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## **Challenging the nation-state: the critical hybrid subject**

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# Challenging the nation-state: the critical hybrid subject

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## **Abstract**

The growing existence of multiethnic individuals and diverse societies seems to pose a challenge to the nation-state and its configuration of the political community. Classic theories of nationalism prescribe the formation of a state around an ever-existing nation which constitutes a somewhat homogenous community, conflicting with the modern realities of statehood. Thus, this thesis explores the theory of nationalism and its ability to accommodate diversity and plurality within its structure. Ultimately, I argue, illustrated through the concept of the critical hybrid subject, that nationalism is unable to cope with the diversity of its members, due to the implementation of a national identity as an authority retaining political strategy.

*“Having a nation is not an inherent attribute of humanity, but it has now come to appear as such. In fact, nations, like states, are a contingency, and not a universal necessity. Neither nations nor states exists at all times and in all circumstances. Moreover, nations and states are not the same contingency. Nationalism holds that they were destined for each other; that either without the other is incomplete, and constitutes a tragedy. But before they could become intended for each other, each of them had to emerge, and their emergence was independent and contingent. The state has certainly emerged without the help of the nation. Some nations have certainly emerged without the blessings of their own state. It is more debatable whether the normative idea of the nation, in its modern sense, did not presuppose the prior existence of the state.”*

*Ernest Gellner (1983)*

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## 1. Introduction

In the last century political communities have predominantly organised themselves within the nation-state structure. Who is part of the political community and what that membership entails exactly, is debated heavily among the scholarly camps. One of these debates surrounds the identity and sense of belonging within such a community. Defining who, and by what standards a person is eligible to claim membership is one of the core pillars in understanding interpersonal relationships of members. Their claim on one another to continually engage and identify with a given community depends on self-identification as well as group identification. On what grounds said identification occurs and who can regulate the factors upon which conformity or recognition are satisfied are further aspects of consideration. Within the nation-state structure, the underlying factor of identification connecting individuals is the character and identity of the nation. What constitutes said identity is often vague or resembling an aspect of traditional practices which are categorised as representing the main culture, or 'Leitkultur' as termed by Bassam Tibi (2000). Thus, it is understood that the national identity characterises the members' culture, through which members can identify to both the political representation of their communal identity, as well as the other members who identify equally. However, the expectation of a homogenous society, where all members share an ethnicity, traditions and identify to the nation-state equally, is improbable.

Some theories of nationalism ground the anticipated homogeneity in a form of a shared *ethne* or historical association (Gat 2013 & Smith 2003). The nation, considered as a community based on a shared identity, exists prior to the state which grounds the cohesion and collaboration of the community in a political sense as the nation-state. Thus, the construction of a state emerges with nations in consideration of their existence abstracted from the political. Nevertheless, grounding the relationship between members based on concepts of tradition to their political membership of a state faces difficulty with accommodating citizens and members, such as migrants, who do not share the same traditions, but identify to the community regardless of such defining characteristics. Furthermore, the need to justify other members' identification to each other as fellow community members hinders recognition of belonging, due to the possibilities in subjective interpretations of national members on what constitutes a successful assimilation to an identity, especially, aspects of identity based on alien cultures or traditions (Gellner 1983, 7). In an attempt to reconcile pluralism, diversity and the national identity liberal nationalists argue in consideration of the individual's ability to reflect on their individual and communal position, as well as their relationship to the national identity (Tamir 1995). Although the individual is afforded more agency through introducing liberalism into the conceptualisation of nationalism, its identity is still constructed in light of a static understanding of culture as tradition, which delineates predicted identities the individual can delegate between.

Another perspective on issues of prescribing a national identity is hybridity which conceptualises an engagement between two cultures and the mixing of both cultures constituting a hybrid identity (Hutnyk 2005). The theory of hybridity places this moment of mixture in a 'third space', that

creates a space in which there is a dimension of negotiation. Homi Bhabha (1994) challenges the imposition of a national identity upon a multi-ethnic and diverse community through retaining a 'culture of difference' within the 'third space' by which the means of mixture can be decided upon. Nevertheless, the inherent power inequalities migrants and ethnic minorities face during the negotiation process may limit the actual influence a strategy of keeping a 'culture of difference' can achieve due to their lack of access to the culture embedded within the national identity.

Therefore, in pursuit of understanding how the nation-state, as the main modern political structure, can engage with diversity and migration in terms of equal membership and recognition, this thesis will investigate the theory of nationalism at the base of the nation-state. By determining how differing theories of nationalism conceive of the state and the political community within as well as engaging with concepts such as hybridity and liberal nationalism, the main issues in reconciling the nation-state model and a multifaceted society will be analysed. Thus, this thesis will be split into four main chapters. The first and second chapters will outline the main theories of nationalism, as well as contextualise inherent inequalities in the access of power within nation-states in the accommodation of diversity within liberal nationalism. The third chapter will discuss hybridity and further analyse the individual's role of identification. Finally, in the last chapter I will challenge the efficacy of conceptualising a political community in terms of a nation, utilising the concept of a critical hybrid subject (Marotta 2020).

## **2. Nationalism**

### **2.1 Normative theories**

What constitutes the nation, its members and a general conception of nationalism has a variety of different perspectives. While some defend the claim that nations have always existed, others state that their existence depends on their creation through the conceptualisation of nationalism. Two dominant strands exist within the theories of nationalism — the modernist and the premordialist theories. Modernist, or civic, theories as the term suggests, describe the nation as a created community on the basis of inclusive self-determination bound by equal citizenship, having come forth through the creation of the modern nation-state. In contrast, primordialism conceptualises the nation as an organically constituted and timeless phenomenon. As categorised by Garner (2022, 9), primordialism considers nations as ever-existing through an inheritance of genetic favouritism. Those that share genetic or common descent are understood to form uninterrupted communities that span over generations. However, as Garner (2022, 8) acutely recognises, the dependence on such factors, as an idea of a "community of blood" (Gat 2013, 20), seems easily refutable due to the existence of nations which encompass a multitude of communities which continuously cooperate regardless of their genetic associations. Azar Gat's (2013) critical analysis of primordialism equally engages with the challenges of shared blood membership, advocating for social and historical kinship instead. He argues that while nations have a civic, and therefore non-cultural, dimension it would be wrong to understand them as members purely sharing political institutions without a sense of a minimum tacit implication of an ethnic commonality. Gat (2013,

19-20) states that by relying on kinship rather than common descent, the concept of ethnicity underlying this timeless association can include multi-descendent ethnic groups. The definition of ethnicity he employs includes both kinship and common culture, as he argues that even distinct *ethne* have shared cultural traits, which is especially relevant in consideration of his understanding of a conscious common identity. Although he argues there needs to be commonality of culture, the act of consciously defining its content by members can be precluded as most ethnic communities delineate their cultural attributes through contact with ‘others’. In congruence with his ideas of an ever-existing nation based on kinship he invokes Friedrich Meinecke’s (1970 in Gat 2022) ‘cultural nations’ (Kulturnationen), which characterise pre-modern nations as having “[...] shared ethnic attributes and increasingly developed a conscious sense of common identity [...]” (Gat 2013, 22). Referring back to the civic nature of modern states, Gat (2013, 23-24) places his definition of a nation within the political dimension, including the voluntary basis which often underlines belonging to a nation. However, he concludes his understanding of nationalism by stating that the bonds of a political community of the state — i.e. the nation — are underlined by a strong relation to the commonality of kin and cultural traits.

Gat (2013) recognises the challenges of solidarity between members of a state who do not share kin or descent, embodied by the inclusion of culture or shared commonality in his definition of an *ethne* which comprises the nation’s character. Nevertheless, the understanding of culture he employs is relatively vague. It seems to ground a commonality between those not sharing kin or descent, while still being of the same ethnicity through cultural practices and a cultural identity, to constitute an ever-existing understanding of a nation, or at minimal its ethnic origins. However, he makes no active distinction between cultural commonalities and traditions, as discussed by Eric Hobsbawm (2012) in his evaluation of ‘invented traditions’. Hobsbawm (2012) defines these traditions as “[...] a set of practices [...] which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies a continuity with the past” (Hobsbawm 2012, 1). He further distinguishes between ‘custom’ and ‘tradition’, stating that while customs are necessarily flexible actions, traditions are invariant. Referring to formalised and fixed practices of the past, whether invented or real, these traditions are necessarily unchanged as to “[...] use history as a legitimator of action and cement group cohesion” (Hobsbawm 2012, 12). Finally, he states the very nature of a modern nation relies on novel constructions of symbols and practices to comprise the subjective aspect of a nation’s character, aimed at rooting them in historic continuity to assert their identity (Hobsbawm 2012, 14). Thus, while he does not deny the existence of real traditions, he argues in a modernist perspective that all nations contain ‘invented traditions’ which aim to establish historical continuity in pursuit of legitimacy in their existence.

In consideration of Gat’s (2013) inclusion of cultural traits which cause commonality between members of an ever-existing nation, the vagueness of such cultural commonalities causes one to question whether the use of ‘cultural’ is not better understood in terms of ‘invented tradition’. Modernists, such as Hobsbawm (1992, 5-6), would deny these ever-existing cultural traits and

instead argue that focusing on an overarching objective definition of what constitutes a nation's existence is inherently exclusive to some members of the nation. Due to the ever-changing character of nations, relying on a framework of objective permanence and universality seems meaningless. He instead argues that nations are dual phenomena constructed from above, but futile if not also analysed from below, including the interests and assumptions of the ordinary people which constitute the members of the nation (Hobsbawm 1992, 10). He makes this claim on the argument that both the objective criteria, or a priori definitions, of a nation and the subjective, or a posteriori, definitions are in themselves unsatisfactory. Describing the character of a nation in objective terms seems likely to be open to objections categorised as “[...] almost certainly anachronistic, question-begging or so vague as to be meaningless” (Hobsbawm 1992, 7).

In pursuit of further grounds upon which to understand the character of a nation, he refers to various subjective definitions. On the one hand, collective action in reference to Renan's (1882) depiction of a nation as a 'daily plebiscite' in which members constitute the nation's character through a constant engagement with each other, reconfiguring the essence of the nation in tandem with one another. On the other hand, the individual level in which the personal associations of a member and their claim to the nation constitute the subjective understanding of the nation. However, Hobsbawm (1992, 7-8) also problematises attempts of a subjective definition of the nation, as the reliance on the members' consciousness to associate with defining themselves as belonging to the nation opens up the possibility of voluntarism and undermines the complexity of the members' individual identities. The former, voluntarism, would open the existence of nations up to depend solely on the will and whim of a collective to want to be a nation. Hobsbawm (1992, 8) seemingly claims there to be more to the creation of a nation than a certain number of inhabitants 'willing' there to be one. The latter concern with defining a nation through its subjects would limit the way individuals define themselves, as the association to nationhood would essentially undermine all other group memberships they may want to define themselves with. Finally, even when disregarding the previous issues he writes that a subjective definition can only ever produce an “*a posteriori* guide to what a nation is” (Hobsbawm 1992, 8). Thus, he endorses a dual understanding of the nation with 'invented traditions' defining the objective character, whereas the members' belief in what their national identification implies defines the subjective criterion. Furthermore, the inclusion of the subjective dimension of the member's perspective opens this conception of the nation up to adaptability and change which primordialist accounts of nationalism struggle to accommodate.

Another theoretical understanding that seemingly combines both the primordial considerations and the modernist ahistorical understanding of the nation is Anthony Smith's (2003) ethnocentric nationalism, or perennialism. Within his analysis of nationalism he critically discusses the modernist's, more specifically Hobsbawm's (1992), character of the nation as “[...] constructed essentially from above” (Smith 2003, 122) and the inclusion of the *a posteriori* subjective dimension as a 'conceding' to make note of the various ways in which individuals define



themselves. While Smith (2003, 188) makes room for the diversity and variety of associations within a modern state, similarly to Gat (2013) he argues for a commonality between the members of the nation to constitute solidarity with one another. He differentiates his theory from primordialists through the origins of nations. Nations are understood as historical and social, and needing “[...] common and distinctive elements of culture [...]” (Smith 2003, 188) as opposed to an ever-existing natural phenomena. Furthermore, solidarity within the community’s collaboration is cemented through the common experiences existing on the basis of commonality guaranteed through the shared ethnicity and practices which derive thereof. Thus, while nations are found they are not ‘natural’ as Gat (2013) suggests, but rather an extension of an ethnicity which congregates individuals into a system of a modern nation-state. The modern nation-state as classified in Smith (2003, 188) describes both economic and civil rights of members, adding political aspects into the description of the nation. During his analysis Smith (2003, 29) refers to Gellner’s (1983) theory of nationalism which promulgates somewhat similar understanding of nationalism, namely the congruence of the political (the state) and the national unit.

## 2.2 Nationalism as a political principle

While the theories thus far have outlined more normative parameters of the nation and how it should be categorised, Gellner (1983, 1) defines nationalism as a political principle and a theory of political legitimacy. He understands the theory as requiring the political and ethnic boundaries being congruent with one another, not from a position of descriptive understanding, but rather as a political enhancement. He differentiates the state from the nation quite distinctly, stating that the state exists where ‘order-enforcing agencies’ have been separated from the social sphere, and a specialisation of such order is maintained by said agency (Gellner 1983, 4). He argues, seemingly against the premordialist and perennialist ideas that neither nations nor states are a universal necessity, but rather a contingency which by circumstance of the modern emergence of nationalism appear jointly. However, nations themselves are based on a cultural commonality, and can emerge “[...] without the blessings of their own state” (Gellner 1983, 6). He outlines two conditions upon which any two individuals are members of the same nation. The first being the sharing of the same culture, defined as “[...] a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating” (Gellner 1983, 7). The second condition relies upon the recognition of the membership of others. Two individuals can only be members of a nation if they recognise each other as part of the same nation. He clarifies, in contrast to premordialists and perennialists that the recognition of each other as members makes the nation one, not any specific shared attribute in themselves. Thus, ethnicity is not a relevant factor, but rather the cultural means he outlines for a community to share.

While these cultural factors are (at least tacitly) considered here in political terms or as norms that structure the society, to remove them entirely from factors related to ethnicity would be wrong. The implication is that there is no strict or necessary relation to ethnicity in the collective political state, but a commonality between members for functional matters. However, when approaching the

specific terms used to describe the cultural commonality, the similarity between the previous normative theories becomes evident. In consideration of the 'system of ideas and signs', Hobsbawm's (2012) 'invented traditions' likewise employ created and collectively understood attributes that 'objectively' describe the nation's character. The 'ways of behaving and communicating' are more reminiscent of Smiths (2003) ethnocentric nationalism and its need for understanding members of the community through shared experience. While the resemblance to these normative theories is not in itself problematic, the implementation of nationalism as a political principle open to interpretation of a given society without recognition of the inherent ethnic boundaries which it entails creates limitations. Gellner (1983, 2-3) discusses the existence of 'foreign' persons within a nationalist state, delineating that under nationalism as a political theory, the existence of persons not related to the cultural commonality is not favoured. If the stability and existence of a state relies on the shared cultural commonality (whatever aspects may be considered for this), and on the mutual recognition of members, the existence of non-nationals promulgates their expulsion or assimilation. This, as presented in Gellner's (1983, 2) writing on the consequences of strict nationalism, follows from the idea that if a nation is only comprised of people sharing these values and recognise each other, there exists a process of cultural homogenisation.

While a homogenous society in itself is not problematic to establish a state, solidarity between and collectives of heterogenous societies and nations are the norm, where homogenous societies are rare, as seen in the immediate critique of premordialism which refers to the solidarity evident between ethnically diverse communities. Thus, a theory of nationalism, if wanting to be applicable to the modern conception of state- and nationhood, needs to be able to accommodate both heterogenous nations as well as creating a normative base which stabilises the 'cultural' or 'descriptive' sphere of the nation. The compatibility of pluralism and nationalism has been debated and discussed thoroughly, by authors such as David Miller (1995) and Yael Tamir (1995), as will be contextualised within the next chapter of this thesis.

### **3. Liberal Nationalism**

In the previous chapter, I outlined a variety of theories of nationalism. While some theories outwardly focused on ethnicity as the essential element of the nation, others did so tacitly through invoking an idea of a 'cultural commonality'. In this chapter, I will lay out two theories of liberal nationalism which aim to reconcile cultural commonality with the pluralism and diversity of the modern nation state.

Liberal nationalism contextualises both the realities of a pluralistic society in which individuals are equally able to express their beliefs and make meaningful decisions upon their life. Needing to find an account of nationalism which fits within this political scope, David Miller (1995) starts his examination of the concept of nationality by differentiating between nations and states. While the nation depends on a community with political aims, the state itself is the institutional expression of

those aims which “[...] successfully claims a monopoly of legitimate force in a particular territory” (Miller 1995, 19), invoking a Weberian definition of statehood. He continues by distinguishing between nations and ethnic groups, stating that although nations are often based upon an ethnic group, they transcend mere ethnicity, either including multiple ethnic identities within their scope, or forming a new identity under the political aim of nationhood. He furthers his specification of a nation by invoking five main aspects. The first addresses the necessity of members of a national community needing to recognise their own and others’ belonging to such a community. Here, he relies on Gellner’s (1983,7) second condition, as to what constitutes membership to a nation. Persons belonging to a community they believe to be a nation can only exist if they understand those they recognise in being part of their community to believe in the same commitments. He terms this as a ‘mutual recognition’ of members, who believe in the political community which makes the basis of their nation. Secondly, he states that a historical continuity in a national identity is constitutive, as it regards the existence of a nation as a community which does not simply exist by a mutual expression of aid or circumstance. The existence of a historically recognisable national identity establishes a continuity which does not cease to exist if its current benefits of aid or territorial control no longer benefit the nation. Similar to Smith’s (2003) perennialist definition, the implication describes there is something more to nationhood than mere administrative ease. Third, Miller (1995) argues that to retain an identity as a national one, it has to be an active identity, reminiscent of Renan’s (1882) consideration of the nation as a ‘daily plebiscite’. Thus, in context with Miller’s (1995) focus on historical continuity there need to be active decisions made by the community to further their existence or communal goals which are shaped by its history and shape the future of the nation. The fourth aspect particularises a nation to a geographical space, either in aspiration thereof or actual control of it constituting the ability to form a state around the nation, reiterating the Weberian definition of a state and its necessary territorial boundaries. Finally, and arguably most importantly, he argues for a set of characteristics which encompass a commonality and identifiability between the members. While specifying that a multitude of ethnicities can exist within a nation, it is necessary for there to be something he calls a ‘common public culture’ (Miller 1995, 22-25).

By ‘common public culture’ Miller (1995, 26) designates a broad understanding of values and norms by which the community organises itself. He argues this must not be considered as a monolithically informed set of rules, but rather as ideals which guide and connect the community through the norms which regulate their daily lives. Furthermore, while it does not necessarily need to base itself on cultural factors derived from practices and traditions of a specific ethnic group as in Smith’s (2003) theory, the ‘common public culture’ can express itself in a language commitment or the retention of religious beliefs. However, Miller (1995, 26) asserts that a consideration of a ‘common public culture’ does not necessarily extend to private decisions by individual community members. While the ‘common public culture’ orders and delineates the norms and values which govern the community, it does not impair the individual from making meaningful life choices (or more trivial ones). He acknowledges that the separation between the communal expectations

determined by such an idea of a 'common public culture' and the individual's ability to plan their life and make self-determined choices can be problematised.

At the basis of Miller's (1995) reasoning for a 'common public culture' lays Benedict Anderson's (2006) theory of nations as 'imagined communities'. Anderson's (2006) theory of 'imagined communities' specifies that a larger community is 'imagined' as the members themselves may never be able to relate to each other on a personal level, necessitating a belief in the community and its national identity to constitute a collective self embedded in a given community. This can only be guaranteed by means of communication, through expression of the communal identity in historical and contemporary media. Whether signified by historical artefacts or contemporary communication based on such beliefs, the necessity of a communal belief in the national identity is key. While Anderson's (2006) theory is more linked to an ethnic relationship signified by the historical continuity of a community, Miller (1995) seemingly implores this in relation to the civic identity of the nation. Although his definition of the 'common public culture' does not specify a dependency on an ethnic character, the belief in the existence of an ethnic character of the nation grounds the legitimacy of the borders of the civic nation. There is the implication of legitimacy of arranging a civic community along the borders of an ethnic community, which makes political decisions on the basis of the shared norms informed by (and informing) the 'common public culture'. As Miller (1995, 32) explains, what constitutes an identification to the nation is a belief in the community and its determining factors. There seems to be a reliance on a dual relationship between the ethnic nation delineating the cultural values and norms and the civic sphere which upholds and reiterates the values within the political decision-making within the nation.

Furthermore, Miller (1995, 34) states that the historical identification of a community to their national identity includes an idea of veiling. In consideration of the creation of the current geographical and territorial boundaries of modern nation states, the violence of territorial wars and historical narratives created by the winners of such disputes is often purposely forgotten to constitute a culture and society which members can believe in. The means by which a contemporary nationality constitutes their contemporary self is reflected in the institutional expression of the contemporary society not only through territorial boundaries, but also the reinvention of their historical narratives. Simply put, the often arbitrary and violent history in the creation of nations and political territories is expressed only in limitation in their current institutions due to their framing of the national identity. Nevertheless, the explicit denial of certain historical events "[...] is likely to signal a nation gripped by a monolithic ideology" (Miller 1995, 38). Miller (1995, 44-45) thus relates the ability of a personal identity to grapple with its unchosen history, weighing it with the more rational and chosen values, with a national identity which need not limit itself to its history. Here, the fluidity of personal identity is underlined to constitute a national identity being able to have the same adaptability, denouncing a community's precondition to "[...] commit themselves rigidly to a particular set of values" (Miller 1995, 45). However, this seems to be in conflict with Anderson's (2006) theory of 'imagined communities'. While on the one

hand, there is a subjective sphere in which individuals constitute a belief in the nation which is somewhat distinctive and respective of their own personal identity, there also exists an imposed culture which informs individuals on their relationship to the national character. Similarly to Hobsbawm's (2012) 'invented traditions', the maintenance of a 'common public culture' relies on the decision making based on an objective understanding of what said culture is. Therefore, although there is a reciprocal relationship between the individual identity and the national one, the idea of fluidity which Miller (1995, 45) proposes cannot extend in the same way. If the civic nation's existence is based on an ethnic nation, legitimised through the citizens' belief in said ethnic nation and its 'common public culture' being the basis of the community's engagement with one another, the content of the 'common public culture' necessarily includes a static element. It is questionable, whether the 'common public culture' is actually constituted by the individual members' identities and relation to one another, as their own identities are in a constant renegotiation. Miller (1995) seems to conflate the ethnic dimension of a national identity, composed of a historic relation of individuals, and the civic nation's identity of the 'common public culture' which shares more similarity with Hobsbawm's (1992) constructed objective criteria.

Miller (1995) has thus far argued for a liberal nationalist understanding of nations, essentially basing a political community's stable existence as a nation bound by mutual recognition, informed by history and tied together through a 'common public culture'. He reiterates this with the understanding that communication and trust are at the basis of 'effective' democratic states. Relying on Mill, he states that in the pursuit of an inclusion of all citizens within the decision making progress with the aim of agreement "[...] only a common nationality can provide a sense of solidarity that makes this possible" (Miller 1995, 97). He prefaces his conclusion on deliberative democracy based upon a solidarity of co-nationals, with the understanding that this process aims to bring about ways in which fellow-nationals who have pluralistic identities and political views can agree to conditions which allow their living collectively. The unification of a pluralistic society with an overarching trust in their recognition of each other as co-nationals is made on the basis of a recognition of a 'common public culture' which informs the values and norms which inform the conduct of one's fellow-nationals. Thus, in finding the 'common public culture' and its implications present within the co-nationals, and the debate on framing the continuous living conditions and the political framework which is to guide said conditions, people within the nation can trust each other to consider each other with respect and solidarity.

### 3.1 Introducing diversity

The pluralistic heterogeneity of modern nations in need of acknowledgement has only been addressed in an assumption of indigenous nationals with varying ethnic or personal identities. In grappling with ethnic diversity within a nation, Miller (1995, 122) categorises nationality as an 'essentially political phenomenon' and makes the distinction that ethnicity itself is not, while stating that political claims on the basis of ethnicity can still be made towards the state. Here again, Miller (1995) seemingly does not make an adequate distinction between the political or civic nation

and the ethnic nation, conflating the two. He takes further note of ethnic diversity abstractly, that even those not included in the 'ethnic core' of a national identity "[...] cannot be expected straightforwardly to embrace the national identity that is on offer, since this both creates internal strains and puts them at a practical disadvantage" (Miller 1995, 123). Thus, out of this disadvantage, the desire to make the national identity more reflective of their specific cultural traits seems evident. Therefore, he continues reiterating that the flexibility and adaptability of the 'imagined' national identity gives space for a discussion between diverse groups, in which the shaping and changing of the nation should include "[...] a collective conversation in which many voices can join" (Miller 1995, 127). The understanding of trust and respect tied to nationality being at the centre of the political expression of the community seems to be problematic in relation to an equal footing between various ethnicities when it comes to migrants. The inherent belonging and access to the political arena, in which nationality and the political expression thereof is discussed, is not as equally guaranteed to migrants. When considering national identity as political, tied to a shared history and 'imagined', the inaccessibility thereof becomes evident. In pursuit of becoming part of the political community, one must understand the historical events which inform the present expression of said identity to comprehend the 'common public culture' by which people mutually recognise themselves as members, all while having no formal access to these parameters besides being in the same territory which borders the nation. Miller (1995, 123) has outlined the strenuous nature of abstracting one's self from parts of one's identity in assimilation to another with regard to nationals attempting to include more of their ethnicity into the national community. Migrants not only have no inherent access to make claims to the larger political community to include their ethnicity within the national identity, even in assimilating to the national identity, their status as being a 'national' depends on the mutual recognition of those born into the national identity.

Miller (1995, 128) engages with these issues in his comparison between the conservative nationalist's ideas and those of radical multiculturalists. On one side of the argument, he delineates the aversion of the conservative nationalists toward migration to their dependency of a pre-political idea of the community informing the basis of authority, as represented within the primordialist understanding of nationalism. Here he makes the claim that although they make a compelling argument in stating there need be a 'pre-political' entity at the basis of the nation and subsequent state, that their conclusion is misguided in seeking that the political institutions which stem from this identity base their authority in retaining it. He states that although national identity is necessary to the nation it is not a static concept. As argued previously the conflation of the civic identity and the ethnic identity of the nation, defined by the objective 'common public culture' and the individual negotiation of belonging and identity, creates lacking clarity within his analysis. Considering the previous nationalist theories, separating the objective and top-down imposed idea of 'invented traditions' of Hobsbawm (1992 & 2012) and the negotiation of the individuals' identity and belonging in connection to the political community, Renan's (1882) 'daily plebiscite' seems better equipped to explain the phenomenon of a changing culture. The constant negotiation

between members on the subjective criterion of the nation's character creates inclusion, as well as space for individuals to engage with each other as a community. The idea of change through conversing and existing together under the civic boundaries of a state, is more plausible than Miller's (1995) limited view of change in culture. In his understanding the national identity is not threatened by migration, as long as it is limited in scope, giving both the nationals and those seeking to become part of the nation time to create a new common identity (Miller 1995, 129-131). This is wholly dependent on the necessity of a graspable 'common public culture' which does not reflect on the diversity between individuals of the same ethnicity (let alone another ethnicity), and the goals of a pluralistic understanding of nationalism which can accommodate the variety of ways in which members pursue their goals and ways of living.

With respect to the arguments made by radical multiculturalists, he maintains that they are equally wrong in their conclusions. He argues that although the respect for smaller groups to make claims on behalf of their own identities, practices and principles is valuable to the individual, that the state cannot accommodate the claims of smaller groups over those of the nation. Due to the equal respect and mutual recognition necessary to constitute a national identity which informs a state able to invoke norms on the basis thereof, the demands of minorities cannot be granted at the expense of the national identity and 'common public culture' (Miller 1995, 129-131). In wanting to belong to the nation on equal footing to the majority, smaller groups need to "[...] embrace their national identity wholeheartedly" (Miller 1995, 136). However, he fails to engage critically with the power imbalance between the two groups. His statements on the conservative nationalists showcase that he sees their understanding of the role of the state as an extension of the authority of the national identity, whereas he views the state in his own theory merely as an actor which embodies whatever shape the 'common public culture' endorses at a given time. Thus, in his own view, the nation need not be tied to a stagnant idea of nationality which may oppress those who wish to shape it. In his theory this 'shaping' can only occur through communication and deliberation on the basis of mutual respect in seeing fellow nationals as such, somewhat resembling Renan's (1882) theory of national identity as a 'daily plebiscite'. Nevertheless, due to the implication of an inherent power imbalance between nationals and migrants, migrants would need to wholly embrace the national identity, abstracting themselves fully to match the ideals of the society they wish to be included in until they reach a point in which the majority recognises their sense of belonging. As touched on in the previous section, only when judged as a co-national can the migrant aim to shape the national culture to match their self. Miller (1995, 131) fails to fully realise the lack of access of those not part of the majority understanding of the nation's identity to engage in a deliberative process, as envisioned here. Especially, when the underlying aspect to have access to deliberate on the state of the 'common public culture' relies on mutual recognition, it is entirely up to the majority to designate the threshold of what constitutes an individual who embodies said culture and their sense of belonging. If, as Miller (1995, 21) proposes, that a nation need not be ethnically homogenous or informed by a monolithic idea of culture, the diversity of ethnicity can only be justified if the ethnic groups are considered intrinsically part of the nation,

and are therefore also entitled to shape the values and norms of the political expression of the nation which under this exposition of his theory is contradictory.

In another writing, Miller (2005, 369) argues that nations have an interest in limiting the flow of migration, as an accelerated migration policy could result in a loss of a 'viable' public culture, focussing on an identifiable continuous public culture. Reiterating the points he has made in his previous writing, the basis of the claims here is the necessity of a 'common public culture'. Miller (1995; 2005) again seems to differentiate between the state and the national, the identity underlying said political extension of the nation. However, while he believes his position to be different from the conservative nationals, he again fails to recognise the underlying similarity. He argues that the national identity serves as a unification of values and beliefs which guide the norms of the society which then inform the political. Whereas the conservative national depends on the national identity to ground its authority. Miller (1995; 2005) seems to claim that because the individual can choose their self while recognising the public culture, the dependency on the nationality of one's state is individual and only communal in the sense of keeping the community stable. Consequently, when it comes to the argument of migration there is an underlying assumption that a loss of a communal and identifiable identity would constitute a loss of nationhood and therefore compromise the stability of the state. Inadvertently, the state's authority and the retention of a national identity is not as separate within this conception as he has argued, especially when it comes to migration. Perhaps this is due to this specific policy having an impact on the identity of the nation, however, the problems of authority on the basis of a graspable culture remain. It seems contradictory to argue that the nation's identity is only a public expression of community while having the state as an actor make decisions on the basis of said character, and simultaneously claiming no connection between identity and authority retention. Who is to decide when a nation's identity has changed too much? If individuals can base their self on the interpretation of certain values, why do these need to be on the basis of an overarching system of values, enforced by the political? Furthermore, the arguments on migration from this liberal nationalist perspective seem to grapple with the idea of a graspable culture one can achieve. There exists a lack of unification between an 'imagined' community and a sense of mutual recognition, when such recognition needs basis in a set of values which are defined and graspable only by some (or perhaps even created as in Hobsbawm's theory of nationalism (1992)), who already have access and constitute the accessibility to membership to their community through a threshold of recognition. Finally, in assessment of Miller's (1995) liberal nationalist perspective of the nation and its cultural roots, the tacit notion of a certain group being able to dictate what does and what does not belong to the 'common public culture' leaves those seeking access wholly dependent on the recognition of the majority. It seems gaining access to 'shaping' the 'common public culture', when one has not been born into it by circumstance, has not been adequately addressed.

Although offering valuable points in the understanding of nationhood and the individual in a given community, David Miller's (1995 & 2005) theory of liberal nationalism still relies on the idea of an



identifiable culture, which informs the political expression of a state. Through this, access to a given political community is guided by this somewhat graspable idea. While it is believed to be 'imagined' (Miller 1995, 32), and therefore non-monolithic or even invasive, the lack of critical assessment when it comes to the power imbalance to access the mutual recognition to be able to have an effect on said 'common public culture' makes it essentially problematic. Even within diverse states, the underlying ideas of such a culture being the basis of recognising fellow citizens opens up the possibility of exclusion of those not *recognised* as 'belonging'. Thus, while the 'common public culture' may not be limited to inherent features, it is limited to certain individuals, making it exclusionary through basing belonging on said 'common public culture'. The next section will engage with the individual's perspective on their own identity in connection with the community, in an attempt to reconcile the competing positions. Yael Tamir (1995) recognises the issues of undermining individual agency in a liberal understanding of nationalism, by giving ontological priority to the individual and their relationship to their national or communal identity.

### 3.2 Yael Tamir's liberal nationalism and the consideration of the individual

A different understanding of liberal nationalism comes from Yael Tamir's (1995) exploration of the role of the individual within a nation. As shown earlier, the focus was on the basis of an assumption of overarching systems and concepts of the borders and parameters of an evenly applicable culture which are said to define the nation and thus its citizens. Simultaneously, the culture in question is able to leave space for the individual to define themselves outside of their ethnic and historic communal associations while defining stabilising norms which guide the political. I also suggested that lack of recognition of the imposition of such a culture, as accounted in Hobsbawm's (1992) theory of dual spheres of culture and traditions, are at the forefront of the issues within liberal nationalism. Precisely because the individual is not bound to this invented culture and can also actively participate in shaping it, the problematic aspects of individual identity being confined to their ethnicity within a state as addressed in other forms of nationalism appear solved. However, as I equally indicated earlier, the dependency on the imposition of a specific and restricted 'common public culture' is on the one hand exclusionary and authority retaining, and on the other lacking a solution to respecting the individuals' plurality within a state.

Yael Tamir (1995, 20) seemingly addresses the individual's role with the discussion of a 'strict choice model'. In her work on liberal nationalism, the main aim is to connect the supposed incommensurability of liberalism and nationalism, where the former focuses on the individual and the latter on the communal. She divides an individual's identity into two: the communal and the moral identity. For her, the communal identity consists of the historically inherited and informed meaning thereof, encompassing one's ethnicity or social position. In contrast, the moral identity is constituted by the goals and life plans a person makes and is seen as somewhat undefined by the given social relations. Although the 'strict choice model' believes both the communal and moral identity can be decided and reflected upon, it does not predicate complete dissociation from all attachments within these processes. The context of one's communal relationships and identity

inform and ground the considerations and limits of one's moral identity. However, this model challenges the idea that an individual is destined into a way of living and thinking (Tamir 1995, 20-21). Thus, while nationalists would argue that one cannot make choices upon one's communal identity, Tamir (1995, 26-29) states that both the moral and communal identity can be reflected and chosen upon. She elucidates, that while the 'inheritance' and social context of an individual's given communal identity may explain a tendency to keep to said given identity, individuals' decisions and choices in light of their reflections produces the ability to choose a completely separate culture, as is evident through successful assimilation in the history of migration. She contextualises the limits of the detached individual, stating the ability to reflect and make choices upon both the moral and communal identity are possible and happen throughout one's life, but that the reflection on the "[...] moral identity is dependent on the presence of a cultural context" (Tamir 1995, 22). Thus, although somewhat separable, the two identities remain constitutive of each other in times of reflection on either. She places this in the context of the modern individual, who makes decisions irrespective of their given context while also wanting a rootedness and belonging to a community from which to make said decisions. Furthermore, she argues that cultural plurality in an environment is necessary to be able to make cultural choices, therefore advocating for a protection of cultural diversity.

Although this conception of the individual and its relationship to the community's values opens up options for the individual that are not given in traditional theories of nationalism, it lacks the critical assessment differentiating between the cultural and political identity. Making the claim that an individual is both contextualised within a culture and needing to retain cultural diversity for the individual's ability to make reflected choices seems contradictory or, at minimum, limiting. If an individual is able to reflect on both its moral and communal identity only due to the existence of cultural diversity, the individual's agency with regard to their cultural context appears undermined. Equally, the issues of an overarching 'common public culture' are assumed to be bypassed, as the communal identity is not categorised to be defined by a national one. However, due to the boundaries of the community not being explicitly explored, the extension of an ethnicity being the national identity is the assumed implication based on the nationalist theories which underlie Tamir's (1995) own contemplations. Whether Tamir (1995) actually equates the communal identity to an ethnicity which informs the national identity, as theories of nationalism do, is unspecified. If the community is equated to the nation, the issue of an overarching culture still remains. In consideration of the necessity of retaining cultural diversity for the individual's ability to reflect, the existence of plurality is understood as given without critically assessing how it is kept. Due to the lack of separation between the community and the political expression thereof — the state — it is unclear whether ideas such as the 'common public culture' or 'invented traditions' are taken into consideration. Thus, not only is it ambiguous whether an individual is making a reflection on their communal identity with regard to imposed traditions, but also how and what kind of diversity can exist simultaneously as the imposed traditions. With regard to her use of examples such as assimilation in justifying the empirical existence in shifting cultural associations, there is no critical

assessment of assimilation often being a necessity for individuals and not a choice within migration. Assimilation does not allow individuals to make choices on their communal identity or reflect on the relationship between the communal and the moral part of their identity, but rather obligates them to conform to a given understanding of a 'common public culture'. As I have problematised within the analysis of Miller's (1995) use of the concept of a 'common public culture', there exists no equal access to the host's identity for migrants. Thus, even if one's communal identity can be reflected and chosen upon, by not addressing the inherent issues in a conception of 'public culture' the acceptance into another community still depends on the latter community, retaining the issues raised in the previous section.

In contrast to Miller's (1995) theory, Tamir's (1995) focus on reflection nevertheless opens up a perspective which does not directly predicate the individual's choices. Despite the lack of critical engagement with the issues raised with regard to a 'common public culture', she invokes the individual's agency through active reflection of a belonging to said culture, instead of passive inheritance. The 'contextual individual', relying on the nature of individual persons, "[...] combines individuality and sociability as two equally genuine and important features" (Tamir 1995, 33). This understanding of liberal nationalism seemingly bridges the reliance on social context and the communal framework constituting solidarity and belonging with the conception of the free individual able to autonomously participate and reflect on said participation throughout their life. Her conception therefore also conceives the act of participating within the communal sphere, in connection to the individual reflections thereof, as is predicated in Renan's (1882) 'daily plebiscite'. When considering the implications I have made with regard to Miller's (1995) continuous conflation of an ethnic and civic identity and their connection to Hobsbawm's (1992 & 2012) 'invented traditions' and the imposition of them, Tamir's (1995) theory seems unable to circumvent such inherent prescription. The lack of critical assessment of the accessibility of given cultures and ambiguity in defining the community also fails to solve the issues of understanding imposed traditions as equal to culture. However, the focus on the individual's ability to reflect on themselves and their community's cultural character alludes to an importance of participation, especially when these identities are challenged and re-negotiated daily, as a 'daily plebiscite' (Renan 1882). Nevertheless, something yet to be addressed is the nature of how this renegotiation is constituted within the individual and how this reflects on the broader national character, as will be closer examined in the next section on the theory of hybridity and the meeting point of cultures.

#### **4. Hybridity and third spaces**

In the last chapter, I discussed two theories of liberal nationalism. David Miller's (1995) theory which more closely resembled traditional theories of nationalism, whereas the second Yael Tamir's (1995) held liberalist views as its basis. The latter theory of liberal nationalism concerned itself with the individual and their perspective and ability to reflect on their cultural and moral self. While it is necessary to thematise an individual's autonomy, Tamir (1995) ultimately gives priority to a contextualised individual which can make autonomous choices with regard to their moral self from

within their cultural context. Both Miller (1995) and Tamir (1995) struggle to accommodate a theory which does not conceive of imposed traditions as the foundation of the identity of the community. In this chapter, I will outline Homi Bhabha's (1994) theory of hybridity and the 'third space' he lays out in connection to cultural relationships and the individual's relation to the nation, as well as deconstructing the inherent problematics of hybridity utilising John Hutnyk's (2005) critique of the concept and Michael Onyebuchi Eze's (2020) contextualisation of liminality.

#### 4.1 Bhabha's third space

Bhabha (1994, 200-201) begins his critical analysis of nationalism from a post-colonial perspective, stating that the idea of the nation, as is implemented in the Western world, is more complex than the historicism often attributed to nationhood. For him, the 'locality of culture' is viewed in a temporal rather than historical perspective, describing the historical view as a narrative strategy of symbolic power meant to create 'cultural difference' and ambivalence between cultural groups. Individuals taking part of the nation, for Bhabha (1994), are both the "[...] the historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy" (Bhabha 1994, 208-209) and the subjects rewriting the contemporary principles of the nation. Thus, the individual's actions with regard to the nation are split into two: the reiteration of the historical 'pedagogical' and the 'performative' reiteration of the modern character of the nation, influenced and constituted through the political narrative strategy of difference and ambivalence between powerful and powerless. As a means to rectify this growing space of difference, Bhabha (1994, 213) traces a shift in perspective in which the focus of authority and narrative construction in the nation is not in the pedagogical, given and historical establishment of a people, but rather on the performative. In this aspect of the identification to the nation, the process of construction, rewriting and subjective identification there exists a "[...] temporality of the 'in-between'" (Bhabha 1994, 212) which supposedly interrupts the production of a homogenous people within the nation. The confrontation with this space of liminality allows for a reflection and confrontation with the heterogeneity of the people and their contested locations of cultural difference. The liminal, or 'third space' as named by Bhabha (1994, 208-209), is an in-between space of the pedagogical and the performative which questions and contests the narrative of authority through the engagement with the heterogenous histories and expressions of culture of the peoples of the nation. The reflection within the 'third space' is said to safeguard the modern pluralistic nation against an essentialist understanding of the nation, given by the narrative of homogeneity through a chosen historical understanding of a nation's character.

In this context, the creation of a 'third space' essentially originates from the idea of the 'representation of difference' which describes the utilisation of difference in culture and tradition as a form of authority contestation by the minority. As Bhabha (1994) describes, the nation is both constantly in a process of 'writing' itself and aiming to re-establish its historical permanence to constitute the narrative of its authority. The homogenisation of the people to constitute an idea of the nation as a political tool of authority retention is said to be countered through the interactions of individuals with their described cultural difference (Bhabha 1994, 3-4). The space in which

traditions and histories are negotiated create cultural hybridities, made up of both the pedagogical given tradition and the performative renegotiated appreciation of cultural difference. Thus, the idea of hybridity and a 'third space' for Bhabha (1994) represents a contestation of the narratives of authority, through the representation of difference in a space of renegotiation and reconstruction of the plurality of cultural expression and tradition. Within this space, there is no innate authority which can reiterate its political agenda of identification with given traditions, but rather it is an individual's space of contestation between the given tradition of the nation and the actual diversity of their cultural differences in the present. In comparison to Tamir's (1995) reflection of one's cultural context which focuses more on the individual's relationship to its own community, Bhabha's (1994) space of renegotiation specifically engages with the imposed traditions of the idea of the nation through the reiteration of the minority's cultural difference. Rather than the assumed coherence with the national identity Bhabha (1994) subverts the identity in itself, creating a space of confrontation between the individual and the imposition of cultural homogeneity.

Bhabha's (1994, 230) understanding of the narrative creation of the nation also directly criticises theories of 'willing' the nation, as described by Anderson (2006) and Renan (1882). The claim is that in the latter's conceptions of the nation through will or plebiscite, exists the 'obligation to forget'. Through needing to wholly or partially identify with an idea of the nation, the essentialised characterisation of the nation abstracts the historical heterogeneities to construct a 'totalising' of the people and will of the nation. Directly addressing Anderson's (2006) 'imagined community', Bhabha (1994, 231) claims there is a lacking consideration for the homogenisation and arbitrary construction of a signifier which embodies the 'imagined' aspect of the nation. There exists a reliance on at least one homogenous aspect of 'willing' the nation which 'essentialises' the nation's character into the arbitrariness of the political narrative of authority and invented traditions (Bhabha 1994, 208-209; Hobsbawm 1992). As for Renan (1882), Bhabha (1993, 230) argues there is a partial identification within the 'daily plebiscite' which similarly invents a "narrative of nationness". The critique rests mainly on the point of essentialising the identity of the nation within individuals. In needing to 'will' a nation, rather than discuss the spheres of identification to the nation, constituted of given (pedagogical) and constructed (performative) aspects within the 'third space' of cultural difference, the individual lacks the agency afforded to it in the sphere of liminality. Bhabha (1994, 232-233) claims the retention of cultural difference is a 'strategy' which allows the minority to establish and negotiate the historical understanding of the nation and its present expression while not being 'obliged to forget' to constitute a homogenous modern nation. The hybridities which come about through the negotiation of traditions in the sphere of liminality or 'third space' constitute the complexity of the modern nation and the modern individuals of difference and plurality, countering the narrative of authority of an invented nationhood. Hybridity, as presented here, is a product of a space of translation in which oppositional views of tradition are negotiated as a mixture of difference (Bhabha 1994, 37).

#### 4.2 Deconstructing hybridity

While the previous section has established the basis of the Bhabha's (1994) arguments on nationhood and negotiation of cultural difference through the construction of a hybrid conception of nationhood as created in the 'third space', this section aims to challenge some problematic aspects of this categorisation of nationhood and culture. Beginning with the contextualisation of liminality as presented in Eze's (2020) explication of African communitarianism, the understanding of liminality within Bhabha (1994) seems decontextualised to the originally envisioned purpose of a liminal space. Bhabha (1994) presents this process as a disconnected moment in time where the culturally subjugated individual contests the pedagogically given traditions of the imposed culture of the political narrative of nationhood, as a tool to constitute a hybrid form of negotiation of difference. In this conception liminality is a mere space of reflection of the individual to counter and abstract from a community and reflect upon one's own difference to an imagined or imposed cultural understanding. Similar to Tamir (1995), this reflection is proposed as an individual action of contestation and retention of a moral self which is abstracted from the cultural context it is placed within. While recognising that Bhabha's (1994) writing is meant to reclaim indigenous cultural identities within a post-colonial imposition of a foreign culture, the implications of what liminality is facilitating in his conception to the broader community remain unclear.

Traditionally, liminality is a term associated with Victor Turner (1974 in Eze 2020) in reference to a communitarian process of virtue cultivation and self-reflective learning experiences in indigenous African communities during initiation rituals. During this ritual performance, an individual undergoes a liminal experience, where one learns and cultivates their personhood in context of gaining the knowledge and norms of their community. Liminality is an in-between space that separates an initiate and an adult. Within this in-between, the individual initiate is not yet a fully moralised human, allowing space within liminality to cultivate the community's values and ethics, as well as practices and traditions. Personhood is not considered given, as is conceptualised in liberalism, but rather constituted within the community's "*moral temporality*" (Eze 2020, 125). The individual is considered a moral agent not by virtue of existence, but through the ability to reflect, discuss and embody virtuous practices embedded within given traditions, customs or norms. As a fully realised member of a community reflecting upon and challenging norms of temporality to create productive social change and development for the community is at the core of this conception. Liminality is not necessarily a space of conformity, but equally a location of rupture and transformation. It is a place where one considers the pedagogical self as a fertile necessity which is able to learn and develop its moral self through understanding the knowledge and values of its community with the intent of advancing the communal good. Thus, although the individual's personhood is dependent on the community's values and traditions, the purpose of bestowing these legacies as an embodiment of lived tradition is to prefigure a moral outlook which is neither imposed nor non-dialogical. The dialogical interaction within the liminal space, the

process of becoming, allows for the full engagement with given traditions and values, rather than passively receiving them and continuously contesting them.

Contrasting the traditional understanding of liminality, Bhabha (1994) utilises this concept in the form of clarifying the minority's repressed culture from the invented and imposed one. While liminality is still presented as a process which aims to bring about productive social change within the community, by contesting the authority of the imposed, the pedagogical self is viewed as a negative condition. While African communitarianism views this aspect of *becoming* as a productive position in the process of personhood (Eze 2020, 124), Bhabha's (1994, 208-209) understanding of the pedagogical self is not understood in such positive terms. Rather, the liminal- or 'third space' occurs not as a process with the pedagogical self being taught in a moment of dialogue, but rather resembling Tamir's (1995) individual reflection of the moral self. Although understood as contextualised, the individual both in Tamir (1995) and Bhabha (1994) seems to reflect on its moral position not with, but despite its communal context. In the understanding of liminality as contestation it is assumed that the individual is fighting to negotiate a cultural difference between itself and the imposed tradition of the authority. Rather than negotiating the development of the community through equal dialogical engagement, the result of the space of liminality for Bhabha (1994) is the negotiation of a hybrid culture.

Until now, I have addressed Bhabha's (1994) arguments of liminality and cultural difference in the context of deposing an imposed culture in connection to a post-colonial nation, where the implications for subverting the authority of an invented tradition is inherently related to the positions of power within the same community. However, the concept of hybridity needs further analysis when understood as a consequence of migration, rather than the reclaiming of a cultural authority. Hutnyk (2005) engages with hybridity from a position of critique of the idea of cultural purity. His analysis begins with a primary definition of hybridity, as well as an engagement with a variety of uses of the term. Starting with hybridity as a description of "[...] cultural mixture where the diasporized meets the host in the scene of migration" (Hutnyk 2005, 79), as well its broader application in association with the mixing of differing cultures, the term has a temporal and spatial element. Furthermore, Hutnyk (2005, 80) engages with Bhabha's conceptualisation of hybridity as a 'third space', adding a defined space and positioning to the moment of hybridisation. Considering these primary applications, the term seems to encompass an action in a specific space which is not yet mixed or changed, where two differing cultures clash and become something else — a hybrid. Unlike in the reclamation of what is subverted in the post-colonial context, hybridity in consideration of migrants having adapted a different identity into their own distinguishes them from their former cultural self to reflect aspects of the host, creating a space where they are separate and distinct from both their original culture, as well as the host's. Although the host is forced to engage with this hybridisation as well, the power imbalances of a minority diaspora clashing with a host culture creates a difference in the felt severity of individual hybridity. In the presence of a leverage over access and power the diaspora mixes its identity to construct a hybrid

within themselves to appease and appeal to the host. Ultimately, the retention of cultural difference as a strategy to subvert authority on the basis of 'invented traditions' mischaracterises the accessibility migrants have to the space of negotiation.

Another aspect discussed in Hutnyk (2005, 82) is the problem of purity embedded within the terminology of 'hybridity'. The moment of hybridisation is prefaced with two pure entities which engage in the mixture. On the one hand, this raises normative issues regarding the understanding of something fundamentally pure, as well as the basis upon which it is considered as such. If two cultures are in the position of mixture, there is an implication of a graspable idea of an objective culture which has been thoroughly discussed and contested when discussing David Miller's (1995) 'common public culture'. This understanding of culture does not reflect on the necessary differentiation of the cultural and political, and the resulting imposition of 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawm 1992) as authority retaining. It is a conflation between tradition and the multiplicity of an individual's identity, as well as their engagement with fellow individuals as a dialogical and 'daily plebiscite' (Renan 1882). On the other hand, Hutnyk (2005, 82) outlines an additional assessment of hybridity in which not only two pure positions necessarily exist and are in need of definition and justification, but that hybridity as a description of mixture of two pure entities implies reversibility. The ability to return to the pure position offers the term further issues in applicability. Presupposing that there is an objective culture which one can conform to, it seems there is an ability to return to said state. However, as the existence of such a culture is called into question not only by individual experience, lack of definition and the fierce debate continuously challenging scholars, the reversibility of hybridity is questionable. Again engaging with the difference between culture and tradition, when considering culture as something ever-changing, in an engagement between individuals or a 'daily plebiscite' (Renan 1882), the fluidity of this concept cannot be understood in terms of essentialist forms reducing interaction between individuals to traditions.

## **5. Challenging the nation-state**

Thus far, this thesis has thematised a variety of theories centred around the idea of the nation and the national identity. As I have argued, neither theories that endorse traditional forms of nationalism nor those that aim to accommodate plurality and diversity within the nation-state have successfully overcome issues of essentialising individuals' identities or the conflation of culture and tradition. This chapter will challenge arguments made on behalf of the nation in favour of the individual and utilising the concept of the critical hybrid subject by Vince Marotta (2020).

The starting point of this thesis was understanding the relationship of culture and the political community embedded within a nation state. Seemingly, nationalism relies on the existence of a people who desire to be self-determining and form a political entity, or state, around the territory of the community of individuals making claims for political autonomy from other groups. As was showcased when engaging with theories of nationalism, for some, the community or nation's



existence is understood as prior to their political expression of state forming. Primordialists, who ground the continual existence of a people in political terms through a sense of solidarity forming out of familiarity between members based on shared history or kinship, are most clear in their reliance on a people prior to the nation state (Gat 2013). Even those who do not engage with the idea of ever-existing nations, but propose their emergence in congruence with the concept of nationalism such as Ernest Gellner (1983), rely on an undetermined understanding of cultural commonality through which members themselves identify to the state as well as each other. As discussed in the analysis of the problems facing traditional theories of nationalism, the assumptions of a homogenous society are incompatible with the realities of pluralistic and diverse societies which embody the modern nation-state. The attempt to reconcile plurality and national identity in David Miller's (1995) theory of liberal nationalism highlights one of the underlying contentions of the nation-state — the conflation of cultural and civic values and the identities which they inform.

As was argued by Eric Hobsbawm (1992), nationalism as a concept relies on an authority which creates a national identity “[...] essentially from above” (Smith 2003, 122). If the national identity is constructed upon shared history and values which formalise in practices, the expression thereof would necessarily be broad and ambiguous, due to the existence of plurality within states. As was conceptualised by Benedict Anderson (2006), the nation is understood as an ‘imagined community’, emblematic of the existence of a constructed identity which informs individuals as to how they identify with their fellow citizens. The community is ‘imagined’, as two individuals on opposite sides of the bounded political territory presumably have less in common than they do with individuals physically closer to them, belonging to a different state. What relates the two individuals is a belief in the national identity. However, the essence of said identity must be constructed as a political tool in efforts of territory retention. If the members of a state do not believe in a binding agent which unifies them and constructs a people differentiating them from other non-members, then there is no guarantee of the continuation of a state based on the existence of a nation. Homi Bhabha (1994) reiterates this in his analysis of ‘intervening ideology’. Paraphrasing Stuart Hall he writes, “the notion of hegemony implies a politics of *identification* of the imaginary” (Bhabha 1994, 32). Those who claim and want to retain the authority over a given territory can only do so if there is something differentiating the essence of their state from another, through the creation of a nation.

Although I do not dismiss the existence of practices, traditions or values that are bestowed on following generations, I argue that their content, means of expression and essence do not naturally formalise into a political narrative unless created into one. As has been discussed continuously throughout this thesis, culture cannot be conceived as something solely inherited, but rather it is something active. Ernest Renan's (1882) conceptualisation of an active renegotiation of the understanding of what culture between individuals is, as a ‘daily plebiscite’, fully captures the engagement and dialogue happening within communal contact which forms an individual's

identity. This confrontation between static tradition and active culture is perfectly embodied in the processes of liminality within African indigenous practices. The purpose of teaching and bestowing initiates with the knowledge and practices of the community is not to condemn them to form their identity based on a replicate of tradition, rather it is the connection to the community's knowledge through which an individual can question and reflect on themselves, their community's values and their relation to others. The idea of personhood as a process in the liminal space (Eze 2020, 124), is somewhat present in Yael Tamir's (1994) 'contextualised individual' as well. There is an understanding that the communal context a person develops from is constitutive of their personal identity while their individual agency allows them to reflect on said context, not only in connection to one's self, but also in context to others. An individual's identity cannot be conceptualised through essentialising them to an abstracted version of traditions which are neither negotiated nor questioned, as is necessary when the existence of a national identity is the basis of the political authority of a state.

As conceptualised by Michael Onyebuchi Eze (2023) in the context of post-colonial African states, "[...] access to the state is based on the politicization of ethnicity" (Eze 2023, 57). This is emblematic of the way a constructed national identity creates and simultaneously denies access to a state through differentiating between those who are in congruence with the authority retaining homogeneity and those who are not. David Miller's (2005, 369) arguments of limiting migration based on a community's desire to have control over their nation's cultural development places the question of access into the context of migration. Utilising ethnicity as a marker which creates or denies access to certain states and privileges is inherently exclusionary and showcases the lack of validity in basing the nation on an abstraction of its culture as a static concept of 'invented traditions'. As I have argued when discussing the idea of a 'common public culture', constructing a state and the access to its membership on an idea of a graspable objective culture which one can learn and adopt obfuscates the actual meanings of an inherited cultural tradition through ethnicity. The former represents the imposed and politicised ethnicity which embodies the traditions underlying the national identity, whereas the latter can be conceptualised through the experiences of an ethnically mixed member.

Vince Marotta (2020, 1) differentiates two sets of hybrid subjects. The first being the modernist hybrid which embodies the binary coming together of the host and the migrant in a space reminiscent of Bhabha's (1994) 'third space' out of which the modernist hybrid emerges. As has been problematised in the last section of this thesis, this form of hybridity faces the issue of having an inherent unaddressed power imbalance between host and migrant, as well as the issues of purity in the hybridisation of two entities (Hutnyk 2005). The second subject, formed by critical hybridity theorists, is intrinsically aware of the tension between a merging of two fixed cultures, and "[...] exposes the unequal and conflictual relationship between host and migrant [...]" (Marotta 2020,1). Essentially, the critical hybrid subject embodies the heterogenous essence of cultures which derive from their mixed ethnic backgrounds and experiences allowing them to be emblematic of the

fluidity and contradictory nature of culture and individual existence. Instead of being passive receivers of two cultures neither of which they fully embody, confined to a constant exclusion and misrecognition in a state imposing its 'invented tradition' onto its members, the critical hybrid subject challenges the fixity of the national identity through the subject's existence and "[...] everyday cultural practices" (Marotta 2020, 3). An individual of both the ethnicity underlying the national identity of the state and another, is in a constant state of renegotiation. Therefore, the critical hybrid subject has a layered relationship with tradition and identity. The first layer contains the constitution of its own identity through negotiating between the inheritance of a multitude of traditions and practices from which it delineates its own private identity, resembling the liminal initiate and its coming into personhood (Eze 2020, 125). The second layer is the contestation of the heterogeneous interpretations of identity of a multiethnic individual in dialogue with the community, constitutive of the 'daily plebiscite' in renegotiating culture between individuals in their engagement with each other (Renan 1882). The first two layers can be contextualised in previously discussed concepts and are not inherently problematic. The third and final layer — the individual's relationship to the invented tradition of the national identity — embodies the tension between cultural identity and statehood.

The critical hybrid subject, in contrast to the migrant, exists within the context of the national identity and does not need to abstract itself from the ethnic traditions which underlie the national identity. Administrative hindrances or lack of citizenship which often restrict access to the political community for migrants are equally non-existent for the critical hybrid subject. Not only understanding the national identity through assimilation, but because of the shared historical and social connection propagated by nationalism, the individual embodies both perspectives. However, it can never embody the homogenous essentialised identity of the nation-state. Thus, if the state ties membership of the nation to the expression of the culture propagated through 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawm 2012), the critical hybrid subject while being a citizen of the nation-state, cannot be understood as a full national. If coherence to ethnic and 'cultural' identity markers creates immediate membership to a nation, a mixed or critical hybrid subject could not fully be a member. However, in consideration of culture as renegotiation through dialogue and the individual's identity formation in contact with others, the conceptualisation of a national identity needs to be either incredibly vague to the point of non-relevance in determining membership or it needs to grapple with excluding most of the perceived members, even for the non-mixed member. Reiterating Anderson's (2006) lack of inherent coherence between members of an ethnic or territorial group except the imagined nature of their community, the construction of a national identity to constitute membership and justify borders surrounding a given territory cannot be understood as a natural representation of a nation or people.

To summarise, nationalism, and by design the nation-state, employs a constructed national identity on the basis of 'invented traditions' through which the authority of a certain territory can be justified and retained. Through equating culture to the adherence of an imposed identity, rather

than the active participation and creation thereof through the members' contact with each other, the state essentialises the individual's identity to the national one. However, the lacking space for the empirically existent plurality and diversity within a modern state creates exclusion of both members and non-members alike. The critical hybrid subject, while being constituted by the traditions which underlie the nation-state, cannot be considered a national by virtue of the exclusivity of the national identity and therefore calls to question the validity of a political strategy which excludes some of its members on the basis of their difference in the name of authority retention.

## **6. Conclusion**

This thesis has aimed to understand the relationship between a political community understood as a nation and by extension the theory of nationalism which informs and underlies the modern nation-state, and the diversity evident within such a state. Through analysing a variety of theories of nationalism two main points of contention become evident. The first concerns the use of culture which conflates an active engagement between individuals, or 'daily plebiscite' (Renan 1882), with the imposition of 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawm 2012) as the national identity. Through engaging with traditions and communities as a process of a bestowing of knowledge and personhood, as is done within the liminal process, culture expresses itself through the contact and engagement of individuals who have reconciled their personhood. Thus, a state's implementation of static traditions, as a political strategy of authority retention cannot be considered more than 'invented' and constructed. The second matter of concern is the essentialisation of the members' identities. Due to the theory's reliance on the members to associate and identify with the prescribed national identity, it exists prior and in superiority to any other factors of identification an individual may have. The critical hybrid subject highlights these issues, due to it being both inherently part of the ethnic heritage which informs the traditions underlying the national identity, as well as being constantly excluded for its other diverse ethnic identity. The inability of a nation-state to cope with the diversity within members in favour of the retention of authority calls into question the nation as a strategy of community identification to a political structure. In consideration of the continuous globalisation and international association between individuals resulting in mixture and new personal identities, the nation-state may not be a suitable arrangement to accommodate the citizens of the future. However, due to the firm establishment of nation-states and their effectiveness in preserving their state's authority their existence will likely continue. Thus, I endorse a refocusing in state structures on emboldening smaller community groups within states, in which the state to resident relationship can be strengthened. Understanding the needs and desires of people residing in a state, through dialogue and community service, is key to reducing the creation of difference or exclusion.

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