

Minding 'Identity' in A Depthless and Hyperreal World

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Abstract

From the Socrates to Hegel and Heidegger and beyond, the 'same' has been aiming to construct a hegemonic and master discourse, based upon the articulation of desire for 'Empire of the Selfsame', 'totality', 'Unity' and 'the One', and in virtue of the antagonistic exclusion of the 'Others'. Its philosophy privileged "oneness and unity at the expense of manyness and plurality". And its anthropology inscribed the Western Civilization as the one which has the "privilege of being the direct descendant of the very first civilization on Earth", and the civilizations and cultures of the Others described as "deviations and aberrations."

However, what today is called our "postmodern condition", either revises or totally rejects many of these age-old, deep-rooted ideas and paradigms. The celebration of "difference" and "Otherness", has made a room for different thinking on "Identity". The main concern of the writer in this paper is analyzing the possible relation between Islamism and postmodernism.

Key words: Binary opposition, Blur identity, Hybridization, Otherness, Rational identity, Sameness

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I

I can state categorically that the manifestations of hate are not diminishing under the new pluralism, but growing in number and intensity. (Anatoly Rybakov)

One problematic moment is iterated in the context of our time, over which our intellectual journey in this article begins. It marks what may be called a foundation myth of "Otherness and Identity".

Such problematic moment, however, as a postmodernist could say, is related to the era of modernity. Now, s/he may add, is the turn of post-modernity. We are at the threshold of an iconoclastic age; the age of reflexivity, irony, parody and *"the floating signifier, when word no longer attaches properly to thing, and no high bonding glues can help us..."* (Bradbury, 1987, 1, 5, 21-22); *"the age of partial objects, bricks that have been shattered to bits, and leftovers."* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, 42) We are now living in the era of the death of "universal values" (Laclau, 1995, 1); *"the end of modernity, the assault on foundationalism in its various expressions"* (Laclau, 1995, 1); the end of the hegemonic domination of the Self/Same (the West). Ours, is an era *"(fin de siècle), in which we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion."* (Bhabha, 1994, 1)

What today is called our "postmodern condition", either revises or totally rejects many age-old, deep-rooted concepts and paradigms which had been taken for granted for centuries. "The incredulity toward meta-narratives" (Lyotard, 1984) of modernity, the deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence; celebration of "difference" and "Otherness"; the discursive construction of 'reality';

the operation of the logic of undecidability; the ex-transcendentality of a given signified and unstable identity of any signifier; the insurrection of subjugated knowledge; the breakdown of the paternal metaphor; the crisis in representation; the decentering of the subject; the critique of binarism, are all marks of the problematization of these grand narratives.

Western man now is at the threshold of certain self-consciousness about a culture's own historical relativity, a sense of losing the absoluteness of any Western account of History. S/he now comes to affirm the fragmentation intrinsic in the fact that each society has its own regime of truth, its general politics of truth. S/he now calls for an openness to those once-tabooed aspects of 'otherness': religion and religiosity.

Western man stands at a historical turn when those universal grand narratives in which the dominant self speaks for the dominated others in a totalizing voice begins to be challenged, discarded and replaced by the "more pragmatic, ad hoc, contextual, and local" little narratives (*petits recits*) in which the hitherto voiceless others try to speak for themselves in their local voices.

Given this postmodern condition an issue arises as to what would be an appropriate response by Islamists. A number of responses are possible. First, Islamists might take the signifiers of post-modernity as the symptoms of a pervasive amorphous mood, what Heidegger calls a *Stimmung*: a mood of deconstruction, destabilization, rupture, and fracture of resistance to all forms of abstract totality, universalism, and rationalism.

Second, they should take this postmodern turn as the very possibility of a being-in-the-world-with-others which is not always already pre-dictated, pre-determined and pre-scribed-and thereby foreclosed by language and various institutionalized political relations which organize its meanings and *sense*, and thereby the meanings and *sense* of both their consciousness and their lives.

Third, the issue arises as to why, against a postmodern mood Islamists should concern themselves with obscure and forgotten discourses on religion and modernity, and attempt to re-theorize things and engage in esoteric fantasies about the obvious.

Fourth, they might conceptualize what has been presented as the Other of modernity (here, religion) outside the postmodern texts.

Fifth, they would inhabit a space between sameness/otherness, West/Islam, Dominate/dominated, inside/outside, and being-otherwise-than-being an Other.

Finally, it is so much easier, and even more worth for them to do as many other intellectuals would, i.e. keep with new intellectual waves; seeking reality always somewhere else; inhabiting - in their thoughts - not the house in which they live and make sense of their identity; constructing an 'a priori' outlook this time on the ground of post-modernity.

What is at issue here? Obviously, I am tracing the old trajectory of 'Otherness and identity' which has been continued to rob the spirit of Islamist movements even at threshold of what has called the postmodern turn.¹

In such postmodern condition the only thinkable strategy could that one calls for lifting a certain number of elements from different discourses, objects, pre-existing messages, integrating them in a new creation and producing an original totality. Or to detour/detourn rather than to tour; as Roland Barthes put it in another context, '*to change the object itself, to produce a new object [and] point of departure*'. (Barthes, 1977, 169)

1. A turn which is defined as the turn to a performance that is iterative and interrogative, to a repetition that is initiatory, instating a differential history that will not return to the power of the Same. A turn which opens up an enunciative space between Other and Same that does not simply contradict the metaphysical ideas of progress, racism, rationality, but distantiate them by 'repeating' these ideas, making them uncanny by displacing them in a number of culturally contradictory and discursively estranged locations.

But it is a valid question to ask, whether the Islamist Others desire/will to intervene any notion on Authentic identity and lay a new ground which is simultaneously inside and outside, and purely neither at the same time? And if not, how can one possibly explain their attempt to return to the 'Self', to think, talk, write, signify, testify, reason, and in one word to be otherwise - what may called the fear of "*difference and block access to the ethics of difference?*" (Fischer & Abedi, 2002, 153)

An assessment of such complex issues is beyond the scope of this paper. However, in what follows I try to open an argument on some given aspects of postmodernist texts - that is the questions of 'difference', 'space/human geography', and 'strategy of rupture' - through which I wish, first, to explain the continuous journey of Islamist movements toward a foundation based world.

Second, to bring under scrutiny their quest for a rock upon which they can base their identity, by a hope to interrogate, problematize or overthrow the logic of the dominant mastery discourses - whether local or universal.

Third, to find out if post-modernity could modify their reading of the question of 'Otherness and identity', and to see if any of the 'concessions' made by postmodernism to the Other can be of any value to them. From a different angle, to examine whether the postmodernist critiques, interpreted as a crisis of assumptions behind the meta-narrative of modernity, could push the process of identity formation and appropriation of a space beyond the logo-centric and exclusionary logic of the West and its modernity? Could postmodernists step outside the identity they have developed in Western civilization to such degree that they can repudiate all that comes to them from the Grand Narrative of modernity and toss aside the Western metaphysics of presence?

II

The Indignity of Speaking for 'Others'

They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented. (Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte)

Let me begin this section by trying to examine whether the very postmodernist concepts of 'difference', 'differance' and 'paralogy', could help postmodernists to avoid the 'indignity of speaking for Other'? Whether they have the appropriated 'thin' and 'thick' words, and the adequate mental imagery, to understand 'Others' properly, to speak for them, and to cast some significant light on cultural and political practices of voiceless peoples?

Since the Modern Age and Enlightenment, it is said, the Western version of human civilization - their knowledge of themselves, their history and the rest of the world - has been mainly framed, legitimized, disseminated and perpetuated by and through what Lyotard has called 'Grand Narrative', from which the hegemonic Self/Same speaks for all. With its disavowal of any source of identity external to itself, modernity elevated its putative universality as the new transcendent. As universal, identity could now have no positive limits and would, without more, lack coherence.

It could no longer take identity through some mythic sameness with a transcendent model outside of itself. Rather, identity and its limits were generated from within, as it were, by constituting identity as universal in opposition to what is exceptional to its universality. What is 'Other' to the universal could only be absolutely, irredeemably Other. It must remain in a distinct region, quite 'outside' the realm of the universal, and remain as a point of constant opposition to it.

In its project to discredit "prejudices," the Enlightenment therefore, proposes an ideal of truth and understanding that requires the transcendence of one's web of situated positionality - one's textuality - and free oneself from one's temporal and spatial locality. As Spivak points out, in representing an objective, independent world, as well as in representing the subaltern other, the modern intellectuals represent themselves as transparent; that is to say, they don the mask of what she calls the "absent nonrepresenter" who then pretends that the objects and the oppressed of her/his writing-into-being speak for themselves. (Chakravorty, 1988)

"A conscious, historically framed action" as Bauman says, "has been, so to speak, 'dehistoricized', and envisaged as a universal process, characteristic of all social life." (Bauman, 1990a, 155) Everywhere and at all times differences between the ways human beings behave tend to disappear or at least blur; whenever and wherever human beings of distinct habits lived close to each other, they would tend, with the passage of time, to become more like each other; some habits would gradually give way to others, so that more uniformity will result. (Bauman, 1990a, 156) Hence, an excluded outside or an assimilated inside.

Unambiguously, 'assimilation'¹ here stood for conversion, not a

1. Literally, assimilation means making alike. In the biological narrative of the sixteenth century the term 'assimilation' referred to the acts of absorption and incorporation performed by living organisms. As a part of biological narrative 'assimilation' stood for the activity of the foraging organism, that subordinated parts of the environment to its own needs and did it by transforming them so that they become identical with its own 'fluids and tissues' (the organism as, simultaneously, *causa finalis*, *causa formalis* and *causa efficiens* of the process and its outcome). The imagery that the concept evoked was one of a living, active body, bestowing or impressing its own form and quality upon something different from itself, and doing it on its own initiative and for its own purpose; of a process, in the course of which the form and quality of the other entity went through a radical change, while the identity of 'assimilating' body was maintained and, indeed, kept constant in the only way it could. It was this imagery that made the biological concept eminently suitable for its new, social, semantic function. (See Bauman, 1990a, 157)

self-administered change; an action performed by a living organism on its passive environment. It meant "to convert into a substance of its own nature"; "the conversion by an animal or plant of extraneous material into fluids and tissues identical with its own." (Bauman, 1990b, 156) In this context, as Said tells us "thinking about cultural exchange involves thinking about domination and forcible appropriation: someone loses, someone gains". (Said, 1994, 235)

Fanon goes still further when he reverses the hitherto accepted paradigm by which Europe gave the colonies their modernity and argues instead that not only were "the well-being and the progress of Europe built up with the sweat and the dead bodies of Negroes, Arabs, Indians, and the yellow races" but "Europe is literally the creation of the Third World". (Fanon, 1964)

Post-modernity with its sensitivity toward "difference" and "Otherness" has been waging a war against totality and the indignity of speaking for Others. "To assert one's own differential identity", postmodernism tells us, "involves the inclusion in that identity of the other, as that from whom one delimits oneself". (Laclau, 1995, 3) This is to say, every identity (as Derrida put it) is relational and the affirmation of a difference is a precondition for the existence of any identity. There is no major historical change in which the identity of all intervening forces is not transformed. There is no possibility of victory in terms of an already acquired cultural authenticity.

To understand postmodernism's 'sensitivity' toward 'difference' and 'Otherness' one however should trace back its genealogy to the Saussurean linguistic turn. In *Course in General Linguistics*, Saussure defines language as a system of signs in which each in the system has meaning only by virtue of its difference from the other. "In the linguistic system", says Saussure, "there are only differences without positive terms." (Saussure, 1974, 129) Linguistic units are not given in a positive and unequivocal fashion but must be defined in relation to others. The relationships between the signifier and the signified and

between a sign, which consists of both the signifier and signified, and its referent are arbitrary. That is to say, there is no self-evident link or one-to-one relationship between the sign and the concept it serves to evoke. *"Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system. The idea or phonic substance that an idea sign contains is less important than the other signs that surround it."* (Saussure, 1974, 120)

Signs are caught up in a play where differences distinguish them from one another and are the makers of their identity. *"The important thing in the word"*, Saussure says, *"is not the sound sequence alone but the phonic differences that make it possible to distinguish this word from all others because 'differences' carry signification"*. (Saussure, 1974, 118) Signs do not signify anything in themselves, but a sign marks a difference of meaning between itself and other signs within a system.

Another legacy of Saussure is his dichotomy of *langue* (the linguistic structure or the general system of articulated relationships) and *parole* (the individual utterance or the speech event made possible by the system) - from which it follows that the proper object of study for linguists should be *langue* rather than *parole*. (Saussure, 1974, 118) He also distinguishes between the synchronic (which treats language as a network of structural relations existing at any given time) and the diachronic (method which studies the correlation between elements from different historical periods); and syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations in the system and between the two constituents of the sign, signifier and signified. The value of any term is determined by its environment or syntagmatic context.

Language in the Saussurean sense thus is a form not a substance. Signs are constituted solely by their relationships with other signs. Moreover the connection between the material form of the signifier and what we call its signified (meaning or idea) is purely arbitrary. But "if", as Laclau put it, *"language is all form and not substance, and if*

there is a perfect isomorphism between the order of the signifier and that of the signified, how is it possible to establish the difference between the two?" (Laclau, 1993, 333) This, of course, could be done only in so far as one makes the sign distinguishable from its neighbors, and *"only if one assumes a subject exterior to the linguistic system"*. (Laclau, 1993, 333)

Derrida draws the following radical conclusions. If intelligibility depends only on lateral relations of signifiers and not at all on vertical relations between signifier and signified; then no signifier can ever fully coincide with the idea it is said to represent. The binary structure is never definitive. The signified is always occulted by the signifier rather than delivered by it in and of itself. Since every signifier is determined by the infinity of all possible significations, the full possession of the signified by the signifier always withdraws. Each signifier is always in debt to all the others and thus defers to them. Meaning becomes promissory, constituted not by correspondence of word and idea but by an unlimited cross-referencing of signs among themselves, "calculations without end". (Derrida, 1982, 7)

Thus the deconstruction of Saussure's semiology, through which he thought of the sign as "moving towards" to a certain presence (an ideal object) and that the value of the sign is governed by the fullness with which the signifier can convey this presence - uses one aspect of the theory, differentiation, to undermine another, binary sign-structure. The collapse of the two-tier model has an important consequence. It makes it impossible to account for either the origin of meaning (because the referent is always deferred) or for its completion (because meaning is subject to an endless calculus) from within the structural model itself.

Yet for all its frailty, language is; and, since it has not "fallen from the sky," it must contain a moment of inauguration whether logically or genetically. Derrida would have us think of *differance* in this role. That is to say, in the place of what, in metaphysics, would be an a-priori condition of possibility or a first cause? He writes:

"We can extend to the system of signs in general what Saussure says about language. "The linguistic system (*langue*) is necessary for speech events (*parole*) to be intelligible and produce their effects, but the latter are necessary for the system to establish itself". There is a circle here, for if one distinguishes rigorously *langue* from *parole*, code and message, schema and usage, etc. and if one is to do justice to the two principles here enunciated, one does not know where to begin and something in general can begin, be it *langue* or *parole*. One must therefore recognize, prior to any dissociation of *langue* from *parole*, code and message and what goes with it, a systematic production of differences, the production of a system of differences - a difference among whose effects one might later by association and for specific reasons, distinguish a linguistics of *langue* from a linguistics of *parole*¹". (Derrida, 1981b, 26)

Derrida conceptualizes 'difference' with a double sense, in a way that is not in difference. The double sense of 'differer' is preserved in 'difference' in a way that it is not in 'difference'. The latter means simply 'difference' as a static state of affairs, whereas the former conveys both 'deferring' and 'differing' at the same time in a dynamic fusion of noun and verb. *Differance* is, firstly, 'temporizing', the dynamic of deferring, of postponing; and, secondly, 'spacing' the dynamic of making spaces, of making differences.

In coining this term, Derrida has evaded a number of grammatical and semantic oppositions. Not only is *differance* undecided between its two meanings, between noun and verb, and between propriety and impropriety but, importantly, between active and passive voices, and, between transitive and intransitive modes. *Differance*, like 'resonance', is neither simply the operation of a subject nor a quality of an object. It cannot be conceived "on the basis of the categories of agent and patient". (Derrida, 1982, 9) *Differance* as Ryan has pointed out, consolidates also the dual meaning of the verb *differer* from

1. The term difference, which Derrida introduces in this passage, refers to the equivocal nature of *langue* and *parole* in relation to the birth of language.

another perspective. It incorporates to differ, "*in spatial distinction or relation to another*", with the verb to defer "*as in temporizing or delay*". (Ryan, 1982, 11)

Derrida thus questions the authority of the ideal presence as the standard which governs signification. In making the differential theory more thoroughgoing the philosophical value of presence is undermined. It is now *differance* that 'governs' the presentation of signs not a primordially present signified. Indeed we can say that, far from being primary and original, presence is a result of *differance*. In both of its senses *differance* orients the present (here and now) in terms of that which it is not. 'Deferring' it is oriented to a time other than now; 'differing' to a place other than here. This dislocation of the origin of the present is not provisional. Each present is not oriented to a particular presentable now but to a time that is always other than now. The here and now is revealed from always absent standpoints.

Thus *differance* as the proliferation of times and spaces is the condition of possibility of a present thinkable only as issuing from differential play. As the endless deferral of presence it is precisely that which is necessarily never present so that presences (signs, entities, selves...) may appear. Where Derrida's involvement with metaphysics becomes openly ambiguous is with his refusal to see *differance* straightforwardly supplant foundational principles that invoke presence. *Differance* is rather the 'name' of the subversion of foundational principles as such. "*Precisely what is put in question here is the demand for a de jure beginning, an absolute point of departure, a principle of responsibility*". This is what Derrida identifies as "*the value arkhe*". (Derrida, 1982, 6)

Differance may only be called originary so long as the values of origin are not thought of in terms of the *arkhe*. For *differance* does not "master" theoretical structure. It does not subject the totality to its rule. On the contrary it is the totality that represses and excludes *differance* in order to contrive the semblance of completion. *Differance*

is not sovereign but rather constitutes the margins of philosophy. It is the non-text that lets the text take on its ordered shape. *Differance* is "the very opening of the space in which ontotheology - philosophy - produces its system and its history". (Derrida, 1982, 6) We must think the originality of *differance* without tying it to concepts of metaphysical domination.

Yet, for Derrida, these concepts are utterly and necessarily pervasive. The tendency to system is not an ideological bias but an inevitability that is characteristic of conceptuality as such. If *differance* is an alternative to the fundamental principles of past philosophy it is not their simple contrary. Derrida recognizes that we are bound to think from within structures and therefore that *differance* will always be threatened by presence-thinking and by the *arkhe*. The thinking of *differance* is maintained "in a certain necessary relationship with the structural limits of mastery". (Derrida, 1982, 7)

But in what way, if at all, does *differance* depart from a tradition of fundamental principles (dialectic, will-to-power, ontic-ontological difference)? The methods of 'presentation' of *differance*, it is said, will be conceivable only through what it is not. *Differance* always exceeds the totality of the conceivable. It can be conceived only as inconceivable. *Differance*, on the other hand, "derives from no category of being, whether present or absent". (Derrida, 1982, 6) *Differance* then is not simply absent but the necessarily unrepresentable that allows presence to emerge. Therefore to express the 'operation' of *differance* Derrida must write: "Now if *differance* is what makes possible the presentation of the being-present, it never presents itself as such". [m 6] Not only does *differance* not exist but it doesn't not-exist either.

Thus Derrida claims that *differance* cannot be assimilated into the tradition because it is to be thought in no relation to appearing present entities. "What is written as *differance* will be the playing movement that "produces" - by means of something that is not simply an activity - these differences, these effects of difference. This does not mean that

differance that produces differences is somehow before them, in a simple and unmodified-in-different present. Differance is the non-full, non-simple structure and differentiating origin of differences. Thus the name "origin" no longer suits it". (Derrida, 1982, 11)

For Derrida *differance* will be a resurrection of the "middle voice". (Derrida, 1982, 9) It suspends oppositions and thereby creates an opening on to that which philosophy has bracketed out in order to establish for itself its fundamental dualisms; subject-object, intelligible-sensible, culture-nature. And his deconstruction as a "responsibility toward the trace of the other" (Kearney, 1984, 123); a critique of the grounds of knowledge in general, but specifically of the grounds of Occidental knowledge (Young, 2004, 17) and the equation of knowledge with *'what is called Western thought, the thought whose destiny is to extend its domains while the boundaries of the West are drawn back'* (Derrid, 1978, 4) & (Foucault, 1966, xxiiiiv and passim.), a rejection of *'a certain fundamental Europeanization of world culture'* (Derrida & McDonald, 1982, 69), and a problematization of not only the Enlightenment, and sociology, but also the whole metaphysical tradition of Western philosophy¹; the decentralization and decolonization of European thought-insofar as it is *'incapable of respecting the Being and meaning of the other'*, and to the extent that its philosophical tradition makes *'common cause with oppression and with the totalitarianism of the Same'*. (Derrid, 1978, 91)

The question of "difference" and "Otherness" also finds its expression in the texts of Foucault and Lyotard. Foucault's entire

1. In his criticism of philosophy, Derrida's (1967) calls into question the tradition of Western philosophy, particularly its logocentrism. From Derrida's (1967) point of view the Western philosophical tradition is based on metaphysics, reason, and a belief in progress. Derrida seeks to overturn traditional metaphysics which seeks to find firm unified foundation for reason. In other words, he was skeptical about the grounding of knowledge and seeks "the replacement of rationality by subjectivity".

oeuvre can be read as a transgression against the normalizing powers of the hegemonic self/same. By the same intention Lyotard characterized the 'post-modern condition' by fragmentation of science into a congerie of games, each seeking not deterministic laws but instabilities, and all legitimizing themselves, not by appeal to some grand narrative which has been used to legitimate the quest for knowledge and the importance of scientific research, but by *paralogy*, the violation of rules.

There are two major forms of the legitimization narrative. In the first, the narrative of emancipation, the people are the subject of science. Here, it is argued that through scientific research man will eventually create a society free from poverty and injustice. According to this narrative legitimation, all research undertaken by members of the general scientific community is justified because it will eventually lead to an improvement in the lives of the people. In the second major narrative of legitimation, the speculative mind, the practice of philosophy, is the subject of science. Here, knowledge is sought for its own sake on the assumption that every small contribution will eventually lead to advancement in the totality of knowledge.

According to Lyotard, neither of these two narratives can now be used to justify scientific research: "Speculative or humanistic philosophy is forced to relinquish its legitimation duties". This crisis of legitimation has been partly brought about by the breakdown in the belief that a unified totality of knowledge is possible and that if it were it would necessarily benefit humankind. Citing the way in which the techno-sciences can be said to have increased rather than alleviated disease, Lyotard critiques the very idea of progress:

"One can note a sort of decay in the confidence placed by the two last centuries in the idea of progress. The idea of progress as possible, probable or necessary was rooted in the certainty that the development of the arts, technology, knowledge and liberty would be profitable to mankind as a whole". (Lyotard, 1984, 6)

He points out that although there were disagreements, even wars,

over the "name of the subject" to be liberated, the contestants agreed that activities were "legitimate" if they contributed to the eventual liberation of humankind. However:

"After two centuries, we are more sensitive to signs that signify the contrary. Neither economic nor political liberalism, nor the various Marxisms, emerge from the sanguinary last two centuries free from the suspicion of crimes against mankind". (Lyotard, 1984, 6)

What Lyotard calls "Postmodern knowledge", he contends, *"refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable"*. (Lyotard, 1984, xxv) As Jameson suggests in his foreword to Lyotard's text, *"Lyotard's ultimate vision of science and knowledge today [is] as a search for consensus, but very precisely for 'instabilities'...in which the point is not to reach agreement but to undermine from within the very framework in which the previous 'normal science' had been conducted"*. (Lyotard, 1979, xix)

The logic of "paralogy" - open system, local determination, and anti-method - which is sensitive to difference and fights against the homogenizing "terror" of system, permanent institution, consensus, and totality was used by Lyotard to *"wage a war on totality;... activate the differences and save the honor of the name"*. (Lyotard, 1986) Using the practice of "paralogy" as a new mode of legitimation in the postmodern condition, and drawing on the later Wittgenstein, Lyotard characterizes postmodern discourse as a heterogeneous group of language games¹ which diverge from all those grand narratives that ground legitimacy in appeals, whether in the name of truth, justice or performativity, either to a universal subject of knowledge or to social consensus. In a nutshell, Lyotard's postmodernism signifies "incredulity towards metanarratives" (Lyotard, 1984, xxiv), and challenges any centralized authority or institution.

1. These language games range from Wittgensteinian 'models of discourse', that is, various forms of utterance - denotative, performative, prescriptive, etc. - that all follow their own specific set of rules, via the discourses that employed by social institutions and professions, to full-scale narratives.

But what if the celebration of difference carries with it the insistence that synchronicity is the key site of historical evaluation, if the symbols, products, and meanings of other cultures are decontextualized and then juxtaposed or combined with similarly extracted elements, the historical and political vitality of the distinct and of the distinguishable will be erased. Moreover, under a new Occidental panoply of decontextualized and re-amalgamated meanings, there is the possibility that the potentially fissuring impact of the non-West on the hegemonic discourses of the West will be better resisted and contained.

As Richard observes it, there has been a tendency in the West for postmodernism to defend itself against the potentially disrupting influence of the Other by inserting it back into a framework which domesticates difference and contradiction. (Richard, Winter 1988, 5-12) Richard further stresses how a symptomatic problem of the centre's postmodern discourse is the inclination to include the periphery under the tolerant slogan of the Other, thus taking away the possibility that Latin Americans can be actors in 'our own reformulation of discourses'. (Slater, 1994)

In explaining that the object of his study is the condition of knowledge in the 'most highly developed societies', Lyotard for instance, conflates North America with the 'American continent' as a whole. (Lyotard, 1984, xxiii) In this way - Latin - America becomes the not-one, the unnamed part of the American continent. What also if the postmodernist critique of the practice of "speaking for others" which is predicated on the postmodern understanding of the intricate relations among power, discourse, and knowledge: the recognition that "who is speaking" affects the meaning or "truth" of what is said¹, gives way to its own problematization, when the postmodernists themselves could not avoid the 'indignity of speaking for other'.

1. That is, "truth" is very much shaped by discourse or what Foucault calls "rituals of speaking", something which turns out to be not neutral but power-related, especially when only the privileged have access to the dominant discourse.

Whether Foucault who, according to Gilles Deleuze, is the first who teaches the postmodernists 'the indignity of speaking for others' could avoid speaking for madness? For surely not all practices of speaking for others are inherently repressive. One has to avoid the twins' traps of what Paul Gilroy calls, "ethnic insiderism", in which only the Yoruba can speak for the Yoruba. 'I want to speak for myself' should not be understood as 'only I can speak for myself'. After all, to some extent speaking for/on other is an inevitable practice in human every day life. Language itself, as Bakhtin informs us, "*lies on the borderline between oneself and the other*". The word we use in language is "half someone else's." Prior to our appropriation, it "*exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intention*". (Bakhtin, 1981, 293-94)

But if in the practice of speaking for others, one engages in the act of representing and thus s/he participates as Gramsci would put it, in the construction of their "subject position", s/he has to be able to avoid the trap of the power-laden economy of the Self/Same. Putting it differently, since the very act of construction or representation is inevitably mediated and is product of the postmodernists' own language and their own discursive context, they could not avoid the trap of misunderstanding and misrepresenting the others insofar as the 'thin' and 'thick' words they are using to speak for/about others have no meanings outside the repressive language of the West.

The following argument attempts to examine other aspect of the postmodern discourse, i.e., its radical interrogative method toward the meta narratives of the West and modernity.

III

The Honor of a Radical Interrogation

But if you claim you are opening up a radical interrogation, if you wish to place your discourse at the level at which we place ourselves, you know very well that it will enter our game, and, in turn extend the dimension that its trying to free itself from. Either it does not reach us or we claim it. (Michel Foucault)

The next problem with post-modernity begins as soon as one attempts to speak against the master texts of the West and modernity. One, as Derrida would say, can only confirm them, have already confirmed them.¹ *"It is only to itself that one could interrupt/intervene the grand narrative or discursive economy of the West; it is only to itself that an appeal against it can be brought, only in itself that a protest against it can be made; on its own terrain"*. (Derrida, 1978, 59) *"We can undertake [just] a critique of it from within by identifying and reversing the hierarchies it has established"*. (Culler, 1982, 155) Hence, a shameless hybrid. A "perilous territory of not-belonging". A liminalitary representation. A blurred identity. A call for not overthrowing a political system, but just proposing to "unsettle" or deconstruct conventional political systems. (Rosenau, 1992, 139)

Revolutions *"have been betrayed, reforms have been counterproductive, and even resistance has been undone"*. (Nelson, 1987 cited in Rosenau, 1992, 140) To actively work for political or social change, to *"bet on*

1. Derrida says, "As soon as he speaks against Hegel, Levinas can only confirm him, has already confirmed him." (Derrida, 1978, 276)

liberation, emancipation, the resurrection of the subject", is to act in accordance with the "political logic of the system". It is to play into the hands of the oppressor, to accept "subjecthood". (Levin & Kroker, 1984, 15-16) & (Baudrillard, 1983a, 107-9)

Would it be therefore possible through crossing borders and blurring/merging of distinctions and by means of deconstruction "to bring the end of [Western] metaphysics"? Concretely speaking, what sort of politics is possible at "the end of metaphysics" or "in the wake of deconstruction"?

For surely more explanation is needed. For it seems we are problematizing both what has called the 'postmodern politics' (if any), and Derridian insistence "on the fact that deconstruction is not a discursive or theoretical matter, but practico-political, and it is always produced within what we call (rather summarily) institutional frameworks". (Derrida, 1980, 536 cited in Dews, 2007, 35)

How can one text, assuming its unity, give or present another to be read, without touching it, without saying anything about it, practically without referring to it? (Derrida, 1979, 80) Derrida asks in seeking an alternative to "mimetological" commentary, which refers to that capture of representation by the metaphysics of "logocentrism", the era extending from Plato to Freud (and beyond) in which writing (all manner of inscription) is reduced to a secondary status as "vehicle", in which the signified or referent is always prior to the material sign, the purely intelligible prior to the merely sensible.

His solution is to "endeavor to create an effect of superimposing, or superimprinting one text on the other", the text as "palimpsest" or "macula", a double band or "double bind" procedure which breaks with the conventional assumptions of criticism and pedagogy: "One procession is superimposed on the other, accompanying it without accompanying it". (Derrida, 1979, 80)

Derrida's desire to superimpose one text on the other (the program to which mimicry is addressed) is an attempt to devise a system of

reference or representation which works in terms of *differance*, with its reversible temporality, rather than in terms of the irreversible time of the sign. From the very beginning, then, the strategy of deconstruction¹ has been repetition:

1. Deconstruction basically tackles (through three strategies) the fiction that a thing can be known only by what it is not. First, by uncovering the fear that a particular text or argument depends on an oppositional structuring, the author, or the text, reasons by antinomies, opposing terms to one another with no analysis of middle categories or alternative or plural terms; for example, "peace" will be opposed to "war", "truth" to "fiction", "chaos" to "order", and so on. Not merely differentiated and set in opposition to each other, the terms are also differently weighted, one given a superior status over the other, which is regarded "as a complication, a negation, a manifestation, or a disruption of the first". Thus, a hierarchical struggle attends such terminological exchanges. The denigrated term essentially functions to highlight the other term's significance; its formal function is to signify, or identify, the dominant term. The very differentiation and exclusion of this subordinate "opposite" defines the dominant term, which, as it were, draws a boundary around itself and declares: "This I am, and not That". "That", outside the boundary, is the Other, the not-self, upon which "This" depends for its identity. This operation (which at once differentiates one term from another, prefers one to the other, and arranges them hierarchically, displacing the subordinate term beyond the boundary of what is significant and desirable in context) typifies the logocentric procedure. From ancient Greek philosophy through the present time, logocentrism has been the dominant operation for constructing meaning in western thought. What deconstruction aims to "deconstruct" is the structuring of paired concepts as inevitably opposed and as opposed in a zero-sum relation. Derrida explains that the deconstructive operation requires essentially two moves: to reverse the hierarchy and to undo the pairing. The reversal is one part of the deconstructive move. The other part is to displace the entire logocentric system for that particular text or context. This also gives curious results since it now turns out that speech and writing are both forms of "archi-writing," same and other are both variants of "archi-other", etc. "Archi-writing" reforms the "vulgar concept of writing" into a new concept which now includes both speech and writing. Second by looking for certain key words such as "parergon" in Kant, "pharmakon" in Plato, "supplement" in Rousseau, and "hymen" in Mallarmé, in the text that, so to speak, give the game away. Certain key words *"figure in oppositions that are essential to a text's argument, but they also function in ways that subvert those oppositions.... These terms are the points at which the strains of an attempt*

(t) here is probably no choice to be made between two lines of thought; our task is rather to reflect on the circularity which makes the one pass into the other indefinitely. And, by strictly repeating this circle in its own historical possibility, we allow the production of some elliptical change of site, within the difference involved repetition. (Derrida, 1973, 128)

That is to say, deconstruction does not stand outside the text in a total opposition to the text. It infiltrates the text and attempts to show the double character of the text. That is, deconstruction works against the text only in the sense that it attempts to show that the first surface, the metaphysical structure, cannot stand on its own, but must always be supplemented by the second surface. Reading it differently, deconstruction is not an anti-essentialism, but an infiltration and subversion of essentialism. Where essentialism claims that the essence/accident relation is structured such essence is prior to accident, separate from accident and always recoverable in its pure form, and that accident is purely outside essence, deconstruction shows that accident is always 'inside' essence as its condition of possibility.

Deconstruction thus is positioned vis-à-vis presence as a supplement, not as an exterior entity or as an opponent. There is never a 'pure' deconstructive practice that escapes the metaphysics of presence; one finds oneself, inevitably, doing something and, to an extent, doing its discursive opposite-precisely at the same time. Supplementation in the form of deconstruction is possible only because deconstruction is always already at work in the original foundations of the text itself, and frequently retains some of the

to sustain or impose logocentric conclusions make themselves felt in a text, moments of uncanny opacity that can lead to rewarding commentary". (Culler, 1982, 213) And third, by paying close attention to marginal features of the text such as the sort of metaphors that occur in it, because such marginal features "are clues to what is truly important". (Culler, 1982, 146)

features of the pre-deconstruction. The deconstructed, disfavored term differs from the pre-deconstructed one, but not radically and not in all aspects.

Jacob Rogozinski in *Deconstruct the Revolution* argued that, the "inaugural gesture" of deconstruction, the one that opens its field of operation, is the rejection of the radical cut or break (*coupure*). "I do not believe in decisive ruptures, in an unequivocal 'epistemological break,' as it is called today. Breaks are always, and fatally, re-inscribed in an old cloth that must continually, interminably be undone". (Derrida, 1981b, 24) Putting it differently, a politics of deconstruction can be inaugurated only by a rejection of revolution, and outside. It must deconstruct revolution as the metaphysical project of an impossible radical break. It must expose the latter's "arche-teleological structure" which projects an origin and an end, promising an "end of man" as the total re-appropriation of his proper and as the return of the parousia of his presence. It must disconcert any opposition between the outside and the inside, between the external and the internal edge-line, the framer and the framed. Constructing two parallel and simultaneous essays demarcated by a horizontal dividing line, he demonstrates the necessity of such an overrun, such a *debordement*.

From a different angle, as Robert Bernasconi has pointed out, much of the suspicion directed at the politics of deconstruction arises from the fact that deconstruction tends to be presented as a formal method, which as such can be applied to a variety of purposes, including disreputable ones. As "long as deconstruction is portrayed as a formal method it would appear to lack an ethical-political direction independent of that given it by its practitioners. At the very least, the argument would run, deconstruction's formalism amounts to a neutrality which can be put to the service of any political cause, including that of whitewashing". (Bernasconi, 1993, 95)

Although Derrida by the time of *Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* (1980) insists "that deconstruction is not a discursive or

theoretical matter, but practico-political, and it is always produced within what we call (rather summarily) institutional frameworks", (Dews, 2007, 35) he has not been noticeably successful in articulating the relationship between 'deconstruction' in its initial discursive sense, as concerned with the analysis of 'logocentrism' and the 'metaphysics of presence', and his more concrete political concerns. Throughout his work, Derrida hints at a complicity between the fundamental assumptions of Western thought and the violence and repressions which have characterized Western history, but the nature of this complicity is never truly clarified.

One could suggest that the disanalogy between texts and institutions, and Derrida's consequent inability to give an appropriate account of the latter as the major reason for this. For Derrida cannot help but acknowledge that institutions are not simply textual or discursive structures, but rather consist of "*a powerful system of forces and multiple antagonisms*". (Derrida cited in Dews, 2007, 35) Yet this politically necessary recognition of a non-textual reality enters into conflict with Derrida's own contention that there is no "*outside of the text*", since "*the generalized graphics that always already begun, is always grafted on to a "prior" writing*". (Derrida, 1981a, 328)

Furthermore, given that institutions are traversed by relations of force, it is difficult to see how deconstruction could be applied to them. Deconstruction is centrally concerned with exposing the mechanisms whereby texts generate effects of meaning and truth while, at the same time, undermining them-in other words, with logical contradictions.

It is hard therefore, one moves (through the deconstructive intervention) toward a radical shake-up. A radical interrogation always comes from outside. It takes place in the violent relationship - be it 'linguistic' or ethnological, economic, political, or military - between the Same and its Other. (Derrida, September 1969, 56) Further, the political antagonisms could not be simply reduced to

logical contradictions where deconstruction is centrally concerned with exposing the mechanisms whereby texts generate effects of meaning and truth while, at the same time, undermining them. In other words, given that institutions are traversed by relations of force, deconstruction of philosophical reason has been accused in turn of undermining the possibility of rational opposition to existing institutions, and therefore of accommodating even if indirectly-to the status quo.

From a different angle, given a pervasive politics of Same supremacy which seeks to prevent the formation of radical Other subjectivity, and given that it is as subject one comes to voice, then it seems that the postmodernist focus on the critique of identity appears at first glance to threaten and close down the possibility that this discourse and practice will allow those who have suffered the crippling effects of colonization and domination gain or regain a hearing.

IV

The Signs of the 'Time' which Signify the Contrary

If confusion is the sign of the times, I see
at the root of this confusion a rupture
between things and words, and the ideas
that are their representation. (Artaud)
(Sayyid, 1994, 264)

In this section I want to direct my argument toward others problematic aspects of postmodern texts, that is, the questions of 'time' and 'place'. Here I try to find out whether the time and the place within which postmodern discourses are articulated and from

which postmodernists attempt to talk about Others, have any affinity with those of the Others'.

Although it is hard to see post-modernity as a specific historical era, some discussions of postmodernism in the West attempt to relate it to an intellectual period with specific cultural characteristics and philosophical content. Baudrillard, for instance, talks about a post-industrial era, when, as he stresses, the new forms of technology and information become central to the shift from a productive to a reproductive social order in which simulations and models increasingly constitute the world so that the distinction between the real and appearance becomes erased. (Baudrillard, 1983a)

Lyotard writes, about an era when the "computerization of society" (Lyotard, 1979, 67) effects the nature of our knowledge, and "knowledge has become the principal force of production", and a "new depthlessness" in representation - one grounded in the fetishization of the image as simulacrum - marks off a profoundly ahistorical drive which seeks to efface the past as "referent" and leave behind itself nothing but "texts" - what Jameson calls the era of 'late capitalism'. (Jameson, 1984, 53-66)

In such a simulational world, Baudrillard points out, the development of commodity production coupled with information technology have led to the "triumph of signifying culture" which then reverses the direction of determinism, so that social relations becomes saturated with shifting cultural signs to the extent that we can no longer speak of class or normativity and are faced by "the end of the social". (Baudrillard, 1983b)

In *The Mirror of Production* (1975) and the *Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1981), drawing on semiology in the Saussurean sense, Baudrillard has theorized the logic of the commodity to point to the way in which under capitalism the commodity has become a sign with its meaning arbitrarily determined by its position in a self-referential system of signifiers. Baudrillard explores, in Mark Poster's

words, *"the possibility that consumption has become the chief basis of the social order and of its internal classification"*. (Poster, 1988, 2) He argues that consumption entails the active manipulation of signs. The consumer products function within a differential sign system that programs individual consumption and through that consumption structures the social, and moves further towards the position that consumption has become *"a fundamental mutation in the ecology of the human species"*. (Baudrillard, 1970, 29)

This becomes central to late capitalist society where sign and commodity have come together to produce the 'commodity-sign'. The autonomy of the signifier, through, for example, the manipulation of signs in the media and advertising, means that signs are able to float free from objects and are available for use in a multiplicity of associative relations. Hence the consumer society becomes essentially cultural as social life becomes deregulated and social relationships become more variable and less structured by stable norms.

The over-production of signs and reproduction of images and simulations leads to a loss of stable meaning, and an aestheticization of reality in which the masses become fascinated by the endless flow of bizarre juxtapositions which takes the viewer beyond stable sense. The proliferation of phenomena of *"reproduction (fashion, media, publicity, information and communication networks)"* requires a vast expansion of material production; the greater circulation of images depends upon a variety of physical products - television sets, video-recorders, satellite discs and the like, upon which the global process of capital is founded.

Baudrillard's postmodernism therefore, is characterized by 'simulation', which 'bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum'. Instead of a world more or less adequately represented in images, we have a world of images, of hallucinatory evocations of a non-existent real: the hyperreal. The hyperreal is an

aestheticized world. 'Today', Baudrillard writes, "when the real and the imaginary are confused in the same operational totality, the aesthetic fascination is everywhere ... reality itself, entirely impregnated by an aesthetic which inseparable from its own structure, has been confused with its own image. (Baudrillard, 1983, 155-2) This nightmare world is ahistorical product of the technical changes making possible the mass reproduction of cultural products - above all, television, but, more fundamentally, of capitalism:

"it was capital which was the first to feed throughout its history on the destruction of every referential, of every human goal, which shattered every ideal distinction between true and false, good and evil, in order to establish a radical law of equivalence and exchange, the iron law of its power". (Baudrillard, 1983, 99)

The result is an utterly depthless world, a hyperreality of pure surface:

"No more subject, focal point, centre or periphery: but pure flexion or circular inflection. No more violence or surveillance: only "information", secret virulence, chain reaction, slow implosion and simulacra of spaces where the real-effect comes into play.' Ideologiekritik is no longer appropriate, since '[i]deology corresponds to a betrayal of reality by signs; simulation corresponds to a short-circuit of reality and its reduplication by signs'". (Baudrillard, 1983, 12, 48, 53-4, 143, 146)

But to what extent could one portray the Others' existing world by the same 'signs of the time'? For sure, one neither could mark the societies in which the most external Others of the West are live as the 'most highly developed societies'. Nor s/he could call theirs an era of the 'triumph of signifying culture', a 'post-industrial' and a 'hyperreal' world. Nor yet s/he possibly could explain the reality of violent condition of the Others in a world where the only line between the 'real' and 'imaginary' is a confused one. After all such a portrayal of the world signifies another sort of universalizing the Western (more specifically American) codes and signs.

By the same given, therefore, one could say, Baudrillard's representation of Disneyland, in which all of America's values are exalted in miniature and comic-strip form, has no validity/representability outside the limits of the Self/same world. Perhaps that is why, in such an imaginary land, as Kellner points out, there is no place for migrant workers, Chicano barrios, Central American refugees, Vietnamese refugees or Asians, or even the blacks. (Kellner, 1989, 171-2)

In the last section I intend to bring under more scrutiny these discursive incompatibilities which draw a separating line between two discourses of Islamism and postmodernism.

V

The Tale of Separation

Why should we uncritically assume the end of history,...entertain the crisis of the idea of the nation, proclaim the perversion of the State, renounce collective projects, celebrate the end of ideologies and utopias, declare that liberation and the Third World are old myths, hasten to interpret our cultural problems in terms of a very post-modern heterogeneity, declare ourselves the partisans of fragmentation, pastiche and syncretism, and passively enjoy the kingdom of uncertainty? (Reigadas, 1988, 142)

Now let me turn to my main concern in this paper i.e., the possible relation between Islamism and postmodernism. Hitherto, with the

rhetorics of Islamist movements we marked the course of a radical movement toward de-centralization of the Western hegemonic discourse, through a desire/will to return to their own 'past', 'origin' and 'self'. For them the Enlightenment and modernity have taken man away from the true faith, and alienated Muslims from their true self. These modern discourses further have laid a ground for the hegemonisation of the Western logocentric discourse, the result of which is the assimilation/ subordination of the world of Islam.

What then is required are not pleasant words or a textual critique, but a revolution in mind, heart and action; a radical decentralization of the Western hegemonic project. Putting it differently, in a condition in which there is no possibility for 'Others' to speak in the language of the 'Same' - because the enforcement of this language is a way of keeping the Others silent or admitting them only if they submit to the logic of the Same, "letting the other speak" could be possible just through an active and radical resistance to the predominance of the Same and its identity-logic.

But how could one possibly explain their continuous insistence upon both the notions of 'authenticity' which as Binder notes "*stands for the freedom to be what one, in some sense, already is*", and 'identity' which he adds "*may also be referred to the freedom to be what one wants to be*" (Binder, 1988, 320) in the turn of post-modernity, i.e. in an era of the celebration of 'difference' and 'Otherness'?

In what was argued above, however, one thing nonetheless should become clear. Although there is no insistence on post-modernity as a 'passing fad' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986), or yet as a specious invention of intellectuals in search of a new discourse and a source of cultural capital - as Fredric Jameson would put it¹, it does not read as

1. For Jameson "postmodernism" signifies the pastiche energetics of Western society under late capitalism, where a "new depthlessness" in representation - one grounded in the fetishization of the image as simulacrum-marks off a profoundly ahistorical drive which seeks to efface the past as "referent" and leave behind itself nothing but "texts". (Jamson, 1984, 53-66)

a radical rupture¹, or as a culturally/politically specific historical period, or yet as an international cultural phenomenon.

That is to say, although post-modernity may signify a problematizing force, a new 'rearrangement', new 'configuration' and a newly articulated intellectual counter-discourse: a sense of the loss of Western history and culture as History and Culture, the loss of their unquestioned place at the centre of the world, it certainly is not, as Linda Hutcheon would say, a straightforward "incredulity with regard to the master narratives" of dominant culture, as Lyotard would have it, paradoxically inscribes and contests culturally certified codes of recognition and representation.

Postmodern culture, art, and theory "*uses and abuses, installs and then subverts,*" the "*conventions of discourse*" which it sets out to challenge. (Hutcheon, 1988, xiii, 3) Postmodernism therefore, discloses a "*contradictory dependence on and independence from that which temporally preceded it and which literally made it possible*". (Hutcheon, 1988, 18)

Postmodernist discourse, that is, necessarily admits a provisionality to its truth-claims and a secondary (or allegorical) foundation to its referential sweep. As Hutcheon sees it, this inherently quotational or reiterative grounding of postmodernism issues in a dominant signifying practice whose central rhetorical strategy is intertextual parody. Postmodern parody, Hutcheon explains, functions "*as repetition with critical distance that allows ironic signaling of difference at the very heart of similarity*". (Hutcheon, 1988, 26) It "*paradoxically enacts both change and cultural continuity*". (Hutcheon, 1988, 26) And as it uses the strategies of the dominant culture to challenge its discursive processes from within (Hutcheon, 1988, 20), postmodern parody also reveals its "*love of history by giving new meaning to old forms*". (Hutcheon, 1988, 31)

1. One has to realize, with Gramsci, that no historical era is ever absolute; that 'Stone Age' elements remain.

Derrida has clarified such a position in a number of texts, most especially in the essay *The Principle of Reason: the University in the eyes of its Pupils* (1983), where he displays his commitment to the project of reasoned critique, which, as Norris has pointed out, is “*strictly inconceivable outside the tradition of enlightened rational critique whose classic formulations are still to be found in Kant*”. (Norris, 1987, 162) Foucault, having resolutely set himself against the Enlightenment in many of his earlier works, came partially to revalorize the Enlightenment project, especially what he referred to as the Enlightenment ‘attitude’ and “philosophical ethos” of “permanent critique of our historical era”, (Foucault, 1984, 42) admitting also that any modern project of critique had to accept its partial determination by the Enlightenment. (Foucault, 1984, 43)

From a different angle, Mitchell Dean, writing in the Melbourne journal *Thesis Eleven*, remarks that the identity of the West’s modernity obsessively remains “*the most general horizon under which all of Foucault’s actual historical analyses are landmarked*”. (Dean, 1986, 49) For this very reason, Partha Chatterjee argues that Foucault’s genealogy of power has limited uses in the developing world. The combination of modern and archaic regimes of power produces unexpected forms of disciplinarity and governmentality that make Foucault’s epistemes inappropriate even obsolete. (Spivak, 1987, 209)

Baudrillard in his critique of Foucault, argues that he is insufficiently anarchic, that he does not go beyond the “simulacra” of modern society. His argument, Racevskis summarizes, is that modern society depends upon a strategy of simulation, on the production of simulacra - that is of certain effects of truth intended to hide the fact that truth does not exist. (Racevskis, 1983, 160)

Lyotard also argues that treating the “post” in the term “postmodernist” ... in the sense of a simple succession, of a diachrony of periods, each of them clearly identifiable’ is ‘totally modern Since we are beginning something completely new, we have to re-set

the hands of the clock at zero'. But the idea of a total break with tradition "is, rather, a manner of forgetting or repressing the past. That's to say of repeating it. Not overcoming it". (Lyotard, 1986, 6) For Lyotard post-modernity "is undoubtedly a part of the modern". (Lyotard, 1984, 79) As West has pointed out:

"[T]he major sources from which Lyotard borrows - Kant's notion of the sublime and Wittgenstein's idea of language games - are deployed to promote and encourage certain kinds of modernist practices: namely, non-representational, experimental techniques and outlooks that shun and shatter quests for totality". (Cornel, 1993, 391)

From a different angle Norris argues:

"The 'postmodern condition' - as Lyotard interprets it - thus seems to share the essential characteristics of all conservative ideology, from Burke to the current New Right. It rests, that is to say, on the idea that prejudice is so deeply built into our traditions of thought that no amount of rational criticism can hope to dislodge it. Any serious thinking about culture and society will have to acknowledge the fact that such enquiries have meaning only within the context of a certain informing tradition". (Norris, 1985, 23-24)

Thus, although Derrida, Foucault and Lyotard and many other postmodernists have consistently attempted to probe the limits of modern forms of 'rationality', they have not, in the final instance, placed themselves entirely outside many of their protocols. There is a sense of parochialism; a modernist loyalty, and narrow Eurocentric framework within the postmodernist texts; a conventional language used when it is written or talked about and by those who speak it.

Further, by examining the basic tenets of postmodern discourse, one may realize that postmodernism, albeit its manifestation as a subversive theory par excellence, has subverted itself as much as it subverts the discourses of modernity. This is not primarily because every body of thought, like every text, contains the promise of its self-transgression. It is, rather, due to internal limitation; i.e. first, the reproduction within postmodern theory of the static mold which

traditionally characterized the discourses of modernity. This is clearly manifested by the adoption of the modernist/postmodernist periodizing scheme.

Second, that the postmodern claim concerning the "abandonment of universals" in fact is based upon a decontextualised, ahistorical conception of universality, which in turn leads to similarly decontextualised conception of particularity and consequently to the reification of the latter. In this context, a critical approach to Lyotard's theory is envisaged to reveal the self-referentiality of his thought, for Lyotard's emphasis on particularity, difference, as well as his commitment to pluralism, and the autonomy of language games can be sustained only by recourse to those universal principles he passionately rejects.

Since much of this theory has been constructed in reaction to and against high modernism, there is seldom any mention of Others experiences or writings by Others in this text.¹ *"The postmodern critique of modernity remains so far largely a critique internal to Europe, a Western quiz with Western answers to Western questions. As postmodernity it implies and presumes modernity"*. (Nederveen, 1994)

1. The current "postmodernism" debate as Cornel West has pointed out, is first and foremost a product of significant First World reflection upon the decentring of Europe that take such forms as the demystification of European cultural predominance and the deconstruction of European philosophical edifices.... Ironically, most First World reflections on "postmodernism" remain rather parochial and provincial - that is, narrowly Eurocentric. For example, Jean-Francois Lyotard's well-known characterization of the postmodern condition, with its increasing incredulity toward master (or meta) narratives, a rejection of representation, and a demand for radical artistic experimentation, is an interesting but insulated Eurocentric view: a kind of European navel-gazing in which postmodernism becomes a recurring moment within the modern that is performative in character and aesthetic in content. Similar Eurocentric frameworks and modernist loyalties can be detected in Jacques Derrida's deconstructive version of poststructuralism, and even in pre-modern and modern modes of constituting subjects. (Cornel, 1993, 391)

The postmodern discourse which talks the most about heterogeneity, the decentred subject, declaring breakthroughs that allow recognition of Otherness, still directs its critical voice primarily to a specialized audience that shares a common language rooted in the very master narratives it claims to challenge. A critical break with the notion of "authority" as "master over" must not simply be a rhetorical device. It must be reflected in habits of being, including styles of writing as well as chosen subject matter.

With post-modernity we further explain a system of signification within which the signifiers of the 'radical break' and 'outside' both appeared as unthinkable. The concepts of hybridization, collage/montage and ambivalence instead become the key issues for any serious debate on 'identity'. "[T]he strategy of using the only available language while not subscribing to its premises," or "operate(ing) according to the vocabulary of the very thing that one delimits," is defined as the only possible strategic and counter-hegemonic game. In this context therefore, there is no desire/will to "go beyond political critique", to judge the righteousness, or "to instill moral, self-sacrificing political beliefs, or any effort to incite exemplary forms of political action". (Rosenau, 1992, 139)

"Skeptical post-modernists strive to employ terms that do not imply anything pejorative when characterizing modern political systems as constituting, producing, regulating, classifying, or administering. It brings only marginal, temporary change that "acts as balm" for those who engage in it." (Edelman, 1988, 130 cited in Rosenau, 1992, 140) If history has ended and if there is "no future" (Baudrillard, 1989b, 34 cited in Rosenau, 1992, 140), then any struggle for social change is meaningless because individual human beings are powerless to influence government and society anyway.

To refuse to participate, to cultivate "ironic detachment" (Baudrillard, 1983a, 108-9 cited in Rosenau, 1992, 140), becomes a positive, progressive political stance. The masses express genuine and

authentically revolutionary sentiments, concrete resistance when their needs and desires are tapped, but it takes the form of a nonreception, of a refusal to participate. (Baudrillard, 1983a, 105-6 cited in Rosenau, 1992, 140) The masses reject the rational, reasoned logic of those who seek to mobilize them around modern political projects. Baudrillard *"tells us that political participation makes little sense because everything of interest has already happened: the revolution has already taken place, the atomic bomb has already exploded so, therefore, why worry?"* (Rosenau, 1992, 141)

Any radical strategy, whether of reform or revolution, no longer makes sense; the only form of resistance left is that of the silence and apathy of the masses, their refusal to be incorporated, manipulated or represented, even (or especially) by socialist parties. (Baudrillard, 1983) In a companion volume, entitled *Cool Memories*, it is suggested that, while Nietzsche grappled with the death of God, all we have to deal with is 'the disappearance of politics and history'. (Baudrillard, 1990, 186)

At this level it seems that the Islamist movements, by their continuous quest for a different 'final vocabulary', and further by their attempt to articulate an identity around Islam as a 'master signifier', suggest another discursive 'distance', with the postmodernist condition, where it corresponds to the collage of images and ideas that represents it - ironic, iconoclastic and free-floating. By this I am not trying to say that the Islamists were (are) in a position of rejecting the Derridian insistence on:

"the possibility of disengagement and citational graft which belongs to the structure of every mark, spoken or written, and which constitutes every mark in writing before and outside of every horizon of semi-linguistic communication; in writing, which is to say in the possibility of its functioning being cut off, at a certain point, from its 'original' desire-to-say-what-one-means and from its participation in a saturable and constraining context. Every sign, linguistic or non-linguistic, spoken or written (in the

current sense of this opposition), in a small or large unity, can be cited, put between quotation marks; in so doing it can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable". (Derrida, 1977, 185)

Rather the argument is about the Muslims' painful experience of the "hyphenated identities", "mongrelization", "mulattos" and cutting out the images from one context and pasting them into another (grammatology) - through which the superimposed elements as Walter Benjamin would say, disrupted the Islamic context wherever they have been inserted.

Within the context of Muslims' system of signification, as has been already explained, collage/montage has functioned as an alternative to cultural harmony, political unity, religious purity, which in turn implicitly encoded a triumphalist Westernizing narrative. Putting it differently the unconscious, non-dialogic and power-laden structure of hybridization (in the context of Muslim modernists' discourse), led them not to the encounter with the Westernist fetishization of racial and cultural "purity", but to a political neutralization, and to the structural/cultural domination of the stronger and manifestation of what Shayegan has called "Westernization in reverse"? (Shayegan, 1997, 78)

Such a phenomenon caused the *"errors of perception, mistaken judgments and Manichaeian attitudes"*, which *"stunte(d) the critical sense, muddle(d) the power of analysis and encourage(d) dubious expedients and facile solutions"*. (Shayegan, 1997, 78) It violated not merely intellectual property, but the political and geographical as well. And its law of impurity and parasitical economy has not manifested itself as *"a sort of participation without belonging - a taking part in without being part of, without having membership in a set"*, (Derrida, 1980, 206) as Derrida put it, but the reverse.

Now it should become clear that there is a separative line (no matter how ambiguous this line may be) between the structural

possibility or structural functioning of the mark (iterability) and an act of grafting or re-inscribing which take place through human agency.¹ Iterability contests the conception of meanings as founded on an original moment of description of a referent. For a sign to gain intelligibility it must be inserted into a signifying chain of differences which determine its meaning.

The recognition of a sign depends on its being cited more than once. These subsequent articulations constitute the conditions of possibility for the 'first' articulation, which cannot then be conceived as an 'origin' but rather as an expression of the endless repeatability (not 'repetition') of signs, or reinscription of differences. This being the case, the possibility for something to happen (and to be repeated anew, in other context than its "original" one) *"is always at work marking all the facts, all the events, even those which appear to disguise it"*. (Derrida, 1977, 184-85; 1990, 97)

Signs cannot then be conceived as pure, fixed essences (the illusory world of the 'metaphysics of presence') but are capable of infinite citeability within contexts that set in motion a whole network of relays and deferential 'reaccess' at each citation. This is to say, the iterability of an element divides its own identity a priori, even without taking into account that this identity can only determine or delimit itself through differential relations to other elements and that it hence bears the mark of this difference.

Through iterability therefore, we have first, *"a mark functions without the sender or receiver's intentions being actualized, fulfilled, and present, and which to this extent must be presumed"*. (Derrida, 1977, 195; 1990, 112-13) This means that all articulations continue to have discursive effects after the moment of inscription, a process which Derrida calls 'arche-writing'.

1. It is through this act of differentiation which I think one may define the limits of a radical action and an act of hybridization.

Second one is faced with the need to "*recognize an irreducible contamination or parasitism between the two possibilities*", (Derrida, 1977, 195; 1990, 112-13) by means of which the event is announced and prevented from becoming fully present even before it happens, from happening "entirely, purely and simply": "*Once the mark is able to function, once it is possible for it to function, once it is possible for it to function in case of an absence etc., it follows that this possibility is a necessary part of its structure, that the later must necessarily be such that this functioning is possible*". (Derrida, 1977, 184; 1990, 96)

The concept of 'graft' - as we use it here - introduces a situation in which elements of a given discourse articulate to different elements and are pasted to a different context, and hence disseminate and produce something new. Here, we are not talking about the very possibility of grafting the different signifiers to the different chain of signifiers, producing, in effect an 'openness' in the flow of signification. Rather the argument is about an act of transformation of materials from one context to another (Collage), and the "dissemination" of these borrowings through the new setting (montage), through human agency. Such an operation, may also be recognized as a kind of "bricolage" (Levi Strauss), with four characteristics-decoupage (or severing); performed or extant messages or materials; assemblage (montage); discontinuity or heterogeneity.

Let me, for the interest of more specification draw the second line between a "conscious" and an "unconscious" grafting or hybridizing act. By the first, I mean a blind repetition and inscription of incommensurable signifiers which profoundly distort, alter, change, and multiply the idioms of two or more categories in such a way that they are no longer compatible with the discursive context of any of them, could not even be defined in terms of a newly articulated discourse. The second, signifies a critical, and selective confrontation with other discourses.

What Islamists have rejected was (is) therefore neither the very notion of iterability nor a sophisticated reading and borrowing from other texts, but they simply projected the undesirability and incompatibility of those imported 'thin' and 'thick' words which have no meaning outside the context of Western logocentric-ethnocentric discourse. That is to say, the point is not to suggest that there is a pure outside or even that inhabiting the outside always guarantee radicality. Working at the limits of several categories and discourses means that one is neither entirely inside nor outside. As Fuss put it:

"The problem, ... with the inside/outside rhetoric, if it remains undeconstructed, is that such polemics disguise the fact that most of us are both inside and outside at the same time. Any displaced nostalgia for or romanticization of the outside as a privileged site of radicality immediately gives us away, for in order to realize the outside we must already be, to some degree, comfortably on the inside". (Fuss, 1989)

"One has to push one's work as far as one can go: to the borderlines, where one never stops walking on the edges, incurring constantly the risk of falling off one side or the other side of the limit while undoing, redoing, modifying this limit". (Trinch, 1991, 218) There are in so many Islamist texts both an inside and an outside. There is both a continuing analytical engagement with Western discourse and an interrogation of the effects of Occidental penetration on the actual political and socio-cultural structures of Muslim societies. On the other, there is a persistent examination of the internal specificities of their own societies, so that the 'inside' and the 'outside', the 'included' tend to intertwine, separate and recombine. Rather the argument is first that so far in Western discourse there is no possibility for Others to be tolerated except through assimilation, and there is no audience for their words, no clear listener, uncertain then, that their voice can or will be heard, any project to construct a discourse somewhere 'in-between' inevitably will lead to failure. As Golsharreh'i simply put it:

"...they want to make us become like them. If we fight and refuse to become like them, they tame us by force of pills and injections. They calm us down. They make us patient, compliant, meek and quiet. To tell you the truth, it's not just us; those who come to this society from other places must become like them after a while. If they don't, they cannot go on living. If they refuse it, they make them become like themselves with a thousand tricks, just like themselves". (Golsharreh'i, Dal., 103)

Second, so far the West has based its unchallengeable scientificity on the political silence of its objects of study, i.e. the Others without, a radical deconstruction of its logocentric could come only from outside; that is, as a result of a political action. Only a challenge which comes from outside is able to disrupt the inner logic, image and representation of the Occident. Foucault seems thinks the same when he points out:

"...when the prisoners began to speak, they possessed an individual theory of prisons, the penal system, and justice. It is this form of discourse which ultimately matters, a discourse against power, the counter-discourse of prisoners and those we call delinquents - and not a theory about delinquency". (Foucault, 1977, 209)

For sure, the question of the 'West' and 'modernity', for both Islamists and postmodernists is the question of years to come. What is needed then is not displacing ourselves from the question of 'Others without' simply by avoiding 'the indignity of speaking for others'. It should be rather an active (political) engagement with the problems of the 'outsiders'. The first step toward such a engagement certainly is to try to understand them in a way they really are (live, think and act); to communicate with them through a familiar code and terms, and to talk about them without an Eurocentric a-priori outlook.

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