poorer men who might live in concubinage with native women. Racial divisions corresponded with sexual-moral ones, such that Asians in the Dutch Indies were seen as licentious, indulgent, sexually uncontrolled and prone to prostitution. Through sexual relations, or simply through being brought up by native servants, Europeans were at risk for themselves and even their offspring since, in Lamarckian fashion, acquired traits might be transmitted to the next

generation. Not surprisingly, the danger and permissibility of contact with the natives, sexual or otherwise, were gendered and were seen as less threatening for men than for women. This gendered difference in the threat posed to a class (or a nation) by inter-racial sex is widespread (see Williams 1996a) and is familiar to Latin Americanists, for example from Martinez-Alier's (1974) study of marriage, class and colour in Cuba.

This may not seem directly connected with national identities, but Stoler's point is that these identities were being constituted in the transnational frame of colonialism. Ideas of Frenchness or Dutchness depended to some degree on the sexual morality of the life led in the colonies by French and Dutch men and women; and notions of racial identity and sexual morality were tightly interwoven at a supranational, indeed global, level.

In all this, it is interesting to explore the underlying theoretical ideas about *why* concepts of race, nation, sex and gender intersect. Parker *et al.* (1992a, p. 5) hint that the intersection occurs with such power because 'nationality – like gender – is a relational term'; the fact that 'such identities depend constitutively on difference means that nations are forever haunted by their various definitional others'. However, since all identities – indeed all meanings – are constituted relationally, this does not clarify the intertwining of racial, sexual and national identities. Mosse (1985, p. 2) is concerned more with a historical account of Europe than with underlying theories, but he suggests that sexuality is of special concern in the development of nationalism and respectability because it is 'basic to human behaviour'. This, however, does not explain why sexuality became so important, rather than some other 'basic' human behaviour. Zack (1997) explains the sexualization of race in the USA in relation to a particular history of racial slavery, but underlying this is a more general argument that sexuality is constructed by discourses, including discourses about race. In this account, there is nothing special about the intersection between race and sex; sexuality is simply shaped by salient social influences. bell hooks (1991, p. 57) broadens this argument to contend that 'sexuality has always provided gendered metaphors for colonization' and that dominators often use sexuality as a domain to enact their domination. Smith also focuses on power differences and, taking a Foucauldian line, argues that the differences of 'blood' which underlay conceptions of class and other hierarchical social differences, and which derived from a pre-modern symbolics of blood, 'could only be maintained through control of women's sexuality and ultimately their social freedoms' (1996, p. 53). Williams's (1995) approach is broader still: ideas about the sameness and difference of human substance are always mediated through local theories of procreation.

The last idea seems to address the issue at the most basic level. It

seems obvious, perhaps, that the gendering of race and nation derives principally from the gendering of sexuality and sexual reproduction itself. Sexual reproduction links racism and nationalism, since both a 'race' and a nation, or any human group, must be constantly reconstituted in ways mediated through the sexual activities of gendered individuals. Conversely, the forms those sexual activities take (or are thought to take) become markers for where individuals and categories of people belong. This is an apt conclusion, but it also assumes that 'racial' reproduction is always coterminous with sexual reproduction. Stoler's material shows, however, that 'racial' reproduction could also take place through non-sexual reproduction: whites living in the tropics could take on the character of the 'natives' through living at close quarters with them and the simple impact of the climate. This indicates that, although sexuality and race overlap in their mutual concern with ideas about nature, heredity and human substance, we need to be careful in making assumptions about what constitutes nature and human substance in any given context. It is clear that sexual congress will always be a central aspect of collective reproduction, but exactly what is reproduced through such congress is always defined within local theories of procreation and human nature.

In this respect, Jordanova (1986) has an interesting argument about late eighteenth-century medical and literary discourse on the family and sexuality. She contends that, with the increasing commoditization of social relations, the family – and, particularly, women and children – were naturalized and sacralized as non-commodities. At the same time, human nature was increasingly subject to scientific study which, under these circumstances, focused especially on (female) sexuality and reproductive physiology. Controlling the family and women's reproductiveness was central to managing and promoting the nation as a whole. Physiology was not, however, a realm of nature underlying or separate from that of culture – as biological 'sex' to cultural 'gender,' to use now outmoded terms. Physical constitution was seen as influenced by use and habit (Jordanova 1986, pp. 93–4, 106–7). The point is that control of women's nature or the family as a natural/social entity meant intervening in 'human nature' perceived in a way that encompassed aspects of what we would now call culture. The social was naturalized not by attributing social traits to 'biology' or 'genes', but by seeing social behaviour as constitutive of nature. Such a discourse of naturalization gives greater responsibility to the human agent in his or her constitution.

The fact that sexuality and gender are important to national and racial identities intertwines in complex ways with the functioning of sexual desire in situations of power inequality. The male control of female sexuality; the nationalist definitions of the proper manhood and womanhood deemed necessary to make the nation 'fit' in eugenic terms or 'successful' on the international stage; the sexual stigma and sexual power

attached to the subordinate other – all these things clearly have complex impacts on how individual sexual desires are shaped. This indicates that we have to understand gender and sexuality not just in terms of a symbolics of national (or racial) identity, but as embodied practices which involve psychic drives and desires. As hooks argues (1991, p. 57), sexuality does not just provide ‘gendered metaphors for colonization’, it is a process of colonization (and national construction) in itself. Stoler’s work also indicates that, if we want to understand the overlap of race and sex, we need to explore in detail changing conceptions of human nature itself. If it seems, *prima facie*, that ideas about race, nation and sex involve notions of how humans are constituted and relate to one another physically, then we need to know more about these notions, rather than assuming that it is just a matter of ‘biology’ or that it is obvious what is implied in ideas of ‘human nature’.

Homogeneity and heterogeneity in the nation

Various aspects of the themes explored so far come together in ideas about sameness and difference in nationalism. Nationalism supposes universal uniformity, but also particularist discriminations; *mestizaje* holds out the promise (or threat?) of sameness, but depends on difference for its meaning; homogeneity may bring security, while alterity can spark desire, but also danger.

Many treatments of nationalism show that homogeneity is one of its aims. Both Anderson (1983) and Gellner (1983) refer to the ‘anonymity’ of nationalism, while Hall notes that ‘national cultures help to “stitch up” differences’ into one identity (1992, p. 299). The image of homogeneity has, however, to be arduously constructed: Williams (1995, p. 232) notes that nationalist ideologies have to begin with the proposition that a nation ‘has no singular fountainhead for the classificatory criteria out of which a unity of substance can be recognized. Nonetheless, a major objective of nationalist ideology has been to invent a unitary substance and to link that substance to a sociopolitical unit’ – and to naturalize the invention and the link. Diversity is thus an integral part of nations and nationalisms: Parker *et al.* (1992a, p. 5) refer to ‘the nation’s insatiable need to administer difference through violent acts of segregation, censorship, economic coercion...’. In many approaches, this heterogeneity is seen as subject to restriction and often assimilation and destruction. It may be seen as the province of resistant minorities, constantly subject to erosion. It is something against which the dominant nationalist ideology fights, which it has to tame, channel and ultimately erode. One mechanism for this may be what Raymond Williams (1980) called the making of ‘selective tradition’ by which dominant voices privilege certain aspects of history and culture, normalizing, and perhaps naturalizing them, and marginalizing others.

In this respect, there is a tendency to look at twentieth-century history in Latin America as a move from nationalist modernist homogeneity which erased or severely controlled difference to a sort of post-modern multicultural heterogeneity; a move forced in large part by the counter-hegemonic tactics of oppressed minorities, particularly racial and ethnic minorities (see Safa 1998 for an example of this narrative). I contend that a closer look at how nationalism itself is constituted in relation to diversity (whether racial or otherwise) reveals that nationalist ideologies also actively construct difference – in particular ways, of course. This helps us to understand the limits of present-day multiculturalism which seem less at variance with previous versions of nationalism; the ease with which Latin American states co-opt multicultural diversity is also easier to comprehend. This is not to detract from the impressive resistance mounted by black and indigenous social movements, nor from the real changes that have taken place in many Latin American countries – including constitutional change in nations such as Colombia, Brazil and Nicaragua. It is just to get a different perspective on the overall process of change.

I have found the writings of Homi Bhabha useful here, because he explores a basic ambiguity in national discourse (Bhabha 1994). There is one sense in which the nation is invoked as a homogeneous whole, moving through history from an ancient past towards a modern future, a nation among many nations. There is another sense in which the nation is the ethnography of the contemporary performances of the people who make it up, in all their variety. This is an obvious enough contradiction in itself, but Bhabha argues that the nationalist narrative carries this split as a contradiction *within itself*, ‘sliding ambivalently from one enunciatory position to another’ (Bhabha 1994, p. 147). Diversity does not just break through the official image of homogeneity; it is contained within that image. This ambivalence is no accident but one of the central paradoxes of nationalism: the attempt to present the nation as a unified homogeneous whole conflicts directly with the maintenance of a hierarchy of class and culture – and its frequent concomitants, region and race – that is wanted by those who are located in the higher echelons of that hierarchy. The ambivalent movement that Bhabha identifies is a result of this paradox in which the dominant classes actually need and must create and reproduce, in symbolic and material form, the heterogeneity they also deny. As Williams (1996a, p. 14) puts it, for a nation ‘any culturally constructed sameness was continually threatened by the reality of heterogeneity wrought in *intranationally* produced class, religious, and other philosophical differences as well as from equally diversifying forms of *international* movements of persons and cultural properties’. The point is that these intranational differences are wrought by the same forces that construct that sameness.

My way into this was through music. When I wrote about Colombian

national identity and race in the early nineties (Wade 1993), my own view followed those who saw in modernist nationalism a crushing and erasure of difference. At that point, however, it was also clear to me that representations of the Colombian nation also *depended* to some extent on the notion of indigenosity and blackness, even if the future was thought of in terms of progressive mixture and 'whitening'. Blacks and indigenous people, or at least the image of them, were needed as a reference point against which whiteness and a future of whitened modernity could be defined. Furthermore, it seemed to me then, and even more now, that representations of the nation in some sense took nourishment from images of these racialized others. Taussig (1987, 1993) has pursued this idea in relation to the healing powers of indigenous people and in my work on music and national identity this theme also struck me as highly relevant.

To begin with, I noticed that writings of the literate elite on music and national identity (or indeed on national identity alone) contained constant reference to black and indigenous people. Far from being erased, they were being represented, albeit in ways that varied from the frankly racist to the paternalistic – and sometimes the celebratory, even alongside the racism. I see this as a process of the active construction of otherness by national elites. Of course, the mere fact that racialized subordinate others were being represented is no surprise. But I argue that elites were not just representing something 'out there', an inconvenient presence to be pruned, tamed and channelled – and perhaps ridiculed or praised. They were also remaking difference because it was fundamental to the reproduction of their own position.⁵

I pursued the history of music from the Caribbean coastal region of Colombia – a region and music often associated with happiness, tropicality, blackness and sexual freedom – looking at the way in which, from the 1920s onwards, it had grown to national dominance, taking over from styles associated with the mestizo interior centre of the country which seemed much more in keeping with Colombian elites' self-representation as whitened and Europhile (see Wade 2000). In the process of this growth to national dominance, musical styles from the Caribbean coastal region were stylized and incorporated into big-band formats that were fashionable all over the Americas and Europe; they were, in a word, whitened. Yet they still retained their 'tropical' identity within the nation. Reactions to the boom of this music were varied. Some conservative elites condemned it as noisy, vulgar, immoral and licentious. Others praised its 'happiness'. The constant reference to happiness awoke my curiosity. It seems to me that musical happiness (associated with blackness) served something like the purpose of shamanic curing (associated with indigenous people in Taussig's argument). It was a resource for the nation – especially one which in the 1950s was going through a horrendous period of civil violence.

In fact, things were a good deal more complex than this, since the music

was becoming popular at a time when the country was bent on rapid economic and social modernization and when mass media were beginning to take their present form in the shape of the record industry, radio and TV. Both sets of factors were vital to definitions of national identity, giving new purposes for, and means of, national integration. Music from the Caribbean region was, despite its link to 'folklore', also linked to the early economic modernization of that region, promoted vigorously by immigrant elites. The music was thus both 'traditional' and identifiable as authentically Colombian and modern and, as such, fitted well with nationalism's well-known 'Janus face'. In this sense, the music was a resource for national tradition and national modernity in equal measure.

Whatever the complexities of the case, the point is that discourse on the music, and the production of it and its associated dances, actively constructed racial diversity within the nation, whether blackness and black sexuality were being condemned as immoral or celebrated as happy and uplifting. Sexuality could be linked to primitiveness, but since primitivism was fashionable in avant-garde circles at the time, it could also be linked to modernity and new sexual and gender mores. As one conservative commentator stated with evident distaste 'modernism requires this: that we should dance like blacks in order to be in fashion and in line with the tastes of the latest people' (see Wade 2000, p. 128). Sexual passion and the fate of the nation were hand in hand and the image of a supposedly untrammelled sexuality held forth the promise, or threat, of relations between people of different racial identities. But, as I argued above, it was not just a question of image. As embodied activities, music and dance were seen to actively encourage and facilitate such relations, not just symbolize them. Hence the fear they produced for conservative observers.

In sum, when understanding the intersections of racial and national identities, I think we need to understand the tensions that exist between sameness and difference and to grasp how difference is a positive as well as a negative resource for representations of nationhood and processes of constructing identities.

Transformation, appropriation and hegemony in national and transnational circuits

This leads us towards another important theoretical theme: that of how appropriations and transformations take place in a hegemonic formation. In referring to Gramsci and Hall's reading of him, I have already suggested that hegemonic discourses can make use of a wide variety of ideological elements whose meaning is not fixed and can be subjected to resignification through multiple re-readings, some of which will have more power than others to become dominant and more or less commonsensical.

There are many treatments of appropriation and transformation within cultural hegemonies.⁶ I cannot deal with all the issues that this literature raises, but I want to outline briefly two related concerns which emerge from it. To put them in perspective, I will outline the narrative of nationalizing appropriation that is frequently told about music by people involved in the making and marketing of music in Latin America. It is a story of how middle-class musicians and producers 'cleaned up' working-class and/or peasant styles of music and turned them into modern, but still authentic, expressions of national identity which could make an impact on the international scene. The story I told about Colombian music in the previous section conforms in many ways to this stereotypical idea. And it is a story that could be told in many other countries where processes of cultural appropriation were particularly intensive in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Societies in Latin America were undergoing urbanization and urban class segregation. National economies were increasingly linked to the global economy. National musical styles emerged in two main forms, as, first, art musicians appropriated 'traditional' elements into their conservatory styles (Béhague 1996) and, second, national popular music styles emerged. Tango developed in Argentina, samba and *maxixe* in Brazil, *danza* in Puerto Rico, *ranchera* in Mexico and *son*, *rumba* and *guaracha* in Cuba. In Colombia, an initial interest in the *bambuco* of the Andean region was displaced by the success of *porro* and *cumbia* from the Caribbean coastal region. Looked at in simple terms, these musical styles had emerged from the working-class neighbourhoods of the growing cities, or sometimes from rural areas, and were often based on a combination of European- and African-derived elements. These new styles were then appropriated by the middle classes who modernized them, removing some of their 'vulgarity', and transformed them into acceptable national symbols (see Manuel 1995, p. 15).

This narrative of appropriation as nation-building is that of an insider in many respects, but it can leak into aspects of analytic accounts as well, unless attention is paid to two issues. First, it is necessary to see how syncretic, hybrid and often transnational the initial working-class musics themselves were. If we miss this, we run the risk of construing them as authentic, traditional, local working-class styles which were then subjected to process of hybridization, transformation, nationalization and transnationalization by the middle classes and/or elites. We, in effect, take for granted the traditions often invented for these styles by later middle-class commentators.⁷ We set up false oppositions between local and national, or local and global, between authentic and inauthentic, between working class and middle class, between resistance and appropriation. The local does not just emerge in an autochthonous fashion; very frequently it too is constructed in supralocal or even global circuits as Gilroy (1993a) has shown for black US music (see also Wilk 1995).

Second, we must also grasp the fragmented nature of the ‘transformist hegemony’ – the term is borrowed from Brackette Williams (1991) – within which such processes take place. It is tempting sometimes to rely on overly instrumentalist models of a national elite or middle-class sector orchestrating a project of national hegemony. If we look at Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, or Duvalier in Haiti, such a view is justified, since both dictators pursued intensive policies of cultural nationalism which included music in their purview (see Austerlitz 1995; Pacini Hernández 1995; Averill 1997). But the Colombian case shows that this is not always the case and it is probable that Colombia is the rule rather than the exception.

A couple of examples will illustrate the first point. In Argentina, the tango seems to have emerged as a distinctive named style of dance in about the 1880s and is said by Collier to have been the result of lower-class urbanites parodying Afro-Argentine dance styles (Collier *et al.* 1995; see also Savigliano 1995). Afro-Argentines were dancing *candombe*, itself a complex fusion of a rather indeterminate nature, but with strong African roots. However, they also danced European polkas and mazurkas. Their non-black imitators also danced a variety of styles, most importantly the *milonga*, again a syncretic form influenced by European dances and the Cuban *habanera*. Thus tango, as found in its reputed ‘birthplace’ of the lower-class barrios of Buenos Aires, was already a highly complex hybrid formed in long-term transnational exchanges, including of course, the slave trade itself. The very name was a common term which already existed all over Hispanic America for a place where blacks danced, or for the dances performed there.

The link of this name with one local style is a good example of the selective post hoc reading of history in which one particular line in a complex network of nodes and knots becomes *the* line of evolution. In this case – very similar to many others all over Latin America – tango rose socially as middle- and upper-class men danced to it in brothels, as better-off urbanites danced to it in music halls and salons, and as different instrumentation was introduced. It is no coincidence that the music acquired definitive shape just as the means for its dissemination and mass consumption were beginning to form (specialized spaces of diversion for class-segregated urban clientele) and just as the middle classes were beginning to write about it, to document it in journals and newspapers. By 1900, tango was an integral part of Argentine urban culture; by 1913, it was the rage in Paris and London, later moving to the USA. The point is that processes of hybridization had been continuous and that tango became a symbol of Argentina not because in some simple sense it was a new dance that was ‘born’ in the barrios and was then simply appropriated by the middle classes, but because the very possibility emerged at that time of there being a mass urban music and dance form – which might then represent the nation among other nations. This possibility

found its fulfilment in whatever was around at the time that might persuasively be read as having authentically traditional roots.

The same sort of picture emerges for Colombia (see Wade 2000 for more detail). Styles such as *porro* and *cumbia* are generally held, by commentators on and players of this music, to have emerged in the 1920s and 1930s as local musicians with some formal training ‘jazzed up’ the authentic local traditions of the rural Caribbean coastal region which were heavily influenced by African and, to a lesser extent, indigenous musical styles, although a degree of European influence in the ‘original’ is generally admitted. Composer and band-leader Lucho Bermúdez was an important figure in this process. He came from a small town and acquired skills in the wind bands that were typical all over Latin America and which – to complicate the story – had already adopted and adapted still more original forms of *porro* and *cumbia* in an older appropriation (in the 1860s). Bermúdez then became an urban dweller, working in radio station house bands and collaborating with early initiatives in the recording industry. He popularized *porro* and took it to the interior of the country where, conquering the prejudices of conservative Europhiles, he made it the rage of the fashionable middle-class dance scene.

This popular narrative privileges a traditional, authentic core which, as many tellers of the story put it, is ‘dressed up in tails’. Yet Bermúdez states that his own influences were Ernesto Lecuona (a famous international Cuban song-writer and pianist), Rafael Hernández (a Puerto Rican song-writer and musician, central to the popular Latin American music recording scene in New York) and Pedro Biava (an Italian immigrant to Colombia who founded a symphony orchestra and opera in the regional capital city of Barranquilla and who taught many musicians active in the local popular music scene). Bermúdez himself was a person who moved ambiguously between the rural and the urban, the lower and the middle classes. Like many musical innovators of the period, he was a liminal figure. In Cartagena, where he worked in radio and recording, he had song-writing friends among the cities literary and economic elite, friends who also wrote songs labelled as *porros*. In short, it is just as feasible to see the master narrative as one in which a musician schooled in transnational popular genres (see below) takes elements of local styles that happen to attract him and can be used to claim a personal or regional style.

Vital here is an appreciation that the transnational recording scene of the period was tremendously eclectic. New York record companies sent representatives abroad to make recordings or scout for talent. Musicians from all over Latin America – not to mention Spain and the Canary Islands – combined in flexible house orchestras and shifting band line-ups to play wide varieties of styles. There were notional ‘national’ repertoires – tango from Argentina, *ranchera* from Mexico, *guaracha* and *son*

from Cuba, *porro* from Colombia, *danza* from Puerto Rico – but everybody played everything and some styles – the bolero, for example, – could barely be tied to a national origin any more. So, on the one hand, it was useful and necessary to have a national sound, or the image of such a sound, while on the other, the best sounds were produced in a totally transnational way and were consumed in international circuits of radio waves, live gigs and record sales. People such as Bermúdez were working in this overall context. As early as 1946, he travelled to Buenos Aires to record, leaving a lasting impression on a couple of band leaders there who went on to record *porros* and related styles and sell them all over Latin America, including Colombia itself.

In short, it is vital to see appropriation as a continuous process. In this case, national styles were being formed by appropriating ‘local’ styles that were themselves the product of transnational appropriations. Underlying this paradox is the fact that the mass media that allowed people to imagine national communities (e.g. radio) by the very same token allowed them to imagine transnational communities as well. Nationalism could be seen partly as a reaction to the disintegrative possibilities opened up by these media.

In relation to the second point about the lack of a coherent national project, managed by a particular sector of society, the same story can be used as an illustration. In Colombia, the state did little to control music. There was a national radio station from 1940, but it was one among a burgeoning crop of stations. There was legislation controlling the airwaves, but it said very little about the content of programming. Yet central values of modernity and whiteness won through. Bermúdez’s music was tropical enough to be identified by many as, to some degree, black. Yet it was whitened and stylized compared to rural styles played in the coastal region itself. Few band members were black. The way the music emerged was ‘controlled’ in a fragmented and uncoordinated fashion by composers and musicians, by radio station owners and DJs, and by record company employees, all of whom pursued their own varied and perhaps conflicting agendas, all of whom were trying to second guess ‘the public’ and were intent on making money or being successful, rather than instigating a nationalist project.

Yet everyone ‘knew’ that, while a hint of blackness might be exciting, too obvious a presence would either be alienating or confined to ‘folklore’. Success might be had with ‘old-fashioned’ music, but it was more likely with something that seemed ‘modern’. What exactly constituted ‘blackness’, or ‘folklore’, or ‘modernity’ varied for different people, but was oriented by the nature of the Colombian racial order as a whole. Thus as the national musical scene changed and became more ‘tropical’, it retained a hierarchy of blackness and whiteness, and continued to reflect nationalism’s Janus-faced couplet of tradition and modernity. Certain basic values (whiteness, modernity) were widely shared

and, of course, it was the owners of the record companies and the radio stations, who were middle class, whose tastes were likely to win out in the longer run.

The general point, which emerges from many treatments of appropriation in a nationalist context, is that the process of appropriation is done by many different people, many of them not necessarily elite or even middle class, each pursuing particular projects, but oriented by some underlying, hegemonic, values which, although they may be read differently from different social positions, retain a common structure of meaning.

Post-modern nationalism

This brings me back to an earlier theme which will serve as a conclusion. If heterogeneity has always been a constitutive part of nationalist narratives and if appropriations and hybridizations have been a continuous process (albeit subjected to post hoc selective readings that privilege certain lines of 'evolution'), then what is new about recent post-modern nationalisms – for example, those in Latin America that celebrate and even officially recognize that countries are racially plural and culturally diverse and seek to include (appropriate?) blackness and indigenusness into the national arena? My answer is that, while real changes have taken place, we need to understand that these 'new' accounts of the nation do not represent a radical departure from the long-standing recognition and active construction of diversity within nationalisms and the equally long-standing processes of appropriation through which basic hierarchies have been maintained, even without explicit orchestration. It is true that in Colombia there are now land rights for blacks and indigenous peoples, there are also indigenous Senators and an 'Afro-Colombian' dimension is being introduced into national curricula – to mention just a few potentially positive changes.

Against this, it is clear that the state is laying claim to the universalist dimension of nationalism that Balibar referred to. In this case, we are faced with a claim about the universality of difference being harnessed to claims about democracy. The inclusion of blacks and indigenous people, as explicitly different, is meant to signify a move towards pluralist democracy as a universal good. The idea is that everyone has the right to be recognized as different. But this claim exists in tension with the particularist tendency which means that specific categories are privileged, rather than others. In many cases, this continues to be those who are already privileged. This happens partly through processes that are not directly coordinated by the state. If, in the past, a coordinated project was not necessary for the perpetuation of racial hierarchies and inequalities, then it is not surprising that now, when there appears to be a coordinated state-led project of inclusion, processes of exclusion can

continue very effectively without being driven directly by the state. (Although one could easily argue in the Colombian case that the state is also pursuing policies that in practice lead to exclusion when it encourages infrastructural modernization and 'development' in exactly the areas where black and indigenous communities are supposed to be living out their difference.)

I argued above that blacks and indigenous people, or representations of them, 'nourished' elite ideas of the nation; apart from being points of difference against which to define whiteness and progress, their supposed primitive powers were also valued for their own sake. Now indigenous people and blacks are also being used as points of difference with which to legitimate democracy, while their powers, imagined or otherwise, continue to be essentialized as resources for the nation: recently the image of indigenous people (and in Colombia, although to a lesser extent, blacks) as guardians of the rain forest has become a popular trope (see Wade 1999). Racial identities continue to be central to imaginings of the nation and its destiny.

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Notes

1. See, for example, Helg (1995), Wade (1993), Stepan (1991), Urban and Sherzer (1991), Graham (1990), Wright (1990), Whitten (1986; 1981), Smith (1996), Stutzman (1981), Skidmore (1974). See also Williams (1996, 1995, 1989), Goldberg (1993), Todorov (1993), Wetherell and Potter (1992), Segal (1991), Gilroy (1987), Horsman (1981).
2. There is a large body of work dealing with music in relation to these themes which I cannot cite here; see Wade (2000) for a discussion.
3. See Williams (1996), McClintock (1995; 1993), Parker *et al.* (1992), hooks (1991), Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989), Mosse (1985).
4. Similar themes have been explored in relation to other racialized practices: for example, blackface minstrelsy in the USA (Lhamon 1998).
5. See García Canclini's interpretation of Mexico's National Anthropology Museum where diversity is on display, but subordinated to 'the unification established by political nationalism in contemporary Mexico'. The museum 'certifies the triumph of the centralist project, announces that here an intercultural synthesis is produced' (1989, p. 167–68, my translation). But I think there is more than taming and channelling going on here. National elites are actively producing diversity as well, because it operates as a needed resource for them and their nation.
6. For the Latin American and Caribbean context, good examples include Moore (1997), Pacini Hernández (1995) and Williams (1991).

7. In suggesting that we need to deconstruct those traditions, I am sympathetic to critiques of the notion of invented tradition which say that all 'traditions' are 'invented' (in the sense that all cultural forms are the product of human creativity), but I maintain that some traditions are more invented than others and thus bear examination in the sense that we still need to look at the dynamics of power and ideology that shape such discursive traditions.

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