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Reoccupying the Space of Culture: Greece and the Postcolonial Critique of Modernity

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The *history* of modernity's antique dreams is to be found in the writing out of the colonial and postcolonial moment.

—Homi Bhabha "Race, Time and the Revision of Modernity"¹

Ever since the publication of Michel Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, and his argument not only of the possibility but the inevitability of the new, there has been an abundance of new times. For years now, scholars have been "trying to detect the incidence of interruptions" beneath "the great continuities of thought," in order to "suspend the continuous accumulation of knowledge, interrupt its slow development, and force it to enter a new time" (Foucault, *Archaeology* 4). Their success is evident in the number of "posts" so prolific today: post-marxism, post-feminism, post-colonialism, post-modernity. Are these times new, however, or are they merely the products of the abstraction of the logical process of change from its concrete historical determinants? The latter has been the view of many mostly Marxist theorists, especially of postmodernity, the most recent of new times.² Postmodern theory's construction of the time of the present as an epistemological structure, and its subsequent narrativization of social ethics and subject formation, would appear to prove them right. It is precisely these elements, though, which also inhabit critiques of postmodernity and make them subject to its logic.³

This paradoxical doubling or inherently dialectical quality is what makes modernity both so irre-

sistible and so problematic a category. It also ushers in the problem of modernity's legitimacy, latent, Hans Blumenberg tells us, in its "claim to carry out a radical break with tradition and in the incongruity between this claim and the reality of history, which can never begin entirely anew" (116). "Modernity," he writes in *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* — one of the most original re-thinkings of both the substance and process of Western intellectual history — "was the first and only age that understood itself as an epoch and, in so doing, simultaneously created the other epochs" (116). It is in the nature of modernity to self-propagate, he continues, because it distances itself even from the most recent past with which it is identified. Blumenberg addresses the problem of newness through his concept of "re-occupation." Arguing against the popular "secularization" thesis supported by most theorists of modernity, he tells us that modern philosophies of history do not break from but "re-occupy" earlier positions. He explicates this metaphor in terms of the contrast between "content" and "function." "Totally heterogeneous contents," he states, can "take on identical functions in specific positions in the system of man's interpretation of the world and himself" (64). He views the idea of progress, for example, neither as a secularized Christian idea nor as a modern idea affected by Christianity. In Blumenberg's account, it is essentially modern in its content (the initial idea of possible progress) but heavily affected by Christianity in the function that the content is forced to perform (the function of explaining the meaning and pattern of history as a whole). For him, unlike Foucault, continuity underlies the change of epochs and it is a continuity of problems rather than solutions, of questions rather than of answers.

Blumenberg's work, mostly overlooked in favor of Foucault's more optimistic diagnosis of the interruptive temporality of the modern, is crucial in understanding the contradictions in recent negotiations of modernity. It explains, for example, the disjuncture between political desire and critical practice at work in Homi Bhabha's "'Race,' Time, and the Revision of Modernity," one of the most influential contemporary theories of the new. It also explains why Bhabha is condemned for being complicitous with the very epistemologies that are the object of his criticism.⁴ That is, Blumenberg explains why his own critique can be seen as operating at the discursive level only, despite his political desire to "slow down the linear progressive time of modernity" so that "the pauses and stresses of the whole performance" can be revealed, and "our sense of what it means to live, to be, in other times and different spaces, both human and historical" be transformed (253, 256).⁵ For Blumenberg modernity involves "a continual questioning of the conditions of existence" (242). This is a conflicted social process of identification, interrogation and disavowal of extraordinary complexity, which requires the constant production of new pasts to maintain its rhythm of temporal negation and projection, as urgently as new images of the future.

Because there is the danger of confusing this process and "the theoretical anarchy of aporia," Bhabha makes sure to distinguish his revision of modernity from that of postmodern theory (245). He wonders whether the "synchronous constancy of reconstruction and reinvention of the subject," characteristic of the critical discourse on modernity, "does not assume a cultural temporality that

may not be universalist in its epistemological moment of judgement, but may, indeed, be ethnocentric in its construction of ‘cultural difference’” (240). For him, modernity is also about “the historical construction of a specific position of historical enunciation and address” (243), a specific “we” that “defines the prerogative of my present” (247). Historically, the “we” that has been defining the present have been the Europeans. Historically, also, the colonial space provided that present’s pasts and futures. It is not surprising, then, Bhabha argues, that Europeans now use the postcolonial space to produce their most recent “new time” of postmodernity. That space’s experience of fragmentation, due to the violent way in which the colonial encounter has intervened in its histories, and its necessarily disjunctive narratives are the West’s metaphors of postmodernity. The experience of “what it means to live, to be in other times and different spaces, both human and historical” is erased by this metaphoric process, which needs these other times and spaces only as abstractions—images, styles from which to define the present. Only in the postcolonial space, he tells us, can one find the unedited transcript of the modern that contains the stories of “what could have been” had they not been crossed out (245). According to him, these stories are what give modernity its characteristics of contingency, indeterminacy, and transitoriness and not, as postmodernism tells us, “the endless slippage of the signifier” (245). By drawing attention to the importance of colonialism in the historical constitution of modernity’s disjunctive form, and by pointing to its displaced repetition in the postcolonial, Bhabha wants to rethink the historiography of the modern and change the conditions through which narratives of the new are generated. For him the “interruptive” temporality of the postcolonial “now” with its “culturally hybrid social identities” is the model of a future time where there is no gap between the lived and the historical consciousness of the present (250).

Several critics have taken issue with Bhabha’s bid on behalf of “the hegemony of the concept of the postcolonial” as the site of the modern. “There is not necessarily anything *specifically* ‘postcolonial’ about the reproduction of the more general structure [of displaced repetition],” Peter Osborne writes in *The Politics of Time*, “although the repetition of colonial differences is currently one of its most important, and hence most heavily contested sites” (199). For Osborne, the general structure that Bhabha identifies as particular to postcolonial modernity is the very structure that characterizes the post-Enlightenment production of modernity as the social process of differentiation, identification and projection. He thus argues that Bhabha’s code of displaced repetition is too restrictive “given the plurality of forms of social difference (especially class and gender) making up the world they represent” (199).⁶ To reduce this general structure to the temporal logic of the sign “postcolonial,” he argues, leaves it open to a formalist reading which risks the “danger of reinstat[ing] original difference across its supposed temporal rupture” (199).

In a similar vein, speaking from within the discipline of postcolonial studies, Gayatri Spivak has argued that universal applications of postcoloniality conflate internal and the various different heritages and operations of colonization in the rest of the world. The stories of the postcolonial world, she writes, are not necessarily the same as the stories coming from “*internal* colonization

— the patterns of exploitation and domination of disenfranchised groups *within* the United States” (*Outside* 278). Other critics have also charged not only Bhabha, but postcolonial criticism in general, for not being forthright about their relation to contemporary capitalism. Arif Dirlik and Aijaz Ahmad, for instance, see postcolonial criticism answering the conceptual needs presented by transformations in global relationships within the capitalist world.⁷ Others still, have criticized Bhabha for reintroducing an unexamined totality through the back door “by projecting globally what are but local experiences,” for leaving unexamined the heterogeneity of colonial power, and for being complicitous in the production of ameliorative metaphors of the problems of colonialism in the beyond and not in the here and now.⁸

It is very difficult to imagine a “new time” in the present.⁹ Any such prophecy always runs the risk of being implicated in the very vision of the future that it seeks to avoid. The future, that is, as transparent becoming that must establish itself in relation to an ever-expanding and temporally heterogeneous past. It appears that despite his critique of Foucault’s work as ethnocentric, Bhabha also “falls prey to the notion of the ‘cultural’ as a social formation whose discursive doubleness . . . is contained in a temporal frame that makes differences repetitively ‘contemporaneous’” (243). He offers time-lag to “cut [modernity] off from its empirical origins and original motivations” so that he can “cleanse it of its imaginary complicities,” to cite Foucault (4). But, in the process, as the critiques above indicate, his vision of a postcolonial contra-modernity also “makes differences repetitively contemporaneous.”

Both time-lag and past projection, his tools for slowing down the forward movement of modernity so that the past and its symbols can be projected forward in the future and circulated in the present, are useful in changing the narrative of modernity. How useful are they, though, for changing the present, for creating a radical break with history and inaugurating a new time not only for criticism but also for life? Both projection and time-lag are the characteristic symptoms of nostalgia. Nostalgia is a composite of the Greek *nostos* (return) and *algos* (sorrow). Jean Starobinski, points out that it was a word initially coined as a medical term in 1688; it is a “pedantic neologism . . . invested with the appropriate classical trappings” (Gourgouris 222). The prevalence of Homer in the discourse of the West was probably crucial in the invention of this word. Since in Homer, however, “the return home” was coupled with desire, not sorrow, nostalgia is a relatively modern discourse, the inevitable part of an Enlightenment world.¹⁰ A world, that is, which defines its time through differentiation, identification and projection with a past or a place, which, by the fact that it is the product of the subject’s projection, exists as the fantasy of the real for which the subject then longs. Renato Rosaldo, in his investigation of representational violence in modern nostalgia, has demonstrated how this seemingly innocent sentiment masks the cultural expression of dominance that he calls “imperialist nostalgia.” “Imperialist nostalgia,” he explains, “uses a pose of ‘innocent yearning’ both to capture people’s imaginations and to conceal its complicity with often brutal domination” (70). He argues that in Euro-American modernity imperialist nostalgia erases collective responsibility and replaces it and personal responsibility with powerful discursive practices through which the past is perceived or narrativized as another place or culture.

Because Bhabha's nostalgia does not long for or does not try to forget or to sublimate a past but aches for a future, it is not imperialist but utopian: it longs for a present that is not yet present, a time when we all know "what it means to live, to be, in other times and different spaces, both human and historical" (256). As such, it is the sorrowful longing for a return to nowhere. The template of this nowhere in the discourse on modernity, Bhabha himself argues, is the colonial space (246). According to him, it is this nowhere that the "subalterns and ex-slaves" seize in order to rewrite modernity's narrative and to transform the center of thought and writing (246). And, it is this nowhere that he seems to be nostalgic for, treating it as if it is already past, when contemporary realities — and his own argument of its displaced repetition in the postcolonial — show us that it is very much in the present.¹¹

Nostalgia for utopia is quintessentially paradoxical.¹² Both past and future, it is outside history — the history of the present. Outside history, "neither teleological nor . . . endless slippage," neither fixed (nostalgia) nor always in motion (utopia), it holds the place of the historical sublime (253). This is a highly aporetic move, despite Bhabha's differentiation of his "genealogy for post-modernity" from Eurocentric ones that posit it as "the 'aporetic' history of the Sublime" which he criticizes for "merely chang[ing] the narratives of our histories" and not our sense of what it means to be in other times and places (251).¹³ For this sense to change, the conditions of possibility that he envisions must be produced in the present and not in the retrospective past or projective future. The answer to my question whether it is possible to break with the past, based on my reading of Bhabha's work, is a clear "no." This does not mean, however that the tools that he gives us are useless, as Osborne argues. If we see his work as a "re-occupation" (remembering Blumenberg) of the discourse on modernity, that is, if we understand that the content of his work is new but that its function is not, then, we can begin to understand that continuity is not the sign of backwardness that Foucault makes it to be in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Nor is it the sign of "the *history* of modernity's antique dreams," as Bhabha reads it (250). Rather, to paraphrase Bhabha's definition of time-lag, *it is the means through which the making of the past is kept alive* (254).

The foremost symbol of continuity in Western culture has been Greece. Making up "our" everyday, according to Henri Lefebvre, its function in the discourse of the West has been to represent both history's totality and its radical incompleteness. "When we question Greece, we are questioning a historically tested utopianism," he writes in *Introduction to Modernity*, his highly poetic attempt to think the new (226). "In Greece we recognize our own problems," he continues, "or we want to know how our problems differ from hers" (226-227). For Lefebvre "Greece alone caught a glimpse of the total man, vitality, reason, harmony — and let them slip away" (226). For him the questions of Greece make up "our" everyday which he defines, in *Critique of Everyday Life*, as that which is most phenomenologically familiar, hence least differentiated, and sociologically residual (97). Greece, thus, defines modernity. Consistently throughout the process of this form's constitution — either as the specific "antiquity" or the more general "tradition" — Greece has figured as the universal that Europe needed to either signify an irreversible break from, or project a

movement forward towards, in its process of self-totalization. It was also the universal that Europe used to signify the qualitative difference of its universality from that which it projected onto Greece. Simultaneously reconstructed and dismantled in the dream of recovering lost origins and inaugurating new times, Greece has been the site of the West's "phantasmatic reconstitution," its "dream nation," to cite Stathis Gourgouris (157). The examples are countless. In England, from the late eighteenth century when it began to displace Rome as the point of origin of English culture to the nineteenth century when, as cultural fantasy, it served as its model, Greece consistently was evoked as the historical abstraction that ensured the concreteness of English "civility."¹⁴ In the U. S. today, despite the efforts of multiculturalist and postcolonialist critics to question the universal validity of Eurocentric norms, Greece still tends to represent "our civility." Neo-conservative public intellectuals like William Bennett and conservative critics like Roger Kimball see the efforts of multiculturalism as a direct attack on patriotism, democracy, and civilization. Kimball argues that "despite our many differences, we hold in common an intellectual, artistic, and moral legacy, descending largely from the Greeks and the Bible, [that] preserves us from chaos and barbarism" (postscript)

Located in this impossible position, Greece is an example of what Michel de Certeau calls the "originary non-place" from which all historiographical projects begin (90-91). Both utopian — in that it harbored the promise of a concrete universality — and empirical — in that it offered a critique of the present — Greece is the category of historical analysis with which the West's myth of progress was rendered into *logos*. It is also the category with which current postcolonial demystifications of that *logos* (embedded as they are in it, even as its negation) map their ideal future. Thus, when exploring "the *history* of modernity's antique dreams" in an attempt to revise modernity, we must look at not only "the writing out of the colonial and postcolonial moment," as suggested by Homi Bhabha, but also at the writing *in* of "antiquity" (253). It too contains erasures. Of the many examples which support this point, I will trace this function of Greece in two of the most influential critiques of the historiography of modernity: Henri Lefebvre's *Introduction to Modernity* and Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Said's work is part of the discourse of postcolonial contra-modernity, in fact, it is one of its founding texts. Lefebvre's is part of the discourse which rethinks the modern as the "everyday." Lefebvre was instrumental in inaugurating this discourse in his concretizing of Marx's concept of alienation as "critical knowledge of the everyday," and as such he is a forerunner of cultural studies.¹⁵ Both critics address the production and temporalization of history by and as modernity not only as an existential but also a social process embedded in material processes. Yet, both stumble when it comes to Greece.

"Greece alone concerns us," writes Lefebvre in *Introduction to Modernity* (2). "Our dialogue with other eras, with India or the Orient, is marginal . . . Greece, the original source, offers the only ideal and the only idea of man's possibilities . . . Greece is the yardstick against which we measure our own self-knowledge" (226). I hardly need to mention the large body of work (mostly from postcolonial studies) which shows that the dialogue with India and the Orient was indeed central to Europe's self-constitution. I also hardly need to

mention the even larger body of work on Greece as origin, the litany is much too long and all too familiar. I will repeat the crux of it using Lefebvre as the mouthpiece:

It was Greece which created historical thought and political thought. Greek philosophers discovered active reason, based on social praxis. They gave language a form; they elaborated its theoretical and practical categories. By mediating on its social and political effectiveness, they brought the essentials of social and political praxis to the logos. . . . They also sensed the limits of the logos. They posed all the problems. They tried all the directions.

(226)

According to Lefebvre's listing of its virtues, Greece was "modern," before all of "us." Sounding quite Habermasian in his definition of modernity as autonomous reason, he tells us that, for a brief moment at least, Greece had "confidence in the universal logos and in the power of the rational" (228). Yet, he also tells us that it is the *tradition* against which we define our modernity. It is "a vast, imaginary screen," the "region of the past" with which "we" define "our present age" in the hopes of founding a "new Greece" (226). Here, in this contradiction between modernity as qualitative and modernity as chronological, Lefebvre betrays his argument of Greece's modernity as his own and performs what Foucault calls "the most touching of treasons": he suppresses the very question of the "historicity of the thought of the universal" ("Kant" 95).

Ironically, his work's aim is to trace this very historicity. Both *Introduction to Modernity* and the larger project of which it is a part — his critique of everyday life, a project that he pursued for over fifty years — have as their political aim the social production of possibility at the level of historical time, the time of the everyday.¹⁶ He writes in *Critique of Everyday Life*: the everyday is "profoundly related to all activities, and encompasses them with all their differences and their conflicts; it is their meeting place, their bond, their common ground" (97). As such it is the partially realized form of the unrealized universality of the species as opposed to the abstract but realized universality of its alienated forms (money, the commodity, the state). In *Introduction to Modernity*, the metaphor for this real yet radically incomplete totality is Greece: "Greece alone caught a glimpse of the total man, vitality, reason, harmony — and let them slip away." Thus for Lefebvre it functions both as a realized abstraction against which "we" define ourselves, and a concrete, though fleeting, example of the unalienated universality of the "good" universal, i.e. the unrealized universality of the species. He goes into the realm of culture to make his point. Defining ourselves against this realized abstraction, he tells us, leads to classicism while, at the same time, as an example of the good universal, this abstraction powers romanticism. He defines classicism and romanticism not narrowly as artistic movements but as "totalities" — partially realized systems of thought. "Without some kind of concrete unity," he explains, "neither classicism nor romanticism could have created the aesthetic 'world' they needed in which to exercise their own creativity" (326). As the underlying unity (the

“yardstick”) which accompanies all differentiation and furnishes it with its social meaning, Greece provides classicism and romanticism with their identity. “For classicism,” he continues, “it is the goal, something to be achieved by the struggles of passion and imagination. It is recognizable and repeatable. For romanticism, unity remains a possibility, and nothing more” (326). In both instances Greece is the realized abstraction, the “non-place,” that allows the present to take its shape as a partially realized totality that needs to be “*present-ed*,” that is, “made *present*” (327). In so doing, Greece continues to bring “social and political praxis to the logos” (226).

For Lefebvre, then, the example of Greece helps us analyze dialectical movements, like the one found in the conflictive relationship between classicism and romanticism. It also helps restore “vitality, harmony, and reason” in our present time and free modernity from mystifications like the ones found in all sorts of modernisms (including postmodernism). As the above account of his characterization of its function in the present shows, Lefebvre uses Greece to take issue with aesthetically centered or purely epistemological symbolizations of the present. “This period which sees and calls itself entirely new,” he complains, “is overcome by an obsession with the past: memory, history. History begins . . . with the here-and-now, with each passing minute. Historical becoming is immediately upon us, and immediately it becomes history” (224). “We are overloaded with fragmented pieces of unarticulated information, the debris of the past, knowledge as scrap-yard” (225). “Myths are back,” he continues, “and with them the philosophy of myths and reflection of myths. No one seems to see the disconcerting aspects of it all: a reliance on a form of thought and a profound sensibility which, though uprootable, is untransplantable” (330). And finally, showing his strong critique of unhistoricized universalism, or classicism without the contradiction of romanticism, he writes, “classicism turns myths into allegories; it freezes them to death” (326).

How ironic that, despite his criticism of such a process, he also allegorizes Greece, literally creates it as the space of the other, the “mythic zero” of modernity’s (and his own) historiographical project, the thing that allows him to “present” modernity. For the Marxist Lefebvre, “presenting” atemporality is of the utmost importance because, in its dialectic with the partially realized universality of the everyday, it rehistoricizes experience and drives away the abstraction that leads to alienation. This disruption of atemporality, however, together with the hoped for “presenting,” can lead to the retrospective construction of images of the integrity of the past. His argument of the “totality” of Greece is one instance of such retrospection. Greece for him is at once empirical and utopian. It is empirical in that it offers a critique of everyday life in the present and utopian in that it harbors the promise of a concrete universality. For Lefebvre, Greece’s power lies in the disjunction between these two aspects. Yet, this is where its misrepresentations lie also. Lefebvre’s own misrepresentation is obvious in the contradiction between his insistence on Greece’s historical specificity and his treatment of it as an abstraction, an alienated one at that too. How else would one explain “all the bad dreams, the nightmares, the forebodings about imminent catastrophe” that he sees together with his vision of the myth of Greece? (227)

Postcolonial theory has analyzed these nightmares as the return of the repressed and uncanny past, the product of “the writing out of the colonial and postcolonial moment” from “the history of modernity’s *antique* dreams” (Bhabha 250). As with all analysis, however, there is always the risk of counter-transference and the reinstitution of the nightmare, the re-inscription, as we saw in Bhabha’s work, of modernity’s antique dreams as the visions of the future. Only if the liminal space of the postcolonial remains exterior to history — a utopian “non-place,” a projective past — can it provide the perspective of a completed whole from which the present can appear as radically incomplete. When it becomes part of history, it suffers the fate of Greece. Its record as a “historically tested utopianism” (as we saw in Lefebvre) was the means through which Western modernity replenished its images of totality (either through its identification or through its difference from it).

This is the problem with liminality or the place in-between: it might be the place of resistance, but it just as easily can be seen as the place of complicity par excellence. As de Certeau explains, a “non-place” is indispensable for any orientation but it cannot have a place in history because it is the principle that organizes history (91). As such, it is the object upon which the subject projects the values that constitute it, that is, produce it in time, without itself ever being *in* time. “It could be said,” de Certeau continues, “that it is myth transformed into a chronological postulate — at once erased from the narrative but everywhere presupposed in it, impossible to eliminate” (91). And, he concludes: “A necessary relation to the other, to this mythic ‘zero,’ is still inscribed in the narrative content with all the transformations of genealogy, with all the modulations of dynastic or familial histories concerning politics, economy, or mentalities” (91). Under the logic of de Certeau’s argument, while initially it was Greece, its latest transformation places this postulate as the location in-between of the postcolonial. Described by Bhabha as standing defiant against any hegemonic subscription to otherness, forever liminal and, as I have indicated, in danger of being seen as the ground of complicity par excellence (much in the same way that Greece has), this space *must* be interrogated. “We are to look up from this ground,” writes Stathis Gourgouris in his mapping of the nation as the space of this otherness, “not to what beckons the utopian (like so many secular prophets) but to what breaks into the space of the present time” (281). It is my contention that what breaks into the present time of the postcolonial is the ghost of Greece as Other.

Nowhere is the crossing of these two moments in the history of “the mythic zero” more evident than in one of colonial discourse analysis’s groundbreaking texts, Edward Said’s *Orientalism*. The contradiction between political intent and critical practice, claims for a new narrativity and the reality of the persistence of the old that this crossing produces, is reflected most clearly in his treatment of Greece. Greece for him, contrary to his proclaimed Foucauldian methodology, is both *at* and *the* origin of a seamless and unified European identity and thought that is essentially the same from antiquity to today, only now it is more dense and complicated. His Auerbachian high humanism leads Said to forget his own argument that this sense of continuity is an eighteenth-century fabrication that was materially consolidated in the nineteenth century.¹⁷

Instead, he argues that the demarcation between Orient and West “already seems bold by the time of the *Iliad*” (Said 56). “With Aeschylus’ *The Persians* and Euripides’ *The Bacchae*, the first and last extant Greek play,” he continues, “the two aspects of the Orient that set it off from the West . . . will remain essential motifs of European imaginative geography.” “A line is drawn between two continents,” he concludes, “Europe is powerful and articulate; Asia is defeated and distant” (57).

Clearly, the question of Greece’s function and location is central to Said’s argument; it is also what complicates his argument. He begins his definitions of orientalism by labeling as an orientalist anyone “who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient — and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist” (2). He next defines orientalism as situated beyond academic boundaries, as a mentality traversing a great many centuries and functioning as “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident’,” and as such, capable of accommodating “Aeschylus . . . and Victor Hugo, Dante and Karl Marx” (2-3). And finally, he argues that it is “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (3). He then comes to his famous conclusion that without examining orientalism, “one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage — and even produce — the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period” (3).

If one follows the temporal schema of his mutually incompatible definitions, orientalist discourse began in the post-Enlightenment period and, paradoxically, also with the tragedies of Aeschylus. It “derives from secularizing elements in eighteenth-century European culture” (120), but it must also be understood “not as a sudden access of objective knowledge about the Orient, but as a set of structures inherited from the past, secularized, redisposed, and re-formed by such disciplines as philology” (122). This double genealogy at the center of his historiographical project raises the question of the relationship between orientalism and colonialism that, for Greece, is particularly crucial. If post-Enlightenment Europe is cited as the origin of orientalism, then orientalism is an ideological aftermath of colonialism, and nineteenth-century Greece under the “protection” of the European powers is a colonized space.¹⁸ This is the genealogical strand in Said’s work that informs Stathis Gourgouris’s argument in *Dream Nation* that Greece is an example (the only he tells us) of the “colonization of the ideal.”¹⁹ If, on the other hand, European antiquity, and its increasing influence from the Middle Ages onward, is cited as the origin of orientalism, then orientalism seems to be the essential element of the modern European imagination. Under this scenario, Greece’s own appropriation by Europe is forgotten in the name of its powerless but ideologically seductive (for the Greeks) and, as we saw in the case of Lefebvre’s use of it, politically convenient (for the Europeans) institution as the origin of Western culture. After all, this “other within” not only provides Europe with an identity but also with difference (at the origin too!). Said’s merging of the ambivalent space that is Greece with Europe, the power that has constructed it as “origin,” erases the

present in the name of the epochal. Greece, the obstacle to his argument's perfect fit, becomes the victim of its teleology's fearful symmetry: it *must* be orientalism's place of origin so that the critique of Western culture and its origin can be the end. Greece's dual role, however, as part of "that hostile other world" (56) that is the Orient and, in that it offers the "essential motifs of European imaginative cartography" (57), part of Europe, makes it what he identifies as the "otherwise silent and familiar space beyond familiar boundaries" (57).

To understand this contradiction at the heart of Said's work one has to turn to Hans Blumenberg's concept of "reoccupation." Through it, one could argue that his "contrapuntal" project in *Orientalism*, while helpful in contesting the grand, continuist *narratives* of modernity, is not a break from but an example of modernity's basic temporal *structure* of historical *self*-definition through differentiation, identification, and projection. As Bhabha has argued, criticizing this internal contradiction in Said's intention and method, "the terms in which Said's *Orientalism* is unified — the intentionality and unidirectionality of colonial power — also unify the subject of colonial enunciation" (71). The example of Greece's double placement at both the origin and the end of Western culture demonstrates that this subject is not unified at all. Understood not as a break but as a "reoccupation" of modernity's disjunctive form, one can argue that *Orientalism* offers alternative temporalities in its content: it redefines the site of the enunciation of the "modern" and traces the colonial character of its origin. At the same time, one can also argue that it is affected by the European discourse on modernity in the function which that content is forced to perform: the function, that is, of inscribing the spatial logic of social differences across a common temporal frame (despite its intentions not to). Clearly, in order to avoid the temporal homogenizing of social differences, *Orientalism*, as one of the founding texts on the postcolonial translation of modernity, needs to "re-occupy" the function that its content is forced to perform. To do so, such work needs to examine its own historiographical operation and situate its own "originary non-place." In other words, it needs to analyze the dialectical movement between itself and the critical discourse on modernity so that it can free itself from the baggage of aesthetically centered — or "modernist" in Lefebvre's sense — interpretations of the present. Only then can we enter the "new time" promised by the postcolonial translation of modernity. The time, that is, in which we know "what it means to live, to be, in other places and different spaces, both human and historical" (Bhabha 256).

Notes

1. Bhabha's "Conclusion" in *The Location of Culture*, 250, was first published as "'Race', Time and the Revision of Modernity" in *Oxford Literary Review* 13 (1991): 193-219. My page numbers refer to the book.
2. See Anderson, (96 -113), Jameson, "Postmodernism" (59-92).
3. This question plagues every claim of newness, including Marxism's own. Marxist definitions of modernity are themselves not immune to criticism the most relevant being that they neglect problems in the philosophy of history.

“Postmodernism, one might say,” Peter Osborne writes in *The Politics of Time*, “is the revenge of the philosophical discourse of modernity upon Marxism for neglecting problems in the philosophy of history” (ix).

4. Osborne’s is the most serious and most comprehensive of these critiques.

5. “Insofar as it is the name for both an existential and a social process, as well as a project of theoretical elaboration,” Osborne writes, “‘modernity,’ must be understood to embrace dimensions of temporalization beyond the purely *enunciative* present of the sign” (199).

6. In *Questions of Travel* in chapter four, “Feminist Politics of Location,” Caren Kaplan offers an overview of gender and class informed accounts of postcolonial modernity that functions as a supplement to Osborne’s critique but also as an answer.

7. See Dirlik and Ahmad.

8. Dirlik (514), Parry (27-58). For a response to Parry’s critique see my 1989 interview with Gayatri Spivak for the *Stanford Humanities Review* Vol. 1.1 (Spring 1989): 84-97.

9 Especially, as Reinhart Koselleck shows us in his survey of the semantic history of the concept of “new time” in *Futures Pasts*, after the Enlightenment divorced the concept of “new time” from any fixed referent.

10. This is one of the central arguments in Theodor Adorno’s and Max Horkheimer’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

11. Other postcolonial critics have also noted its presence. Kwame Anthony Appiah points to the pitfalls of assuming that postcolonial means going beyond colonialism. “Many areas of contemporary African cultural life” — he writes in “Is the ‘Post-’ in ‘Postcolonial’ the ‘Post-’ in ‘Postmodern?’” — “are not in this way concerned with transcending — with going beyond — coloniality.” In Anne McClintock, *et. al. Dangerous Liaisons* (432). Achille Mbembe, in his response to Appiah, argues that the reason for this lack of “going beyond” is the forgetting of colonialism’s memories that has begun to set in postcolonial societies after the initial period of decolonization (353).

12. Gourgouris writes: “In being nowhere, utopia has access to everywhere, a vision in motion always in the process of seeking a place. On the other hand, nostalgia, by virtue of its tremendous concentration on the trajectory of return, aims constantly at a fixed space” (224).

13. The ascendancy of postcolonialism in cultural criticism (obvious in the rapid rise of the field of postcolonial studies in the American academy in the 1980s) has been seen as the result of its affiliations with the emergent consciousness of global capitalism in the 1980s. Dirlik has argued that “the appeals of the critical themes in postcolonial criticism have much to do with their resonance with the conceptual needs presented by transformations in global relationships due to changes within the capitalist world economy” (502-503). The success of the “feeling” for the postcolonial must also be seen as the result of its affiliation with the libidinal economy of postmodernity as “the ‘aporetic’ history of the sublime.”

14. For good representative accounts of the rediscovery of Hellenism by eighteenth-century England see Clarke’s *Rediscovering Hellenism*.

15. “Cultural studies” in the way Jameson reads it as a particular desire. He

approaches it politically and socially as the desire to constitute a “historic bloc” (“On Cultural Studies” 251).

16. The central piece in that project are the three volumes of *Critique of Everyday Life*, *Foundation of a Sociology of Everydayness* (1962), *From Modernity to Modernism: Towards a Metaphilosophy of the Everyday* (1981). See also *The Production of Space*.

17. For a negative account of how these two different positions (Foucauldian methodology and Auerbachian Humanism) manifest themselves in Said’s work see Ahmad (159-219). Although Ahmad’s critique is harsh — it received a vociferous critical response in *Public Culture* 6.1 (1993) — it provides a useful reminder of the importance of class in race, ethnicity and culture studies which tend to aestheticize displacement. One can say that for a diasporic cosmopolitan intellectual schooled in the same elite Euro-American institutions as his critics, Said cannot help but write criticism that can only reflect the tensions and complexities of this social history. This really is the argument that Aamir Mufti also comes to, even though he criticizes Ahmad for misreading Said’s use of Auerbach. See Mufti, “Auerbach in Istanbul” (95-125).

18. For England’s and the other “Great Powers” influence and “protection” of Greece, see Richard Millman, *Britain and the Eastern Question*.

19. “If the story of India,” he writes “is the paradigmatic condition of the colonialist imaginary, then the story of Greece is the paradigmatic colonialist condition in the imaginary.” “These two stories have a common history,” he continues, “the refracted history of ‘Europe’” (6).

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