In this section, then, I have tried to map the conceptual shifts by which, according to some theorists, the Enlightenment 'subject', with a fixed and stable identity, was de-centred into the open, contradictory, unfinished, fragmented identities of the post-modern subject. I have traced this through *five* great de-centrings. Let me remind you again that a great many social scientists and intellectuals do not accept the conceptual or intellectual implications (as outlined above) of these developments in modern thought. However, few would now deny their deeply unsettling effects on late-modern ideas and, particularly, on how the subject and the issue of identity have come to be conceptualized.

3   NATIONAL CULTURES AS 'IMAGINED COMMUNITIES'

Having traced the conceptual shifts by which the late-modern or post-modern conceptions of the subject and identity have emerged, I shall now turn to the question of how this 'fragmented subject' is placed in terms of its *cultural* identities. The particular cultural identity I am concerned with is that of *national* identity (though other aspects are implicated in the story). What is happening to cultural identity in late-modernity? Specifically, how are national cultural identities being affected or displaced by the process of globalization?

In the modern world, the national cultures into which we are born are one of the principal sources of cultural identity. In defining ourselves we sometimes say we are English or Welsh or Indian or Jamaican. Of course, this is to speak metaphorically. These identities are not literally imprinted in our genes. However, we do think of them as if they are part of our essential natures. The conservative philosopher, Roger Scruton argues that:

> The condition of man (*sic*) requires that the individual, while he exists and acts as an autonomous being, does so only because he can first identify himself as something greater — as a member of a society, group, class, state or nation, of some arrangement to which he may not attach a name, but which he recognizes instinctively as home.
> (Scruton, 1986, p.156)

Ernest Gellner, from a more liberal position, also believes that without a sense of national identification the modern subject would experience a deep sense of subjective loss:

> The idea of a man (*sic*) without a nation seems to impose a [great] strain on the modern imagination. A man must have a nationality as he must have a nose and two ears. All this seems obvious, though, alas, it is not true. But that it should have come to seem so

very obviously true is indeed an aspect, perhaps the very core, of
the problem of nationalism. Having a nation is not an inherent
attribute of humanity, but it has now come to appear as such.
(Gellner, 1983, p.6)

The argument we will be considering here is that, in fact, national
identities are not things we are born with, but are formed and
transformed within and in relation to *representation*. We only know
what it is to be 'English' because of the way 'Englishness' has come to
be represented, as a set of meanings, by English national culture. It
follows that a nation is not only a political entity but something which
produces meanings — *a system of cultural representation*. People are
not only legal citizens of a nation; they participate in the *idea* of the
nation as represented in its national culture. A nation is a symbolic
community and it is this which accounts for its 'power to generate a
sense of identity and allegiance' (Schwarz, 1986, p.106).

National cultures are a distinctly modern form. The allegiance and
identification which, in a pre-modern age or in more traditional
societies, were given to tribe, people, religion and region, came
gradually in Western societies to be transferred to the *national* culture.
Regional and ethnic differences were gradually subsumed beneath what
Gellner calls the 'political roof' of the nation-state, which thus became a
powerful source of meanings for modern cultural identities.

The formation of a national culture helped to create standards of
universal literacy, generalized a single vernacular language as the
dominant medium of communication throughout the nation, created a
homogeneous culture and maintained national cultural institutions,
such as a national education system (see Geoffrey Whitty's discussion of
this in Book 3 (Bocock and Thompson, 1992), Chapter 6). In these and
other ways, national culture became a key feature of industrialization
and an engine of modernity. Nevertheless, there are other aspects to a
national culture which pull it in a different direction, bringing to the
fore what Homi Bhabha calls 'the particular ambivalence that haunts the
idea of the nation' (Bhabha, 1990, p.1). Some of these ambiguities are
explored in Section 4. First, Section 3.1 will consider how a national
culture functions as a system of representation, and Section 3.2 whether
national identities are really as unified and homogeneous as they
represent themselves to be. It is only when these two questions have
been answered, that we can properly consider the claim that national
identities were once centred, coherent, and whole, but are now being
dislocated by the processes of globalization.

3.1 NARRATING THE NATION: AN IMAGINED COMMUNITY

National cultures are composed not only of cultural institutions, but of
symbols and representations. A national culture is a *discourse* — a way
of constructing meanings which influences and organizes both our

actions and our conception of ourselves (see *Penguin Dictionary of Sociology:* DISCOURSE; also Book 1 (Hall and Gieben, 1992), Chapter 6). National cultures construct identities by producing meanings about 'the nation' with which we can *identify;* these are contained in the stories which are told about it, memories which connect its present with its past, and images which are constructed of it. As Benedict Anderson (1983) has argued, national identity is an 'imagined community' (see the discussion of this idea by Kenneth Thompson in Book 3 (Bocock and Thompson, 1992), Chapter 7).

Anderson argues that the differences between nations lie in the different ways in which they are imagined. Or, as that great British patriot Enoch Powell put it, 'the life of nations no less than that of men is lived largely in the imagination' (Powell, 1969, p.245). But how is the modern nation imagined? What representational strategies are deployed to construct our commonsense views of national belonging or identity? What are the representations of, say, 'England' which win the identifications and define the identities of 'English' people? 'Nations', Homi Bhabha has remarked, 'like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye' (Bhabha, 1990, p.1). How is the narrative of the national culture told?

Of the many aspects which a comprehensive answer to that question would include, I have selected *five* main elements.

1   First, there is the *narrative of the nation*, as it is told and retold in national histories, literatures, the media and popular culture. These provide a set of stories, images, landscapes, scenarios, historical events, national symbols and rituals which stand for, or *represent*, the shared experiences, sorrows, and triumphs and disasters which give meaning to the nation. As members of such an 'imagined community', we see ourselves in our mind's eye sharing in this narrative. It lends significance and importance to our humdrum existence, connecting our everyday lives with a national destiny that preexisted us and will outlive us. From England's green and pleasant land, its gentle, rolling countryside, rose-trellised cottages and country house gardens — Shakespeare's 'sceptered isle' — to public ceremonials like the Trooping of the Colour and Poppy Day, the discourse of 'Englishness' represents what 'England' *is*, gives meaning to the identity of 'being English' and fixes 'England' as a focus of identification in English (and Anglophile) hearts. As Bill Schwarz observes:

> These make up the threads that bind us invisibly to the past. Just as English nationalism is denied, so is the fact of its turbulent and contested history. What we get instead ... is an emphasis on tradition and heritage, above all on *continuity* so that our present political culture is seen as the flowering of a long organic evolution.
> (Schwarz, 1986, p.155)

Jubilee year, 1977

2   Secondly, there is the emphasis on *origins, continuity, tradition and timelessness*. National identity is represented as primordial — 'there, in the very nature of things', sometimes slumbering, but ever ready to be 'awoken' from its 'long, persistent and mysterious somnolence' to resume its unbroken existence (Gellner, 1983, p.48). The essentials of the national character remain unchanged through all the vicissitudes of history. It is there from birth, unified and continuous, 'changeless' throughout all the changes, eternal. Mrs Thatcher remarked at the time of the Falklands War that there were some people 'who thought we could no longer do the great things which we once did ... that Britain was no longer the nation that had built an Empire and ruled a quarter of the world. ... Well they were wrong ... Britain has not changed' (quoted in Barnett, 1982, p.63).

3   A third discursive strategy is what Hobsbawm and Ranger call *the invention of tradition*: 'Traditions which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented. ... "Invented tradition" [means] a set of practices, ... of a ritual or symbolic nature which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviours by repetition which automatically implies continuity with a suitable historical past'. For example, 'Nothing appears more ancient, and linked to an immemorial past, than the pageantry which surrounds British monarchy and its public ceremonial manifestations. Yet ... in its modern form it is the product of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries' (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983, p.1).

4   A fourth example of the narrative of national culture is that of a *foundational myth*: a story which locates the origin of the nation, the people and their national character so early that they are lost in the

mists of, not 'real', but 'mythic' time — like basing the definition of the English as 'free-born' on the Anglo-Saxon parliament. Invented traditions make the confusions and disasters of history intelligible, converting disarray into 'community' (e.g. the Blitz or evacuation during World War II) and disasters into triumphs (e.g. Dunkirk). Myths of origin also help disenfranchised peoples to 'conceive and express their resentment and its contents in intelligible terms' (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983, p.1). They provide a narrative in terms of which an alternative history or counter-narrative, which pre-dates the ruptures of colonization, can be constructed (e.g. Rastafarianism for the dispossessed poor of Kingston, Jamaica; see Hall, 1985). New nations are then founded on these myths. (I say 'myths' because, as was the case with many African nations which emerged after decolonization, what preceded colonization was not 'one nation, one people', but many different tribal cultures and societies.)

5   National identity is also often symbolically grounded on the idea of a *pure, original people or 'folk'*. But, in the realities of national development, it is rarely this primordial folk who persist or exercise power. As Gellner wryly observes, 'When [the Ruritanians] donned folk costume and trekked over the hills, composing poems in the forest clearings, they did not also dream of one day becoming powerful bureaucrats, ambassadors and ministers' (1983, p.61).

The discourse of national culture is thus not as modern as it appears to be. It constructs identities which are ambiguously placed between past and future. It straddles the temptation to return to former glories and the drive to go forwards ever deeper into modernity. Sometimes national cultures are tempted to turn the clock back, to retreat defensively to that 'lost time' when the nation was 'great', and to restore past identities. This is the regressive, the anachronistic, element in the national cultural story. But often this very return to the past conceals a struggle to mobilize 'the people' to purify their ranks, to expel the 'others' who threaten their identity, and to gird their loins for a new march forwards. During the 1980s, the rhetoric of Thatcherism sometimes inhabited both these aspects of what Tom Nairn calls the 'Janus-face' of nationalism (Nairn, 1977): looking back to past imperial glories and 'Victorian values' while simultaneously undertaking a kind of modernization in preparation for a new stage of global capitalist competition. Something of the same kind may be going on now in Eastern Europe. Areas breaking away from the old Soviet Union reaffirm their essential ethnic identities and claim nationhood, buttressed by (sometimes extremely dubious) 'stories' of mythic origins, religious orthodoxy, and racial purity. Yet they may be also using the nation as the form in which to compete with other ethnic 'nations', and so to gain entry to the rich 'club' of the West. As Immanuel Wallerstein has acutely observed, 'the nationalisms of the modern world are the ambiguous expression [of a desire] for ... assimilation into the universal ... and simultaneously for ... adhering to the particular, the reinvention of differences. Indeed it is a universalism through particularism and particularism through universalism' (Wallerstein, 1984, pp.166–7).

3.2 DECONSTRUCTING THE 'NATIONAL CULTURE': IDENTITY AND DIFFERENCE

Section 3.1 considered how a national culture functions as a source of cultural meanings, a focus of identification, and a system of representation. This section now turns to the question of whether national cultures and the national identities they construct are actually *unified*. In his famous essay on the topic, Ernest Renan said that three things constitute the spiritual principle of the unity of a nation: ' ... the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories, ... the desire to live together, [and] the will to perpetuate the heritage that one has received in an undivided form' (Renan, 1990, p.19). You should bear in mind these three resonant concepts of what constitutes a national culture as an 'imagined community': *memories* from the past; the *desire* to live together; the perpetuation of the *heritage*.

Timothy Brennan reminds us that the word *nation* refers 'both to the modern nation-state and to something more ancient and nebulous — the *natio* —a local community, domicile, family, condition of belonging' (Brennan, 1990, p.45). National identities represented precisely the result of bringing these two halves of the national equation together — offering both membership of the political nation-state and identification with the national culture: 'to make culture and polity congruent' and to endow 'reasonably homogeneous cultures, each with its own political roof' (Gellner, 1983, p.43). Gellner clearly establishes this impulse to *unify* in national cultures:

> ... culture is now the necessary shared medium, the life-blood, or perhaps rather the minimal shared atmosphere, within which alone the members of the society can breathe and survive and produce. For a given society it must be one in which they can all breathe and speak and produce; so it must be the *same* culture. (Gellner, 1983, pp.37–8)

To put it crudely, however different its members may be in terms of class, gender or race, a national culture seeks to unify them into one cultural identity, to represent them all as belonging to the same great national family. But is national identity a unifying identity of this kind, which cancels or subsumes cultural difference?

Such an idea is open to doubt, for several reasons. A national culture has never been simply a point of allegiance, bonding and symbolic identification. It is also a structure of cultural power. Consider the following points:

1 Most modern nations consist of disparate cultures which were only unified by a lengthy process of violent conquest — that is, by the forcible suppression of cultural difference. 'The British people' are the product of a series of such conquests — Celtic, Roman, Saxon, Viking and Norman. Throughout Europe the story is repeated *ad nauseam*. Each conquest subjugated conquered peoples and their cultures,

customs, languages and traditions and tried to impose a more unified cultural hegemony. As Ernest Renan has remarked, these violent beginnings which stand at the origins of modern nations have first to be 'forgotten' before allegiance to a more unified, homogeneous national identity could begin to be forged. Thus 'British' culture still does not consist of an equal partnership between the component cultures of the UK, but of the effective hegemony of 'English', a southern-based culture which represents itself as the essential British culture, over Scottish, Welsh, and Irish and, indeed, other regional cultures. Matthew Arnold, who tried to fix the essential character of the English people from their literature, claimed when considering the Celts that such 'provincial nationalisms had to be swallowed up at the level of the political and licensed as cultural contributors to English culture' (Dodd, 1986, p.12).

2   Secondly, nations are always composed of different social classes, and gender and ethnic groups. Modern British nationalism was the product of a very concerted effort, in the late Victorian and high imperial period, to unify the classes across social divisions by providing them with an alternative point of identification —common membership of 'the family of the nation'. The same point can be made about gender. National identities are strongly gendered. The meanings and values of 'Englishness' have powerful masculine associations. Women play a secondary role as guardians of hearth, kith and kin, and as 'mothers' of the nation's 'sons'.

3   Thirdly, modern Western nations were also the centres of empires or of neo-imperial spheres of influence, exercising cultural hegemony over the cultures of the colonized. Some historians now argue that it was in this process of comparison between the 'virtues' of 'Englishness' and the negative features of other cultures that many of the distinctive characteristics of English identities were first defined (see C. Hall, 1992).

Instead of thinking of national cultures as unified, we should think of them as constituting a *discursive device* which represents difference as unity or identity. They are cross-cut by deep internal divisions and differences, and 'unified' only through the exercise of different forms of cultural power. Yet — as in the fantasies of the 'whole' self of which Lacanian psychoanalysis speaks — national identities continue to be represented as *unified*.

One way of unifying them has been to represent them as the expression of the underlying culture of 'one people'. Ethnicity is the term we give to cultural features — language, religion, custom, traditions, feeling for 'place' — which are shared by a people. It is therefore tempting to try to use ethnicity in this 'foundational' way. But this belief turns out, in the modern world, to be a myth. Western Europe has no nations which are composed of only one people, one culture or ethnicity. *Modern nations are all cultural hybrids.*

It is even more difficult to try to unify national identity around race. First, because — contrary to widespread belief — race is not a biological

or genetic category with any scientific validity. There are different genetic strains and 'pools', but they are as widely dispersed *within* what are called 'races' as they are *between* one 'race' and another. Genetic difference — the last refuge of racist ideologies — cannot be used to distinguish one people from another. Race is a *discursive* not a biological category. That is to say, it is the organizing category of those ways of speaking, systems of representation, and social practices (discourses) which utilize a loose, often unspecified set of differences in physical characteristics — skin colour, hair texture, physical and bodily features etc. — as *symbolic markers* in order to differentiate one group socially from another.

Of course the unscientific character of the term 'race' does not undermine 'how racial logics and racial frames of reference are articulated and deployed, and with what consequences' (Donald and Rattansi, 1992, p.1). In recent years, biological notions of races as a distinct species (notions which underpinned extreme forms of nationalist ideology and discourse in earlier periods: Victorian eugenics, European race theories, fascism) have been replaced by *cultural* definitions of race, which allow race to play a significant role in discourses about the nation and national identity. Paul Gilroy has commented on the links between 'cultural racism' and 'the idea of race and the ideas of nation, nationality, and national belonging':

> We increasingly face a racism which avoids being recognized as such because it is able to line up 'race' with nationhood, patriotism and nationalism. A racism which has taken a necessary distance from crude ideas of biological inferiority and superiority now seeks to present an imaginary definition of the nation as a unified *cultural* community. It constructs and defends an image of national culture — homogeneous in its whiteness yet precarious and perpetually vulnerable to attack from enemies within and without. ... This is a racism that answers the social and political turbulence of crisis and crisis management by the recovery of national greatness in the imagination. Its dream-like construction of our sceptered isle as an ethnically purified one provides special comfort against the ravages of [national] decline.
> (Gilroy, 1992, p.87)

But even when 'race' is used in this broader discursive way, modern nations stubbornly refuse to be resolved into it. As Renan observed, 'the leading nations of Europe are nations of essentially mixed blood': 'France is [at once] Celtic, Iberic and Germanic. Germany is Germanic, Celtic and Slav. Italy is the country where ... Gauls, Etruscans, Pelagians and Greeks, not to mention many other elements, intersect in an indecipherable mixture. The British Isles, considered as a whole, present a mixture of Celtic and Germanic blood, the proportions of which are singularly difficult to define' (Renan, 1990, pp.14–15). And these are relatively simple 'mixtures' as compared with those to be found in Central and Eastern Europe.

This brief examination undermines the idea of the nation as a unified cultural identity. National identities do not subsume all other forms of difference into themselves and are not free of the play of power, internal divisions and contradictions, cross-cutting allegiances and difference. So when we come to consider whether national identities are being dislocated, we must bear in mind the way national cultures help to 'stitch up' differences into one identity.
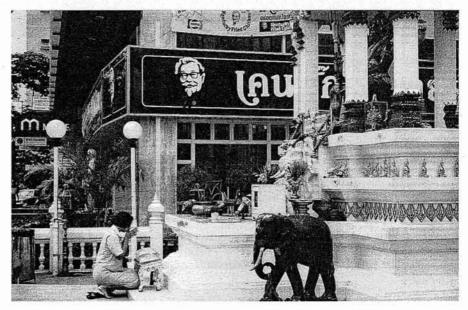
4 GLOBALIZATION

The previous section qualified the idea that national identities have ever been as unified or homogeneous as they are represented to be. Nevertheless, in modern history, national cultures have dominated 'modernity' and national identities have tended to win out over other, more particularistic sources of cultural identification.

What, then, is so powerfully dislocating national cultural identities now, at the end of the twentieth century? The answer is, a complex of processes and forces of change, which for convenience can be summed up under the term 'globalization'. This concept was extensively discussed by Anthony McGrew in Chapter 2 of this volume. As he argued, 'globalization' refers to those processes, operating on a global scale, which cut across national boundaries, integrating and connecting communities and organizations in new space–time combinations, making the world in reality and in experience more interconnected. Globalization implies a movement away from the classical sociological idea of a 'society' as a well-bounded system, and its replacement by a perspective which concentrates on 'how social life is ordered across time and space' (Giddens, 1990, p.64). These new temporal and spatial features, resulting in the compression of distances and time-scales, are among the most significant aspects of globalization affecting cultural identities, and they are discussed in greater detail below.

Remember that globalization is not a recent phenomenon: 'Modernity is inherently globalizing' (Giddens, 1990, p.63). As David Held argued (Book 1 (Hall and Gieben, 1992), Chapter 2), nation-states were never as autonomous or as sovereign as they claimed to be. And, as Wallerstein reminds us, capitalism 'was from the beginning an affair of the world economy and not of nation states. Capital has never allowed its aspirations to be determined by national boundaries' (Wallerstein, 1979, p.19). So *both* the trend towards national autonomy and the trend towards globalization are deeply rooted in modernity (see Wallerstein, 1991, p.98).

You should bear in mind these two contradictory tendencies within globalization. Nevertheless, it is generally agreed that, since the 1970s, both the scope and pace of global integration have greatly increased, accelerating the flows and linkages between nations. In this and the

Capitalism — 'an affair of the world economy'

next section, I shall attempt to track the consequences of these aspects of globalization on cultural identities, examining *three* possible consequences:

1   National identities are being *eroded* as a result of the growth of cultural homogenization and 'the global post-modern'.

2   National and other 'local' or particularistic identities are being *strengthened* by the resistance to globalization.

3   National identities are declining but *new* identities of hybridity are taking their place.

4.1   TIME–SPACE COMPRESSION AND IDENTITY

What impact has the latest phase of globalization had on national identities? You will remember from Chapter 2 that one of its main features is 'time–space compression' — the speeding up of global processes, so that the world feels smaller and distances shorter, so that events in one place impact immediately on people and places a very long distance away. David Harvey argues that:

> As space appears to shrink to a 'global' village of telecommunications and a 'spaceship earth' of economic and ecological inter-dependencies — to use just two familiar and everyday images — and as time horizons shorten to the point where the present is all there is, so we have to learn to cope with an overwhelming sense of compression of our spatial and temporal worlds.
> (Harvey, 1989, p.240)

What is important for our argument about the impact of globalization on identity is that time and space are also the basic coordinates of all systems of *representation*. Every medium of representation — writing, drawing, painting, photography, figuring through art or the telecommunications systems — must translate its subject into spatial and temporal dimensions. Thus, narrative translates events into a beginning–middle–end time sequence; and visual systems of representation translate three-dimensional objects into two dimensions. Different cultural epochs have different ways of combining these time–space coordinates. Harvey contrasts the rational ordering of space and time of the Enlightenment (with its regular sense of order, symmetry and balance) with the broken and fragmented time–space coordinates of the Modernist movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We can see new space–time relationships being defined in developments as different as Einstein's theory of relativity, the cubist paintings of Picasso and Braque, the works of the Surrealists and Dadaists, the experiments with time and narrative in the novels of Marcel Proust and James Joyce, and the use of montage techniques in the early cinema of Vertov and Eisenstein.

Section 3 argued that identity is deeply implicated in representation. Thus, the shaping and reshaping of time–space relationships within different systems of representation have profound effects on how identities are located and represented. The male subject, represented in eighteenth-century paintings surveying his property, in the form of the well-regulated and controlled classical spatial forms of the Georgian crescent (Bath) or English country residence (Blenheim Palace), or seeing himself located in the spacious, controlled forms of Nature of a Capability Brown formal garden or parkland, has a very different sense of cultural identity from the subject who sees 'himself/herself' mirrored in the fragmented, fractured 'faces' which look out from the broken planes and surfaces of one of Picasso's cubist canvases. All identities are located in symbolic space and time. They have what Edward Said calls their 'imaginary geographies' (Said, 1990): their characteristic 'landscapes', their sense of 'place', 'home', or *heimat*, as well as their placings in time — in invented traditions which bind past and present, in myths of origin which project the present back into the past, and in the narratives of the nation which connect the individual to larger, more significant national historic events.

Another way of thinking about this is in terms of what Giddens (1990) calls the separation of space from place. 'Place' is specific, concrete, known, familiar, bounded: the site of specific social practices which have shaped and formed us, and with which our identities are closely bound up.

> In premodern societies, space and place largely coincided, since the spatial dimensions of social life are, for most of the population ... dominated by 'presence' — by localised activity. ... Modernity increasingly tears space away from place by fostering relations between 'absent' others, locationally distant from any given