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Henry James and the “Imperial Feeling”

BY IREM BALKIR

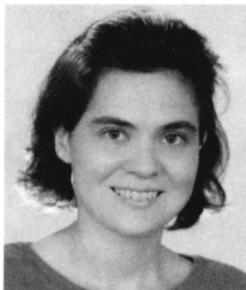
Monogenealogy would always be a mystification in the history of culture
— Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading*

IN HIS CRITICAL WRITINGS JAMES SEEMS TO REGRET IMPERIALISM AS THE harbinger of cultural corruption, the nemesis of a “pristine” Europeanism. Yet, in spite of his ethical disaffection with power desires and consequences of the imperial practices, perceiving the connection between culture and “empire” as a dynamic historical experience, and speaking to the society of the metropolis from within that history implicate James in what Edward Said recently characterizes as the “imperial feeling.” According to Said, literature makes constant references to itself as somehow participating in Europe’s overseas expansion, creating thereby “structures of feeling” that support, elaborate, and consolidate the practice of empire. With the leverage of “imperial feeling,” similar references of location and geography appear across a number of diverse, individual works that are not otherwise connected to one another, or to an official ideology of “empire.”¹ That James began to perceive England and Europe with a knowledge of their empires invites us to take a second look at the politicization of James’s critical language.

The scope of James’s critical writings from the mid-1880s onwards can be characterized as a search for stylistically comprehensive tools to represent a greater world. At first sight the meaning accorded the concept of “greater world” in the essays seems contradictory because what is signified by this is not geographical diversity but an enclave which can safeguard from isolation the artist who faces an increasing encroachment of the capitalistic society, and one that can distance the intellect from mimicking the tendency to rationalize the international relations in purely economic terms. Yet more intriguing propositions

which are not often associated with Henry James can be found in these essays' efforts at delineating what exactly is comprised in a greater world. More specifically, the magnetism and the "frisson" (the peculiar combination of fear and pleasure) of the "greater world" in these essays seem to be induced more by empire, colonialism, and the expansion of the Western culture beyond its domain, and less by fears of isolation amidst the encroachment of capitalist market principles.

The critical essays, more so than the novels, help make clear that James attends to the issues of empire, colonialism, expansion, and he attends to them from a positionalist vantage which is often expressed in the form of provisos. What I mean by this is that James is at once opposed to the sordid work of expansionism even as he affirms its moralizing legitimacy. Theoretically, James finds the expansion of the West via empires and colonialism insupportable insofar as the continuity of Europe as a homogenous cultural foundation is seen to be damaged in this process. However, to James, taking issue with the exoticists such as Pierre Loti who for instance entertain fantasies of a French-Oriental syncretism, empire and colonialism seem not so unwarrantable because they signify the de facto conquest of the non-European peoples by the European Empires. Hence, the empire becomes one of the potent evidences of the presumed incommensurability between Western and non-Western cultures. Put differently, Jamesian positionalism is somewhat similar to the presence of the "conscious double vision" which Raymond Williams perceives in George Orwell's ambiguous repulsion from the British imperial practices which Orwell encountered through his involvement in Burma.² Williams suggests that in the case of Orwell, such a vision is rooted in the simultaneous position of the dominator and dominated; it is at once "powerful" and "disturbed." Likewise, James's positionalism is engendered by "giving the West too great, if also too guilty, a role. In asserting the guilt, one also asserts the greatness."³ His appeal, in effect, is less in the interest of calling an end to empire and conquest, but more in the interest of discrediting the hybridity of different cultures that ensue from the practices of empire. As you see, the difference between the first position which disproves



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the imperial structure and the second position which acquiesces in its logic is a diacritical one. Herein resides the intriguing aspect of James's positionalism which, then, does not deflect or reverse the ideology of the supremacy of one people or culture over another, but is animated by it.

Scattered throughout the critical essays, the "successes" and "vicissitudes" of the British and French Empires, with occasional references to the U.S., provide the context for these positions. A classification of these positions seems in order. 1) The exhortation to preserve history and the idea of civilization as-is, that is to say, to preserve "the old England" against an unharnessed internationalization which treats the colonies and the territories contiguous to Europe as fields of experimentation with interracial governance. 2) The imperative to draw up the boundaries of a cultural map accompanying a cartographic Europe, to chart more precisely where Europe ends. For example, what is deemed as inassimilable civilizations, and their dislocating presence begin in James's own words, "on the east coast of the Adriatic." Hence, mapping re-codifies geographical disjunctions as civilizational differences; moreover the map is narrativized by cartographic metaphors which write race unto geography. Put tersely, the map depicts geography as a metaphor for race. 3) The exhortation to re-establish the borders and barriers of European identity in any venture beyond Europe. 4) From all that is said above James further extrapolates class characteristics of certain genres such as orientalism and exoticism, which are associated with the writers and readers of "middle class" persuasion. Such conclusions proceed not only to a denigration of orientalism and exoticism, but also to an exultation of an anti-orientalist, anti-exoticist, Eurocentric cosmopolitanism. Let me emphasize here that what we encounter in James's critical writings especially on Pierre Loti is not a reproduction of orientalism, but its mimetic inversion into a Europe-centered cosmopolitanism. As Derrida observes, "what passes elsewhere for the 'same' utterance says exactly the opposite and corresponds instead to the inverse, to the reactive inversion of the very thing it mimes."⁴ As I will illustrate in detail below, the reversal of orientalism to eurocentricism manifests the disenchantment with what is perceived as the promiscuous hybridity between the East and the West occasioned by the empires.

Moreover, methodologically the inversion is made possible by what Derrida elsewhere calls "anamnesic capitalization."⁵ In Greek anamnesis means recalling to mind. It entails the recollection of ideas, peoples, events in a previous existence; it is a harking back where the writer accepts anteriority as an interlocutor and carries on a dialogue with it. As in Platonic dialogues, the guiding concern is to discover in oneself something that is sought.⁶ Hence, anamnesis is instrumental in constructing a language of memory, especially that of the universal. Likewise, Jamesian anamnesis quintessentially consists of a look back to European culture, less as an alien intellectual resource that can be implanted at will, but more towards achieving self-definition through an identification with it. James evokes the anamnestic process through the pronoun "we," thereby not only presenting his relation to an older Europe organically, but also posing as though he is part of a continuous history which he can sense

directly. The idea of the West's familiarity with itself as a singular cultural formation, then, underwrites a cultural conservationist discourse. By the same token, the absence or impossibility of such a discourse foretells "decline" and displacement.

However, in the political conjuncture between 1885 and 1914, the anamnestic familiarity, the "we" underwent several transformations. The 1880s seem to have had a dislocating effect on James, placing him in the thick of Europe's colonial activity, ideology, and discourse. By the late 1890s when the course of empire became irreversible, it was treated as a spectacle, a later episode from the history of the Roman Empire or Napoleonic conquests which James saw and felt directly unfolding before his eyes. Finally by 1914, if it appeared at all, the "we" in James's discourse bore no significance worth mentioning. In other words, the appearance and disappearance of an anamnestic "we" was one of the peculiar traces empire leaves in European culture in general, and in James's discourse in particular. It signifies an aggrandizement, an overvaluation of the collective memory of the Western culture bound up with the "successes" of its empires.

It should be further noted that with the First World War not only did the collective "we" begin to vanish, but also the idea of a "greater world" became appallingly complex. James for instance increasingly grew restive at the proliferation of such projects as the "world city" or "world consciousness" at the turn of the century which signaled more and more the excesses of accumulation and an all pervasive megalomania. Among the ideas of 1914, very few people found use, application, and sympathy for the power of assimilation and oversimplification entailed in the discourse on "world." James was one of the many who found this concept vacuous around 1914.

In spite of himself, the "London Notes" (1897) portray James not as an unpolitical man, but quite to the contrary, as observing, indeed as participating in "the imperial feeling." As a way of corroborating Edward Said's exhortations I recited in my opening remarks, I will quote at some length a passage from the little discussed book reviews in "London Notes" which illustrate James's feelings about the empire and its infinite capacity for weaving a seamless fabric of imperial culture.

[The British Empire] was behind Sir William Wilson Hunter (the eminent Indian official and author of the almost classic *Annals of Rural Bengal*) on the occasion of his producing, the other day, that delightful little volume *The Thackerays in India*, a volume that makes us feel also how much it [Empire] was behind the author of *Vanity Fair*. Sir William Hunter, moreover, really writes, even though his small and charming book be as essentially a mere drop in the bucket of a special literature as the lives it commemorates were a drop in the bucket of the ravenous, the prodigious Service; wherefore I commend him heartily to readers whose feeling for Thackeray is still a living sentiment. Thackeray's people, on both sides, for generations, had been drops in the great bucket, and the author lifts with a light and competent hand, an art that animates his few pages, the veil

from a kind of mephitic obscurity, the huge, hot, horrible century of English pioneership, the wheel that ground the dust for a million early graves. The Thackerays and the Beechers helped to feed the machine, and the machine, at the same time, turned them out with the big special stamp that sometimes, for variety, didn't crush to death. It gave only life to the greatest of the former race, whose birth at Calcutta we have always fancifully felt, I think, as making for his distinction. It is a fact, at any rate, into which the volume before me puts more meaning than before—a meaning that fills a little the void of his unwritten biography. Is it only a vain imagination, or is there in his large and easy genius an echo of those masteries and dominations which sometimes straightened and sometimes broke the backs of so many of his ancestors and collaterals?⁷

Notice also how the anamnestic "we" appears intermittently and instrumentally in the narrativization of the "imperial feeling." In fact, it would not be wrong to gloss the "imperial feeling" in terms of a political will, not only in this excerpt, but in the entirety of the "London Notes" where a geopolitical discourse summons all allusions to the Gurkhas, Sikhs, Highlanders, Riflemen into a single sentence, thereby compressing space, time, and continents according to the exigencies of the Empire. To be accountable for England means to be accountable all at once for the England in India, in Ireland, in Khartoum, in Afghanistan. Even when James inveighs against the relentless real-politik of the Empire, there seems to be no tangible effort at finding a vantage outside the pervasive "imperial feeling." Moreover, one does not find any substantial reference to the ongoing harassment of the natives. Instead, what one encounters in the ensuing discourse is a jeering, tongue-in-cheek derision of the colonial bureaucrats, the satraps and governors bound for India who look but too anemic to perpetrate colonial violence. Perhaps at most, allusions to the feeble, anemic officers portend a sense of the brooding gloom over the empire, or even convey a sense of exasperation with it—yet these hardly contravene the "imperial feeling."⁸

A precedent to the "imperial feeling" can be found as early as in the 1885 letters to Grace Norton, who happened to be James's best interlocutor on political issues. In contrast to the seasoned, virtually unabashed perspective on the course of Empire in 1897, there is a certain unease and embarrassment in the earlier observations about an "artificial empire" fabricated by the crown, the aristocracy and the army, in struggle with forces "which perhaps in the long run will prove too many for it."⁹ An issue not at all raised in 1897, James also ascribes in the earlier writings the "decline" and destruction of the "old England" to the empire. But similar to the 1897 "Notes," colonial lands and peoples are acknowledged as mere citations in which history is stirred up in the consciousness as a curiosity, without any genuine experience. For instance, a reference to the native resistance against the British troops in Sudan appears and disappears as a vignette in a sustained critique leveled against the exceeding "lack of confidence" in the British foreign office.

Reasons for the intensification of the "imperial feeling" between 1885 and 1897 can be found in history books. Eighteen-eighty-five is earmarked as the year of the "Concert of Europe." Just when the English began to think that the continent was united against England, Salisbury came to office with entrenched Hobbesian notions of governmentality which regarded self-preservation as the highest priority in a state of anarchy. Under Salisbury's direction, foreign policy took the irreversible real-politik-at-all-cost approach. For example, Salisbury considered Ireland and Afghanistan as "contiguous territories" to the Empire and defended the British interventions there on the basis of applying the "morality" which would be applicable to two individuals possessing adjoining property who are protected from wrong by surmounting to a law superior to either one. As a way of deterring a European hegemony over England, Salisbury put his Hobbesian principles to work and incorporated Africa into the British diplomatic strategies by granting Cecil Rhodes the British South Africa Company Charter in an area where the Portuguese, the Germans, the Boers were already investing.¹⁰ In the same year James wrote: "we live in suspense, anxiety and a kind of sickness."¹¹

The theme of empire in the critical essays is by no means confined to the "London Notes." As Harry Levin ascertains, no literature has spoken for all of Europe with more authority than the French.¹² Surveying a wide array of French writers, from Balzac to Loti, James seems to have appointed himself to the task of charting the map of that very authority. Balzac in particular unravels for James how that authority is established in the (then) benign contradiction of the modern European nation-state: the valorization of particularity and the predisposition to define and establish the identity of universal with particular, national idioms. Balzac condenses the universe to France and to the panoply of modernity in the centralized post-Revolutionary nation-state:

What [Balzac] did above all was to read the universe, as hard and as loud as he could, into the France of his time; his own eyes regarding his work as at once the drama of man and a mirror of the mass of social phenomena the most rounded and registered, most organized and administered, and thereby most exposed to systematic observation and portrayal, that the world had seen. There are happily other interesting societies, but these are for schemes of such an order comparatively loose and incoherent, with more extent and perhaps more variety, but with less of the great enclosed and exhibited quality, less neatness and sharpness of arrangement, fewer categories, subdivisions, juxtapositions. Balzac's France was both inspiring enough for an immense prose epic and reducible enough for a report or a chart.¹³

Fredric Jameson characterizes the sway of the Balzac novel in terms of its totality—its libidinal investment. What is meant by this is a form of symbolic satisfaction in which the working distinction between biographical subject, Implied Author, reader, and characters is virtually effaced.¹⁴ Yet, in a more compelling way, James locates the libidinal investment and the symbolic

satisfaction in the rise of the modern nation-state as an enclosed, catalogued, arranged, yet exhibited structure which makes possible the access to national life as a totality, without which the Balzacian novel cannot theorize itself. Furthermore, modernity of the nation, not yet tapped by the internationalisms of 1848, enables Balzac's indulgence in the nation's "thick tradition." In various other essays on Balzac, James goes on to illustrate how the symbolic satisfaction found in the totality of the national life is interrupted by the awareness of being French and European at the same time, and by a longing for "a vaguely-felt outside," for the greater world which renders the national culture a parochialism. Yet, as both Henry James and Harry Levin concede, Balzac reroutes this desire: the more centralized France is imagined to be, the more Balzac imagines himself as "the fourth man" in the century—after Napoleon, Cuvier, O'Connell—who "carries a whole society in his head," and who is "solicited by the world from all quarters at once."

When James's essays on Balzac are juxtaposed to the ones on Loti, the French authority on behalf of Europe is assigned a geopolitical meaning, a position that took centuries to conquer and occupy. James intimates that Loti's novels, by indulging in oriental themes, promiscuously dilute the French European identity with an exotic one. In doing so, they bring the "refined" French literary tradition to an end, and step over France's geositions that took centuries to establish. Put differently, James impugns Loti for exoticizing and enjoying the racial barriers instead of enforcing them. (Today however, any contemporary critic who is familiar with "Orientalism" would place Loti within the orientalist economy of race and racial geography making.) So, it becomes incumbent upon James to "restore," as it were, the racial barriers to Loti's texts by means of and under the aegis of literary criticism; specifically, by laying the discourse on the boundaries of Europe, and the presumed disjunction between the West and the "east of the Adriatic" as an interpretative grid upon Loti's texts. Hence, in reversing the un-European positions Loti takes vis-a-vis the orient, James erases the enticing ambiguities accrued to Loti's depictions of the orient as a dislocating presence, an inassimilable civilization. In retrospect, James's critique with regard to Loti's insufficient racialization of the oriental helps us label James's conservatism and cosmopolitanism as a form of ultra-Europeanism.

Another telltale sign of the Europeanist ideology resides in the terms with which patterns of modernity and their differences are narrativized, because modernity is inextricable from geopolitical boundaries. For instance, when the essays on Balzac and Loti are read simultaneously, there is a noticeable contrast pivoted on the rendition and topos of modernity. Let me explain briefly. On the one hand, there seems to be a valuation of a pristine French modernity represented by Balzac. On the other, the ethnically and geographically mixed modernity explored by Loti in the Orient, especially in "Constantinople," seems to lend itself to racialization and to denigration in the hands of the Europeanist who further finds a Frenchman's indulgence in such a novel pattern of modernity daunting, an unspeakable suspension of the European identity. (Nowadays, conservative Europeanists themselves take on the task of characterizing the

different patterns of modernity beyond the West as the poor imitations of the "original.")

Pierre Loti ventured to the East in the late 1870s. Although he groped with the insufficiency of his culture's norms, his language, and his disposition for an interaction with the peoples encountered there, he remained interested in the foreignness of the East and the Pacific. His narratives attempted to seize that interest for the eyes of his European audiences.¹⁵ While retaining most quirks of the orientalists, what makes Loti a little untypical among this company is his peculiar perception and enactment of the janus-faced modernity of "Constantinople" which in effect replaces the manichean orientalism, the effortless and repetitive representation of the East as an immutable, backwards, yet penetrable geography. Such novels as *Aziyadé* for example do not stabilize the orient as a referent in introducing a framework that allows the European to step out of his modernity, his national identity and language at will, and step into another pattern—let's say—of modernity where a polyethnic, polyglot empire perpetually negotiates its identity. The stepping in is allowed of course with the proviso that the Frenchman can step-out, back to his modernity any time. Meanwhile, I need to add that, whether it is penned by diplomats or writers, the singular difference between the representation of "Constantinople" and other parts of the oriental geography resides in the issue of representing the multi-nationality and poly-ethnicity of the former.

A side note on the Ottoman metropolis seems in order. Unlike the European Empires, perhaps with the exception of the Habsburg Empire, the Ottoman Empire expanded not by means of inglobation, but by means of annexing its contiguous territories and keeping intact the ethnic identities of its subjects in a prolonged negotiation process. Owing to the geographical proximity between the metropolis and its peripheries, "Constantinople" became a polyethnically cosmopolitan city long before London or Paris did, because the empire's subjects had access to the city for commercial and bureaucratic reasons, where, over the centuries they settled in quarters divided along ethnic boundaries. What I have just outlined has preoccupied the nineteenth century West as "The Eastern Question." With the currency of the term "Balkanization" which is often pronounced with a pang, and since the eruption of exacerbated nationalism in the Balkans, especially with the tragic vivisection of Bosnia-Herzegovina, several enduringly relevant aspects of the so-called "Eastern Question" have been revisited. In my judgment what stands out as the most relevant one is the European skepticism toward the idea of a multinational state and a polyethnic population which did not seem "natural" to the ethos of the European nineteenth century which thrived on the alleged hierarchy amongst peoples, races, classes, genders, and nations. My readers should judge whether much has changed since then or not. Underlying such a skepticism of course is the inherent inadequacy of the political concepts of the modern nation-state to negotiate and accommodate polyethnicity, polyglot population and institutions, which are otherwise normative in a multi-national state.

In the context of Loti's *Aziyadé*, stepping in and out of modernity is enacted not only by alternating between France and the orient, but also by dividing the Ottoman metropolis into two halves—one part that is seen as a replica of a European city, and an exotic one that has not been modernized. But, reading this scheme as the setting of an exotic colonial novel, one critic characterizes the partition of the city into westernized and indigenous halves as a colonialism yet to begin.¹⁶ Historically, Constantinople was modernized, but never colonized; it behooves the critic, then, to clarify whether it is Loti, or the critic himself who perceives the co-existence of the western modern and exotic indigenous in close quarters as a manifestation of “colonialism.” While I remain unconvinced about colonialism in Constantinople, the implementation of dual-cities, one modern, the other native, became one of the salient practices of colonial urbanization in French occupied North Africa in the first decade of this century. In his enticing *French Modern*, Paul Rabinow characterizes this practice as “techno-cosmopolitanism.” Among other things, this exercise signifies one of the essential differences between the contrivances of the British Empire and the French Empire to keep the colonial peoples under surveillance. In its most manifest form in Rabat and Casablanca, “techno-cosmopolitanism” codifies a “comprehensive experiment” in urban planning which “allows” the indigenous community to “maintain” its “cultural autonomy” without rights, and to conserve its culture in the segregation of the living arrangements of the European and native Arab populations. In other words, “techno-cosmopolitanism” is an amalgamation of colonialism, orientalist romanticism, urban aestheticism, and technological modernity. As such, it is animated by an anti-metropolitan suspicion of racial, social conflict and mass participation; it is also animated by an imperial myth of order intent upon not losing its power of regulation and supervision. Toward this effort, urban planning is employed as a comprehensive rubric under which geography, demography, aesthetic and ethical forms of the native society can be treated as pragmatic knowledges. In other words, in this phase of colonial history, technocrats transport modern technology and bureaucracy to bear upon the construction of a spectacle in which the colonized continue to share with the colonizers an ameliorated order which is nonetheless defined by the exigencies of the Empire.¹⁷ Thus, in obliterating the infamous territorial appropriations, missionaries, rapacious treatment of the conquered lands and environment, technocracy bestows colonialism a “cosmopolitan” outlook.

Against this backdrop, Lotiesque exoticism, and James's reading of it remain within an older economy of imperial structures. Here is how James frames French literature as a verbal performance of its empire:

We seem to be studying not simply the genius of an individual, but, in a living manifestation, that of a nation or of a conspicuous group; the nation or the group becomes a great figure operating on a great scale, and the drama of its literary production (to speak of that) a kind of world-drama, lighted by the universal sun, with Europe and America for the public, and the arena of races, the battle-field of their inevitable contrasts

and competitions, for the stage....Whatever benefits or injuries that great country may have conferred upon mankind, she has certainly rendered them the service of being always, according to her own expressions, *bien en scene*. She has educated our observation by the finish of her manner, and whether or no she has the best part in the play we feel that she has rehearsed best.¹⁸

In the context of Loti's exotic descriptions of the orient, these remarks reverse what Mary Louise Pratt calls the "anti-conquest narrative" and perform a lateral conquest; in other words, what Loti dehegemonizes in Frenchness and in French literature, James rehegemonizes by evoking the presence of the empire behind all. I believe that herein resides the fundamental reason for James's preoccupation with Loti. The rest of the rhetoric in the Loti essays is still more familiar. James appropriates an effortless dialectic between a defamiliarized zone of "far and strange things" of the orient, and the anamnestic, familiar "us"; onto this, commonplace racial biases of the nineteenth century are inscribed with no strain at all. For instance, Loti's seeming xenophilia and his choice of foreign idioms in place of French are reviled as a "desire to change his skin," where the preference is almost always "for a dusky one. We rarely see him attempt to assume the complexion of one of the fairer races—of the English for instance."¹⁹ As Loti's narratives are racialized within the interpretive process in this manner, an underrepresented humanity, which otherwise functions as a by-play in the original travel narrative, becomes orientalized. In effect, not only James's finely attuned critical language begins to deteriorate in reappropriating the racialized coding of the orientalist discourse, but the provenance of his critical narrative derives its political significance and positions from the disjunction between the East and the West which took centuries and several empires to consolidate.

Thanks to Edward Said's seminal book, "Orientalism" is not an enigmatic or an unfamiliar endeavor. But why should Loti's orient arouse the "political unconscious" of James? One can only speculate. Tzvetan Todorov for instance points out that Loti makes no claims as to whether his Constantinople, Japan, or Tahiti are real or not.²⁰ Two things can be inferred from this observation. First, Loti's representations do not make an investment in a "regime of truth." Secondly, spectator/reader is an unproblematic category for Loti. In effect, both of these absences become amenable in subsequent interpretative process, such as James's, to ideological manipulation, inversion, and catachresis, allowing the critic to foreground his own "truth," referents and protocol of reading. As exemplified above, this is clearly noticeable in the increasing racialization of the critical language which transforms travel to conquest, exoticism to xenophobia, and fascination to horror. Furthermore, once racialized, certain geographies become vulnerable to be distorted as the forbidding outback, and frequently, so they remain. James once again: "We are content to go nowhere because he [Loti] leaves us with a fear of finding strange things themselves not so true....It is of the scenes I shall never visit that I like to read descriptions, and nothing, for that matter, would induce me to interfere with any impression received from

[Loti]....We remain in his caravan as disconnected from everything else as it need occur to us to desire."²¹

Consequently, representations become the alibi for the bias, the horror of the unfamiliar, and the excuse for not wanting to find out for oneself the characteristics of distant places and peoples.

After having reestablished the race barriers, James proceeds to ascribe class characteristics to Loti's ways and means of arriving at his subject matter. Briskly, through allusions to Loti's career as a midshipman in the royal navy as the actual circumstance of the encounter with the East, the issue of race is tallied with the issue of class persuasion. James intimates that it is perhaps a middle-class fantasy and desire to mix and mingle with other races, with little or no inhibition. Accordingly, the orient is seen as a place that accommodates the European middle-classes and their fantasies. This is summed up in a sweeping triangulation between aesthetics, race, and class. "[Loti's] customs and those of his friends on the east coast of the Adriatic...are not such as we associate in the least with high types...[his] is an aesthetic gathered independently in the world, not in the school."²² The idea that class and race can complement one another and can donate meaning to a topography finds further thematization in cosmopolitanism which then takes the form of counter-orientalism. Cosmopolitanism, as James's like-minded, literary counterpart Paul Bourget portrays in his novel *Cosmopolis*, is perceived as aristocratic, it has the character of "perennity" and "secular past" impressed in cities like Paris and Rome. It seizes the West as the embodiment of modernity; as the representative of the most arbitrary and the most momentary life, which unlike the orient defies categorization. Bourget also admits that cosmopolis is an imaginary place; it can have neither defined customs nor a general character. It is composed of exceptions and singularities which are permitted by "the permanence of race and strength of heredity." In other words, the idea of cosmopolis is the backlash from the dislocating presence of an Orient. Thus we have to reckon with the "imperial feeling" as a constitutive force in the making of the cosmopolitan subject in the nineteenth and twentieth century.

The pertinence of what I have attempted to delineate above, and my epigraph from Derrida become more vehement still, as most contemporary criticism by and large leaves the empire component in James's works untapped in thematizing James's, and critics' own preoccupation with Europe as the "greater world." Such criticism thus suffers the debilitating limitation of "monogenealogical" methodology where all the references that contradict the credo of Europe as the "greater world," or culturally different codes of representation within and beyond Europe, become irrelevant to the critical practice itself. We should not, however, dismiss the absences of this kind as mere elisions, and remain vigilant as to what supplements them.

In James's case, while the empire remains more or less a counter-intuitive or a misfitting category, cosmopolitanism becomes an expedient, a favorable rubric under which cherished values and criticism commingle, where the real world is replaced with a literary-imaginary, and a putatively better one. It seems to me that an unquestioning cosmopolitanism could only codify an unconflicted

rapprochement between James and the European writers. In emplotting the "attachment of literatures," an imaginary concord between certain Western nations, their cultures and peoples gets to be emplotted. In effect, the critical process runs the risk of positing the Western national literatures as a continuous entity, held together by an internal coherence fabricated in criticism.

Moreover, laying James's involuted style, and his "intertextuality" as a dense grid over cosmopolitanism and making these consonant with cosmopolitanism stabilizes this otherwise catachretical referent, and confines it to the versatility to traverse discursively several national traditions and styles all at once. I am not at all discrediting the notion that James would have to "internalize and thoroughly sublimate" the national literatures of America, England, and France. Indeed, James could be read as the Hegel of the novel.²³ Yet, even if for one moment we concede that culture in general, and literature in particular, has a metonymic relation to a nation, to a people throughout the nineteenth century, culture critics should not overlook the ways in which culture also derives from the nation and the people the hierarchy and authority accrued to these referents during imperial and colonial interactions. The absence of such interpretive grids are especially flagrant in James criticism. Magnetized by the notion that there is not one nation that exacts James's allegiance, critics seem to have ignored the fact that the "nation" referent is displaced to the most frequent moralizing signifiers of empire: race, cultural topography, map, which incessantly codify the closures of the "European" terrain to the things that are deemed non-"European." Criticism ought not reinscribe the flaws and shortcomings of a cosmopolitanism which has a vested interest in the idea of concord of a few peoples, cultures, nations, and has no investment in the feeling of agreement amongst nationalities in ways that would render all forms of nationalisms anachronistic.

It is my further contention that influence, intertextuality, and the imaginary excess in the object world are absent causes for the preoccupation of James and other like-minded writers with Europe qua "Europe." Along with these, notions such as freedom and privileges of movement, deracination, "unplaceableness," jettisoning, elitism which frequently reverberate with cosmopolitanism, are misleading criteria in determining the reasons why cosmopolitanism should after all be a desirable idea and rubric. My underlying reason for rethinking cosmopolitanism at this juncture is to probe the conditions which create a nationless cosmopolitanism in literary culture. Yet, in rethinking cosmopolitanism through James, I recorded more of the deflection of the idea of nationless cosmopolitanism and its retrenchment onto an idea of Europe which assigns to a few nations the essentialist representation. Or better still, what is recorded is what Spivak perceives as the "cosmopolitan challenge to national culture" as an aporia, "an impossible decision between two opposed decidables with two mutually canceling sets of consequences."²⁴ In doing so I would like to assert once again that in contemporary genealogies of cosmopolitanism, blandishment to a European rapprochement should not mystify the blemishes, that is to say, other peoples, cultures that have systematically not been admitted into the economy of the European culture throughout the centuries to take rank with it.

Toward changing this predicament, culture criticism could undo the obscurity induced by the dissimilar and unfamiliar geographies on such writers as James.

One of my purposes in undertaking the present exercise has been to abrogate the interpretative process which sanctions the idea that certain works of culture historically have a presumed and pristine Western audience. Unless all contemporary critics, who one way or another rely on the European intellectual resources, change the terms as well as the terrain of their debate on culture, unless all include what Europe has deliberately excluded for centuries in order to produce and contain itself as "European," the legitimacy of contemporary work will be ineluctably derived not from the twentieth century, but from the earlier ideologies of interdiction, and demotion, which artificially set apart, overlooked, or simply wrote off the presence of cultural formations other than European. Thus, in late modernity it behooves everyone to ensure more inclusive interpretations of cosmopolitanism unmarred by "race-ideological" discourses.

Notes

1. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), 14, 52.
2. See Raymond Williams, *George Orwell* (New York: Viking, 1971), 1-24, especially 13.
3. This formulation is appropriated from Bruce Robbins's critique of the "professional imperative" in contemporary post-colonial discourses in his recent *Secular Vocations: Intellectuals, Professionalism, Culture* (New York: Verso: 1993), 328. Here Robbins indicts the reductive zero-sum logic operant in certain critical attempts to dovetail nineteenth century culture with imperialism which assert the "guilt" of the Western culture as a way of affirming its "greatness." In the provocative chapter on "The Composition of Cultural Capital: Gayatri Spivak and Pierre Bourdieu" Robbins asks: "Who says the Empire is the 'political unconscious' of the nineteenth century? On what grounds could we assume it is a repressed but definitive truth that could not help but return?"; and thinking along with Spivak, he retorts: "the supposed necessity for the empire to show up in domestic culture may be less an imperative of the nineteenth century than a professional imperative of the twentieth." (330) My underlying concern is with practicing the "professional imperative" of the post-colonial condition but precisely to abrogate the commonplace that empire is somehow a misfitting or an eludible category for a writer like James who is long perceived as "the cosmopolitan" figure of the nineteenth century Anglo-American letters by a host of critics. See for example Edwin Sill Fussell, *The French Side of Henry James* (New York: Columbia UP, 1990); John Carlos Rowe, *The Theoretical Dimensions of Henry James* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1984); Adeline Tintner, *The Cosmopolitan World of Henry James* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State UP, 1991). Therefore, far be it from me to ferret out the "imperial feeling" in James's works in order to assert Western cultures "guilt" or its "greatness." In this essay, I treat the "empire" as the entelechy of the nineteenth century—in Said's terms as the "consolidated vision"—and I submit that the works of such writers as

Henry James that are not hitherto read by the majority of critics in such a context (with the exceptions of brief allusions to James's "imperial moves" in Tony Tanner's *Henry James: The Writer and His Work* (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1985) and Martha Banta's *Taylored Lives* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1993), cannot be disintricated from the entelechy of the century that envelops them.

4. Jacques Derrida, *The Ear of the Other*, translated by Peggy Kamuf, edited by Christie McDonald (Lincoln, NE: U Nebraska P, 1985), 30.
5. Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe*, translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael B. Naas (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1992), 19.
6. Among the literary modernists, practitioners of such a dialogue include Auden, Eliot, Faulkner, Pound, Proust, and Yeats. A little etymology can be of interest in understanding the polyvalence of this concept. In *The Ear of the Other*, Derrida reminds that the prefix "ana" signifies an antithetical preposition which has the sense of both progression and retrogression.(67)
7. Henry James, "London Notes," *Literary Criticism*, vol. 1 (New York: The Library of America, 1984), 1397).
8. At this juncture, there is a carry over from the "London Notes" to *The Golden Bowl*. I read the figure of Colonel Assingham in that novel as a pre-political allegory of the empire. Colonel's skeletal figure emblemizes the ruins of the empire and the transitoriness of power. However, by choosing this style of representation, James relegates the theme of empire to brittle structures which cannot buttress their political weight for too long. I am not intimating that allegory is not an effective device for representing empires, but in the case of *The Golden Bowl*, shriveling the empire into the figure of Colonel Assingham actually obscures the empire's otherwise vibrant symbolic structures. In other words, the symbolic and real structures of the empire are prematurely shown to be post-history.
9. Leon Edel, ed., *Henry James Letters, 1883-1895*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1980), 64-67.
10. Muriel E. Chamberlain, *'Pax Britannica?': British Foreign Policy 1789-1914* (London: Longman, 1988), 148-152.
11. Edel, *Letters*, 75.
12. Harry Levin, *The Gates of Horn* (New York: Oxford UP, 1966), 74.
13. Henry James, "Honore de Balzac," *Literary Criticism*, vol. 2 (New York: The Library of America, 1984), 92-93.
14. Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981), 155.
15. It is highly relevant to read at this juncture Mary Louise Pratt's, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).
16. Chris Bongie, *Exotic Memories* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1991), 93.
17. Paul Rainbow, *French Modern* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 273-278, 285-302.
18. Henry James, "Pierre Loti," *Literary Criticism*, vol. 2 (New York: The Library of America, 1984), 483.
19. James, "Pierre Loti," 499.

20. See Tzvetan Todorov, *On Human Diversity* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993), 310.
21. James, "Pierre Loti," 516.
22. James, "Pierre Loti," 497, 505.
23. This suggestive analogy belongs to Jonathan Arac who kindly read and commented on the earlier versions of this essay.
24. See Gayatri Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 222.