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Impacts of Modernities

Edited by
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INTRODUCTION: IMPACTS OF MODERNITIES

THOMAS LAMARRE

Modernity is about certain kinds of change. It suggests the emergence of something new — new modes or modalities, and maybe even new modes of being. Moreover, it commonly implies a positive evaluation of what is new or modern. Accounts of Western modernity frequently revisit the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes*, a debate about the superiority of the modern over the ancient. This debate made clear that modernity is not just about any change whatsoever. It entailed a sense that the new was better than the old, the present better than the past, potentially brighter, cleaner, healthier, freer and richer. Discourses for the new and for the modern dramatically transformed relations to the past, and modernity thus came to dovetail with what are now thought of as myths of progress. The past was no longer what it had been, a high ages, a crystalline source whose waters would continue to nurture and cleanse subsequent generations so long as those generations dedicated themselves to the maintenance of its ancient canals and channels. The past became thick viscous fluid, primordial ooze that demanded constant heroic efforts to step clear of it and to keep it at bay.

Discourses on modernity are, in other words, discourses on change that present a particular set of temporal relations and historical values. There was a time (it is usually thought) when people embraced these discourses for the modern; they affirmed the new; they favoured change as historical progress. Today, however, thinking about change has itself changed dramatically. If it is no longer so easy to

affirm the temporal and historical relations associated with modernity, it is because there is something inherently paradoxical about affirming the new. The new never seems to arrive definitively or all at once; it is not exactly now, not quite yet. In which case, something new may appear to be no more than 'just something new,' that is, more of the same. The result is an eternal present in which everything is 'just new' without any particular value. In which case, there is never really anything new. This is the neurosis of modernity diagnosed by Nietzsche: when the new or the modern becomes the dominant value for understanding history, the present no longer succeeds the past but breaks radically with it. Oddly, modernity then becomes a culture of permanent renewal and comes to deny transience or change itself. Everything is constantly renewed; nothing changes. The moderns start to oscillate neurotically between maximizing and minimizing the relation between past and present. If they minimize their relation to the past, they become consumed by the present, by their inevitable and rapid obsolescence. They may then try to maximize their relation to the past, but this is a futile effort to evade obsolescence, one that effectively disavows change. There is, in other words, a temporal anomaly at the heart of the historical relations championed by the moderns. It is this temporal anomaly that ultimately comes to make historical change seem practically unthinkable.

Change is potentially a violent event — especially the kind of change associated with modernity, which is styled as a temporal break or rupture. What Nietzsche identified as historical neurosis appears today as global crisis. One might say that the West (wherever it is) is engaged in desperate efforts to evade its own obsolescence, calling on the maximal glory and sanctity of the tradition of God or Reason or Law or Logos, while the rest of the world is called upon to make good on its break with the past. Thus the rest of the world may be summoned to affirm the unity of the West, which (ironically or neurotically) amounts to a general affirmation of the possibility for unity despite modernity. If modernity is to be sustained, then temporal break, historical rupture, and global crisis must be continually naturalized and disavowed. This is temporal paradox become historical neurosis become the politics of everyday fear: everything breaks, nothing changes, all is crisis.

Now critical discussions of modernity seem to agree on one point — that the problem of modernity is, at some level, one of totalization. This seems to hold true whether commentators cast the problem of modernity as a largely physical

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problem (a matter of industrialization, imperial expansion, modernization of institutions, and such), or as a more metaphysical problem (modes of rationalization, subject formation, essentialization of identities, and so forth), or both. To confront the problem of modernity — its impacts, as it were — is to confront totalizing forces, processes, structures, formations or logics — a tireless systematization, homogenization, unification, standardization and globalization of resources, exchanges, institutions and peoples. Probably it is an overstatement to say that critiques of modernity ‘agree’ on this point. For agreement implies some manner of convergence or a common point of departure. Rather the problem of totalization continually arises, maybe not so much as a shared point of departure or debate as an impossible tangle in which discussions inevitably become enmeshed. In any event, the problem of modernity is also that of totalization, that is, modernization.

A number of questions arise, however, about the relation between modernity and modernization. There have been efforts to separate modernity (as cultural modernity) from modernization (as societal modernization). Arguments for the complete autonomy of modernity from modernization remain unconvincing because some degree of complicity is always in evidence. Nevertheless, modernity and modernization are not the same thing. The question is, how does modernity — first and foremost a temporal marker — relate to modernization, that is, to totalizing forces or processes? The answer lies in the notion of a temporal break or historical rupture — one that is somehow total and therefore foundational. The logic of temporal rupture can play into, and even ground, totalizing processes. As Nietzsche noted, an emphasis on the new easily becomes a desire for more of the same, a desire for totality, which totalizes everything in an eternal present — whence, in his view, the need for new non-foundational values.

Second, there is the related question of how a specific kind of temporal relation (modernity) comes to imply a specific configuration of geopolitical relations (the West versus the rest). Clearly, the relation between modernity and its ‘antecedents’ (antiquity, tradition, the premodern, the classical, the archaic, etc.) has incessantly been mobilized to mark a division between the West and its geopolitical others (constructing such others as the Orient, the East, the Third World, the South, or simply, the Rest of the World). Modernity announces a seemingly indelible division between the West and the rest, and perpetually conflates modernization and Westernization. If modernity as a temporal relation so often becomes associated

with geopolitical totalization (that is, Westernization), it is on the basis of a displacement of the operation of modernity as total rupture. Briefly put, temporal rupture is spatialized, which displaces and naturalizes the violence of the rupture. The rupture is no longer within but without — displaced, as it were.

Finally, the question arises of whether there are today ways of dealing with spatial and temporal relations that are not totalizing, that are not modernizing or westernizing. This is a question about whether — or how — one can effectively counter or bypass totalizing modes or logics or formations. It is a question posed insistently in discussions of postmodernity and the postmodern, which have most often been discredited on the basis of their own totalizing gesture — the announcement of a historical rupture with modernity — implicit in the ‘post.’ There may, however, be other ways of thinking the relation between the modern and postmodern than historical rupture — for instance, as an intensification of a moment within modernity, or maybe in terms of a-modalities.

Nevertheless, the problem of totalization persists in discussions geared toward modernity, and indeed, seems almost fundamental to them. It is not surprising then that discussions of modernity often hinge on diverse possibilities for counter-totalizing tactics, strategic alternative totalizations or non-totalizing differential systems. Crucial to all critical efforts to undermine, overturn or somehow unmake or unravel modern totalization is a demonstration that such efforts are not merely detotalizing. (Or they must at least show some awareness of the problem of detotalization.) For detotalization — a simple quantitative fragmentation or pluralization of the times and spaces of modernity (many smaller modernities) — tends to produce difference as more of the same and to open itself entirely to retotalization — a supermodernity or globalization comprised of comparable nations or consumable locations. The key then is to think breaks that are not so simple, and relations that do not lend themselves to quantification. While speaking in the plural — of modernities and impacts — is not in and of itself a solution to the problem of modern totalization, there is a sense in which such a multiplication of modernities may not be so simple and quantitative after all. If modernity is no longer in or of the West, what will become of it? Maybe this is to start to think change anew.

The general trend in current discussions of modernity seems rather dark and bleak, however. Much criticism lingers, aptly and persuasively, on the crisis and systematic failure inherent in modernity and modernization. It is as if there were no hope for modernity, and that is the best thing about it.

Comparativism and the Production of Space and Place

In the first essay in this volume, Harry Harootunian addresses the problem of modern temporality. The central concern of 'Ghostly Comparisons' is to contest the privileging of space in analyses of modernity. He begins with knowledge about modern time and space produced in the West and gradually enlarges his critique to address the production of knowledge in East Asia. He does not draw a line between the West and the rest. On the contrary, by emphasizing how analyses of modernity have privileged space, Harootunian wishes to call critical attention to how discourses on modernity have generally constructed privileged spaces and essentialized places — nations and national identities above all, but also geopolitical abstractions such as West and East. His aim then is to find a new approach to modernity that does not remain mired in spatial abstractions or totalizations like the nation, or the West.

Of particular importance is his demonstration that the privileging of space entails a systematic unwillingness to deal with temporality. Spatialization, in his account, is not merely a matter of reluctance or inability but of methodology. At the outset, he links this systematic refusal to deal with temporality to a specific discipline — area studies — whose basic methodological framework is comparative and thus spatializing. Drawing on Johannes Fabian's work, he argues that the effect of comparative methodologies, and indeed their founding mission, is to deny the coevalness or contemporaneity of other societies. The observer sees another society as if living in another time, yet that other time remains comprehensible and accessible to the observer because he situates it as a different stage or period of human development or of social evolution — in effect distancing and spatializing it. Needless to say, in Fabian's account, the observer is the Western anthropologist, who establishes the West as the normative standard for the evaluation and classification of temporality of other societies.

Modernization theory, especially the American version that has proved so persistent in universalizing America's strategic interests, could be seen as a variation on the comparative framework. It is a variation that establishes the United States as the pinnacle of modern development, and other societies are mapped in terms of their distance from that normative standard. The historical rupture within the West is naturalized and disavowed as a rupture between the West and the rest. In modernization theory, there is only one path and one aim, and other societies

are to pursue that path and to catch up if they can. (They cannot, of course, and the racial and historical disturbances created by the economic success of Japan in the 'bubble years' — such as Japan-bashing in North America and Europe, and Francis Fukuyama's pronouncement of the 'end of history' — show how fragile and precarious modernization theory is, and how violent its responses can be.) Otherwise, if non-Western societies cannot become 'sufficiently' modernized, they should at least be sufficiently amenable to accommodating some degree of Americanization or globalization.

Harootunian contends that accounts of modernity that privilege space or 'spatialize' inevitably side with modernization. Even those accounts that oppose modernization ineluctably reproduce it — so long as they insist on spatializing relations. In effect, Harootunian sees spatialization operating in the same way as modernization: it detotalizes (divides into equal aliquots) only to retotalize (refers back to the West, modernity, or a unitary global time or system). Naturally, because his emphasis is on the production of knowledge (discourses on modernity), he associates this tendency to detotalize and retotalize with disciplinary formations. On the one hand, he finds what might be described as an 'anthropologizing' gesture. The anthropologizing gesture promises to overcome the totalizing forces of modernization by emphasizing local identities. The anthropologizing gesture depends on the establishment of local identities on the basis of places. It makes specific places the sites of unity and identity. Yet, Harootunian suggests, the production of local identities, thus linked to spaces or places, runs the risk of doing nothing more than detotalizing the world in order to enable retotalization — literally deterritorializing in order to reterritorialize. In his account, the emphasis is on the nation as place-identity. Yet he suggests that the same logic informs current trends in cultural theory as well, which strive to dismantle the unity and identity of the nation by fragmenting and multiplying local identities. Indeed, he hints that the recent interest in speaking in terms of global and local may present a simple intensification of the logic of the universal and particular (modernity and the nation, or the West and the rest), precisely because it remains within the same spatializing logic.

In his account, this risk of incessant retotalization or reterritorialization is very great because the anthropologizing gesture relies, however unwittingly, on what might be called (on the other hand) a 'synchronizing' gesture. This gesture becomes most obvious in comparative studies. If identities are to remain identities

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(that is, self-identical), they must sustain their difference via spatial isolation. Yet, when one compares them, one must assume an underlying or overarching simultaneity or synchronicity, a time frame in which all these different identities exist at once, somehow equally and evenly. In effect, recourse to synchronicity makes different identities the same, equally accessible to modernizing or globalizing processes. Synchronicity produces identical differences. Put another way, the major problems with discourses that privilege space is that they privilege 'difference between societies' over 'difference within societies.' If Harootunian turns to problems of temporality in order to counter spatialization, it is precisely in order to draw attention to unevenness within societies, which becomes especially evident in the everyday experience of 'non-synchronous contemporaneity.' He turns to the temporal disjuncture and dissonance that are experienced and actualized as part of everyday life in 'those places and spaces that have committed their resources to the transformations of capitalist modernization.' He thus proposes that the everyday may afford a new comparative framework for modernity, one attentive to the production and reproduction of difference within and across modernizing societies, one based on rethinking the temporality of modernity.

'Overcoming Modernity,' a symposium held in Japan in 1942 to address Japan's problem with Western modernity, provides for him a prime example of the essentializing of place implicit in thinking modernity spatially. The fundamental problem of 'Overcoming Modernity,' as Harootunian sees it, lay in the equation drawn by Japanese intellectuals between modernity and a spatial unity (the West and especially America as the place of modernity). This forced intellectuals to conceive modernity entirely in terms of imitating or reproducing that model — which naturally proved impossible. Intellectuals then recuperated that impossibility: everything in Japan that did not fit the American model was seen as a remainder and reminder of a lost unity, of authentic traditions and the native homeland. In this privileging of a lost place of timeless authenticity, Harootunian detects complicity between 'modernist' discourses and fascist ideologies.

'Overcoming Modernity' and subsequent responses to it also become the focus of Sun Ge's essay. Sun's central concern is also that of the complicity between intellectuals and what she calls 'official ideologies' or 'national ideologies.' Similarly, she raises questions about the relation between discourses on modernity (modernism) and totalitarianism (fascism). Yet, even as she explores the complicity

between intellectuals and official ideologies, she continues to direct attention to the possibilities for difference and resistance within the very problematic of 'Overcoming Modernity.'

On the one hand, Sun emphasizes that subsequent commentators on 'Overcoming Modernity' have largely disparaged it. They see its discourses as not only complicit with totalitarian ideologies but also as continuous with them. In brief, for most commentators, the symposium — indeed the very notion of 'overcoming modernity' — simply entailed intellectual legitimization of the ideologies of total war. Likewise, as if in agreement, Sun herself continually reminds her readers that the historical moment for the symposium, the outbreak of the Pacific War, served to silence all dissent among Japanese intellectuals vis-à-vis Japan's War in Asia. United in their opposition to the West in the wake of the attack on Pearl Harbor, intellectuals came to accept rather than challenge the idea that opposing the West meant liberating the East.

On the other hand, Sun continually asks what it means for subsequent commentators to claim that resistance proved futile, and thus, in effect, to declare that there was no resistance at all. Specifically, she points to commentators who adopt a 'transcendent position' with respect to 'Overcoming Modernity,' reducing it to univocal complicity in order to avoid the difficulties inherent in the idea of Japanese or non-Western modernity. From the outset, she signals a tentative rift between the writers and literary critics who organized the conference, and the scholars and philosophers whom they invited. The writers tended to insist that Japan had already overcome Western modernity through its purification of what they saw as the quintessentially Japanese aesthetic — a sensual, embodied approach to the world exemplified in traditional art and literature — which they linked to the 1930's renaissance of pure literature in opposition to Americanized mass culture. The scholars, by Sun's account, showed greater awareness of the difficulties inherent in claims to have already overcome Western modernity. Sun sees in this rift a play between the relative and the absolute, in which the scholars showed greater awareness that positing Japan as an absolute to which other formations are relative meant repeating not overcoming Western modernity. Yet the scholar's insight came at the expense of a serious account of the everyday and difference in repetition. The scholars, almost by default, endorsed the idea of Japan as a future (Asian) absolute, to which other cultural and geopolitical formations in East Asia would become relative.

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Sun thus teases out a sort of 'double consciousness' at the heart of 'Overcoming Modernity,' for she shows how the symposium was at once complicit with, and resistant to, the West. Moreover, she argues that, even if the intellectuals' resistance proved ineffective, subsequent commentators who ignore or disavow the question of their double-consciousness merely foreclose resistance by situating it entirely outside Japan (and thus outside history). Of particular interest is Sun's suggestion that, in and around 'Overcoming Modernity,' the basic problem has been the tendency to think in terms of relative and absolute rather than relationally. She writes, '[s]uch differences are produced in relation, in the process of narrating them, and it is only when awareness of such effects breaks down that differences between Japan and the West tend to collapse (even as they are reified).' When one establishes Western modernity as an absolute, one sets up a situation in which repetition always entails resemblance. Which is to say, to become modern (to modernize) is to become like the West, to resemble the West, to westernize. Japan is never the site of modernity but only that of its negation (as with the writers at 'Overcoming Modernity') or its relativization (the scholars). Their problem was, in essence, one of repetition without difference. The very idea of 'overcoming modernity' set up a play between the relative and the absolute in which repetition could only be resemblance not difference. For the difference of repetition was already captured in resemblance to the West.

Crucial to Sun Ge's rethinking of 'Overcoming Modernity' is the thought of Takeuchi Yoshimi whose importance, in her account, is to have introduced indeterminacy into the question of overcoming modernity. She sees in Takeuchi an insistence on thinking difference within hegemony as well as a willingness to look for resistance to totalitarianism within totalitarianism. This resistance or 'difference within' potentially enables a different understanding of modernity and Japan. Although modernity arrives as shock from without, it must also arrive as a shock from within Japan (and likewise with East Asia), a shock that must be continually renewed. Otherwise, modernity in Japan is little other than modernization as Westernization — gradual process of coming to resemble the West. Yet this experience of shock is not a unitary, once-and-forever 'modern consciousness,' as it were. It is a sort of 'double consciousness' in which repetition is experienced as difference, shockingly, almost traumatically, to the point of losing all hold on resemblance (and thus the self and identity). Sun's Takeuchi speaks as if the result of this loss of self would be the attainment of Japan, that is,

a truly modern national subjectivity (one must lose the self to gain the self). Yet this subjectivity, this Japan, is not a 'state' or 'place,' still less a 'home.' Modern subjectivity is, for Sun, a truly critical subjectivity, which entails an on-going process of relating, that is, narrating resistance or 'difference within.'

There are echoes here of something like Derridean deconstruction, much as Law Sing Wang characterizes it in his essay, as 'a double reading encapsulated in the notion of closure,' as a problem of 'discovering how a reading can remain internal to the text and within the limits of textuality without merely repeating the text . . .' It is not surprising, given that modernity is so often set up as a problem of totalization (modernization), that deconstructive tactics should prove so productive in critiques of modernity. For deconstruction does not adopt the stance of overcoming, surpassing or otherwise transcending totalizing tendencies. Nor does it side with, or repeat them, in the manner of a commentary on a text. As Law puts it, 'The signifying structure of a deconstructive reading has to be located at a hinge, which links the double movement between logocentrism or metaphysics and its other. At the same time, it has to enable one to exceed the orbit of conceptual totality. The goal of deconstruction is to locate a point of otherness within logocentric conceptuality and to deconstruct that conceptuality from that position of alterity.'

Part of the appeal of deconstructive readings comes of their attentiveness to the problem of an underlying totality and the risk of recuperation within it or by it. In response to modernity (in its specifically philosophical and juridical register), deconstruction aims to locate points of otherness within it. It avoids the temptation to announce the end of modernity, as some thinkers of the postmodern are often accused of doing. There are, however, many different ways of working with deconstruction in relation to modernity. In this volume, as I will strive to make clear in this introduction, subaltern theory and postcolonial theory frequently provide a point of reference for critique — particularly in relation to the idea of 'alternative modernities.' Yet, despite their continual reference to such thinkers as Chatterjee, Spivak, Bhabha and Chakrabarty, these essays also tend to differentiate themselves from subaltern theory and postcolonial theory, having a very different sense of the politics of deconstruction and alternative modernities. Although such differences can surely be attributed to site specificity and specific disciplinary formations, it is important to raise the question of where specificity arises, and how it works.

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One of the operations important to alternative modernities is to question whether one can ever pretend to have supplanted, surpassed or otherwise overcome modernity. One strategy is to submit, as Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar does, that modernity 'continues to "arrive and emerge."' Indeed Gaonkar suggests that '[t]o think in terms of "alternative modernities" is to admit that modernity is inescapable and to desist from speculations about the end of modernity.'

It would be rash, however, to conclude that this stance entails a simple resignation in the face of an inevitable modernity, a tacit or covert acceptance of its totalizing structures. (There are ways of failing and then there are ways of failing.) Gaonkar, for instance, situates alternative modernities in such a way as to problematize the dialectic of convergence and divergence. Theories of convergence are those that see modernity as societal modernization: regardless of their different points of departure, modernized societies eventually all become the same. Theories of divergence (largely theories of cultural modernity) are those that presume that different points of departure lead to different outcomes, to vastly different modernities. To Gaonkar, the problem with divergence theories is that they entirely ignore homogenizing forces and totalizing logics (modernization). Gaonkar wishes to retain yet complicate the notion of totalizing modernization. 'An alternative modernities perspective,' he writes, 'complicates this neat dichotomy by foregrounding that narrow but critical band of variations consisting of site-specific "creative adaptations" on the axis of convergence (or societal modernization).' Creative adaptation, however, is 'not simply a matter of adjusting the form or recoding the practice to soften the impact of modernity.' Gaonkar sees it as 'an interminable process of questioning the present, which is the attitude of modernity.' He also suggests that it 'is the site where people make themselves modern.'² In other words, to speak of alternative modernities is to open points of otherness within totalizing conceptuality ('sites' of 'questioning').

The image of modernity that emerges is not that of simple reproduction or imitation of the unitary Western model. Rather modernity appears as a process of rupture and reinscription; alternative modernities entail an opening of otherness within Western modernity, in the very process of repeating or reinscribing it. It is as if modernity itself is deconstruction. It is not unlike the double consciousness evoked in Sun's discussion of Takeuchi, which comes of a traumatic shock that opens totalizing modernity to the possibility of critical modernity. A question invariably arises, however, about 'site specificity.' What is the relation between

these 'points of alterity' or 'sites of questioning' and the place or space of the nation? To Harootunian, the site specificity evoked in theories of alternative modernities reproduces the problem inherent in 'overcoming modernity.' He asks whether the emphasis on site specificity does not simply reproduce and reify national identities. Is the notion of Chinese modernity, Russian modernity, Japanese or Indian modernity so different from Chinese, Russian, Japanese or Indian nationalism? Alternative or alter/native modernities run the risk spatializing 'otherness within' as an alternative place to Western modernity — which amounts to cultural particularism, essentialism or nationalism. Likewise Law cautions at the outset, 'One response to the complexities of modernity takes the form of an increased emphasis on the specificity of site, as in analyses of "alternative modernities." If the formation of those sites is not examined, however, one could easily slip back to a naïve view assuming a natural and coherent spatial entity wherein all sorts of eternal folklores or mythical authenticities could be uncritically asserted As a consequence, our understanding of modernity has to go back to the question of the relation between modernity and nation formation.'

Gaonkar, however, is cautious on this point. When he speaks concretely of the sites of alternative modernities in his account, he seems to agree with Harootunian. Rather than nations, they are places that have committed their resources to capitalist modernization; in particular they are urban sites and metropolitan modes. Across the 'noise of difference,' Gaonkar sees a 'string of similarities' among modernities — the style of the flaneur, the mystique of fashion, the magic of the city, and so forth. These examples suggest something like urban, cosmopolitan 'non-places' — or, at least, layered and hybrid sites — rather than authentic national traditions and locations. Nevertheless, what does it mean to associate something like 'non-lieu' or 'non-site' with an actual place, be it China or India, or Shanghai or Bombay? What haunts site specificity is the problem of origins. Indeed modernity easily becomes a discourse on origins — a unitary and self-identical origin, an original model, the West.

Gaonkar deals with the problem of origins by proposing that alternative modernities are 'originating' — they entail creative adaptations or variations. Yet the problem of the origin persists: 'Modernity has traveled from the West to the rest of the world not only in terms of cultural forms, social practices, and institutional arrangements but also as a form of discourse that interrogates the present. That questioning of the present, whether in vernacular or in cosmopolitan

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idioms, which is taking place at every national and cultural site today cannot escape the legacy of Western discourse on modernity.¹³ In Gaonkar's account, the problem of the origin persists in the emphasis on diffusion from the West and on the primacy of convergence. The origin then tends to reappear in the future as a potential point of convergence, albeit in a potentially better, more ethical world. Gaonkar thus asks whether these 'common intensities . . . will one day pave the way for an ethic of the global modern.'¹⁴

Gaonkar's characterization of modernity as a kind of deconstruction — as an incessant questioning of the present — suggests that modernity is a mode of temporality that always diverges from modernization. Paradoxically, although such divergence characterizes alternative modernities, it has already happened in the West, or rather in the cosmopolitan West. In effect, divergence is always already at the origin. Yet, no sooner does he point to originary divergence than Gaonkar resists it. He insists that only reference to convergence allows an evaluation of the impacts of modernity. (And he tentatively draws lines from cosmopolitan modernisms that converge in the future on global modernity.) I do not wish to underestimate the importance of Gaonkar's evocation of divergence in convergence — surprises, shocks, questions — but rather want to ask whether (or how) alternative modernities would ever allow for their 'originating activities' (creativity) to be done with the logic of unitary origins. This is a question that applies not simply to alternative modernities but to analyses of modernity generally. For it seems that discourses of modernity (or modernities) invariably confront the problem of unitary origins — this becomes especially pronounced when they pose questions about space, place or sites.

It is easy to understand why some thinkers would prefer to be done with the modern and origins. Deleuze, for instance, writes, 'If things aren't going well in contemporary thought, it's because there is a return under the name of "modernism" to abstractions, back to the problem of origins and so on. Any analysis of movement or vectors is blocked. We are now in a very weak phase, a period of reaction. Yet, philosophy thought it was through with the problem of origins. It was no longer a question of starting or finishing. The question was rather, what happens "in between"?'¹⁵

In discussions of modernity, however, it is commonly and probably necessarily a question of origins, of starting (with the West) and sometimes of finishing (with the globe). Gaonkar's account of alternative modernities potentially complicates

the question of origins, by calling attention to divergence — the shocks, surprises, questions and creative transformations that happen in between. At times, he seems far from the notion of a unitary origin and model, and his modernity already seems to be doubled and innovative at its origins. There is always already divergence. Ultimately, however, it seems that the set-up borrowed from Charles Taylor — divergence in opposition to convergence — encourages a continual return of something unitary, as if the impacts of modernity could not be addressed without continual reference to a unitary West — which collapses modernity into modernization.⁶ Ultimately, although Gaonkar evokes the difference between modernity and modernization, there is no productive or effective difference between them.

Of particular interest in this respect is the work on Western modernity that appears in a volume edited by Stuart Hall and others, which ‘sees modern societies now as a global phenomenon and the modern world as the unexpected and unpredicted outcome of, not one, but a series of major historical transitions.’⁷ In other words, to counter the image of modernity presented by modernization theory, in which there was one path and one motor (economic modernization), Hall insists, ‘Modernity, then, was the outcome, not of a single process, but of the condensation of a number of different processes and histories.’⁸ Hall effectively multiplies, transforms and thus problematizes the origins of modernity. If it becomes impossible to locate modernity in a single space or at a single moment, he suggests that there are nevertheless ‘condensations’ that merit attention. Yet, somewhat differently from Gaonkar, even though Hall thinks globally, his notion of condensation does not suggest any manner of convergence. Thus it would be a mistake to think of his discussion of modernity as a return to unitary origins, for there is no terminus insight. Rather his is a deconstructive problematization of origins, of starting and of beginnings.

‘Deconstruction,’ writes Vicki Kirby, ‘has a fixation with origins and with their peculiar capacity for innovation, ubiquity and endurance. However the suggestion that a beginning has something of a mutating existence tests our comprehension in a most fundamental way.’⁹ If deconstruction tests our comprehension, it is because its insistence that origins are not unitary threatens our ability to orientate ourselves, to locate coordinates that will serve as a point of departure for discriminating, evaluating and making decisions. If origins endure because they are innovative, we have to deal with innovation, change and

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movement rather than fixed points of departure and arrival. The mutating existence of the origin undermines recourse to a prior fixed system of orientation that would allow us to draw a line between two points, to travel from A to B. We confront deconstruction's paradoxical inversion of the linear temporality of cause and effect: 'a supplement which "produces" what it supplements' or 'an originary repetition' or 'an absolute past that has never been present.' How can we hope to go anywhere if our arrival at B produces our point of departure from A? We are always departing and never arriving.

The mutating existence of origins seems to many commentators to be politically disabling because of its temporal and spatial disorientation. Simply put, it becomes difficult to say definitively when and where Western modernity is. It also becomes difficult to decide, once and for all, who is inside and who is outside. Once one speaks of modernity or of the West, one is paradoxically within it even while one claims to be without. It is impossible to locate and define a position of exteriority. Whence, in a related register, Gayatri Spivak's famous query: Can the subaltern speak? The answer is that, no sooner does the subaltern speak, than the subaltern does not exist. Needless to say, as Law discusses in detail, such a paradox assumes a specifically Western philosophical relation between speaking and being — always already globalized within disciplinary and discursive formations of the modern nation.

In her discussion of subaltern studies, for instance, Spivak looks at how the group 'tracks failures in attempts to displace discursive fields.' In particular, the group shows how Western discursive fields invariably fail in non-Western contexts, and Spivak shows how it is a force of crisis that operates functional displacements in discursive fields — a modern crisis, that of colonialism. She also suggests that 'A deconstructive approach would bring into focus the fact that they are themselves engaged in an attempt at displacing discursive fields, that they themselves "fail" (in the general sense) for reasons as "historical" as those they adduce for the heterogeneous agents they study; and would attempt to forge a practice that would take this into account.' Without a sense of the implications of its own work, the group tends to objectify the subaltern, control him with knowledge, and thus become complicit with what they oppose 'in their desire for totality.'¹⁰ Some readers might object that Spivak's deconstructive approach condemns in advance all resistance, for she generalizes failure not success. She sees complicity in all attempts to speak as the subaltern, to speak for the subaltern, or to have the

subaltern speak. Hence 'one must see in their [subaltern studies] practice a repetition as well as a rupture from the colonial predicament.' Analogously, one must also see repetition as well as a rupture at the origin in the metropolitan West. For speech is always failure.

There are, however, different ways of speaking and failing, for historical reasons. There are different failures or different histories, as it were. Context becomes critical, and clearly the context for Spivak is the colonial predicament, or the universalization of Western modernity as metaphysics. It is the universalization of Western metaphysics that informs Spivak's emphasis on the problematic of speech in relation to the subaltern. As Law puts it in his essay in this volume, 'The Western discipline of philosophy, including comparative philosophy, which is supposed to investigate the thought of non-Western worlds, is always instituted as a way to *speak of something*' (emphasis mine). To deconstruction, the history of Western metaphysics is such that speaking is always already conflated with Being, onto-theo-logically. Speaking is inseparable from the assimilatory power of Being. This is logocentrism. To quote Law again: 'Derrida is skeptical of the possibility of overcoming, or finding some leeway for, thinking Being, for he thinks that the assimilatory of Being excludes such a possibility. Derrida is always vigilant about the possibility that the negation of Being will itself be subsumed. It would be moot for him to consider the possibility of *otherwise than Being* without negation to Being.' Yet this problem of speaking 'is not as "speaking in general" or language-in-itself but as the place, the position, the context in which promises or hopes are delivered.' The problem of modernity then is that there are no ways of speaking otherwise than from within Western metaphysics or logocentrism.

Law demonstrates convincingly that the comparative philosophical enterprise is one that makes other traditions of thought speak the language of Western metaphysics. Thus the thought of Chuang Tzu, in one instance, is posited as the site of 'our' (Chinese) logos; and in another instance, Chuang Tzu is seen as deconstruction before deconstruction, as superior deconstruction. Such comparative efforts not only make Chinese thought the equivalent to Western metaphysics but also reduce political critiques of Western metaphysics (such as Derrida's thought) to stylistic play. To counter this kind of failure, which Law aptly characterizes as a whole-hearted capitulation to universalism in the form of national particularism, Law enters into what he tentatively dubs a 'para-

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comparative' study in which he addresses the difference between the 'unsayable' in Chuang Tzu and Derrida in a philosophically rigorous manner. Law discusses Chuang Tzu as if it were possible for him to speak otherwise than Being. In this respect, his para-comparative study resonates with Spivak's notion of strategic essentialism (or Alberto Moreiras's retooling of this notion as tactical essentialism).¹¹ For his goal is not to rescue Chuang Tzu from Western metaphysics, nor to use Chuang Tzu to overturn Western metaphysics. Ultimately, Law does not suppose that para-comparative study allows one to speak outside modern comparativism (which would amount to speaking otherwise than Being). Although he attends to the otherness of Chuang Tzu (the historical specificity of what it means to be philosophical), there is a sense in which the historical and philosophical specificity of Chuang Tzu can only be located as a point of otherness within Western metaphysics, within modernity. In other words, Law sees that the para-comparative study also fails. It fails to transcend the place of the nation and the context of modernity. Nonetheless, his is a different way of failing, one that potentially opens new hopes as well as new desires for other histories.

If Law faults other strategies for discussing the impacts of modernity, it is because other strategies continue to evoke sociological explanations of modernity. Chatterjee, for instance, argues that universalism is not equally available to non-Western thinkers, and thus searches for sites outside capitalism and colonialism. Harootunian argues, on the contrary, that the modern nation has long been universalized in such a way as to make 'universalizing' or 'totalizing' gestures available to non-Western intellectuals; there is no outside to capitalist modernity. Law takes issue with Chatterjee for assuming an outside and with Harootunian for ignoring the unevenness in access to universalizing. He detects the residue of sociological explanations of modernity in both stances: the one supposes that modernity's incompleteness allows an outside, while the other supposes modernity's arrival. Thus Law directs our attention to psychoanalytic and philosophical questions about the desire for comparability whose long history continues to frame and colour discourses of modernity, especially those that rely on sociological explanations.

In other words, looking at comparativism, Law sees the mutating existence of the colonial and imperial origins of modernity, which he links to the assimilatory power of Being (Western metaphysics). This means that all speaking is caught up in the production of spaces and places for modernity. Simply put, deconstruction

sees speaking as both innovation and assimilation. Speaking continually innovates and produces new sites, but that innovation is also assimilation because innovation merely displaces origins. Speaking otherwise than modernity is bound to fail. This means that Western modernity, as logocentrism, is potentially everywhere there is speaking. This does not mean that modernity succeeds everywhere, however. Rather it fails. Although new places of speaking are always assimilated to an underlying totality, that totality continues to unfurl violently, displacing the origin, producing difference, and generating unevenness. Once again, modernity is an incessant production of difference as the same — which becomes particularly problematized in relation to place and space. Site specificity promises something otherwise than modernity but can never deliver it.

In sum, the first three papers address the impacts of modernity in relation to comparativism, space, and places. Although all three seek points of disorientation or divergence, they do so in order to re-orientate themselves toward those places and spaces very differently. Faced with the production of space, Harootunian turns to temporality. His 'solution' is a tactical essentialism of historical temporality that locates points of otherness in modernity by looking to the temporal anomalies arising around the pasts that modernity unfurls. Sun also calls attention to 'difference within,' in the context of Japanese intellectuals' totalizing bid to overcome Western modernity. Her tactic is to pose the question of a needful yet impossible relation to indigenous traditions — the self must orientate itself in relation to traditions yet cannot do so without losing its self — a self-critical relating and narrating. Law stresses an ethical relation: while it is not possible to speak non-metaphysically, it may be possible to listen. To listen is to find points of otherness within modernity and to acknowledge the violence to the other implicit in that discovery. In many ways, Hong Seong-tae's photo essay on the colonial modernization of Seoul rearticulates these problems.

To avoid unitary modernity, Hong pluralizes modernization. He wishes to contest the idea that the violent rupture wrought by the Japanese invasion and annexation of Korea constitutes just another point of departure for modernity. He challenges that idea that, no matter how modernization starts, it is still the same modernity. Thus he writes of modernizations, with attention to Seoul's colonial history. Although urban spaces around the world may look the same on the surface, he suggests that there are underlying historical differences. The Japanese imperial reconstruction of Seoul — colonial modernization — involved a deliberate erasure

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of traditional spaces and thus of a historical sense of the city. Contemporary Koreans living in Seoul thus have few clues to remind them of its past, their past. While one solution would be to reconstruct the city as it was before colonialism, Hong does not take such a simple route. He sees a need to preserve the history of Japanese imperialism. He takes issue not only with the Japanese destruction of traditional space but also with Kim Young Sam's attempt to correct history by removing evidence of Japanese imperialism. Thus two contradictory historicizing impulses co-exist in his essay: to restore the precolonial, traditional past and to preserve the colonial past. This means that the remnants of Japanese imperialism must be at once negated and preserved.

Such an act of remembrance might be thought of as an act of working through, of mourning — in contrast to an amnesiac repetition of the colonial destruction of the past. Yet Korea's current relation to the United States makes this impossible. In light of the American military occupation of Korea, how is it possible to negate and preserve the history of colonialism? Is it possible at this time, under occupation, to negate and preserve historical traces of American imperialism? Hong focuses on one possibility for working through this other layer of colonial modernization: the movement to reclaim and transform the land currently occupied by the American military base. Yet ultimately, Hong calls our attention to the risk of repetition of colonial modernization. For it is not only a matter of getting rid of Japanese or American imperialism but also of working through those histories. In light of the previous essays, one might say that Hong relies on an essentialism of place and identity (the special case of Korea) that pushes toward the production of national identity — within a history of imperial perpetrators and colonial victims without collaborators or bystanders.¹² Nevertheless, given his awareness of urban history as one of both negation and preservation, it is clearly possible to see his emphasis on Korean autonomy as a strategic or tactical essentialism, one that returns with the question, 'What exactly is a strategy or a tactic?' How are we to orientate ourselves politically when the received configurations of speech and place appear to fail in advance?

Speech, Writing and Empire

One of the triumphant narratives of modernization is that of the establishment of mass literacy on the basis of standardized national languages. Sociologically, for

instance, the degree of literacy continues to provide an index of a society's civilization and democratization. In recent years, however, this triumphant view of the rise of literacy has been challenged on a number of fronts. Simply put, the transformations in speech and writing necessary to the establishment of a standard national language have been studied in view of their propensity toward homogenization and subjection, toward inventing and mobilizing national subjects, and producing exploitable 'masses.' This stands in stark contrast to the vision of mass literacy, freedom of expression and transparent communication among citizens that had been promoted in stories of linguistic modernization. What is at stake in revisiting and historicizing the production of standardized national languages is not simply to speak of modernization in terms of the rise of unfreedom. Rather at stake is an account of how modern individualizing techniques generate localized disciplinary formations that work in conjunction with totalizing power formations. Which to say, the ability and freedom to speak and write in the national language depends on a prior injunction to speak and write in specific ways, which produces spaces of inclusion and exclusion necessary to modern processes of totalization.

Of particular interest in the three essays in this volume are the links they draw between the establishment of modern forms of writing and the totalizing processes of modern empire. There is little confidence that national language and literature enable local or national autonomies in any positive, effective way. As I will emphasize in my discussion, this stands in contrast to many postcolonial accounts of the novel that emphasize how the non-West's rupture with, and reinscription of, Western literature enables hybrid and indeterminate forms that are not easily or automatically recuperated. One important implication of these essays is that the individualizing techniques of modern writing — and hybridity itself — are productive of national empire or imperial subjects. Moments of difference and divergence are seen as sites of assimilation.

In his essay on linguistic modernity in Korea, Kang Nae-hui historicizes linguistic usages that today appear natural, inevitable and even desirable. In order to counter the tendency to see modern Korean as a natural outcome or as social consensus, Kang outlines different phases in the production of linguistic modernity. He links these phases to the history of Japanese and Western imperialism and the colonization of Korea. For instance, around 1894, when the Japanese army drove the Chinese army out of Korea only to remain as an imperial power, there occurred

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a major transformation of traditional linguistic and scriptural spaces. A variety of writing practices were subsumed under a binary opposition between 'Chinese letters' (*hanmun*) and 'national letters' (*gukmun*). This opposition also spelled the end of the general prestige of writing practices associated with traditional Chinese learning, and introduced a temporal divide between past and present, tradition and modernity. This divide provided the basis for the totalizing, modernizing processes of separating the present from the past. Of course, such totalization can never be complete: initially, a variety of mixed styles of writing appeared. Yet the overall tendency was toward the purification of 'national letters' through the elimination of all deemed prior or external to them. The impetus for this purification was a desire for national autonomy, but as Kang signals, it was 'a path to autonomous modernization that could only meet with failure.'

Kang also writes of a kind of liminal phase in which older linguistic usages had not yet passed, and new usages had yet to predominate — a period of satire and parody when common people took up the grandiose hierarchical forms of address bequeathed from the past and used them boldly in new public forums. Ultimately, however, such unexpected mixtures of old and new gave way to the establishment of homogeneous and unmarked linguistic modes of address and reception — as if the initial rupture, at once imperialist and modernist, inevitably foreclosed autonomous movements. Crucial was the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910, after which, Kang notes, a specifically modern formation of subjectivity and objectivity became dominant, especially in novels and newspapers. Characteristic of this modern linguistic mode was an 'unmarking' of the position of speaker or writer. This unmarking produced a new kind of subjectivity, interiority. It also gave precedence to the enunciated, which encouraged naïve realism, and readers came to perceive and believe in the written as factual, objective, and true. Also characteristic of linguistic modernity was a transformation of tenses and temporal relations. The result was a sort of empty, homogeneous linguistic space that emphasized logical and analytical relations (rather than figural, emotional or hierarchical relations), to be mastered by the new modern subject.

One of the interesting points of Kang's account of linguistic modernization is that the linguistic production of an 'unmarked' subject results not only in a politics of inclusion and exclusion but also one of assimilation. On the one hand, insofar as the unmarking of the subject is framed within Korean grammar, the new subject is supposed to be a national subject. Its ideal is sovereignty spread flatly and

evenly to the boundaries of the Korean nation, in which all citizens are equally Korean. On the other hand, in linguistic terms, not all inhabitants of Korea are evenly Korean. This means that the linguistic production of national subjectivity must in effect colonize Korea — whence the ambivalent positioning of dialect speakers like Kang himself — at once Korean and not Korean, or potentially of two different Koreas situated differently in the world. National subjectivity is already cosmopolitan and potentially imperial, and one would have to ask whether something like ‘modern Korean’ is particular or universal, for it acts in both ways. Co-figured with modern Japanese and thus with modern English, modern Korean allows for cosmopolitan and imperial prerogative, even as it produces national sovereignty.

Ethan Nasreddin-Longo’s essay on ethnomusicology likewise deals with questions of marking and unmarking in relation to what he styles the ‘imperium.’ Central to his critique of ethnomusicology is its paradoxical attitude toward its own musical notation. Modern musical notation serves to mark the West from the rest, for only the West is deemed to possess proper notation. Yet, paradoxically, musical notation also unmarks the West, establishing it as an apparently neutral yet authoritative subject. This is analogous to the production of linguistic modernity in Kang’s account of modern Korean. For Nasreddin-Longo’s account suggests that the production of modernity involved the development of a writing that posed as transparent because it had most thoroughly rationalized the relation of sound to mark. Transparent notation produces an unmarked subject who could mediate all musical cultures, but invisibly, silently. In other words, modern Western musical notation results in a silence that acts — invisible mediation, or more precisely, hegemony — which Nasreddin-Longo calls the ‘imperium’ to stress its protean relation to diverse modes of imperial appropriation.

Nasreddin-Longo argues that the invisible mediation of Western musical notation serves as the foundation for all ethnomusicological knowledge. Hence Western ethnomusicologists must undermine the claims of other, competing systems of notation. Not surprisingly, however, ethnomusicologists show a distinct preference for musical cultures without systems of notation recognizable as such to the West. Their sense of the immediacy and vitality of these musical cultures that allegedly lack writing recalls for Nasreddin-Longo the persistent Romantic myths about orality and oral cultures — cultures without systematic mediation and thus without alienation, cultures and musics that are ‘just there,’ eternal and

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immutable, as if awaiting the Fall into the West. In his critique of ethnomusicology, one of Nasreddin-Longo's central points is that this hegemonic structure of knowledge leans toward racism. This is because it begins with a process of unmarking the West and marking the rest. Yet the West is framed (as self-identical), while the rest are unframed (each equivalent and comparable to the others). Nasreddin-Longo argues that this paradigm leans toward racism precisely because others are marked (usually as coloured) yet unframed (all equally, comparably marked, as non-white). In sum, Western notation remains the naturalized, unexamined basis for ethnomusicology, grounding a disciplinary refusal to look seriously at practices of marking. Maybe it is time, he concludes, that we mark the West itself, as a way to open an inquiry into its marking practices rather than continue to assume their neutrality and authority.

With his parting remarks about marking the West, Nasreddin-Longo seems to call for an end to a certain kind of universalism, one that involves imperial ambivalence (and maybe depth). He shows that, in ethnomusicology, the hegemony of the West lies in its ability to play with marking and unmarking. Western hegemony plays both ends against the middle, as it were. It plays with the marked and unmarked to hide the actual practices that generate those positions. Commonly, it opts for an opposition (writing versus not-writing) to hide the constant play of its marking/unmarking. In this respect, the West is at once marked and unmarked. Thus the call to mark the West ethnically runs the risk of furthering Western interests. Consequently, Nasreddin-Longo's bid to mark the West should probably be seen as a strategy to make visible the operations of imperial ambivalence rather than a definitive solution.

Although Nasreddin-Longo does not consider the production of musical modernity outside the West (national autonomy through the local production of one's own modern notation), his account seems to agree with Kang: this is doomed to failure. Of course, in light of previous essays, I should add that there are different ways of failing, which are potentially other histories. Striking, however, in reading Kang and Nasreddin-Longo is the suggestion that, as different as literature and music are, their recourse to transparent writing produces an unmarked subject whose history is difficult to localize but easy to globalize. Moreover, the problem of modern subject formation is not only or primarily one of signification. It is one of marking and framing, unmarking and unframing. In addition, the hegemonic possibilities of modern subject formation do not lie exclusively in its decisiveness

(imposition of meanings, codes and institutions) but also in its ambivalence (sites and times of their suspension).

This is precisely the point of Atsuko Ueda's essay as well. Her essay looks at the profound overlap between discourses on the modern novel and political discourses on civilization, popular rights and 'de-Asianization' in the 1880s in Japan. Ueda calls attention to the discursive production of a new figure, the autonomous intellectual or scholar (*gakusha*). Significantly, she argues that modern Japanese literature would have been impossible without the formation this modern intellectual, which in turn would have been impossible without discourses on the de-Asianization of Japan.

Methodologically, Ueda suggests that literary and political discourses preceded and produced their objects. Which is to say, in the 1880s, geopolitical entities like 'Japan' or 'Asia' or 'the West' had no more objective existence than something like the 'novel' or 'literature.' To produce objects like Japan and the modern Japanese novel, such discourses had to produce and simultaneously repress an 'un-Japanese' and an 'un-novelsque' as well as an 'un-modern.' Of particular importance in the Japanese political discourses of the 1880s is the simultaneous production and repression of something called 'Asia.' This was precisely the effect of discourses on de-Asianization — the production of an uncivilized or unmodern to be repressed — Asia. On the side of the production of Asia were all the sociological and political discourses on civilization and rights that posited an uncivilized and unfree Asia. On the side of repression were the military campaigns calculated to subjugate the uncivilized and liberate the unfree. Needless to say, there is something fundamentally tautological and even paradoxical about the discursive production of geopolitical entities such as Asia, Japan, and the West — repression and production arise together, as do destruction and liberation.

Ueda suggests that, to contain and naturalize their inherent paradoxes, such discourses demanded specific sites and characters — whence, in discourses on de-Asianization, the insistence on apolitical spaces in which autonomous, neutral intellectuals could transcend interests and exchange ideas disinterestedly. The new, modern intellectual becomes the embodiment of the simultaneous production and repression of Asia. The result, however, was not so much intellectual disinterestedness as double consciousness or ambivalence, which Ueda finds in discourses on the modern novel as well. If such ambivalence ultimately operated hegemonically and imperialistically, it is because the Japanese

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ambivalence about Asia allowed for a particular kind of relation to the West, which Ueda styles 'mimicry.' Mimicry is not like imitation. Imitation posits a relation between original and copy in which the quality of the copy, its authenticity, is gauged by reference to the original. Imitation thus implies a lag between Japan and the West, which reinforces the logic of modernization: Japan is forever second to the West and behind it. Mimicry, on the contrary, entails a mode of relation in which Japan may act as if it were the West. Its operations are analogous to the simultaneous production and repression of Asia. The operative logic of mimicry allowed Japan to be as the modern West toward Asia — before the fact, so to speak. Mimicry does not involve a studious, step-by-step reproduction of Western institutions and paradigms but rather captures the temporal anomaly at the heart of Western modernity in order to act ahead of time. It is motion capture, as it were.

Ueda suggests that Japan's ability in the 1880s to act before the fact, does not signal a premature, belated, incomplete or otherwise distorted modernity. Mimicry is a fully modern modality. What is striking is how profoundly her account of non-Western intellectuals and mimicry differs from that of Homi Bhabha. To Bhabha, and more generally in accounts of the postcolonial novel, mimicry suggests a process of reinscription that transforms and hence subverts the logic of original and copy. Bhabha evokes mimicry to challenge mimetic models for nationalism and literature. He counters the idea that the non-Western novel is an imitation of the Western novel, an imitation fated to reproduce institutions of national literature. For the logic of imitation establishes the non-Western novel as a site double failure. Not only does non-Western novel fail to reproduce exactly the Western novel, but its failure also relegates it wholly to the formation of ethnic or national identity — it fails to be anything more than an expression of nationness, one that is forever belated or incomplete in relation to the Western norm.

Bhabha's account calls into question that of Benedict Anderson, who sees, with the rise of the novel and newspaper (print capitalism), the production of an empty, homogeneous time that allows for modern nationness. Nationness is a form of subjectivity that corresponds to the ideal of national sovereignty — by which sovereignty is reputed to spread fully, flatly and evenly to the boundaries of the nation. Bhabha evokes mimicry to counter two sociological assumptions about modernity that underlie Anderson's account: first, the nation as a Western

model that may be pirated; and second, the novel as the site of production of modernity and modern nationness. Bhabha is aware that, when one links the novel to the production of modernity via the model of modernization (imitation), the novel becomes trapped in the logic of universal and particular. It is fated to serve the West at the expense of the nation, or to support the nation in opposition to the West. Bhabha turns his attention to ambivalence, to the ways in which the postcolonial novel hovers between the West and the nation. It is both and neither. In this sense, mimicry poses indeterminate hybridity prior to imitation, as the condition of impossibility for imitation and modernization. Ambivalence appears as if prior to operations of universal and particular.

Bhabha stresses the ways in which mimicry thus subverts the logic of universal and particular, of Western modernity and its national formations. Ueda, on the contrary, links it to the production of Japanese empire. Bhabha also sees possibilities for subversion in the ambivalence of cosmopolitan postcolonial intellectuals, while Ueda associates ambivalence with the rise of the universal intellectual. At issue here is not who has the correct view of ambivalence or mimicry. Clearly, the contexts and interests of Bhabha and Ueda differ greatly. Theirs are different histories and different modernities that need not be reduced with a framework of global comparativism. The difference between them is nonetheless instructive because it underscores the importance of context, and indicates that tropes like ambivalence, mimicry and double consciousness are not necessarily or automatically liberatory or even subversive. Indeed, in these three essays, the tendency is to associate ambivalence not with zones of autonomy but with the production of unmarked spaces that extend imperial modernity. In all three, something like ambivalence signals the failure of non-Western autonomy. It is as if the production of non-Western civic spaces was merely the point of articulation between quasi-national subjects and an imperial formation. In this respect, the three essays seem to share a critical history and path.

All three challenge the idea that formations of literacy involve liberation or democratization. The very goal of literacy — the production of civic space and universal communication — fails. The production of unmarked spaces, with their claims to transcend ethnicity and local interests, turn out to dovetail with totalizing formations. Not only do these unmarked spaces involve ideologies and fantasies of universal transparency but they also entail the local production of subjects who are subject to national and hence global formations. Crucial are the arguments

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that literacy does not only subject individuals to local and national formations but also to the global and imperial formations. Universal and particular formations are always already in communication. Local and national formations are not in opposition to global and international formations. An awareness of the complicity of universal and particular imparts a sense of the generalized failure of the particular to resist the universal.

In different ways and to different degrees the essays share this sense of the failure of the particular, because they all detect a productive indeterminacy at work in totalizing formations. Exploring scriptural and discursive formations of literacy, the essays find an underlying totality to modernity — one that subjects. Yet subjection does not work without deterritorializing, without opening unmarked spaces — like those of modern national language, the novel or musical notation. It is as if deterritorialization suspends or subverts the logic of universal and particular, only to bind them more intimately. The resulting image is one of nationalism ever on the verge of empire. Here there are hints that the rise of modern literature and music may not only be written into the history of nations but into formations of global modernity, in which the transparency of communication begins to stage all particulars in the synchronized 'real time' of globalization.

Beyond Sovereignty and Subjection

Another of the key narratives of modernity is that of the rise to prominence of human agency and sovereignty in the construction of the social and political order. With the advent of political modernity, the story often goes, belief in the divine origins of the social order gave way to the notion of humans as lawmakers; people came to see that society was the product of human individuals not deities or monarchs. Crucial to such narratives is some manner of revolution in which humans overthrow the monarch and assume responsibility for, and control over, the natural order (set in motion by a now-distant God whose death approaches). While human sovereignty frequently found its legitimization in the ability of humankind to conquer nature, theories of natural rights and popular sovereignty tended to posit a pre-social state in which humans dwelled together in peaceful contract before various institutions and technologies divided them. In other words, the sovereign individual came to occupy the unenviable position of conquering

nature in order to realize its inherently rational and egalitarian order. Political modernity thus is commonly framed as the teleological separation of humans from nature, as the rationalization of nature, or as its dialectical overcoming. In either case, human agency and freedom are established over and against nature.

Of the many challenges to this notion of the sovereign individual, that of Michel Foucault provides a point of departure in the essays by Michael Goddard and Jon Solomon. Simply put, Foucault submitted that we have yet to cut off the head of the sovereign in political and historical analysis so long as we treat the individual as natural and given, as sovereign. In a sense, like Nietzsche, he saw that the death of one sovereign (God) had given rise to another (Man), who in turn needed to be deposed — whence the pronounced anti-humanism of Foucault's early works. One of the ways in which Foucault challenged the notion of individual sovereignty was by radically historicizing the figure of 'Man' and contesting its noble, natural, quasi-divine origins. The figure of Man turned out to be nothing more than a discursive construction, the effect of a historically specific formation of power and knowledge — disciplinary societies, which succeeded the sovereign (that is, monarchical) societies. 'Foucault associated disciplinary societies with the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; they reach their apogee at the beginning of the twentieth century. They operate by organizing major sites of confinement. Individuals are always going from one closed site to another, each with its own laws. . . .'¹³ Prison provides the model site of confinement, and carcerality is one of the characteristic discursive formations for disciplinary societies.

Now, as Deleuze notes, Foucault knew how short-lived this model was: 'discipline would in its turn begin to break down as new forces moved slowly into place, then made rapid advances after the Second World War: we were no longer in disciplinary societies, we were leaving them behind.'¹⁴ Nonetheless if Foucault felt that we have yet to cut off the head of the sovereign, it was because the figure of Man continued to organize our thinking of political resistance exclusively in terms of oppositional movements and revolutionary action — that is, on the basis of the individual who replaced yet continued the sovereign. This imagination of resistance continually opposed the particular to the universal, which merely served to advance the universal. Foucault's analysis of the rise of disciplinary societies effectively showed, on the contrary, that the individual emerged through 'subjection.' Disciplinary societies construct self-governing

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subjects, whose particular interiority subjects them in advance to the laws of each confined space. This is where Michael Goddard's essay begins: with Foucault's attempt to think resistance differently from the model of subjection, beyond the framework of the universal and particular. He shows how Deleuze's concept of 'subjectivation' — which he reads across Deleuze's work on Foucault, on the Baroque and on cinema — continues from Foucault's move away from the model of subjection.

Whereas many read Foucault from the angle of how discourses form, Deleuze emphasizes Foucault's interest in how discursive formations break down. Crucial is the tension between speaking and seeing, between the statement and the visible. Regimes of power and knowledge strive to link, fix and even fuse speaking and seeing, in order to stabilize modes of observation and representation. Yet prior to all relating of speaking and seeing, there is non-relation. There is a force of the outside that disrupts the linking, fixing or fusing of their relation. Goddard writes that there is an inside of the outside — which is not interiority. The subject is not an entity but a process; it remains open to the outside. This means that the subject has an inside 'deeper' than its interiority that comes from without. Neither Foucault nor Deleuze claim that the non-relation constitutes an absolute outside immune to history and regimes of power and knowledge, yet Deleuze especially stresses the ways in which the non-relation intervenes, disrupts and detaches.

Goddard's essay suggests that Deleuze is able to rework the fundamental non-relation between speaking and seeing by taking it to a 'deeper' ontological level. He shifts the non-relation between statements and the visible to the problematic of matter and light (or matter and energy or spirit), to reconsider the (non)relation of body and soul and the process of subjectivation. Leibniz's monad — the fold of a fold — provides the initial model. Deleuze begins with matter as folds, at once continuous and discontinuous. This means that each fold, as a point of continuity in discontinuity, implies a point of view. The subject, as Goddard explains, is what remains in a point of view. It is the fold of a fold — or a co-fold. This differs from a dualistic philosophy in which the subject or consciousness subjectifies matter. Rather, the folds of matter implicate points of view that complicate subjects. Because matter and consciousness co-exist, this makes for an ontology founded on difference (that is, ontogenetic).

In Leibniz, each monad, or each fold with fold, has all of a world, albeit with some regions more or less distinct than others — whence the notion of

impossible worlds based on different monadic points of view. Deleuze differs from Leibniz, however, with regard to the question of whether there exists a point of view that encompasses all others (God or totality). Goddard explains that Deleuze sees the world as infinite potentiality, not as totality. There is no point of view that encompasses the others, God-like. Rather the impossibility between worlds is within this world, within each world, potentially. Goddard argues that this allows Deleuze to open the concept of truth to time: '[Leibniz's] concept of impossibility is an attempt to save the concept of truth by positing different worlds in which a particular event does or does not take place; in one world the battle takes place whereas in another it doesn't so that the contingency of undecidable temporal alternatives is resolved. It is just a question of knowing which impossible world you are in, depending on whether the event does or does not take place. However, in modern aesthetics these undecidable alternatives or divergent series are located in one and the same world, so that the event both does and doesn't take place in the same world.'

How does Deleuze's reworking of the fold allow a rethinking of modernity? There are (at least) two ways of seeing it. On the one hand, one might think of his reinvention of the Baroque as an alternative modernity, or more precisely, an alternative modernism. The Baroque allows Deleuze to work within a different genealogy, one that bypasses Romanticism and Hegel to arrive at a different theory of change and historical movement. Goddard suggests that, in this respect, Deleuze's Baroque bears comparison with that of another thinker of modernity, Benjamin, who saw in Baroque allegory the liberation of the fragment from totality. However, while Benjamin looked at this disruption from the angle of destruction of historical movement, Deleuze sees in it the creative powers of the false — fabulation. To Deleuze, historical movement is a process of infinite complication that generates divergent series (which bears thinking alongside Derrida's sense of historical movement as abyssal, as infinite regression). All in all, there are infinite impossible modernities, and even if one insists on thinking in terms of our modernity, the difference between those modernities is nonetheless implicated in ours. Thus Deleuze looks to modernist practices that multiply pasts and futures in the present. Nevertheless, if his approach seems modernist, its lineage diverges from received notions of modernism. Of particular importance is Deleuze's emphasis on 'being for' and 'being with,' which are completely at odds with visions of synchronicity or global simultaneity.

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On the other hand, it is possible to ask whether the question of modernity or modernism really matters in this context. Goddard thus ends with the more radical possibility that the important question is no longer 'what era are we in?' but rather 'what practices are we engaged in, and how do they constitute modes of subjectivation?' This is to reinvent the basic question of modernity, by asking how we create new modes or modalities.

Now while Deleuze and Foucault have had a great impact on thinking modernity outside the West, questions often arise about the extent to which their story remains the story of Europe. Timothy Mitchell, for instance, discusses some of the postcolonial criticism of Foucault's work. He concludes that the spatializing tendencies of Foucault's discursive analyses stage a homogeneous time-space that allows for no interruptions from the non-West in the story of modernity.¹⁵ Goddard's account suggests that Foucault began to break with the spatializing tendencies of his earlier work, as he turned toward processes of subjectivation. Yet there is no doubt that Foucault's evocation of Zen and the Orient in his later work continues to posit Japan and China as spaces entirely outside, and even incommensurable with, those of the West. This is, in effect, where Jon Solomon's critique of sovereignty (and Foucault) begins. For he situates his critique at the moment when the outside of the West is no longer discernable as it was in the centuries of Western expansion and imperial conquest.

The extension of political sovereignty to an international league of nations spanning the globe is a recent phenomenon, coming with the processes of decolonization after World War II. Yet, Solomon argues, the result has not been self-determining nations (on the Wilsonian model) or self-governing individuals (on the model of Foucault). Indeed, the model of sovereignty now serves only to mask a new power formation: the sovereign police. Crudely put, the transfer of sovereignty has not been from God to monarch to Man. Sovereignty persists not in citizens but in police forces. The modern problem is not that of self-governing individuals and representational politics that discipline subjects to internalize the laws of separate spaces and spheres of activity (the production of space with the prison as model). Rather it is the dissolution of national boundaries and reduction of individuals to unqualified life or 'bare life.' In essence, Solomon sees a complete dissolution of Foucault's biopolitics of inclusion/exclusion, which afforded sovereignty to those who accepted subjection to it, albeit in the dubious form of protection of their life. The transfer of sovereignty to the police affords no

space for welfare. The new biopolitics is that of assuring the complete mobilization of populations.

Solomon's account builds on Agamben to suggest that, if Foucault, like many others, did not see this other biopolitics, it was for geopolitical and historical reasons. Foucault looked at disciplinary societies that reached an apogee in the early twentieth century. At that juncture, Solomon suggests that it was still possible to imagine a spatial divide between the West and the rest, and thus to think modernity spatially in terms of relations, as a problem of representation. While there is some resonance here with postcolonial theory's critique of Foucault, Solomon does not transfer the production of modernity from its alleged centre in the West to centre/periphery or West/rest relations. He does not think in terms of centre and periphery. The real problem, he argues, is our continued inability to think the non-relation in political theory. To this end, he suggests thinking the inclusive exception. Sovereignty is not a matter of relations between friends and enemies (that is, between particulars struggling among themselves to approximate the universal), but a matter of those who are outside (general rather than universal or particular, so to speak). One might see this outside deconstructively, as prior to relations, a supplement that functions as the condition of possibility and impossibility of the system. Solomon, however, does not deconstruct the system based on its points of internal otherness, arguing that these are sites of the system's assimilatory power.

Solomon looks at the contemporary status of Taiwan, posed between America and China as a permanent exception to the global production of national and individual sovereignty. In many respects, Taiwan exemplifies the model for (the failure of) modern sovereignty in East Asia. The rule of extraterritoriality meant that nations tended to conceive sovereignty not on the model of protection of citizens but on the model of policing the native populations to prevent violence against the colonizers. Solomon sees the native populations as the site of non-relation of sovereignty, neither represented politically as citizens nor treated as outsiders — they are neither inside nor outside national sovereignty. In the case of Taiwan, this condition is writ large. Effectively held in a state of permanent exception to national sovereignty, Taiwan is a fictive neo-liberal state whose populations remain under variations on American martial law, in a state of permanent crisis — treaties appropriately refer to 'people on Taiwan' not 'people of Taiwan.' The permanent crisis of Taiwan is not, however, the exception to the

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rule. Rather, Solomon argues, it is the permanent exception that shows the rules of contemporary geopolitics. Under globalization, we are not all Israelis (as some Americans submitted); nor are we all Americans (as some Europeans suggested). We are all Taiwanese and Korean — in a state of permanent crisis of sovereignty.

In different ways, Goddard and Solomon point to a new condition that demands thinking beyond modernity, that is, beyond subjection and sovereignty. While Solomon describes the contemporary reduction of humans to bare life under martial law and transnational capitalism, Goddard addresses an inability to think subjectivity beyond static spatial models of confinement (or inclusion/exclusion) — models associated with modernity and disciplinary society. When the essays are read together, it seems that Goddard's discussion could be seen as an effort to allow for resistance at the level of bare life (that is, within what Deleuze calls the 'society of control'). Resistance can no longer take the form of liberation from confinement (and maybe never did). Rather we need new forms of resistance, which he begins to conceptualize in terms of 'being for the world' and the co-presence of impossible worlds. Read together, the essays hint that some prime sites of this non-heroic, non-sovereign resistance will be immigration, the workplace, advanced education, health and nature. Clearly, however, this calls first for a way to think the world beyond sovereignty and subjection, and in some sense, beyond modernity.

Coda

Globalization is sometimes thought of as an intensification of the logic of modernization. It intensifies the modernist production and rationalization of space to the point that everything and every time comes to exist in a single interactive 'real time.' A truly globalized world could only exist in what Nietzsche styled the eternal present, and any temporal experience other than simultaneity or synchronicity would falter and fail. It is in this sense that the temporal rupture of modernity becomes global crisis, and to think modernity inevitably is to think the world. To think the failure of modernity is, on some level, to think the failure of the world, or at least, of one world. Of course, there are ways of failing and then there are ways of failing, for historical reasons. The failure of modernity thus is multiple, and there are as many histories as failures.

One of the important questions raised by this volume is that of whether our diagnoses of these failures are not beginning to converge on a generalized, unconditional failure (manifested as a global disciplinary formation). The point is not that we should return to positive notions of modernity, and think of modernity as merely incomplete yet immanently achievable. Modernity by definition can never arrive, or it is always already here. Rather, it is a question of how critiques of modernity (or modernization or both) must operate with (and within) an underlying totality — in particular, some kind of totalizing prefiguration that implies limits to the subject, epistemologically, ontologically or historically. Crucial sites of the prefiguration in this volume are modern language, culture, discourses, media, institutions — all of which entail impossible yet operative closures — productive failures. If discussions of modernity, regardless of an insistence on specificity of site, tend to converge as if despite themselves, it may be because such discussions have come to share a certain sense of the subject and the world — whence maybe a generalized sense of unconditional failure. Yet, in these essays, this generalized sense of modernity's failure also promises to open critique to the world, with new sense of the world and subjects, attentive to the multiplicity of empire.

In recent years, discussions of modernity have thoroughly challenged the simple diffusion model of a modernity that originates in the West and extends to the world. In cultural, linguistic and historical studies of modernity, close critical attention to processes of rupture with the Western modernity and reinscription of it has challenged prior wisdom about where and how modernity happens. Although modernity, as temporal rupture, inevitably directs attention to the problem of origins, it has become impossible to think modernity without some concept of 'originary difference' or 'divergence at the origin.' Nonetheless, if originary difference challenges the centre/periphery model, it runs the risk of recuperating a world systems model — one in which (to evoke Wallerstein) modernity is a thin net or framework spread over the globe, slowly filling in, becoming denser and more constricting. This is an image of global empire. And as the essays in this volume suggest, to confront such transformations, it may no longer be enough to say that 'modernity is not one *but* multiple' but rather 'modernity is one *and* multiple.' But then this may be to think the world beyond modernity, and the transformative rather than the new.

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NOTES

- ¹ Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, 'On Alternative Modernities,' in *Alter/Native Modernities*, ed. Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, Volume 1 in the Millennial Quartet miniseries of *Public Culture* (1999) 11:1, 1.
- ² Gaonkar, 'On Alternative Modernities,' 16–17.
- ³ Gaonkar, 'On Alternative Modernities,' 13.
- ⁴ Gaonkar, 'On Alternative Modernities,' 18.
- ⁵ Gilles Deleuze, 'Mediators,' trans. Martin Joughan, in *Incorporations*, ed. Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter (New York: Urzone Inc, 1992), 281.
- ⁶ Charles Taylor, 'Two Theories of Modernity,' in *Alter/Native Modernities*, ed. Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, Volume 1 in the Millennial Quartet miniseries of *Public Culture* (1999) 11:1, 153–174.
- ⁷ Stuart Hall, 'Introduction: Formations of Modernity,' in *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*, ed. Stuart Hall et al (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 3.
- ⁸ Hall, 'Introduction,' 7.
- ⁹ Vicki Kirby, 'Quantum Anthropologies,' in *Derrida Downunder*, ed. L. Simmons and H. Worth (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 2001).
- ¹⁰ Gayatri Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography,' in *Subaltern Studies IV: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, ed. Ranajit Guha (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 336–37.
- ¹¹ Alberto Moreiras, 'Hybridity and Double Consciousness,' *Cultural Studies* 13(3) 1999, 373–407.
- ¹² I evoke the language associated with genocide here, especially Dominic LaCapra's reworking of Freud's notion of mourning, partly because I find Yang Hyunah's rearticulation of the problem of Korean 'comfort woman' in terms of genocide quite convincing. Also, the language seems to fit the tone of Hong's essay. The essay in this volume by Jon Solomon on Taiwan addresses these issues as well, in the context of bare life. See Hyunah Yang, 'Revisiting the Issue of Korean 'Military Comfort Women': The Question of Truth and Positionality,' in *The Comfort Women: Colonialism, War, and Sex*, special issue of *positions* 5:1 (Spring 1997): 51–72. See too Dominick LaCapra, 'The Return of the Historically Repressed,' from *Representing the Holocaust: History, Memory, Trauma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 169–203; and 'Revisiting the Historians Debate: Mourning and Genocide,' from *History and Memory after Auschwitz* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 43–70.
- ¹³ Gilles Deleuze, 'Postscript on Control Societies,' in *Negotiations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 177.
- ¹⁴ Deleuze, 'Postscript on Control Societies,' 178.
- ¹⁵ Timothy Mitchell, 'The Stage of Modernity,' in *Questions of Modernity*, ed. Timothy Mitchell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2000), 1–34.