



## The Nation-Form

Mahmut Mutman

To cite this article: Mahmut Mutman (2008) The Nation-Form, Third Text, 22:1, 5-20, DOI: [10.1080/09528820701853587](https://doi.org/10.1080/09528820701853587)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09528820701853587>



Published online: 19 Feb 2008.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 120

# The Nation-Form

Mahmut Mutman

1 The opposition cannot be reduced to the question of a taxonomy of ideologies, or of nationalisms, but is rather a question of the subject, and of (its) mimesis or representation. A taxonomic approach to nationalism can be found in Tanil Bora, 'Nationalist Discourses in Turkey', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 102:2/3, 2003, pp 433–52. Speaking of a variety of nationalisms (namely liberal, official, racist and Islamic) made up of different articulations and syntheses, Bora's descriptivist approach is *uncritical* especially of the national subject and its production in representation, since his variety of different nationalist contents all assume *the form of the subject*. Just how this presumption is produced is the question my essay poses.

2 Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1977. By the Orientalist spacing or worlding of the world, I suggest that Edward Said's formulation of Orientalism as 'an epistemological and ontological distinction between the West and East' can be read as spacing in Derrida's sense. See Mahmut Mutman, 'Under the Sign of Orientalism: The West vs Islam', *Cultural Critique*, no 23,

It has been said time and again that the paradigm of Third World nationalism is the Hegelian narrative of lordship and bondage – the struggle for recognition. As the hegemonic petty-bourgeois elite nationalisms seem to have failed in the Middle East, Asia and Africa, attention has now turned to a liberal globalist discourse. The recently growing antagonism between organicist or authoritarian nationalism and liberal globalism has its roots in modernity (Hegel and Kant in philosophy, communitarianism and liberalism in political theory), as well as in the history of the peripheral nation.<sup>1</sup> In Turkey, this debate is overdetermined by the issue of Turkey's entry into the European Union. My purpose here is to displace or deconstruct this opposition in order to show that the construction of a popular-democratic civility, sociality and culture requires a different approach to language and history from the prevailing one, which merely assumes the Western European Subject as authority. Surely this construction of authority has its roots in the Orientalist spacing of the world which produces the identity of the Western Subject vis-à-vis its Oriental Other.<sup>2</sup> Such spacing is not limited to the institutional or ideological in the narrow sense and should be regarded as *prior* to the subject it produces – a subject whose desire is itself encoded in its (Oriental) 'Other'. Reading the production of the Western Subject as spacing the Other is *not* simply to explain a given subjective or intersubjective script, as if the Western Subject is ever constructed and the rest follow in imitation or rivalry. When understood in this limited manner, reading is bound to forget and repeat the European psychoanalytic drama by which this assemblage dissimulates its own (de)constitution in the so-called doubleness or ambivalence of the father's message: 'be like me' and 'do not be like me' at the same time. On the European side, the imperative criticism of a repressive state apparatus is always heard as ambivalently racist, that is to say, always implying 'not white, not quite' in Homi Bhabha's well-known formulation – even though Europe is not a homogeneous entity received and constructed in language and media.<sup>3</sup> On the Turkish side, the paradoxical command is re-written as a blind impasse between a phantasmatic desire for European privileges (produced by a media-led 'globalisation' liberalism minus critical reasoning) and what might be

described as a desperate attempt at reclaiming the father's position, ie, the empty talk of national honour which is justified by a detestable abuse of anti-imperialist discourse and is often no more than a disguise for maintaining the authoritarian structures and habits. This is demonstrated in the recent tragic murder of the Armenian-Turkish journalist and writer Hrant Dink and makes the production and negotiation of a reasonable and effective popular-democratic position extremely difficult. Rather than solving the problem or offering an alternative, in this essay I will try to change the direction and will pose the question of the nation-form in terms of its process of forming, ie, the nation's becoming-nation, or what amounts to the same: the question of the constitution of the national subject in mimesis.

### PHENG CHEAH'S SPECTRAL NATION

By way of a beginning, I would like to go back to some of the recent theories of nationalism. Pheng Cheah has offered a deconstructive reading of what he called the ontological vitalism, especially as developed recently by Partha Chatterjee and Benedict Anderson by focusing on the survival or living-on of the nation. Later in his book *Spectral Nationality*, he developed a new approach to the organicist metaphor of nationalism in terms of Jacques Derrida's concept of spectrality.<sup>4</sup> For Cheah, ontological vitalism is determined by an 'opposition between the spontaneous dynamism of resisting peoples and their institutional capture by the *techne* of reactionary class and state apparatuses'.<sup>5</sup> These theories see the obstacles to the actualisation of freedom as *external* to the process of actualisation. Cheah carefully underlines a few internal obstacles: as popular consciousness is fostered through the artifice of political organisation, it includes, for instance, patriarchal elements. Cheah argues that the state and nationalist ideology do not just invade the living body of the nation-people, but are prostheses or necessary supplements to it. Death is therefore inscribed within the heart of life. In order to negotiate this life-death, Cheah turns to Derrida's notion of spectrality.<sup>6</sup> Derrida's spectrologic conjures up an a-physical body which serves as a prosthesis. Survival or living-on of the form of a present being depends on a minimal idealisation, which allows us to identify it as the same throughout its possible repetitions or alterations. As the iterability that makes all presence possible, spectrality is the trace of the inhuman spectral other within the present in general, and the originary opening up of any present being by and to the other. Criticising Derrida's tendency to see the nation-form as purely ideological, Cheah argues that the decolonising nation is neither an archaic community nor a merely ideological superstructure but a new form of political community that is not necessarily rendered obsolete by neocolonial globalisation. On the contrary, the nation-form survives and instead of an allegedly 'postnational' global order, we had better take into account 'uneven globalisation' which 'makes popular nationalist movements in the periphery the first step in the long road to social redistribution'.<sup>7</sup>

In his book, this argument is transformed and further elaborated by a fascinating detour through German idealism from Kant to Marx, emphasising the rationalist and progressive origins of political organicism.

winter 1992–1993, pp 165–97. Such a reading will enable us to approach a number of problems that appear in Said's analysis in a productive way rather than merely to expose Said's errors.

- 3 Homi Bhabha, 'The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Nationalism', in *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London–New York, 1994, pp 66–84
- 4 Pheng Cheah, 'Spectral Nationality: The Living-on [Sur-vie] of the Postcolonial Nation in Neocolonial Globalization', in *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory and Futures*, ed Elizabeth Grosz, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY–London, 1999, pp 176–200; Pheng Cheah, *Spectral Nationality: Passages of Freedom from Kant to Postcolonial Literatures of Liberation*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2003
- 5 Cheah, 'Spectral Nationality', op cit, p 181
- 6 Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, Peggy trans Kamuf, Routledge, London, 1994
- 7 Cheah, 'Spectral Nationality', op cit, p 198

Cheah's contention is that German idealism's 'organic vitalism' can be read as a site for the 'actualisation of freedom' in a postcolonial context.<sup>8</sup> In the mainstream literature on nation-building, German modernity is considered belated in comparison with Britain and France. This led to an accelerated path of development and an aggressive mode of nationalism in Germany. It is argued that African and Asian countries are comparable to Germany in this respect and demonstrate the same negative characteristics (retarded bourgeoisie, aggressive nationalism, etc). Cheah criticises this historical deterministic reductionism and offers a scrupulous reading of the organicist metaphor of cultural development (the concept of *Bildung*) in the German idealist tradition, according to which culture is taken as a ground for the actualisation of freedom. The experience of postcolonial nationalism shows that the incarnation of human ideals 'is inevitably haunted and can always go awry'.<sup>9</sup> Cheah draws our attention to a necessary logic of contamination:

*Bildung* requires us to open ourselves to an ideal image, an other that we give to ourselves. Yet without our sheer exposure to alterity, without the inhuman other's *techne*, the teleological time of *Bildung* would not be possible in the first place... [T]he incarnation of rational ideals, which is the ontological paradigm of any normative political project, is constitutively susceptible to contamination because all incarnational activity occurs in finitude and is dependent on the absolutely contingent but necessary gift of time.<sup>10</sup>

Postcolonial fictions of the nation in the works of Pramoedya Ananta Toer and Ngugi wa Thiong'o embody the metaphor of cultural development in the style of *Bildungsroman*, but these works, Cheah argues, demonstrate how the nation's organic metaphor cannot constitute the unity it aspires to and instead depends on supplementary and spectral logic.

While Cheah offers a rightful criticism of historical and sociologicistic determinism, a certain notion of Germany's belatedness is at work in his argument in the *Spectral Nationality*. The German case maintains its exemplary and explanatory status in thinking the peripheral national *Bildung*, albeit in a positive manner and on a philosophical level. This risks an implicit assumption about a normal path of development and a rational norm, ie, a 'timely' development in the cases of Britain and France, even though this very idea of a pure, uncontaminated norm is Cheah's theoretical target in the final analysis. This question produces a peculiar effect on Cheah's argument: the conceptual terminology of the ideal and its actualisation has at times the appearance of the idea falling into finitude.

Cheah offers us the deconstruction of a series of binary oppositions between life and death, or *physis* and *techne*. It is important to remember that *techne* is also *mimesis* or representation. For instance, when he writes that 'spectrality also inscribes technicity within the organic because it opens up every proper organic body to the supplementation of artifice',<sup>11</sup> we have already stepped into a problematic of *mimesis*, since, as we learn from Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's seminal reading of Heidegger, 'the structure of original supplementarity is the very structure of the relation between *techne* and *physis*'<sup>12</sup> and 'the thinking of

8 Cheah, *Spectral Nationality*, op cit, p 3

9 Ibid, p 8

10 Ibid, p 113

11 Cheah, 'Spectral Nationality', op cit, p 191

12 Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, trans Chris Turner, Basil Blackwell, Oxford-Cambridge, 1990, p 81

- 13 Ibid, p 78
- 14 Homi Bhabha, 'Dissemination: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation', in *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London–New York, 1994, pp 139–70
- 15 Plato, *Republic*, trans Raymond Larson, Crofts Classics, Arlington Heights, IL, 1979, 397abc
- 16 Homi Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse', in *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London–New York, 1994, pp 85–92
- 17 Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans Barbara Johnson, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1981, pp 173–286
- 18 Again, as has been demonstrated by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, op cit, pp 61–104.
- 19 Homi Bhabha, 'Dissemination', op cit, pp 163–6
- 20 Ibid, pp 142–3, 156–7, 159, 164–9
- 21 Ibid, pp 145, 147, 152, 153, 156, 157, 160, 167, 170
- 22 Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, op cit, p 79
- 23 Ibid, p 81
- 24 In fact, this is explicitly accepted in Gregory Jusdanis's influential work on Greek nationalism. He argues that all projects of modernisation 'after the Netherlands, England and France are belated'. (See his *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture: Inventing National Literature*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis–Oxford, 1991, p xiv.) I must also underline that Jusdanis's brilliant account of Greek nationalism as coming out of a strategic investment in the modern, Western European myth of Ancient

*techne* derives in rigorously Aristotelian fashion, from a fundamental mimetology' even though Heidegger condemns *mimesis*, in a traditional manner according to Lacoue-Labarthe, as adequation or *homoiosis*.<sup>13</sup> The organicity of the people or the national community can only be accomplished and revealed to that community by a *techne* or *mimesis*, that is by art, literature and language. Which means immediately that such organicity is a fiction or a fictioning. Theories of postcolonial nationalism approach this fictionality of the nation in an identitarian, totalising and homogenising manner. Anderson's notion of imagination in his well-known *Imagined Communities* is a paradigmatic example.

## HOMI BHABHA'S THEORY OF NATION

In a seminal essay, 'Dissemination', in which he develops his own theory by revisiting the literature on nationalism, Bhabha criticises Anderson for totalising the time of the nation.<sup>14</sup> Focusing on the discursive strategy and form of enunciation of the nation-people rather than the narrative of the origin of the nation, Bhabha defines the former as performative and the latter as pedagogical. The writing of the nation requires an allegorical and double movement in which the pedagogical certainty of the origins and evolution of the nation is interrupted by strategic enunciative performativity. For Bhabha, it is this split and interruptive nature of the nation's ambivalent double time which makes it possible for cultural difference to be articulated, and another history of the Western nation appears from this articulation.

Although I regard Bhabha's focus on the strategic nature of enunciation as a significant step in a theoretically informed approach to nationalism, I argue that his unproblematic identification of the split nature of the psychoanalytic subject with an interruptive practice makes him overlook the possibility that the performative enunciation might well *reproduce* the pedagogical narrative as well as interrupting it. The ambivalent nature of discursivity is simply not a guarantee of the interruption of a statement. This criticism must surely be made in a positive spirit, in order to emphasise the significance of Bhabha's distinction, and particularly his introduction of a *performative* dimension. However, while emphasising this dimension, one cannot avoid seeing that the distinction is as old as Plato's *Republic* in which the philosopher distinguishes simple *diegesis* from dramatic narration or *mimesis* in a similar manner.<sup>15</sup> Despite Bhabha's argument for the subversive nature of colonial mimicry elsewhere,<sup>16</sup> his notion of mimesis is entirely negative. It is seen as deadly repetition of gestures and words which alienate the life of the metropolitan migrant worker. This dismissal of mimesis is curious, given especially that Bhabha's major reference, Derrida's *Dissemination*, offers precisely a deconstructive engagement with mimesis in Plato and Mallarmé.<sup>17</sup> First of all, not only the concept of mimesis is at work in the formation of national identity and identification in general,<sup>18</sup> but also it has a specific ethico-political dimension in terms of the relationship between metropolitan and peripheral nationalisms, which is often conceived as a relationship of model and copy. Bhabha's exclusion thus becomes questionable, especially when considered together with the manifest shift in his argument from (the

Greece that nicely supports and further complicates Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's reading of modernity as a mimesis of ancient Greece.

- 25 Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, op cit, pp 82–3
- 26 Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, 'Typography' and 'Transcendence ends in Politics' in *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics*, ed Christopher Fynsk, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 1989, pp 43–138 and 267–300, and *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, op cit, pp 61–103
- 27 This might seem to be a deviation from Lacoue-Labarthe, and in some sense it is. Yet I must warn the reader that a spectral problematic is not entirely alien to Lacoue-Labarthe's deconstruction of mimesis. I am reminded here of his great essay on Theodor Reik's *Haunting Melody: 'The Echo of the Subject'* in *Typography*, pp 139–207. And his fascinating reading of the death of God in Nietzsche: 'We must rather imagine a death without disappearance (nor reappearance, of course), a kind of haunting, perhaps, which would explain at once how the "dead" god continues to inhabit the language that has "killed" him (grammar...) and how he never stops undoing it, ruining its assurance, faith and power.' See Lacoue-Labarthe, *The Subject of Philosophy*, trans Thomas Trezise et al, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis–London, 1993, p 33.
- 28 It seems essential, once more, to emphasise the significance of Jacques Derrida's seminal reading of Plato's mimesis together with Mallarmé's short enigmatic text *Mimique*: 'Pierrot is brother to all the Hamlets haunting the Mallarmean text' (*Dissemination*, p 195 – emphasis added) and if there is no model and 'no imitation' (*Dissemination*, p 194) there is still

promise of) a general theory of nationalism to a theorisation of the Western nation towards the end of his essay. The major problem is now the Western nation's acceptance of its colonial past against a racist denial of it *within* its own public sphere and culture. There has been a shift from that of the peripheral nation. Left untheorised and unspoken, is the peripheral nation not the object of mimetological imperative? Second, in spite of the clear kinship between the concepts of performance and mimesis, Bhabha's preference for the former over the latter depends on his association of performance with the value of presence and present, living practice as opposed to the dead, reifying pedagogy and alienating mimesis conceived in terms of imitation of gestures.<sup>19</sup> But how can we think of a performativity that does not involve imitation of gestures, a performativity that is not iterable? The performative is given a special ethico-philosophical value of presence as opposed to a reified pedagogy which, in such a case, could not actually be performed or iterated. This observation must be related to a last and more fundamental point. In several passages in his essay, whenever Bhabha wants to show the interruptive moment of enunciative performance, he characteristically refers to ghosts and spectrality in general,<sup>20</sup> but performance is always and in typically ontological vitalist fashion associated with the 'living perplexity', 'the forms of life struggling to be represented', 'lived energy of memory', and so on.<sup>21</sup> Employing Bhabha's distinction from within a critical reading inspired by Cheah's deconstructive approach, I see that which interrupts the performance of national pedagogy as always the spectral, appearing and disappearing in the abyss of enunciation. If the organicity of the people or the national community can only be accomplished and revealed to that community by mimesis or fictioning, then the *mimetic* movement here cannot be dissociated from a *spectral* movement.

## A TENTATIVE THEORETICAL CONCLUSION

In the classic approach to nationalism, the nation's Other (or the national subject) is seen as a *model*, ie, as having a form which can constitute and maintain itself as a whole. There is an unquestioned concept of mimesis or representation at work, conceived in terms of a hierarchical relationship between model and copy. This brings me to the case of Germany. I will approach it, while assuming the relevance of Pheng Cheah's analysis of organicist metaphor. In his analysis of German nationalism, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe refers to modern Germany's imitation of and agonistic, mimetic rivalry with the ancient Greeks. From his point of view, this should be said for modernity itself: Europe's mimesis of Greek antiquity. For him, what is at stake in mimesis is always a *paradox*, that is the mimetological law or 'the constraint governing *imitatio*' as a Latin version: 'that *imitatio* rid itself of *imitatio* itself or that in what it establishes (or has imposed upon it) as a model, it should address something that does not derive from *imitatio*'.<sup>22</sup> As neither pure emergence nor pure imitation is possible, in Lacoue-Labarthe's terms, 'identification or appropriation – the self-becoming of the Self – will always have to be thought as the appropriation of a model, ie, as the appropriation of a means of appropriation, if the model (the example) is



*copying*: 'Letting itself be read for itself, doing without any external pretext, *Mimique* is also haunted by the *ghost* or grafted on to the arborescence of another text' (*Dissemination*, p 202 – emphasis added). And, if there is no referent, there is still a reference, a ghost: 'we are faced then with mimicry imitating nothing; faced so to speak with a double that doubles no simple, a double that nothing anticipates, nothing at least that is not itself already double. There is no simple reference. It is in this that the mime's operation does allude, but alludes to nothing, alludes without breaking the mirror, without reaching beyond the looking-glass... This speculum reflects no reality; it produces mere "reality-effect". For this double that often makes one think of Hoffmann, reality is, indeed, death... In this speculum with no reality, in this mirror of a mirror, a difference or dyad does exist, since there are mimes and phantoms. But it is a *difference without reference, a reference without referent*, without any first or last unit, *a ghost that is the phantom of no flesh*, wandering about without a past, without any death, birth or presence' (*Dissemination*, p 206 – emphasis added).

29 As Lacoue-Labarthe puts it: 'The self-production of the Aryan myth is an end in itself, the end as immanent, embodied and immediate' (*Heidegger, Art and Politics*, p 95). The sense of self-formation in peripheral nationalism is, rather, characterised by a strife of a unique kind, even in its most authoritarian mode or moment.

30 For a discussion of this point, see Cheah's *Spectral Nationality*, pp 5–7. Cheah's argument differs from mine in this respect. While he shows, in a brilliant philosophical tour de force, the positive role

the ever paradoxical imperative of appropriation: imitate me in order to be what you are'.<sup>23</sup> The mimetic economy does not depend on a clear demarcation of an inside from an outside. What haunts and dominates the peripheral nation's desire for difference is the *nation-form itself as the form of sovereign (collective) subject*. This form, taken as a model and an ideal, is always thought to be essentially sovereign, autonomous and self-contained *in spite of the fact* that its 'original' Western model, ie, the modern Western nation, was already a product of mimesis, and that the so-called implicit or explicit reference itself was in this sense already characterised by the same relationship.

Although Lacoue-Labarthe is interested in the belatedness of Germany (which was historically traumatised by Napoleon's occupation), is not all of Western modernity belated? When we consider Germany as demonstrating belated development, have we not already accepted a normative path of development, for instance in England, France or Holland?<sup>24</sup> Although this might be acceptable from the point of view of a comparative study limited to European history, it is the time of modernity itself which produces the very sense of belatedness. If Germany's particular sense of belatedness is what takes it towards the disastrous result of Nazism, what is revealed is something of the modern Western mimesis itself. The German case gives a theoretical angle which enables one to think the question of subject-constitution, for it is an instance where the normality of Western Subject/Man becomes questionable. In his singular theoretical context, Lacoue-Labarthe refers to the 'inherent infirmity of the subject'.<sup>25</sup> This implies the necessity of fictioning it. In his *Typography* as well as in *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, he argues for the significance of the relationship between Platonic Idea as 'Form' and the modern notion of *Gestalt*.<sup>26</sup> The resulting model is a national 'type' that must be produced, fictioned and stamped. No less than a problematic of stamp and imprint is at stake here, as old as Plato. Indeed, nothing has been more urgent and binding than this concept of 'type' for various peripheral nationalisms, whether this be Gandhi's traditional self which articulates modern notions of civic consciousness and public health or Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's modern self in Western garb, at the blackboard, teaching the nation his new alphabet (and this dichotomy of traditional versus modern is already like the two sides of peripheral mimesis). The national subject is harnessed not in content but in form or type.

This harnessing in form is *an attempt to control and stabilise the spectral movement* which Cheah and Derrida emphasise.<sup>27</sup> Therefore subverting and deconstructing the pedagogical nation-form is not just a question of performance. No subversive capacity is simply given in performing, unless both the given form and the being-form of the form (what is per-form-ed) is questioned in performance. 'Spectralisation' can be seen as an instance of this questioning: an ethical and political move which aims to bring to the nation its otherness. Further and more importantly, the very thinking of the mimetic or representational practice requires *the copying of a model which itself acts like a ghost or spectre rather than an idea, form or gestalt*.<sup>28</sup> When Cheah has identified a minimal idealisation through repetition and alteration as essential for the survival of the nation-form, the identification of this same or the actualisation of the idea as the spectral is precisely the stake,

of the organic metaphor in German philosophy since Kant, I am more inclined to see the other side of German organicism as an excess from which we learn something of the national subject-constitution rather than as an explanatory model for peripheral nationalism.

- 31 The Turkish case is the prime example here with a classic Nazi-type, mass-based, national socialist movement whose recent electoral percentage is around 14 percent.

- 32 Gerald MacLean: 'Ottomanism Before Orientalism: Bishop Henry King praises Henry Blount, Passenger in the Levant', in *Travel Knowledge: European 'Discoveries' in the Early Modern Period*, eds Ivo Kamps and Jyotsna Singh, Palgrave, Basingstoke–New York, 2001, pp 75–96. See also his 'Performing East: English Captives in the Ottoman Maghreb', *Actes du 1er Congrès International sur Le Grande Bretagne et le Maghreb: Etat de Recherche et contacts culturels*, Fondation Temimi, Zaghouan, Tunisia, 2001, pp 123–39. I must also mention Alain Grosrichard's important contribution: *The Sultan's Court: European Fantasies of the East*, trans Liz Heron, Verso, London–New York, 1998. Grosrichard shows how the concept of despotism was European political coding.

- 33 Of course, taken in itself, this is a problematical statement. Quite simply, for a case to be a case of something, of some concept or theory, it must already exceed or fail it. How can I simply turn to my 'case' while I claim to problematise mimesis itself? In a shifting force field, always already on the move, the norm itself is changed the moment one brings up one's excess or

because it never just happens, and it always tends towards the ontologising production of a type or gestalt whose aim is to govern the spectral. This is another internal obstacle in the way of establishing a popular-democratic nationality that I would like to add to Cheah's critical inventory: the production of the nation-form itself as *form*. It seems to me that this is the most obstinate and the most invisible internal obstacle, as it has to do with the economy of the subject and the processes of desire and identification. In order to be a nation, it seems absolutely essential to control the movement of ghosts – there is, for instance, no nation without mourning. To control the movement of ghosts: to bury the corpses in the right place, to know who they are and to guarantee that they will not come back as spectres, or will come back only ever under the control of a national pedagogy which puts its stamp on them.

I must immediately issue three warnings. First of all, if national *Bildung* is a cultural synthesis of modernity as opposed to a mere cultural importation, it cannot constitute a foundational distinction between modernity and the West (or between modernisation and Westernisation). Second, in spite of necessary contamination, we should underline the disagreement between metropolitan fascist onto-typology and peripheral nationalist onto-typology. While the former is characterised by a fantasy of immediacy, consistent with the techno-logic of its European modality of progress as well as its founding notion of myth which has led to the notion of race,<sup>29</sup> the latter is characterised by a different temporality involving a unique kind of *gap* rather than immediacy even at its most sovereign moment. In this sense, I do not see in the so-called German backwardness or belatedness a model for peripheral nationalisms.<sup>30</sup> Since the peripheral nation is subjected to a representational economy in which it is positioned differently from the metropolitan nation, there remains always a sense of emergence and futurity (rather than 'belatedness') which is a continuous subterranean breaking away from the authoritarian excesses of its onto-typology. Having underlined this, I need not add that this does not make peripheral nationalism immune to fascist tendencies and movements.<sup>31</sup>

Third, and most importantly, Lacoue-Labarthe's perspective is historically limited to the problem of Nazism as a modern phenomenon. As his concern is Heidegger's relationship with Nazism, confined within the European narrative, he also has to depend on the notion of the *belatedness* of Germany. He shows the generalised 'national aestheticism' behind Nazism and how Heidegger was part of this general trend. His interpretation, which puts Platonic form and modern Gestalt together in the context of a deconstruction of mimesis, must be generalised further so that the problematic of mimesis is not short-circuited in a re-inscription of the self-contained European narrative. These concepts of form, model and 'Other' must be deconstructed in a broader historical and geographical context. The guide here is of course Edward Said's paradigm-constituting work on Orientalism, which referred to the Western libidinal investment in the 'Orient'. A most interesting case of this investment was brought up in the literary historian Gerald MacLean's work on British travel literature. MacLean shows how British imperialism, in the period of its emergence, was obsessed with the success of the Ottoman imperial rule, which it took as



failure, that is to say, one's 'case'. My only purpose then is to develop a theoretical and political sensitivity to a certain aspect in the force field of peripheral politics. Any decision or choice in such a force field that is subject to a general instability and undecidability can only be provisional and should be judged by the results it is capable of producing. But then, am I not simply privileging my own background? I cannot deny this possibility, yet my only hope can be to destroy the mastery that I cannot not claim to have of this 'background'. Since, after all, should it not be the alienness or otherness of my 'background' to my very self that urges me to write what I write in the first place?

- 34 Samir Amin, *Unequal Development: An Essay on the Social Formations of Peripheral Capitalism*, Harvester Press, Sussex, UK, 1976, pp 13–59
- 35 For the concept of habitus, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans Richard Nice, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, pp72–95. For the concepts of 'power-knowledge' ('pouvoir-savoir') and governmentality see Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol 1, trans Robert Hurley, Vintage, New York, 1980, pp 92–202; and 'Governmentality', in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, eds Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller, Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead, 1991, pp 87–104. For economic and political history, see Çağlar Keyder's seminal work: *State and Class in Turkey: A Study in Capitalist Development*, Verso, London, 1987, and Şevket Pamuk: *The Ottoman Empire and European Capitalism, 1820–1913: Trade, Investment and*

a model. Did the British see themselves as *latecomers* to the imperial scene in their very emergence as a global capitalist power? MacLean's description of British 'imperial envy' puts the foundation of Western modernity as mimesis of ancient Greece in crisis by bringing to light the significance of Western libidinal and mimetic investment in the Orient.<sup>32</sup> While the European Orientalist spacing was thus already a coding of desire in the cultural Other, European deconstruction seems to have forgotten this *other agon* of the subject it wants to deconstruct. This puts a whole mimetic apparatus organised by concepts of model, reference, subject and other in crisis as well.

### THE TURKISH CASE: IMPERIAL CONDITION

Turkey has never been colonised by a European power. Although it cannot be placed outside the general framework of peripheral petty bourgeois nationalist leadership, the Turkish revolution's distinctive trait was its Westernist cultural tendency. For any postcolonial government elite, excessive Westernism would have meant collaboration with the old colonial powers, governmental corruption and the elite's luxurious, consumer lifestyle at the expense of the masses. In the case of Turkey, however, it meant almost the opposite: not only were the republican elite's economic policies protectionist, nationalist and statist, but the more the republican leadership Westernised themselves, their culture and their society, the more nationalised they felt. No doubt, nationalism is a form of universalism and universalism was invented by the European Enlightenment, but there was something in the behaviour of the Turkish elite that sets them apart as a singular and peculiar case.<sup>33</sup> A brief historical outline is necessary.

The Ottoman bureaucratic elite's habitus had entered into the orbit of the European paradigm of modernity by the end of the eighteenth century. Historically, the habitus of the Ottoman ruling class (the dominant group of 'a tributary mode of production' following Samir Amin's seminal work<sup>34</sup>) had a high capacity for *statecraft*. Interpreting the new political imperative from within its habitus, the Ottoman elite's reformist project had gone through several stages in the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century and had certainly paved the way for the new republican elite's daring political consciousness. However, its basic rationale was that of an imperial state. Ottoman reformism was always an *improvisation* within the Ottoman bureaucratic habitus. This elite statecraft was programmed into modern government by the application of the European paradigm of political and social rule.<sup>35</sup> The result was a rapid and effective modernisation of certain aspects of the Ottoman imperial state apparatus, mainly the military and the foreign office. In the same historical process, the national-ethnic-religious differences were shifting in the multi-ethnic structure of the empire and were increasingly recoded by nationalism. Hence, what used to be a mere religious or ethnic difference, however radical it was conceived to be in the past, turned into a social and political antagonism, especially under the pressure of growing expansion of the Ottoman economy – the privileges given to the Christian minorities played a major role. These two developments led to the emergence of a

*Production*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987. For historical analyses of the Ottoman reform see the important articles by Uriel Heyd, Albert Hourani and Feroz Ahmad, in *The Modern Middle East*, eds Albert Hourani, Philip S Khoury and Mary C Wilson, University of California Press, Berkeley–Los Angeles, 1993, pp 29–60; 83–110; 125–44. To these classic works, which focus on the administrative reform, I must add a recent excellent historical work which focuses on the administrative reform as it concerns *property relations*: Huri Islamoğlu, ed, *Constituting Modernity: Private Property in the East and West*, I B Tauris, New York, 2007. This important collection focuses on China and India as well as the Ottoman Empire.

36 It was Keyder who drew attention to this significant ideological metaphor in *State and Class*, op cit, pp 49–69.

37 If one follows Georges Bataille, this sovereign moment is an ‘experience’ that cannot be experienced. It is lost as soon as it is consecrated as experience in language. See Georges Bataille, *Essential Writings*, ed Michael Richardson, Sage, London, 1998, pp 188–201. When this power of impossibility is coded into the (pedagogical) narrative (of the origins) of the nation-state as territorial (delimited) sovereignty, it produces a performative contradiction. In a short, instructive comparative reading of American, Indian and Turkish constitutions, Gayatri Spivak shows, following on Jacques Derrida’s reading of the American constitution, how the identity of the national agent is produced in performative contradiction: although the sovereign nation-people

paradoxical situation: *on the one hand*, the empire was almost a semi-colony under the yoke of the powerful European global economy that absorbed the peasant surpluses through the comprador bourgeoisie located in Westernised ports such as Istanbul and Izmir; *on the other hand*, the imperial apparatus recoded itself into an emergent modern empire. This was also accompanied by the desire to produce a Muslim bourgeois class to replace the Christian one.

In this singular context, the national and imperial signifiers became almost inseparable for the Ottoman Turk. This is not readable by mainstream historiographies, whether orientalist or nationalist. The well-known label of ‘sick man of Europe’ has always been the main framework for understanding the patterns of political action of the Ottoman state as a ‘decaying’ and ‘dissolving’ empire, without sufficient attention to the historical fact that a whole imperial apparatus was now acting on new, modern premises. Nationalist historiography made much of the so-called ‘drama’ of the Ottoman statesman but was unable to develop an alternative framework in which it would be able to make sense of this strange paradox of a modernising imperial regime under global capitalist hegemony. The result of the paradox was a peculiar ideological-subjective formation characterised by a particular mission, which became the axiom of the Ottoman-Turkish statesman, especially the Young Turks, and formed his subjectivity and affectivity for almost two centuries: the metaphor of *saving the state*.<sup>36</sup> In spite of the great zeal of the reformist and his emergent nationalisation under the new identity of the ‘Turk’, his main rationale was saving the state from the national liberation movements of the minorities. When this historical context is kept in mind, it can shed a new light on the conjuncture following the First World War, the period of national liberation between 1919 and 1922. The loss of empire and the occupation of Anatolia by European powers and the Greek army created a new condition which set off a moment of *sovereign break* with the imperial habitus and its irresolvable national-imperial paradox (it was no doubt Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s capacity to see this from the very beginning that made him a leader). It was this sovereign moment which made possible the republican national revolution and the invention of the ‘free Turk’ as distinct from the Ottoman ‘subjects.’<sup>37</sup>

The powerful republican revolutionary spirit and audacity of Turkish revolution is undeniable. This revolutionary project was a *rupture* from the Ottoman imperial reformist project in the nineteenth century on a number of significant points. The declaration of a sovereign national identity as a break with the imperial-religious one, a new republican constitutional regime based on the principle of secularism and a number of institutional reforms in various spheres from law to education were impossible within the Ottoman imperial framework. However, despite the revolutionary nature of the republican project, and despite some degree of popular mobilisation, there was also a strongly authoritarian element in the performance of the leading elite. This made it difficult for the working people, especially large rural masses, to be articulated in this project of transformation. This was further reinforced by the extreme weakness of the Turkish bourgeoisie, as the bourgeois class of Empire was mostly Christian. Hence, although the republican project

does not exist before it declares itself as sovereignly existing, the declaration can only act as if it does. Gayatri Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, Routledge, New York–London, 1993, pp 262–9. Spivak warns that the trace of this undecidability must always be kept in sight.

- 38 It is these specific characteristics of the Turkish path that often led to its comparison with the German one, especially in the arguments of pro-Anglo-American liberal globalists in Turkey. The judgement is of course that such a path is abnormal and pathological.

- 39 The two best examples are Bernard Lewis's well-known work: *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, Oxford University Press, London, 1968 and Ernest Gellner's chapter on 'Kemalism' in his *Encounters with Nationalism*, Basil Blackwell, London, 1994. These studies are typically Orientalist in their basic assumptions for their very possibility as discourse depends on the axiomatic spacing of the 'East' as ontologically and epistemologically different from the West. See Edward Said, *Orientalism*, op cit, and for my reading of his succinct formulation of an 'epistemological and ontological distinction between the East and the West', see 'Under the Sign of Orientalism: The West vs Islam', *Cultural Critique*, 23, Winter 1992–93, pp 165–97.

- 40 This includes the liberal left as well. According to an important spokesperson of this approach, Murat Belge, the president of the Turkish Helsinki Citizens Association, 'we have a centralised government tradition here. The Ottoman period was followed by the Republican, and the nation-state continues along that path... And it

declared national-popular sovereignty, this radical attempt was adjusted to and controlled by the political and economic priorities of the leading petty-bourgeois bureaucratic elite and was determined by the particular socioeconomic and political circumstances of the prior imperial regime.<sup>38</sup> The project was to produce a national bourgeois class within a protected national economic order.

In conventional sociological and historical accounts of orientalist bias, this historical trajectory is often seen as an inevitable elite project of modernisation in an oriental society which lacks basic civil structures.<sup>39</sup> It seems that the emergent liberal-globalist argument also shares these assumptions. Assuming a standard course of development, the Turkish revolution is often read as modernisation from above, as an aberrant and pathological case that must be corrected by adopting rational democratic values and institutions. Hence the formation and effects of this so-called authoritarian statism have been systematically avoided, for it is regarded as given in history.<sup>40</sup> The liberal argument implicitly accepted the republican imperative while it continued to see the actual transformation as a distorted, errant version of modern nation-building. Critical arguments questioned the naturalisation of authoritarianism as 'modernisation from above' by mainstream social science, but they were not able to develop a framework that would be able to engage the legacy of 'passive revolution' in a critical and productive manner. In order to be able to develop such a framework, it is necessary that the concepts of subject and representation or mimesis are taken into account. I suggest that we focus on the processes of desire and identification in the formation of national subject, and to end, I will draw attention to a certain aspect of Turkish national culture or *Bildung* from this point of view.

## CRYPTIC NATION

The transition from an imperial to a republican regime involved a series of reforms in the fields of language and everyday codes of dress as well as law and education. Following Cheah's argument on the specific role of culture in peripheral nationalism, I would like to focus on cultural aspects of the Turkish revolution. Language revolution constitutes the most important aspect of this series of cultural reforms. Although the earlier reformists took up the language question as decisive for the formation of a modern public sphere, changing the alphabet was certainly unimaginable for the Ottoman reformist, even after the 'Turk' appeared as a new identity in the early twentieth century.<sup>41</sup>

The new regime had already found a relatively developed public sphere, thanks to the efforts of earlier reformist groups in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The production of a public language readable and consumable by everyone was no longer a problem, though literacy certainly was. The rationale of language revolution did not depend solely on the question of literacy. In the mind of the republican leadership, the abolition of the *caliphate* was not sufficient to establish a secular republic. The question of secularism was rightly identified as a cultural one. The solution was unique and controversial: as language was seen as a major means of forming culture and subjectivity, the script

seems that this is the big problem in the country now. The paternalist structure that provided the foundation for this country, that “protected” it up till now, that brought it up to this day, has become its major problem, has become an apparition it must free itself from’, in *Urban Rights: Turkey in a Comparative Perspective*, ed Mete Tunçay, WALD Academy, Istanbul, 1994, p 45. Belge’s argument is based on the assumption that the ‘apparition’ can and must be exorcised and replaced by a rational order. I would like to argue on the contrary that the apparition is neither simply reducible to paternalism nor replaceable by a rational order in a straightforward manner. On the contrary, any democratic initiative must definitely take into account the radical indeterminacy of spectral logic.

- 41 The language question was not simply an invention of the republican regime. It was the Young Ottomans who first formulated the question of language in Ottoman modernisation. (This early reformist group of the mid-nineteenth century should not be confused with the Young Turks, or the Committee of Union and Progress.) Their most prominent member, the poet and playwright Namık Kemal, argued for a simplified language that would be easily readable and understandable. This was the moment of emergence of a modern *public sphere* in the empire, which was historically split between an official, administrative, royal language on the one hand and a multiplicity of spoken languages on the other. The formation of a public sphere was impossible without the production of a new language that is common and legible to everyone. For these post-Tanzimat intellectuals (especially Namık Kemal and Şinasi),

was changed from Arabic to Roman in a very short time. The change was so swift that even a sympathetic commentator like Bernard Lewis found it necessary to underline ‘the quick and expeditious way in which the commission (for the adoption of the Latin letters) conducted its business’.<sup>42</sup> The work of the commission took no more than six weeks. The Arabic script was associated with the religion of Islam and its system of religious education, ie, the Qur’anic course. It was thus seen as the operative code of a backward and feudal religious faith and responsible for the low level of literacy among the population because of its alleged difficulty. Roman script was regarded as easier to learn and thus advantageous for increasing literacy which, most importantly, was the visible evidence of the nation’s modernity. The value of visibility should not be underestimated for it presumes a certain theory of representation that identifies legibility with a universal *Gestalt*. Arabic letters were associated with religious obscurantism, as well as an unwarranted and empty sophistry whose only aim was to maintain the imam’s personal power over ignorant people. Legibility was thus seen in terms of visibility as opposed to the backward and dark powers hidden behind the Arabic script. The latter was associated with formlessness, ugliness and darkness. The contorted and twisted shapes of Arabic letters were difficult to read and comprehend, and hence susceptible to manipulation.<sup>43</sup> Roman ones were easy to read and comprehend, accessible to everyone at the same level. Roman typography’s value of visibility was a fundamental feature of the Turkish national onto-typology, one of whose chief aims was to control the spectre of Islam. This was also accompanied by a strong need to distinguish the Turk from the Arab under the new principle of national identity. Hence the Arab nation itself was seen in terms of the dominant religious belief in its countries. In the eyes of the new republican regime, the free Turk represented modernity and progress, the Arab religious dogma and backwardness. The change of dress code was also regarded as evidence of the nation’s modernity. The ‘free Turk’ was thus installed as a type, a *Gestalt*.

The language revolution did not solely consist of changing the script. The Ottoman language, regarded as a hybrid language made up of Arabic and Persian, was replaced with a new Turkish language and words – a long and arduous process that created the modern Turkish spoken today. The change of script must have been traumatic for people who were born into and lived with the Arabic one, including Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his friends.<sup>44</sup> In a couple of weeks, a whole society cut all its ties with the past.<sup>45</sup> That especially the republican elite exercised this discipline on themselves shows the extreme determination with which this group of people acted. No doubt the language revolution is open to criticism for various reasons: the problematic assumption of an internal and necessary link between religious backwardness and Arabic script; the potentially humiliating attitude towards Arab language and culture; the incredible price paid by cutting all ties with the past and its immense cultural accumulation. These criticisms, rightful as they may be, do not answer the most important question: how was it *possible* at all?

In order to answer this question, we must begin by remembering the imperial legacy and the sovereign break with it in the new conjuncture following the First World War. The dissolution of the empire enabled



see Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: a Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1962. Later in the early twentieth century, in parallel with the emergent national identity of the 'Turk' in the discourse of the Party of Union and Progress, the situation was further complicated by the new imperative of articulating Turkish sounds in the Arabic script (a necessity that was not felt under conventional Ottoman identity). The CUP leader Enver Pasha's idea of a new script (called 'Enveri') was an attempt to introduce a new system of marks (for Turkish sounds) into the Arabic system. But the resulting script itself required a translation into the traditional Ottoman! On the more positive side, when the Republic was established, there was already a relatively developed public sphere. I thank Murat Güvenç for sharing his knowledge of 'Enveri script' with me.

42 Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, op cit, pp 277

43 'We must free ourselves from these incomprehensible signs that for centuries have held our minds in an iron vice.' Mustafa Kemal Atatürk quoted in Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, p 278.

44 In my childhood, there were still old people who used the Arabic script for their personal notes or non-public communication.

45 An Ottoman historian of Turkish origin today has to learn the Arabic script, and there are literary works that are still not translated into contemporary Turkish.

46 For an interesting psychobiography of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, see Vamık D Volkan and Norman Itzkowitz, *The*

the Turks to establish themselves as a nation. But when they looked for a history, a narrative (as every nation needs to do), what they found was an empire that was *lost*. The return to Asiatic origins was itself a response to this. But the spectre of empire, or perhaps we should now call it *the spectre of the state as an ultimate unitary reference*, never left the nation. One imagines that this must have been lived and engaged at an affective and subjective level by the leaders of the new regime, most of whom personally fought in all the battles as commanders of the Ottoman army, and worked as Ottoman government or parliament members, and as political leaders and organisers in the Committee of Union and Progress (Young Turks) which ran the empire in its last decade.<sup>46</sup> This is surely not a question of individual personality but rather one of structures of subjectivity. The question that I would like to pose is that of how the subject responds to loss.<sup>47</sup> This requires a theoretical detour.

The French psychoanalysts Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok developed a highly original interpretation of psychoanalytic theory around the question of loss.<sup>48</sup> They make an important distinction between 'introjection' and 'incorporation' in the mourning process. According to Abraham and Torok, *introjection* is the process of including the unconscious drives in the ego by the mediation of an external object of desire. It is thus an active process of acquisition and expansion which is gradual and laborious. As a result, the object of mourning (or of love) is synthesised and successfully articulated in speech. In contrast, *incorporation* is what happens when this process fails because of a *loss that cannot be acknowledged and put into words, while it cannot be simply rejected either*. The words that cannot be introjected are instead 'incorporated', ie, they are swallowed and buried live inside the subject as a *crypt*. As opposed to introjection, incorporation appears as a phantasmatic and magical solution. As these impossible words are placed and forgotten in a separate enclave, the radical forgetting of the crypt is perpetuated by means of a *fantasy* that hides it and resists its reading. The crypt constantly evokes reading but is ultimately not readable. The incorporated object is actually *fragmented*; it is a 'broken symbol'. The fragmented object can neither be located in the unconscious in conventional psychoanalytic manner, nor can it return as the repressed (all this would mean that it is synthesised). Yet its effects are not absent. The crypt operates differently: the relations between words are not binary but operate through lines of fracture and fragmentation inside the word. If, as a refusal to mourn, incorporation is impossible to observe because it is already a miming or mimesis of introjection, one can nevertheless *point to* the presence of a cryptic operation by means of long and arduous translation which requires taking the fracture lines and intra-symbolic relations into account rather than simply depending on a symbolic or semantic correspondence. Abraham and Torok call this act of reading *cryptonymy*.

The cryptonymic concept of fantasy refers to a mimetic operation, but what is mimed, that which is prior to the act of miming, does not have a unity. Not only is it fractured and fragmentary but it also has a spectral status.<sup>49</sup> As Tobias van Veen explains, the secret crypt commemorates the refusal of the loss of object as well as the associated desires, 'while maintaining those desires through a spectral, performative process



*Immortal Atatürk: A Psychobiography*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago–London, 1986, which could have engaged this question if it did not have the evolutionary bias of its Anglo-American framework.

47 This is not an unproblematic question, as it assumes a prior unity of the subject; however, I suggest that we think under the methodological presumption of a constitutive loss that is prior to all loss.

48 See Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy*, trans Nicholas Rand, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1986; and *The Shell and the Kernel*, trans and intro Nicholas Rand, University of Chicago Press, Chicago–London, 1994.

49 In fact, Abraham and Torok develop a singular concept of phantom or ghost as the effect of another's unconscious in my unconscious. See *The Shell and the Kernel*, pp 171–6.

50 Tobias van Veen: 'The Crypt and Incorporation', <http://www.quadrantcrossing.org/papers/TheCrypt-tV.pdf>

51 Derrida himself wrote a long introduction to Abraham and Torok's work on Freud's famous case of the 'wolf-man'. Jacques Derrida, 'Fors: The English Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok', in *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*, pp xi–lxxii. In a recent excellent work on Gothic writing, Jodey Castricano brought these theoretical approaches together: *Cryptomimesis: The Gothic and Jacques Derrida's Ghost Writing*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal–Kingston, 2001. My above argument is certainly not as elaborated as her highly original concept of 'cryptomimesis', which must be regarded as a

that never achieves synthesis'.<sup>50</sup> There is a clear association here between Jacques Derrida's notion of spectrality and Abraham and Torok's concepts of crypt in that both assume the mimesis of a radically divided (non-)origin.<sup>51</sup> I have formulated national *Bildung* as the mimesis of a model or reference that itself acts like a spectre. This formulation now gains a different dimension. Spectral mimesis is a process of maintaining oneself by encrypting and hiding oneself in language. Fantasy then is formed as this process itself. Given the double imperative of producing a new national identity and having a historical narrative, the emerging Turkish national Subject was in a paradoxical situation with regard to the imperial (dis)continuity: a loss that cannot be acknowledged and put into words, while it cannot simply be rejected either. I have already spoken of the spectre of Islam, but now we gradually realise the presence of another spectre haunting the installation of Turkish national identity, *the spectre of the state*. It is important to underline that this spectre was *not* just patrimonial. This is why its religious appearance might be somewhat deceptive. It was characterised by a constitutive undecidability: it was as much Western and modern (the imperative of re-forming, curing its identity as modern nation-state) as it was paternalistic and imperial (the identity that needed to be saved).

The metaphor of 'saving the state' must be considered as the historical backdrop of a phantasmatic process of incorporation that took place after the foundation of the republic.<sup>52</sup> The manifest instance of this phantasmatic incorporation is the language revolution, especially the swift change of the script. The state was now 'saved', safe, inside. But what is this thing called the state, if not, to paraphrase Derrida, something 'sealed and thus internal to itself, a secret interior within the (re)public(an) square, but by the same token outside it, external to the interior'?<sup>53</sup> The thing saved is a broken symbol that is now re-coded, re-encrypted: the sudden disappearance of an 'old' Arabic script, which had indeed become old by the very act of abolishing it, and its replacement with the 'new' Roman script is the magical solution, a mimesis of introjection as the creation of a *Gestalt* and the building or the erection of a type, supplemented by the new dress code and other reforms. It was no longer possible to speak and write, to articulate or introject, in the unshapely and uncanny Arabic script. Latinisation is the Turkish man's magic word, his magic script. Does this fast solution not have something to do with the impossibility of accepting the lost object, the impossibility of loving the dead as a living part of me?

The above reading is only a hypothesis. For reading such a historically and socially produced crypt requires an immense undertaking, most probably impossible in terms of time, space and human power, and moreover impossible by the very nature of the 'object' under interrogation. However, to the extent that it is possible, it would have to involve, for instance, a most careful reading of the replacement of the old Arabic, Persian and Ottoman words by the new Turkish words, most of which were supposedly produced from their original Asian Turkic roots.<sup>54</sup> This replacement is a displacement or crypting that is a work of hiding rather than finding origins. The origin here must therefore be read *not* in terms of a generic type or essence such as the Asiatic Turk, *but* in the sense Michel Foucault carefully read in Friedrich Nietzsche's texts on history

singular contribution to deconstruction.

- 52 This whole process is itself the historical backdrop to what is today called the 'deep state' – the secret organisations, the self-appointed saviours, the coding of politics in conspiratorial language in the media and popular culture – what should be called an incessant secretion of the secret without a final disclosure.

- 53 Derrida, 'Fors', op cit, p xiv

- 54 Such an undertaking would also have to take into account Atatürk's well-known theory of sun-language.

- 55 Michel Foucault: *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed Donald F Bouchard, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1977

- 56 Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, op cit, p 3

- 57 This would have to mean that the border between introjection and incorporation can theoretically be governed; or, to put it in other words, the other can be known and returned to the same. That the other as such cannot be raised, for as soon as such a process begins it will dissimulate itself to remain other, is a point that Jacques Derrida has underlined more than once. As he writes: 'The presentation of the other as such, that is to say the dissimulation of its "as such" has always already begun and no structure of the entity escapes it', in *Of Grammatology*, trans Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD, 1976, p 47.

- 58 Derrida, 'Fors', op cit, pp xxi–xxii, and van Veen, 'The Crypt and Incorporation', op cit

- 59 Castricano, *Cryptomimesis*, op cit, p 32; Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography*, op cit, passim

and genealogy: 'the subtle, singular, and sub-individual marks that might possibly intersect in them to form a network that is difficult to unravel'.<sup>55</sup> The 'spectral-cryptic' is radically plural (both more and less than one, as Derrida says).<sup>56</sup> It is not simply the spectre of the state but a spectre that cannot be dissociated from its other, ie, the people. The most general context is of course the dissolution of the empire that witnessed wars, violence and massacres.

There is yet a theoretical problem that needs to be addressed. Have I not implicitly proposed the yardstick of a 'normal' introjective process by which we are able to judge the 'pathological', incorporative fantasy? If the border were so easily fixed and governed, then we would be back to the concept of mimesis I have criticised. There must also be a paradox in this normality and normalisation.<sup>57</sup> As Derrida argues, while, as a successful internalisation, introjection makes the other the same as me, incorporation maintains it as other inside me; hence the latter is more respectful to the otherness of the other. Yet, from another point of view, while incorporation resists introjective assimilation, it is also always under the shadow of introjection and it only keeps a topography intact. Compared with it, introjection might also be more open to the other as other through synthesis. The paradox is irresolvable, and it shows the *undecidable* and *moving* character of the border between introjection and incorporation, and by implication all the series of binary oppositions between fantasy and reality, mimesis and truth, etc. It thus calls into question the assumption of the self's original unity before this split is operative. Yet a surprisingly positive consequence follows from this paradox. While crypt is considered to be pathological by Abraham and Torok, for Derrida the very fantasy of incorporation is a necessary condition for the possibility of subject. Crypting is no longer merely a pathological condition but the very activity of a plural and polyvocal subject (made up of Foucault's network of singular, sub-individual marks, and by definition open and on the move).<sup>58</sup> Therefore, the cryptic regime of language that Turkish nationalism produced is not a merely negative phenomenon. It must be thought of, on the contrary, as the very possibility of a Turkish national identity and *Bildung*. This does not mean that there is no longer any distinction between introjection and incorporation, nor does it mean that a new, better and more pluralistic identity can just be reconstructed by remembering the dead. Rather it points to a strange imperative, an unceasing task: speaking and writing in a way which does not establish a homogenous reference, meaning or origin. This performativity would establish a field of meaning that is not unaware of the radical openness of all meaning. In other words, it is a practice of '(de)composition' rather than merely composition, to use Jodey Castricano's adoption of Gregory Ulmer's term, or '(de)constitution' to use Lacoue-Labarthe's.<sup>59</sup>

Working at the critical border between introjection and incorporation, the aim of what might be called a new intellectual work or new literacy (a new reading and writing practice) is to open the national discourse to its others and otherness. It is with this purpose that it works *on* the existing regime of speech by considering the *public* discourse and language in terms of an openness to that which extends *beyond* the self,<sup>60</sup> even though this beyond or outside might be *inside* the self (as cryptonymy implies). Such an approach will have to see

- 60 For the notion of public, see Thomas Keenan, 'Windows: of Vulnerability', in *The Phantom Public Sphere*, ed Bruce Robbins, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, London, 1993, pp 121–41.
- 61 Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator', in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans Harry Zohn, ed and intro Hannah Arendt, Schocken Books, New York, 1968, pp 69–82.
- 62 Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, *Echographies of Television: Filmed Interviews*, trans Jennifer Bajorek, Polity Press, Cambridge–Oxford–Malden, MA, 2002, especially pp 113–34.
- 63 For a reading of Benjamin's sense of survival, see Jacques Derrida, *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln–London, 1988, p 122.
- 64 I have rhetorically transformed Benjamin's famous passage into a question. The original runs as follows, 'A Klee painting named "Angelus Novus" shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned,

language as a *public secret*. In his famous essay on translation, Walter Benjamin argued that if a language were not already a translation from another unknown language, it would not be possible to translate it at all.<sup>61</sup> This thesis of 'translatability' opens language to a *cryptic reading* as well as speaking to Derrida's contention that, in order to live, we have to learn *how to talk with ghosts*.<sup>62</sup> The ethical operation of spectralisation deconstructs the *form* of the nation-people, the ways in which it is identified, produced and constituted as a type. This deconstruction maintains the nation-form in a different manner in relation to otherness. If, as Benjamin argues, translation has to do with the life of a language or text, responding to its immanent demand for survival or living on, then spectralisation or crypting is essential to the *survival* of the nation.<sup>63</sup> This survival, which I call new literacy, is language's capacity of making itself other and inventing itself in crypting and spectralisation.

## CONCLUSION

To go back to my initial observation, the political agenda in Turkey now is democratisation and more specifically the recognition of the rights of minorities in the so-called 'EU process'. As this is part of the process of globalisation, the model of the multicultural, liberal, rule-of-law state cannot be artificially separated from the process of IMF-imposed policies of economic liberalisation (especially severe policies of privatisation in health and education whose effects are daily felt by large masses of working people). Democratic reform and restructuring is an ethico-political imperative, but given Turkey's repressive political tradition it is not possible without taking the national-popular into account (since, for instance, nationalism will not be just the opposite of globalism but a form of universalism). It is not for nothing that the ideological poles of today's world are liberal globalism and authoritarian nationalism. Given this predicament, perhaps the most difficult to remember and the most untimely spectre today is the socialist one. I am referring here to the social struggles of the last four decades and the severe repression of the socialist movement by a series of military coups (1971, 1980). In the rising liberal-democratic consensus expressed by the so-called public opinion media, it is observed with admirable sobriety that the left is unfortunately absent from the political scene (as the social democratic Republican People's Party turned nationalist). It seems that its spectre is once more haunting the scene. Yet this urgent need for an ally in the project of liberal reform and restructuring hides the fact that the socialist spectre has been the most disturbing one. For it is this same liberal argument we hear which used to bury it deep under the charges of 'populism' and 'totalitarianism' (forgetting the totalitarian monstrosity of the powers that suppressed socialism and exercised the neo-liberal economic programme), precisely in order to construct and imprint itself as the new national *type*: the liberal-democratic consumer. I am reminded of Benjamin's 'new angel' in his well-known Thesis IX. To rephrase him: as the storm of progress moves ahead in Europe, *how* can the angel of history, looking towards the past, her wings caught in that violent storm of progress, which is entry to the European Union, seeing in that past a

while the pile of debris  
before him grows skyward.  
This storm is what we call  
progress.' Walter  
Benjamin, 'Theses on the  
Philosophy of History', in  
*Illuminations: Essays and  
Reflections*, op cit,  
pp 257–8.

65 Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, trans V Binetti and C Casarino, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 2000, p 125. The concept of 'spectacular society' is of course Guy Debord's in his *Society of the Spectacle*, trans Donald Nicholson-Smith, Zone Books, New York, 1995.

66 The spectral is never under my cognitive command. It keeps returning, multiplying, fragmenting and crypting 'itself'. Its time is disjointed, Jacques Derrida reminds us: 'this non-object, this non-present present, this being-there of an absent or departed one no longer belongs to knowledge', in *Specters of Marx*, op cit, p 6.

single catastrophe piling up wreckage upon wreckage and hurling it in front of her feet, *awaken the dead*?<sup>64</sup> My rhetorical transformation of Benjamin's thesis into a question cannot at once seek to be *both* rhetorical (warning) and political (hope). For, in the face of a rising demand for the 'left', in the face of the most urgent democratic imperative, one cannot *not* ask if the approved programme is not establishing a 'spectacular-democratic society', one of the laws of which, as Giorgio Agamben writes:

... wills it that, whenever power is seriously in crisis, the media establishment apparently dissociates itself from the regime of which it is an integral part so as to govern and direct the general discontent lest it turn itself into revolution.<sup>65</sup>

The big word 'revolution' is a little word in the big mouth of the media. As for the discontent, it is heard everywhere.

Spectralisation, or the work of crypting or (de)composition, cannot have the cognitive assurance of establishing or restoring a movement.<sup>66</sup> On the contrary, it begins with the questioning of all assurances. The new intellectual work is a modest and patient act of opening the mother language and the father's script to the most distant and the most unexpected other. So that it is not all done in the name of 'Europe', regarded as the proprietor and guarantor of democracy, as if had nothing ever happened in the name of democracy in a long history of repression, as if no one before had struggled and died, as if there are no ghosts to whom we owe a debt of democracy, as if there might be nothing they could tell us, as if it is simply a script written by Europe, the capital, the head of the world, locked in rivalry. Fight for your recognition, it says: 'be like me/do not be like me'.