The Epistemology of Nationalism

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Abstract:

This article poses a number of questions: Is nationalism an ideology, a philosophy, an epistemology or a faith? Is cultural nationalism a seminal constituent of nationalism in general, or is it just a subset of political nationalism? Is physical force an intrinsic constituent of nationalism, or does it arise as an effect of nationalism? Nationalism, as John Hutchinson points out, is generally seen as either political or cultural, and in this article, using Lacanian theory, I set out to deconstruct this definition of the mode of operation of nationalism

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Willy Maley's article, 'Varieties of Nationalism: Post-Revisionist Irish Studies', made some interesting points in terms of mapping the territory of nationalism, or rather, different nationalisms.[1] His point about the necessity for more study of this whole subject before passing over it into the realms of 'post-nationalism' is well taken, as is his notion that the differential facets of nationalism have not received sufficient attention:

> There are, as well as varieties of Irishness, varieties of nationalism. Too often, revisionist criticism of nationalism has chosen to represent it as a flat homogenous whole. Writers, artists and intellectuals would have found it hard to attach themselves to the caricature of nationalism constructed by revisionism. Nationalism, in all its overlapping multiplicity – Catholic, Celtic, colonial, constitutional, critical and cultural – remains to be worked out and analysed, not simply nailed to a post, whether it be the 'post' of post-colonialism, or that of post-modernism. Nationalism is, after all, a complex range of discourses, often contradictory and confused.[2]

I feel that Maley is correct in asserting that, before we move into 'post-nationalist' discourse, nationalism itself must be subjected to a more detailed analysis. However, if we are to get beyond the 'complex range of discourses, often contradictory and confused', we must attempt, by analysing these different discourses, to uncover an epistemology of nationalism.

Despite the variety of nationalisms he reviews, Maley makes no effort to discuss the epistemological status of nationalism *per se*. He seems to feel that such a project would delimit our view of nationalism to the 'flat homogenous whole' of which he speaks. However, I would suggest that if the 'overlapping multiplicity of nationalism' is to be worked out and analysed, such an epistemological approach must be taken. To attempt this type of critique is to attempt to find suitable answers to a number of questions. Is nationalism an ideology, a philosophy, an epistemology or a faith? Is cultural nationalism a seminal constituent of nationalism in general, or is it just a subset of political nationalism? What roles do race and language play in the nationalist project? Is physical force an intrinsic constituent of nationalism, or does it arise as an effect of nationalism? Is it possible to arrive at an *echt*-nationalism, by delving, in structuralist manner, behind the different symptoms to find some unvarying core which binds all the others aspects of nationalism together?

Maley does not offer anything in the way of a definition of nationalism. However, in what I consider a telling aside, he gives an implied definition of the nationalist drive, and it is with this aside that I hope to begin my epistemological analysis. Indeed, I would hope that Maley's remarks will bring this discussion a long way down the road towards a point where the many questions cited above, may be answered.

Having 'rehearsed some of the most common varieties of nationalism in modern Ireland' Maley goes on to warn against the dangers of revisionism becoming part of another nationalist project:

> Open any critical text on post-colonialism and shrink in horror as the terms 'English' and 'British' interchange smoothly without any sense of historical awareness. Britain is a multi-nation state, but try telling that to the anglocentric Brits who think otherwise. For all its talk of ambivalence, dialogism and hybridity, much post-colonial discourse keeps in place, naturalises and perpetuates, a stultifying notion of Britishness.[3]

Here, I think, is the place to start in terms of the aetiology of nationalism. The starting point is important for, as Geoffrey Bennington says, 'saying that there is no secure starting point does not mean that one starts at random. You always start somewhere but that somewhere is never just anywhere'.[4] It seems to me that despite Maley's rehearsal of the varieties of nationalism, he is, in this passage, pointing towards what might be termed the core of nationalism. Despite the dissemination of nationalism into an overlapping alliterative signifying chain, 'Catholic, Celtic, colonial, constitutional, critical and cultural', here, the essence of nationalism slips in with the use of the term 'anglocentric Brits'. The use of the suffix 'centric' is an index of the essentialism that is at the heart of nationalism. For all Maley's differentiation and explanation of nationalistic subsets, it is here, in an apostrophe to the reader, couched in suasive terms, pointing towards a 'stultifying notion of Britishness' that the essence of nationalism is to be found. If we are, as he suggests, to fly by the nets of nationalism, we must determine from what material those nets are constructed. I think that the two adjectives 'anglocentric' and 'stultifying' bring us near to the core of nationalism, but before looking at these words, let us look at the noun 'nationalism' itself. In this context, the etymology of that word may be an apt point of departure.

Etymologically, these words can be traced to the same root, from Old French *nation*, which was a learned borrowing from the Latin *natio*, *nationis*, meaning 'stock' or 'race', back to the root term *nasci*, 'to be born'.[5] What this suggests is that the roots of nationalism lie in racial homogeneity, a homogeneity expressed and solidified by linguistic, cultural and religious practices, and by exclusion of any other racial input. The passive voice of the root term, *nasci*, *to be* born, implies a biologism and ethnocentrism at the heart of nationalism, what Anthony Smith terms an *ethnie*.[6] In an Irish context, one is born a Unionist or a Republican. If one lives on the Falls Road, one is Republican, if one lives on the Shankill, one is conversely a Unionist. This valorisation of race promotes a desire for racial, linguistic and cultural purity which, at one end of the spectrum, promotes a desire for socio-cultural identification and self-definition, and at the other, posits a desire to differentiate one's own group from others, and, by extension, a related desire to keep other groupings outside one's native territory. This latter drive leads to ethnic, racial or sectarian violence and this quasi-xenophobia, a trait which I will trace through Irish nationalism, is an eloquent silence in Maley's description of 'varieties of nationalism'. It is my contention that this is a central flaw in an otherwise perceptive essay, because it is a seminal constituent of the epistemology of nationalism, and it also distinguishes nationalism from the other terms he mentions, as the ethnic factor is not quite as strong in terms of 'nation' and 'nationality' as it is in 'nationalism'. This biologism, or essentialism, makes it necessary to create cultural or political practices which define the group, and differentiate it in terms of other cultures. Often, this procedure involves, as well as definition of self, definition of the other, albeit in negative terms.

Social, cultural, religious and linguistic factors cohere in the process of self-definition that is required to sustain nationalism. These practices function as enthymemes, passwords that are known only to those who belong to the same social grouping. The nature and strength of these enthymematic functions has

been debated by various writers. John Armstrong and Anthony Smith see ethnicity as a seminal factor, though they focus on different aspects of the ethnic.

Armstrong, following Frederick Barth, sees ethnicity as arising from spatial contextualisation which causes populations to develop identity patterns in differential terms; their customs act as borders which demarcate a certain territory. Smith, on the other hand, looks at the intrinsic meaning given to cultural practices, myths and symbols by ethnic communities which he terms *ethnies*.[7] In both definitions, the *ethnie* is seen as an organic community, wherein social, cultural, religious and ideological practices cohere in a synthesis which promotes self-definition. The methodology of this definition is that of binary opposition; namely, one organic community is defined, not only by its own qualities, but also by its alterity from other groups or communities. There seems to be an intrinsic essentialism associated with the epistemology of nationalism, as the ethnie strives to define and validate itself.

It is in terms of this essentialist view of nationalism that the adjectives 'anglocentric' and 'stultifying' are relevant. When speaking of nationalism, as a general term, Maley sees it as various and dispersed; he talks about the cognate terms, 'national', 'nation', 'nationality' and 'nationhood'. When speaking of Irish nationalism, he talks about 'history, race, gender, class, language, sexuality, diaspora and, especially in an Irish context, religion', as well as referring to aspects of its 'overlapping multiplicity – Catholic, Celtic, colonial, constitutional, critical and cultural'. It is only when speaking about British nationalism that this centrifugal discourse changes direction and we see the vision of nationalism become a centripetal one as Maley now speaks of 'anglocentric Brits' and of the perpetuation and naturalisation of 'a stultifying notion of Britishness'. Why is it that only 'British nationalism' is seen as being at 'its most intense'? Possibly it is because this nationalism is the one which exerts a centripetal force on Maley's own socio-

political concerns, and it is this aspect of nationalism that has caused a number of writers to demur, and interrogate the nationalist project. The nationalistic desire for clear definition of its own community brings with it a homogenising drive in which all other groupings, whether racially, linguistically or territorially deviant from the nationalistic *ethnie*, are either subsumed or else seen as totally 'other' and outside the quasi-organic community that is the teleological goal of nationalism. Maley, as a Scot, would perhaps feel the wind of assimilation on the one hand, and differentiation on the other. This, I would argue, is the essence of nationalist epistemology, the desire to create an organic sense of community in a particular territory, to create a centripetal force which binds people to each other, to their past, and to a place. Belief in the destiny of one's *ethnie* is hugely important, as affective and cultural signifiers can bind a population together more closely than rational political arguments. The Ulster Unionist believes that he or she is British, and that Ulster (comprising six counties, since partition in 1922), as a political entity is stable and viable. The Ulster Republican refuses to recognise the state of Northern Ireland, and instead sees Ulster (nine counties, part of the original ternary provincial divisions of Ireland), as part of the whole island of Ireland. The leader of the Orange march at Drumcree, during the Summer of 1996, believes that even as these marchers defy the legal ban imposed by Sir Hugh Annesley, the Chief Constable of the RUC, he is obeying some higher notion of 'Britishness', and was able to invoke the Queen in support of the actions of his followers and himself: 'we are the Queen's subjects, who wish to walk the queen's highway'. The militant Republican believes that bombs in Manchester and London will facilitate the coming into being of a united Ireland. Both traditions blend religion and politics, seeing their own creed as true, and the other as heretical, and both traditions express their respective identities through a matrix of cultural signifiers, murals, graffiti, songs and icons.

Nationalism, as John Hutchinson points out, is generally seen as either political or cultural.[8] However, given the epistemology suggested here, it is often difficult to distinguish between the political and the cultural, as both put forward the view that 'sovereignty is located ultimately in the people, and that the world is divided into distinctive peoples, each with unique homelands'.[9] Here, it seems to me, is the nub of the issue. Nationalism urges a people to see itself as distinct and unique; cultural and religious practices are seminal in terms of creating this notion of unique identity. All of Maley's 'varieties of nationalism' – Catholic, Celtic, colonial, constitutional, critical and cultural – cohere in terms of this identificatory imperative: to ground the *ethnie* in terms of ideology; of religious, linguistic, social and cultural practices.

Literature is the most suasive of these cultural practices at it can synthesise the different constituents of nationalism in terms of archetypes which posit a history which is teleological, which aspires towards narrative closure. It can also create a relationship between a people and the land they inhabit, a relationship which posits an organic connection between people and place which is central to nationalist ideology, as the very act of inhabiting a piece of land becomes an ideological statement of self-identification. In this context the land becomes the ultimate nationalistic signifier, it is *heimlich*, in the sense of offering a home to a set of ideological practices which bind people together. Of course, for this to happen, narrative, historical and socio-cultural texts have to create the *heimlich* ideological position in the first place, and in the context of Irish nationalism, three of Maley's categories, history, race and language, are combined under the rubric of the aesthetic, and in the service of an *ethnie*, or rather in the ongoing construction and definition of an *ethnie*.[10]

The place of the aesthetic in this nationalistic ideology is central. Aesthetic ideology has been defined by Terry Eagleton as involving:

> a phenomenalist reduction of the linguistic to the sensually empirical, a confusing of mind and world, sign and thing, cognition and percept, which is consecrated in the Hegelian symbol and resisted by Kant's rigorous demarcation of aesthetic judgement from the cognitive, ethical and political realms. Such aesthetic ideology, by repressing the contingent, aporetic relation which holds between the spheres of language and the real, naturalizes or phenomenalizes the former, and is thus in danger of converting the accidents of meaning to organic natural process in the characteristic manner of ideological thought.[11]

This ideology is a constituent factor in any nationalistic discourse. Place becomes a cultural signifier of the group, as it is in place, either real or imaginary, that the organic group has its being. One need only look at the protracted confrontations at Portadown, during the Summer of 1996, where the Orange Order's desire to march down the Garvaghy Road, and the residents' opposite desire that they should not, caused such a furore. The Garvaghy Road here serves as a potent signifier for both nationalist and loyalist communities.[12]

The main ethical difficulty with this aesthetic component of nationalism is that aesthetic categories can be used to create structures wherein the *ethnie* feel completely validated, and where the relationship between a people, a language, a religion, a culture and a piece of territory is aesthetically sanctioned so as to create that sense of the *heimlich* which is the teleological point of nationalism. In the case of Ireland, such aesthetically sanctioned notions are the view of 'place' as either a possession of Unionist or Republican communities; the view of religion as a politico-ideological signifier, creating the conflations Catholic/nationalist/republican and Protestant/unionist/loyalist, and the view of the Irish language as a

signifier of a more authentic sense of Irishness than the English language. The vexed terminological debate about whether the study of Irish literature written in English should be called 'Irish' or 'Anglo-Irish' literature is one symptom of this last problematic, while another is the oft-quoted motto of the provisional IRA, '*tiocfaidh ár lá*' (our day will come). Here, the ideology of 'physical force' nationalism, a nationalism that was never mentioned by Maley in his article, is validated by a racial and linguistic imperative. The personal pronoun '*ár*' (meaning 'our') is typical of the nationalist binarism in that it is both inclusive and exclusive, colonising and differentiating. This notion of 'our', of 'us', is seminal to the epistemology of nationalism. It plays on the desire of most people to belong to an *ethnie*, to a *völk*, to a sense of the *heimlich*. This suasive appeal to a sense of organic relationship with the language of the home, with 'our' language, is predicated on the notion that 'our' time will come; but it also begs the question as to the putative role of those who are not 'us', who are 'other', when this time comes. The implication is that when 'our' time comes, there can be no others, there can only be 'us', the organic community of Irish speaking, republican, nationalists. As events in the former Yugoslavia have demonstrated, this way ethnic cleansing lies. By definition, it excludes from this optative future time those who are not 'us', those who are incapable of speaking the language of this nationalistic credo, those who are somehow lesser Irish people.

Here, the huge dangers of aesthetic nationalism become clear. The *heimlich* organic community contains within it the *unheimlich* germ of expulsion and persecution; violence which aids the coming-into-being of this 'time' is sanctioned by the aesthetically coherent notions of the *völk*. Here, the ethical considerations of the Enlightenment are downgraded by considerations predicated on the essentialist binarism of self and other.

For nationalism to thrive, it must keep emphasising the sameness of the *völk*, and the difference of the other. Aesthetic fusions of land, language and ideology serve to do this. Barbara Johnson cites the following example of *völkisch* ideology in an endnote to her essay on de Man's wartime writings, as described by George L Mosse in *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*:

> According to many Volkish theorists, the nature of the soul of a Volk is determined by the native landscape. Thus the Jews, being a desert people, are viewed as shallow, arid 'dry' people, devoid of profundity and totally lacking in creativity. Because of the barrenness of the desert landscape, the Jews are a spiritually barren people. They thus contrast markedly with the Germans, who, living in the dark, mist-shrouded forests, are deep, mysterious, profound. Because they are so constantly shrouded in darkness, they strive towards the sun, and are truly *Lichtmenschen*'.[13]

Johnson goes on to make the point that here, 'a desert is a desert but darkness is also light',[14] and this is a classic example of how aesthetic categories, without regulative epistemological warrant, can penetrate political categories.

These political and cultural consequences have been interrogated by Paul de Man and Christopher Norris. De Man sees the aesthetic as 'primarily a social and political model ... a principle of political value and authority that has its own claims on the shape and the limits of our freedom'.[15] Norris brings out the hidden agenda of high Romantic (and post-Romantic) writers who see in the power of language the ability to 'transcend the opposition between sensuous and intellectual modes of apprehension'.[16] Both writers see, in nationalism, an aesthetic fusion in which all other differentiating and demarcating categories are *Aufgehoben*, in a Hegelian sense, by the ethnic imperative and its drive towards self-identification.

Epistemologically, nationalism rests on dangerous foundations;[17] it rests on notions of self and other which insist on the imbrication of the cultural and religious with the political and the phenomenal in an aesthetically sanctioned fusion of race, language, culture and place. It also attempts to synthesise knowledge and belief, *episteme* and *doxa*, as evidenced in the Irish context by the fusion of Catholicism and Protestantism with Republicanism and Unionism. In this context, nationalism could be seen to repudiate the Enlightenment project of secularisation, and of the separation of different levels of knowledge; for example, politics and religion. Nationalism, it seems to me, is suffused with a post-romantic eschatology wherein language, religion, culture and place become interwoven in a complex nexus which serves to valorise and validate the *ethnie*.

Positing an umbilical relationship between the *ethnie* and a piece of territory is a central trope in organicist nationalism. If a people can be seen as umbilically connected to a place, then their unique nature becomes all-the-more clear. Seamus Heaney, in his poem 'Kinship', captures the symbolism of this intrasubjective relationship between people and place. This aestheticisation of place allows an *ethnie* to create an identity grounded in a sacral identification with place, a place that is individualised and given personality through the literary trope of personification. He speaks of 'Our mother ground' which is sour with the blood of those sacrificed to her 'sacred heart', and asks the apostrophised Tacitus to 'report us fairly'

> how we slaughter
> for the common good
> ... how the goddess swallows
> our love and terror.[18]

For Heaney, this 'goddess' symbolises the deity of nationalism; the deity to whom sacrifices are offered. She is the personification of nationalism, an ideological construct who is imagined as a mother, 'our

mother ground'. This maternal image is a powerful one in the rhetoric of nationalism; it allows a particular group to identify itself in terms of an organic unit: the family. Given that the family and the family home are archetypal images in human society, the use of the personal pronoun, along with the image of 'mother' and 'ground' creates a powerful aesthetically-sanctioned organicist relationship between a people and a place. When one also takes into account how the narrative of history can be aesthetically shaped so as to validate this relationship, the self-perpetuating nature of nationalism becomes clear.

As John Hutchinson notes, many historians, such as Frantisek Palacky in Czechoslovakia, Nicolae Iorga in Rumania and Eoin MacNeill in Ireland, were central figures in their own nationalist movements.[19] They presented their own history as an unfolding narrative, in which the nation, characterised by similarity of religious, cultural and linguistic practices, was in the process of autotelic evolution. In this historiographic context, Maley's comment that nationalism has always been 'both a test of faith and a statement of fact'[20] brings together the epistemological crux that lies at the heart of any critique of nationalism.

Nationalism, as a belief in an optative future, sanctioned by a monological reading of history, and driven by aesthetic totalisations combining, in an Irish context, ideas of mother ground, four green fields, blood sacrifice, the necessity for violence, the necessity for a purging of those who are not part of the organic community, and who are not nationalist, Catholic and Republican, is a dangerous ideology with a huge potential for violence. In pre-Enlightenment manner, it sees truth as revealed to a chosen few, those 'dead generations' invoked by Patrick Pearse as he proclaimed a provisional government on the steps of the General Post Office in the centre of Dublin on Easter Monday 1916: 'Irishmen and Irish women: In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood,

Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom'.[21] As we can see,

Pearse personifies Ireland in aesthetic terms, and clearly sees himself and his colleagues as relaying the

voice of this personified Ireland: 'Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her

freedom'. This blending of criteria, through the use of the aesthetic device of prosopopoeia (the giving of

voice to an absent figure) allows Pearse to claim a trans-human warrant for his actions. There is no need

to seek a democratic mandate (indeed, the 1916 Rising did not have the widespread support of their own

organisation 'The Irish Volunteers'). It is predicated on a belief in a mystical entity, 'Ireland', and on an

aesthetically created sense of communion with the 'dead generations' who have gone before. These dead

generations, like the 'ár' in the IRA slogan '*tiocfaidh ár lá*' are carefully selected. They are generations

who have espoused the nationalist ideology, and died in their attempts at rebellion. They are not the

hundreds of thousands of Irish who have been in the British army, or the Royal Irish Constabulary, or the

various militias that were in existence throughout Ireland. Just as these alternative versions of Irish

identity were to have no place at the pantheon of 1916, the question is begged as to what role is there to

be for Unionists in a unified Ireland, the teleological goal of Irish nationalism?

Before this and many of the questions raised by Maley can be answered, the nature of nationalism *qua*

nationalism must be addressed. In attempting to delineate the epistemology of nationalism, I would like to

suggest an analogy derived from the work of Jacques Lacan. Human identity is seen as emerging from the

crossing of a frontier from what Lacan terms the Imaginary (the dyadic world of mother and child), into

the Symbolic order which is concerned with symbolic systems, language being the main one (though both

stages continue to coexist within the individual afterwards). Lacan sees one of the seminal stages of this

'construct' as the defining of the self in terms of a reflection; the self is defined in terms of a

misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) of itself in the mirror.

In his essay 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience', Lacan outlines what he terms the '*méconnaissance*' of the individual self. He pictures a child becoming aware of its own image in a mirror, and of the child being fascinated by its specular image as it aspires to the totality of that image:

> This jubilant assumption of his specular image by the child at the *infans* stage, still sunk in his motor incapacity and nursling dependence, would seem to exhibit in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which the *I* is precipitated in a primordial form, before it is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject.
> This form would have to be called the Ideal-I, if we wished to incorporate it into our usual register... But the important point is that this form situates the agency of the ego, before its social determination, in a fictional direction, which will always remain irreducible for the individual.[22]

The important point to note about this identification is that the image is ideal, it is fictional, it is something to which the child may aspire, but will never attain. It is also an identification that has no place for any 'other' in its scopic field.

Imaginary relationships are predominated by ambivalent emotions; a desire to become the image in the mirror, and, on realisation of the futility of this aim, aggressivity. The irony here is that the subject comes to recognise itself through an image which, because it is not part of the subject, is a potential of confrontation. The image, as well as being a source of desire, is also, because it is external and can never be fully internalised, a source of hatred.

Surely this is the template upon which the epistemology of nationalism can be studied, both spatially and temporally. The imaginary relationship between a people and a place, the archetypal nationalistic trope, is by its nature, imaginary because it is fictive. Stressing a monological and temporal essentialism, it cannot cope with aspects of the real society that do not correspond to the ideal reflected image. The practices of cultural nationalism all serve to create this mirror, this delusory dyad in which nothing else exists except this specular definition of selfhood. The aggressivity that is a concomitant of narcissism, the child expelling that which upsets the specular symmetry, is an inherent aspect of the imaginary, and also, I would suggest, an inherent aspect of nationalism. All that is 'other' in terms of the imaginary *ethnie* must be expelled, prevented from marching in the territory of the *ethnie*, or conversely, determined to march in that territory and, if necessary, ethnically cleansed.

Temporally, the imaginary can deny the unpleasant pluralism of the present, where other groups occupy the territory of the ethnie, and instead look forward to the specular image of an optative future when 'our time' has come. The past can also be used to bind this imaginary relationship, as witnessed by the rhetoric of the imaginary that is to be found in the *Green Book*, the training manual of the Provisional IRA. Here, the imaginary relationship that is constitutive of nationalism is obvious:

> Commitment to the Republican Movement is the firm belief that its struggle both military and political is morally justified, that war is morally justified and that the Army is the direct representatives [sic] of the 1918 Dáil Éireann parliament, and that as such they are the legal and lawful government of the Irish Republic, which has the moral right to pass laws for, and claim jurisdiction over, the whole geographical fragment of Ireland ... and all of its people regardless of creed or loyalty.[23]

This is the discourse of nationalism, embodying its imaginary epistemology. Time is frozen in a specular identification with the 'Dáil of 1918'. All subsequent elections and democratic expressions of will are null and void; they do not correspond with the totalising image, and must therefore be destroyed. All territory and people, 'regardless of loyalty or creed' are claimed as part of the nationalist imaginary; the chilling question of exactly what is to be done with those whose loyalty is not to the Dáil of 1918, is left unspoken and unanswered.

Here, then, is the epistemology of nationalism: a misrecognition, a *méconnaissance*, in which self and image cohere to the exclusion of all others. According to Lacan, ego is constructed as the child struggles to achieve the specular image of wholeness that is observed in the mirror; an image: 'that is both accurate (since it is an inverted reflection, the presence of light rays emanating from the child: the image as icon); as well as delusory (since the image prefigures a unity and mastery that the child still lacks)'.[24] For Lacan, this specular relationship initiates the Imaginary order where the self is dominated by an image of the other, and it seeks definition through reflected relations with alterity. This, I would suggest, is the methodological tool with which the epistemology of nationalism can be analysed. The nationalistic *ethnie* is forever gazing towards a specular image that is fictional, optative and by necessity, a source of aggressive impulses when it cannot be internalised. In this specular dyad, there is no place for the 'other' and this is the central tenet of the epistemology of nationalism.

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Notes

1   Willy Maley, 'Varieties of Nationalism: Post-Revisionist Irish Studies', *ISR* no. 15 (1996), pp. 34-7.

2   Maley, 'Varieties of Nationalism', pp. 34-5.

3   Maley, 'Varieties of Nationalism', p. 37.

4   Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida* (University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 22.

5   *The World Book Dictionary*, ed. Clarence L Bernhart. (2 vols, Doubleday, 1972), vol. II, p. 1370.

6   Anthony D Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Blackwell, 1986), ch. 6.

7   See John Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism* (University of North Carolina Press, 1982); Anthony D Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Blackwell, 1986); and Fredrik Barth, *Introduction* in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Little, Brown and Co., 1969).

8   John Hutchinson, *Modern Nationalism* (Fontana, 1994), pp. 39-63.

9   Hutchinson, *Modern Nationalism*, pp. 41-2.

10 Maley's 'anglocentric Brits' observation makes the point that one person's *heimlich* position is *unheimlich* to someone of a different relationship to the prevailing nationalist ideology. Indeed, the rhetoric of this passage makes it look as if some 'British' homogenising drives tend to stick in Maley's throat, and perhaps the *heimlich manoeuvre* would be a better alternative.

11 Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Blackwell, 1990), p. 10.

12 I think Maley is absolutely correct in his remark that 'Unionism is ... like Republicanism, a variety of nationalism'.

13 George L Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (Schocken Books, 1964), p. 4.

14 Barbara Johnson, 'The Surprise Of Otherness: A Note on the Wartime Writings of Paul de Man' in *Literary Theory Today*, ed. Peter Collier and Helga Geyer-Ryan (Blackwell, 1992), pp. 13-22.

15 Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 264.

16 Christopher Norris, *Paul de Man: 'Deconstruction and the Critique of Aesthetic Ideology'* (Routledge, 1988), p. 116.

17 It is ironic that de Man's later essays, which stress these implicit dangers associated with aesthetic ideology: 'the potentially violent streak in Schiller's own aesthetic theory' [*Rhetoric of Romanticism,* p 80], were read under the shadow of the discovery of de Man's wartime journalism published in *Le Soir,* and in the journal *Het Vlaamsche Land.* Interestingly, Christopher Norris traces a connection between these writings, and de Man's later academic

and intellectual career: 'deconstruction evolved, in de Man's work ... as a form of ideological critique directed against precisely that seductive will to treat language and culture as organic, quasi-natural products rooted in the soil of some authentic native tradition' (*Paul de Man*, p. 182). For a discussion of the issues, see: Norris, *Paul de Man*, pp. 177-98; Geoffrey Hartman, 'Looking Back on Paul de Man', in *Reading de Man Reading*, ed. Lindsay Waters and Wlad Godzich (University of Minnesota Press, 1989), pp. 3-24; David Lehman, *Signs of the Times: Deconstruction and the Fall of Paul de Man* (André Deutsch, 1991); K M Newton,. 'Review of David Lehman's *Signs of the Times*', in *Textual Practice*, vol 8, no 4 (Summer 1994), pp. 348-58 and Barbara Johnson, 'The Surprise of Otherness: A Note on the Wartime Writings of Paul de Man', in *Literary Theory Today*, ed. Peter Collier and Helga Geyer-Ryan (Polity Press, 1990), pp. 13-22.

[18] Seamus Heaney, *North* (Faber, 1975), p. 45.

[19] Hutchinson, *Modern Nationalism*, p. 3.

[20] Maley, 'Varieties of Nationalism', p. 34.

[21] Ruth Dudley Edwards, *Patrick Pearse: The Triumph of Failure* (Faber, 1979), p. 280.

[22] Jacques Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience', in *Écrits - A Selection*, translated by Alan Sheridan (Tavistock, 1977), p. 2.

[23] Brendan O'Brien, *The Long War: The IRA and Sinn Féin from Armed Struggle to Peace Talks* (O'Brien Press, 1993), p. 350.

[24] Elizabeth Grosz, *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction* (Routledge, 1990), p. 39.