Quartering the millennium

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Despite recent reassurances that 'we have never been modern', owing to a conception of the modern based on the separation of nature from the order of society that has never functioned strictly according to the rules of its 'constitution', it is, nevertheless, this capacity to think the modern as temporally different from its antecedents that has permitted the installation of a great divide between here and there, now and then, however indistinct and wobbly its borders are in reality.[1] Notwithstanding Bruno Latour's rearguard action to reduce the putative separation of knowledge and power to the famous debate of seventeenth-century England between Boyle and Hobbes, prompting him to declare that we – as moderns – have never truly known an order founded on such a division between mediation (or translation) and purification, he has, I suspect, overstated the case and delivered yesterday's news as if it were today's. Latour has simply resuscitated the tenets of Parsonian modernization theory and announced, like the historian François Furet before him, that continuities do exist, the old is already new and the new is always mediated by the old as part of an evolutionary process. But to dramatize this coupling of past and present in the cause of continuity, it was necessary to exaggerate its opposite as a theory of change based on conflict, rupture and revolution – namely Marxism – as it was commonly understood in the Cold War epoch. In any event, it is equally possible, if not more correct, to say that we have always been modern. The divide identified by Latour was actually conceptualized by Max Weber (and the early Marx), who, rejecting what he imagined and feared as the ruptural consequences provoked by capitalism in European life, transmuted a qualitative break in the line into a quantitative (and geopolitical) cleft that separated the West – both spatially and temporally – from the so-called Non-West. Weber, it should be recalled, was able to realize this conjuration by seeing capitalism as a product of a continuous cultural endowment whose enabling elements were absent in Asia and Africa. This is a view which went on to become the staple of social science.

Fortunately, no such assurances are claimed by the editors of the journal *Public Culture*. Since the 1980s, *Public Culture* has increasingly expanded the forum for the discussion of the modern in a transcultural setting and it has gradually evolved a position that has overcome both a social science and a practice of area studies in the USA based on the very theory of modernization that Latour, Furet and company have recently revived after decades of dormancy, when it was nearly forgotten in the English-speaking world. What *Public Culture* aimed to elucidate was, in fact, ways to think the relationship between parts and whole, the singularity of societies and the larger worlds they inhabited – a problem that characterized the modern, perhaps, as much as its temporal consciousness, and one that never really bothered Latour's prescient premoderns very much. Moreover, this vocation to examine the relationship between the local and the global – the particular and the universal – was very much a part of an agenda that anthropology had aspired to realize, and which has informed much of the work of those who founded the journal and its contributors. In many ways this link between anthropology and area studies has enlivened both and expanded their respective compasses. Even though this early anthropological impulse has now fused with Cultural Studies, there are still echoes of its previous kinship with functionalist social science in the form of modernization theory.

To commemorate this work, the editors of *Public Culture* decided to produce a special quartet of issues in the year 2000,[*] marking the millennium, although it is not always clear in the assembled papers (over fifty

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* *The Millennial Quartet*: 1, *Alternative Modernities*, ed. Dilip Parameswar Gaonkar, *Public Culture*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1999; 2, *Globalization*, ed. Arjun Appadurai, *Public Culture*, vol. 12, no. 1, Winter 2000; 3, *Millennial Capitalism and NeoLiberal Culture*, ed. Jean and John L. Comaroff, *Public Culture*, vol. 12, no. 2, Spring 2000; 4, *Cosmopolitanism*, ed. Carol A. Breckenridge, Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha and Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Public Culture*, vol. 12, no. 3, Fall 2000.

essays) if it is the one that just ended or the one that is beginning. While the time-line of the quartet is the contemporary, each volume is devoted to pursuing the project of relating the particular to the general from different totalizing perspectives. Thus we have *Alternative Modernities*, *Globalization*, *Millennial Capitalism and NeoLiberal Culture* and *Cosmopolitanism*: four movements of a single quartet or four different moments of the current situation. Yet, it is not certain if these totalizations, through which the particular manages to find larger meaning, are mutually exclusive domains of the now or different surfaces of a quadrate hermeneutic; whether, in fact, each constitutes a totalizing option or that they all, somehow, cohere to form an aggregate whole.

The category of 'alternative modernities' reflects the effort of anthropologist Arjun Appudurai (who apparently coined the term but who has replaced it with 'modernity at large' in a recent book[2]) to envisage a way to articulate a relationship between the local world of the neighbourhood and village and the larger structures of the modern present (aspirations of both anthropology and area studies, even though the latter rarely acknowledged this goal and worked to fetishize the 'region' into a ghetto). Through this articulation both levels would acquire new, mutually negotiated meaning, out of the relationship of particular and universal and thus supply identity to those regions of modern Asia, Africa and Latin America which had always remained as vague silhouettes shadowed by the glare of Euro-America, lands of eternal lack, an invisible outside to a visible inside. The intent of this strategy is thus to free the modernizing experiences of these regions from carceral categories like imitation and modular supremacy, original and copy in order to demonstrate the achievement of equivalence but with a difference.

With 'globalization', there is the implicit presumption of a dominant capitalist process which has today burst forth from its national fetters to flow freely across borders and barriers to become, in the words of Appadurai, both an 'optical challenge' (by which he means the recognition of a disjuncture between the 'globalization of knowledge' and the 'knowledge of globalization') and a new charge to area studies which demands moving from 'trait' to 'process' geographies – that is, geographies of scale and shift (*Globalization*, p. 7). As for 'cosmopolitanism', we have a recycling of a much older form of totalization and its reincarnation into the figure of a multicultural and hybridized world, mirroring on a global scale the historical model of the cosmopolitan city inspired by capitalist modernization (even though its editors and contributors never make this connection) – the magnet that drew, and still draws, workers: diasporic migrations pouring in from either the countryside or the colonies or simply other societies and their diverse cultures to inhabit and intermingle in the place of production.

When we look at these three figures of totalization it is striking how they all, in their own way, signal a form of utopian aspiration and desire to find shelter or a sense of belonging in a heartless and indifferent world – a longing that is plainly absent in the totality that names and describes 'millennial capitalism' and its 'neoliberal culture'. Above all else, the first three share a common ambition to base their respective positivities on the principle of difference – usually cultural, subdivided further into categories of gender, sexuality, race and even youth, but rarely class – that will supply and mobilize group identity, often fixing it in a specific location or in the in-between world now associated with hybridities and diasporas. This interest in difference and the promise of identity reflects an effort to resolve the discrepancy (or asymmetry) between culture and politics by constructing a cultural politics that Appadurai has named culturalist but that actually works to dilute politics into what Jacques Rancière has called 'consensus democracy'. What this identitarian impulse seeks to promote, whether named 'cosmopolitanism', 'alternative modernity', or 'globalization', is a politics of consensual community: the wish to place and count each identity; to secure not a democratic politics as such, but a 'post-democracy' where nothing is left over, where the 'victims of modernity' (refugees, diasporic groups, migrants and exiles who are supposed to represent the 'spirit' of the new community) are finally assimilated to their proper place and all are included and accounted for. In the name of a democratic polity serving late capitalism and its neoliberal avatar it authorizes the primacy of claiming cultural diversity or difference as a candidate for a universal, regulative idea like 'global law' or human rights. But its political form never exceeds the 'so-called consensus system', where community is an organized body affirming difference(s) on the basis of an 'acknowledged contingency' identical to itself, with 'nothing left over'.[3]

This community of difference, as we shall see, is identical to a global order devoted to consumption. Yet, underlying this transnational 'utopia' lurks the unfinished business that had once driven postcolonial discourse to close off sharply the memory of earlier debates directly related to the political and social projects prompted by decolonization and foreclose

the 'very grain of politics – which today's culturalism suppresses'.[4] In the wake of this attempt to repress the memory of a lost vocation, the turn to poststructuralist anxieties concerning difference(s), unleashing multiple identities and unfixing subject positions, reflected an immense disappointment with, if not a disavowal of, precisely those political and social projects embraced by new nation-states as they tried to grapple with and overcome the consequences of a colonial past in the moment of decolonization. Here, an elastic culturalism has managed to further depoliticize what once were extraordinarily invested political movements which, through violence, aimed to establish new cultural formations capable of mirroring these decolonized political programmes. Only a few of the essays – Achille Mbembe on Africa, Fernando Coronil and Walter Mignolo on the Latin American world – manage to reverberate with memories of these missed opportunities.

While it is the apparent intention of each volume's editor(s), and no doubt many of the contributors, to refer to and employ these totalizing figures as analytic and even historicized concepts, capable of capturing and organizing the various inflections of contemporary modernity and investing their experiences with larger meaning, their interpretative powers are often dulled by a failure either to ground them in specific, ongoing histories (there are, of course, exceptions) or to acknowledge that too often it is not yet possible (if it ever will be) to define their claims to specificity. Sometimes they appear as labels thrown around a number of essays to package them into a loosely tied bundle; at other times their utopian aims get in the way of their analytic instrumentality. At one level these totalizations appear as forms of universalism that offer modes of relating the global to the local; at another level these universals – steeped in a theoretical discourse, autonomized in ideology and thus 'represent(ing) subjects and objects induced by the circulation of commodities' – share a general form inasmuch as each invariably projects a fictional nature that individually must deny historical time, or simply extracts itself from it as a condition of its own authority and effectivity.[5]

Cosmopolitan cities, colonial modernity

For example, the editors of the volume on 'cosmopolitanism' confess to their hesitation to say exactly what the phenomenon is and where in today's world we might expect to find it, apart from the predictable appeals to hybridities and multiculturalism, as if mixing were all there was to realizing human improvement. To be sure, one of them, Sheldon Pollock, seeks to provide a comparative long-durational account of cosmopolitanism throughout the Sanscritic and Latin worlds of earlier centuries, and the way each of these culturally hegemonic languages morphed into vernacular languages and literatures, marking, no doubt, the momentous political passage from the imperial to nation form and regional cultures in Europe and Asia. Unfortunately, this kind of macro-history lacks the organizing and explanatory power of either Braudel's Mediterranean subject/agent or those historical examples of cosmopolitan formation that accompanied the capitalist modernization of cities like Paris, New York, London, Bombay, Shanghai and Tokyo. Pollock's description of this shift in the continental cultural plates of East and West before capitalism, a division of labour from classic to vernacular literatures, remains as timeless and static as any ideal-typical cultural typology and weakens its own utility by bracketing the political, economic and social forces attending this world historical transformation. For this reason alone, he risks recuperating, if not reaffirming, the truth of the Gramscian observation that cosmo-politanism was originally associated with empires and the language of its elites removed from the speech of everyday life.

Closer to the point, perhaps, is Leo Lee's exploration of 'Shanghai Modern' during the interwar years. Lee illustrates the formation of a rich and variegated vernacular urban environment that inflected, like Tokyo and Singapore in the same period, the conjunctural transformations in mass material culture in Asian cities situated on the periphery of the then-dominant capitalist countries of Euro-America. This was dynamically reflected in the appearance of a new cosmopolitan everydayness that stood out more sharply there than in the older urban centres of the industrial West. Lee's sense of scale (Shanghai) and temporality (the moment of interwar capitalist modernization in Republican China) is a far more apposite, if not useful, historical template for grasping the formation of cosmopolitanism than Pollock's lifeless typological grand narrative of premodernity and its presumed genealogical connection to a later and vastly different history. But while Lee acknowledges the crucial role played by Western imperialism in transforming China into a 'semi-colony' and Shanghai into a worldly modern urbanscape – a determinate history absent in Pollock's account of the classical worlds of Asia and the West – he retreats from this observation, persuaded by a nagging 'suspicion' of the totalizing intent of this 'line' and a conviction that it is more important to emphasize precisely those 'emblems' that announced China's new modernity (*Alternative*, p. 76). Historically, cities like

Shanghai, Bombay and Tokyo were reconstituted into immense cosmopolitan sites virtually overnight in the interwar period, because of the force of capitalism and its co-dependent imperialism and colonialism, either directly or indirectly. They thus stood to receive those signs of modernity contemporaries would apotheosize in key terms, often newly coined, that denoted 'light, heat and power' (Shanghai) or 'speed' (Tokyo). Modernity, so understood by those who lived this experience in cities like Shanghai or Tokyo, was neither qualified as an 'alternative' or diminished as a 'retroactive' imitation of an original, but was usually identified with the texture of cosmopolitanism in industrial cities everywhere. In fact, outside of Euro-America there could be no other marker of modernity than the cosmopolitan city. Fernando Coronil reminds us of the virtual impossibility of thinking of capitalism without simultaneously considering colonialism (*Millennial*, pp. 351–74) – an argument made earlier by Enrique Dussel and re-endorsed by Walter Mignolo's conception of 'capitalism's dark side' (*Cosmopolitanism*, p. 723). For such writers this bonding occurred in the same, immanent time frame and showed neither the primacy of a prior model and its subsequent 'pirating', as suggested by Benedict Anderson, nor the possibility of consciously envisaging alternatives to it (what this 'it' is is never addressed) but only *a mutually constitutive and constituting modernity.* Only when the category of 'modernity' was strategically employed by a functionalist social science and an all-too-cooperative area studies (playing the role of a sorcerer's apprentice) to displace both capitalism and the reproduction of accumulation and colonialism was the door opened to pluralizing the modern.

With cosmopolitanism, it is interesting to note how so many of the essays feel they must make an obligatory gesture to the by-now-tattered meditations of Immanuel Kant in order to re-envisage a new programme for a cosmopolitan imaginary that adequately 'catches something of our need to ground our sense of mutability in conditions of mutuality, and to learn to live tenaciously in terrains of historic and cultural transition'. It is doubtful if Kant went so far as to envision cosmopolitanism as a permanent transition on a terrain lived tenaciously, rather than a desired state not yet realized. But transition, according to the editors, promises relief from a 'neoliberal cosmopolitanism' caught in conformist conceptions of personhood as negotiable 'units of cultural exchange', refigured into the shape of a 'minoritarian modernity' launched in 'transdisciplinary knowledges' (*Cosmopolitanism*, pp. 580–81). These have now abandoned the 'self-fulfilling dialectic' of the 'general and the particular' for its timely reversal in what can only be described as a 'second coming' called the provincializing of Europe and a genealogy derived from elsewhere, on no other ground of privilege than the demand for equal air time, the desire, as Rancière has insisted, to be counted and assimilated to the consensual order. What this 'minoritarian modernity' seems to authorize is what Étienne Balibar, writing on Marx's conception of temporality, describes as a permanent or endless transition marking the modern moment that manages to configure, and thus house, multiple and multiplying subjectivities and claims to identity (reproducing the poststructuralist phobia of fixed subject positions) that are all counted and placed, so to speak, in the interest of realizing a new understanding of cosmopolitanism, which resembles a consensual democracy virtually indistinguishable from simple pluralism.

This is hardly an improvement on Kant, whose vision of a cosmopolitan order remained blurred by an astigmatic racism and the conceits of a specific cultural and historical endowment, which were precisely these presumptions that enabled Max Weber later to construct the great geocultural divide separating Asia from the 'modern' West. Here, we might recall David Harvey's unfailingly heroic attempt to promote the acquisition of broader geographical knowledge as a fundamental condition of any proper understanding because 'cosmopolitanism, in short, is empty without its cosmos'. Harvey reminds us that Kant not only envisaged philosophically a cosmopolitan programme; he taught and wrote about geography and anthropology. And while Harvey refuses to blink at Kant's racism and culturalism, he is persuaded that a cosmopolitanism lacking geographical specificity remains mired in 'abstracted and alienated reason' (*Millennial*, pp. 551, 557).

Yet despite Harvey's advice, Kant is still invoked by philosophers like Thomas McCarthy and Jürgen Habermas who are willing to bracket the conceits of racial and cultural superiority found in the geographical and anthropological texts to justify a cosmopolitan project for our present. What interests McCarthy most as a 'framing question' is whether any conception of nationhood is 'compatible with cosmopolitanism', if the former conforms to the protocols of 'cosmopolitan justice under a global rule of law' (*Alternative*, p. 175). To put it more bluntly, his interests lie in the accommodation of nationalism and liberalism, a historical partnership now, apparently, elevated to the status of a regulative relationship. His solution is to offer a new distention of this relationship called 'liberal cosmopoli-

tanism' that exchanges ethnic nationalism for a civic variant by transmuting a constructed 'we' of the nation into a liberal world community – Kant's civil units now situated within the constraints of cultural diversity. Yet in its historical manifestation liberal nationalism had tried to defuse ethnicity by harnessing it to civic and humanistic values which undoubtedly failed to curb its excesses. But Kant's problem becomes McCarthy's dilemma – since the good intention of opposing colonialism even in the eighteenth century simply could not, even then, be made to appear compatible with a belief in the natural inferiority of some races and their incapacity for scientific and moral achievement commensurate to the aspirations of cosmopolitan community. Whether it is Habermas's penchant to privilege a regulative/normative principle and update Kant's cosmopolitan civil units, or Rawls's fiction of an 'overlapping consensus' (both of which McCarthy rightly rejects), or even Charles Taylor's astonishing retrieval (in his essay in *Alternative Modernities*) of the older Hegelian binary between the West and the Rest (now dressed up in the fantasy of 'two theories of modernity' that still look like the old coupling of West and Non-West of modernization theory, a view for which McCarthy curiously shows sympathy), all of these philosophical models are seen as important ways to think through the aporia of unity and diversity and recognize the manifest modes with which to make global law converge with the claims of unregulated and divergent cultural differences. But this discussion belongs entirely to a political philosophy with a Kantian desire to speak to a world without actually listening to it. Cosmopolitanism, in this understanding, dangerously approaches Rancière's conception of consensual democracy, now transformed into the global and transnational post-democracy.

Two histories, or one?

Dipesh Chakrabarty tries to put a different face on this problematic by appealing to the coexistence of a universalism and a concealed sense of 'belonging' in the logic of capital by demonstrating how that logic is rent by a tension between universalism (abstract labour) and historical difference (the irreducible remainder of labour or a mode of existence that manages to live outside of capital and its history). In this project, he is preceded by other searchers for the 'middle ground' who have given it names like 'strategic essentialism', 'hybridity', and 'cosmopolitanism'. Chakrabarty moves to distinguish from capital's well-known disposition toward universalism, invested in categories like 'abstract labour', a coextensive space for historical difference that has nothing to do with capitalism, as such, in order to make room for another form of existence which has escaped the abstracting propensities and their necessity to reproduce the logic of capital. Hence, he seeks to tease out from the logic of abstract labour an indeterminate moment, free from the incessant process of accumulation, that conforms to an unassimilated residue akin to Heidegger's primordial everydayness of Being. This moment is neither prior to capital nor counted among its historical preconditions but rather appears coextensive with it. Chakrabarty calls it 'History 2' as against the 'History 1' associated with the universalism of capital. While it is possible to question the logic that leads to this reading of Marx, the desire propelling the search for a place for difference (home) the insurmountable yearning for the security of belongingness (reminiscent of that Weimar anxiety which Heidegger sought to quell in *Sein und Zeit*) would have required a fuller account of the status of subject and subjectivity in Marx than is attempted in this essay. But it should be said that the only subject Marx speaks about, in contrast to Chakrabarty's reading of capital and its logic, is capital itself, which is practical, not conscious of itself – a 'non-subject', as Balibar described it – and refers only to those activities of 'production', exchange and consumption which are seen by each person as a 'natural property of things'.[6]

In *Capital*, Marx identified value and its capacity for splitting as 'the subject of a process' that assumes the form of money and commodities, but still manages to change its 'magnitude' to valorize itself. 'It differentiates itself', he writes, 'just as God the father differentiates himself from the son, although both are of the same age and form, in fact one single person.'[7] In this regard, Moishe Postone has proposed that capital constitutes a historical 'self-moving subject', that is thus both subject and object. To be sure, this anonymous 'non-subject' or complex of activities both produces objects that are social and representable and constitutes subjects that are no less real than things, alongside and in relation to them. However, even if we accept Chakrabarty's argument that the 'factory creates ways of being human' who act out in a manner unrelated to the logic of reproduction (the German historian of everyday life Alf Luedtke has called this *eigensinn* – a form of 'horse play' on the shop floor, perhaps the relief of momentary forgetting), we must recognize that these 'subjects' are not constituent but constituted. And it is precisely this kind of misrecognition that has enabled the figuration (and

'conjuration') of totalizations like cosmopolitanism, globalization and alternative modernities.

Chakrabarty's effort to see capital's logic as an unintentional 'place-holder' for another kind of existence that has nothing to do with the regimes and history of capitalism and the reproduction of accumulation provides the theoretical underpinning of the category of 'alternative modernity'. Even though its adherents imply that modernity and universalism are associated with capitalism, they effectively want to have it both ways by proposing that capitalism itself falls short of realizing its universalistic aspiration and is thus undermined by its own incapacity to foreclose the particularisms of historical difference – the production of coexisting forms of life that humans are able to live outside of its regime. This place of 'historical difference' is unlike the residue presented by everyday life under capitalism, in so far as it authorizes both a sanctuary that houses another kind of non-capitalistic existence and a way to think through the coordinates of an alternative modernity whose model derives from subaltern historiography. Under these circumstances it can be nothing more than an *irreducible cultural habitus* fixed in a timeless geographical zone that regulates the reproductive rhythms of its fundamentally unchanging everyday.

Despite his best efforts, it is precisely this subdued affirmation of authenticity that hounds D.P. Gaonkar's account of 'alternative modernities'. Much like Chakrabarty's desire to extract an historically different precinct that belongs less to time than to space, Gaonkar seeks to distinguish societal (or Taylor's 'acultural') modernity – bourgeois and EuroAmerican – from cultural modernity, which is intimately associated with place. By the same token, Gaonkar must acknowledge, again like Chakrabarty, that an alternative modernity requires thinking it against the grain of the tradition of Western discourse, since modernity has travelled the long road from the 'West to the rest of the world'. Prewar Japanese thinker Watsuji Tetsuro and writer Yokomitsu Riichi each recommended travelling this route backward, which led to a 'return to Japan'. But an alternative, so imagined, rests upon a 'site specific location', as its 'angle of interrogation', rather than a putative Olympian perspective masking a particularistic platform, as with Max Weber. The problem with this move is that the decision to figure an alternative immediately calls attention to a prior form, which risks making the results of the site-specific examination appear as copies of a modular original and, worse, unintentionally transmuting a quantitative gap into a qualitative time lag. Gaonkar's site of alternatives also resembles Arjun Appadurai's defence of 'culturalism' as a means of mobilizing group identity based on difference and its articulation for national and transnational politics. Significantly, neither writer has bothered to relieve the concept of its baneful historical associations with fascisms in the interwar period and the celebration of eternal and essential values embraced first by the middle classes and then the folk, now made to do the labour of figuring the content of the 'globalization' form.[8]

Capitalism's second coming

This is, in fact, how Appadurai sees globalization (apart from its heuristic potential): as the emergent

domain of cultural heterogeneity rather than a homogenizing process propelled by American economic hegemony. If earlier modernization was promoted by state-sponsored forms of development exporting basically American capitalism to maintain the free world, globalization continues this process but is less constrained in its 'transnational' reach since it no longer is accountable to Cold War strategies aimed at winning the hearts and minds of the nonaligned. But modernization theory was based on the regime of production, whereas the new world of globalization affirms, according to Jean and John Comaroff, the order of consumption. Despite the apparent enthusiasm of its proponents and even their willingness still to recognize the 'disjunctive flows' attending the process (a displacement of temporal and spatial unevenness), the understanding of globalization must be squared with a prior view first expressed by Marx that saw in the world (or global) market the true space for the realization of the commodity relation, the arena of continuing capitalist expansion and consumption, now allied with the production of those multiple identites that globalization has valorized as its principal vocation. But this appeal to globalization with its capacity for housing cultural difference and group identities is really another name for 'millennial capitalism' and its neoliberal culture of 'conjurations', as Anna Tsing has described such operations exemplified by goldmine scams in Indonesia (*Globalization*, pp. 115–42).

Nowhere is this yoking of commodity relations and dispersed plural subjects (difference, to misquote the song by Kris Kristopherson, 'is just another word for nothing left to lose') manifestly more evident than in Comaroff and Comaroff's magisterial discussion of the millenarian dimensions of late global capitalism: its figuration of a culture in which everything – including body parts and frozen DNA – is sold and bought and where the revenants and ghostly reminders repressed by an earlier modernization driven by the privilege of production now reappear as reifications serving an insatiable market for consuming signs of generic authenticity and vanished auras (Povinelli, *Millennial*, pp. 501–28; *Alternative*, pp. 19–47). Moreover, their essay, providing both a penetrating analysis of the current situation and a new mapping for area studies, makes the obsessive desire for historical difference – life lived off the capitalist page – resemble nothing more than a culturalist inversion of a history properly devoted to the 'differential'. This properly historical sense of the differential is Balibar's attempt to emphasize the specific forces in play at any particular moment, determining the direction of the 'historical graph'. It refers to the '"acceleration" effect' signifying the route of advance and thus to the way labour power, both individually and collectively, manages to 'resist and even elude' its assigned status as pure commodity imposed by capital's logic.[9]

In sharp contrast to the inordinate privilege accorded to the spatial realm and cultural analysis that informs so many of the essays of the *Quartet* that seek to delineate the domain of difference(s), the Comaroffs' decision to turn to temporal imagining and examine the possible apocalyptic fallout of this 'second coming' of capitalism strongly implies that 'culturalism' itself may well be the symptom of a neoliberal formation they wish to put into question. In their argument, the millennial moment of global capital marks the current conjuncture of 'change' and 'crisis', overwhelming the modern politics of the nation-state and producing a salvationist doctrine that envisages 'a capitalism that … is invested with the capacity to (magically) transform the universe of the marginalized and disempowered' (*Millennial*, p. 297). Behind their move to identify economies with the magical and occult (made also in the articles by Robert Weller on Taiwan, *Millennial*, pp. 477–48, and Rosalind Morris on mediumship and economy in Thailand, pp. 457–75) is the dismissal of a reigning social science practice long rooted in a view that saw modernization (rationalization) as a force of increasing disenchantment – what Weber actually called 'demagification' (*Entzauberung*) – in the cause of progressive human achievement. Yet this 'magical' capitalism is not just restricted to the 'victims of modernity' or even the 'wretched of the earth' but has already effectively invaded the gated national communities of industrial societies everywhere to induce new forms of unevenness in registers and on a scale never before imagined. Above all else, it is unmistakably apparent in the proliferation of what the Comaroffs call 'occult economies' which enthusiastically embrace strategies of magic and conjuration to generate wealth at the precise historical moment the state is held accountable for its failure to guarantee the citizens of the nation a regular income and is charged with failure to maintain 'public safety' and safeguard the well off.

Under these circumstances, when the nation is thrown into disarray, the state turns to 'new magicalities and fetishes' to rectify the damages caused by punctual ruptures in the fabric of political order. (Even the resurgence of 'civil society' must be seen as a symptom of this growing disaggregation.) Often

the search for a solution spurs the proliferation of identities which nominally share a common national citizenship but progressively favour associations based on other more concrete and immediate interests that work against the fantasy of national unity. The subsequent appeal to magical and other occult devices (in the USA, including everything from elaborate Ponzi schemes, the putative rationality of market behaviour and its stockholding participants to state-sanctioned lotteries, church bingo nights and gambling casinos on reservations) aims to make nationhood work, when nothing else succeeds, even though at an elevated and abstract level. As a result states everywhere (the Comaroffs often restrict their examples to the former Third World) increasingly depend upon orchestrating quotidinal ceremonies – extravagant and improvisational expenditures – in order to elicit the complicity of the citizenry. But these efforts to transmute the everyday into permanent sites of magical performance risk robbing the public of any politicality and reduce the formal agencies of state to devising policies of 'conjuration' and scam or, at least, protecting the practice of fraud in both public and private spheres.

Accordingly, these state rituals, using magic and spectacle to accommodate different interests and identities designed to hold the people in the thrall of a momentary unifying embrace, reveal the very fragility of the political body they supposedly serve. In addition to resorting to ritual, the nation-state's devotion to business and economic interest has accelerated both the privilege accorded to contractual culture and fetishized the law as the 'enchanted' promise to produce 'social harmony', reflecting perhaps the extent to which the domain for realizing the commodity relation has blurred the boundary between nation and globe. If this scenario has come to dominate newer states in Africa, it is confirmed everywhere else the nation-state has been observed relying on the implementation of manipulative programmes that promise the prospect of 'get rich quick' schemes. In the contemporary USA, the stock market was 'democratized' after the spectacular looting of savings and loans associations in order to reinforce nationhood by identifying the status of citizen with stockholder, national unity with populist capitalism and the assurance of realizing rapid wealth, and giving new and enlarged meaning today to the term 'voodoo capitalism', used years ago to disparage the policies of Ronald Reagan. Perhaps Comaroff and Comaroff, by appealing to the example of the disempowered, are able to delineate more clearly what historically will happen to all in the 'second coming'. But whether speaking of magical practices in emergent states ('zombie slave labour') or the 'voodoo economics' of the contemporary United States, we have a description in a different register of how the strategies of historical fascism and its fascination with spectacle, scam and even magic were mobilized to remove social conflict and produce harmony but retain capitalism. The failure of states during the age of what might be called the 'first coming' of capitalism already showed how trickery and deception were utilized to undermine economies and lead to tragically disastrous realignments of politics and culture to control the damage. What the concept of a second coming of capitalism lacks is a theory of historical repetition that sees it – the second coming – as both an overlay of a 'first coming', the coordinates of which still filter through as signposts for the present and a reinscription that need not be bonded to the familiar narrative from tragedy to comedy. This model of historical repetition is, in fact, already implied by Achille Mbembe in his illuminating essay that proposes the necessity for any attempt to understand the current situation to take into account the 'multiple geneses' of contemporary boundaries in Africa and how they still reflect pre-colonial and colonial arrangements (*Globalization*, pp. 259–84).

Consuming traces

Prior to the 'second coming' and the state's role in recharging enchantment, it had always been the nation's purpose to materialize a 'spiritual essence' capable of securing national unity through a number of ceremonial devices and practices supplementing the obligation to provide welfare and order. The 'nation' half of the hyphen always aimed to make visible in diverse practices its concealed, 'mystical' side, while the state apparatus was initially pledged to furnish efficiency in the name of rationalizing the 'domination' of everyday life and progressive disenchantment. In this regard, the nation form came to resemble the commodity in both appearance and performance. The subsequent delinking of the two sides of the hyphenated nation-state, perhaps more sharply manifest in the policies of emergent countries but evident everywhere today, means only that trickery, scam and magic are increasingly employed to stand in for an absented efficiency. Even more important, we should recall that capitalism itself inaugurally connected magic to the generation of wealth when it linked the commodity relation to enchantment. When Marx saw the world of commodities through the optic of perceiving 'sensuous things which are at the same time supersensible', he had already appreciated the intimate and necessary relationship between the uncanny coexistence of the natural and the supernatural. Hence, the commodity appeared as a 'mystical object', shot through with 'theological' and 'metaphysical niceties' that firmly established a lasting relationship between economic

language and religio-magical discourse. Capitalist modernity was enchanted from its beginnings and has continued to be so precisely because it is a world populated by 'objects of value' and 'objectified values'.[10] And the subsequent history of capitalist modernization everywhere has been marked by ceaseless enchantment acting in concert with commodification and consumption to ensure the smooth reproduction of accumulation and the fiction of rationalizing means and ends.

If an older liberalism in the age of the first coming once appealed to culture and religion (as different sides of enchantment) in the hope of finding the reservoir of true (class based) value, the neoliberalism of today supplies enchantment with newer forms of magic to enable economies to perform and create objectified values. In a society still dominated by production it appeared reasonable to associate true and eternal value with cultural artefacts whose conditions of making were disappearing (or had disappeared) to make them appear as scarce and imperishable traces of a lost past. By the same measure, in a social formation driven by consumption, determining value according to scarcity probably counts for less, since what is required is the attribution of price to experiences or objects – regardless of age – which become the marks of its value. Even though the desire for authentic values still persists in this time of the second coming, the difference from the earlier moment is one between production and consumption. Elizabeth Povinelli, in two essays, demonstrates the possibility for imagining this doubling in an account of how Australian Aboriginals have been constituted as the sign of authentic experience by white middle-class tourists, undoubtedly descendants of earlier settlers, willing to pay for the opportunity to 'consume *Geist*', in her words, to purchase the spirit, the authentic experience of Being's existence, as envisaged by Heidegger. The same operation presumably occurs with the production of Aboriginal art, which conforms to the mediations of a different market. Recalling an earlier history, however, invests this contemporary episode in consuming cultural essence with larger meaning in a repetitive history with difference.

Throughout the semi-colonized and emergent national societies before World War II that encountered the force of capitalism and its destruction of received cultures of reference, thoughtful people were moved to resuscitate what was being lost – traces of an authentically *different* 'national life' derived from remote antiquity and which were made to anchor identity in the modernizing maelstrom. Where these bourgeois intellectuals sought to preserve emblems from their own culture, Povinelli's white middle-class tourists, who probably have no memory of a culture of reference, now seek to consume what might be called a generic experience of primordial Being-ness enacted by Australian Aboriginals under the sign of authenticity. While the activities of earlier preservationists constitute no less an attempt to valorize experience, its cultural horizon belongs to their national community, whereas in the more recent case no such constraints exist to encumber the tourist seeker of the 'real'. What seems to have happened (apart from the move from Heidegger 1 to Heidegger 2, ontology to ideology) is a change already prefigured in an earlier moment of capitalism, before the globe offered the final and true space for the realization of the commodity relation, where reifying one's cultural difference as priceless value ('intangible national treasures', as the Japanese and others named this heritage) is now made available to all and anybody who can afford the price.

Notes

1. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1993, pp. 1–43.
2. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2000.
3. Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement*, trans. Julie Rose, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1999, pp. 102–3.
4. Aijaz Ahmad, 'Postcolonialism: What's in a Name?', in Román De La Campa and E. Ann Kaplan, eds, *Late Imperial Culture*, Verso, London, 1995, p. 1. See also Neil Larsen, *Determinations: Essays on Theory, Narrative and the Nation in the Americas,* Verso, London, 2001, pp. 32–7, for an account of the relational incidence of poststructuralist strategies and the retreat from new nation-state after decolonization.
5. Étienne Balibar, *The Philosophy of Karl Marx*, trans. Chris Turner, Verso, London, 1995, pp. 80–81.
6. Ibid., p. 62.
7. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume 1, trans. Ben Fowkes, Penguin Books, London, 1976, pp. 255–6.
8. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, pp. 15–16.
9. Balibar, *The Philosophy of Karl Marx*, pp. 101–2.
10. Ibid., pp. 59–60. Marx, *Capital*, Volume 1, p. 171.