

## “The Role of Greece in the Discourse of Modernity”

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### I.

There is something on earth with one voice that is two-footed and four-footed and three-footed. Alone among however many creatures there are on land and on sky and on sea, it changes its nature. But when it proceeds, supported by the most feet, then the swiftness of its limbs is weakest.<sup>i</sup>

The answer is, of course, “Man,” at least as Oedipus answers it. And so began, in Western culture’s fiction of origin, the history of man.<sup>ii</sup> Oedipus’ answer is “the only ideal and the only idea of man’s possibilities,” Henri Lefebvre tells us in *Introduction to Modernity* in which he attempts to think the modern by transplanting the myth of Oedipus.<sup>iii</sup> The Sphinx’s riddle also begins my interrogation of the role of Greece in the discourse of modernity. But, unlike Oedipus, I am not interested in its solution, or, in maintaining the solution that has been accepted as his. Rather, following Walter Benjamin’s advice in “Riddle and Mystery,” I want to explore the riddle’s “precondition.”<sup>iv</sup> For, as Benjamin explains, “the key to the riddle is not only its solution... but also its intention...its foundation and the ‘resolution’ of the intent to puzzle that is concealed in it.”<sup>v</sup> “Riddles,” Benjamin explains, “appear where there is an emphatic intention to elevate an artifact or an event that seems to contain nothing at all, or nothing out of the ordinary, to the plane of symbolic significance.”<sup>vi</sup> And, he

continues: “Since mystery dwells at the heart of symbol, an attempt will be made to uncover a ‘mysterious’ side to this artifact or event.” The mystery, however, is not inherent in the object but is found in the work of the subject that produces the riddle through its solution.<sup>vii</sup>

Concealed in the Sphinx’s riddle is her identity and the story of alterity that it contains. It is this alterity’s suppression, and not the “questions about reason and discourse,” which produces “the nightmares, the forebodings of imminent catastrophe” that Lefebvre finds accompany dreams of Greece as “the original source” and which he cannot explain.<sup>viii</sup> Lefebvre focuses instead on the power of the rational that he sees as being exemplified in Greece, the only place he says that “caught a glimpse of the total man.” As a realized, and hence alienated, abstraction against which “we” define ourselves, for Lefebvre, the idea of Greece has produced classicism and its various fetishizations of Greece. As a concrete, though fleeting, example of the unalienated universality of the species, the idea of Greece also powers Romanticism, that is, the desire for disalienation, for coherence. Greece, for Lefebvre, allows the present to take its shape as a partially realized totality that needs to be “presented,” that is, “made *present*.”<sup>ix</sup> He uses totality to mean not a unity but an “ensemble of differences.”<sup>x</sup> History, for Lefebvre, is such a totality, one that we can never theorize in its entirety. Instead, we can only grasp what he calls “moments,” flashes of perception into the range of historical possibilities that are embedded in the totality of being, but which cannot be disentangled from the activities of everyday life. The everyday for him is that which is most phenomenologically familiar, hence least differentiated.

Although part of the myth of Oedipus, the Sphinx's story is not included in the national/cultural lineage of Hellenism (and westward-looking Neo-Hellenism) that equates Hellene and "Man" and makes Hellenism an ontological condition of the fictions of origin of both the West and Greece. Unlike the story of the man with which she is linked, the Sphinx's story has been posited as unsignifiable: it is read as part of the *mythos* and not the *logos* of the Greeks, that is, as part of the nightmare and not the utopian dream of Hellenicity and its promise of totality.<sup>xi</sup> And as with all nightmares, every effort has been made either to rationalize or to forget it. Yet its memory persists, its traces found in the West's anxiety over its otherness, in Greece's anxiety over its Europeanness, in what Homi Bhabha calls the "time-lag" of modernity: the metonymic slippages in the narrative strategies of nations and cultures. It is one of the "interstitial" instances in the narrative of modernity that, Bhabha tells us, can offer us glimpses of the "what *might* have been" or the "what *could* have been," that "keep alive the making of the past."<sup>xii</sup> Such instances are important to him because they show the value coding at work in the West's epistemological structures that he finds assume a cultural temporality that is ethnocentric in their representation of cultural difference.

Marina Warner, in her book *Managing Monsters: Six Myths of Our Time*, tells us that myths "offer a lens which can be used to see human identity in its social and cultural context."<sup>xiii</sup> Deeply aware of their ambiguous power, Warner explains:

they can lock us up in stock reactions, bigotry and fear, but they are not immutable, and by unpicking them, the stories can lead to others. Myths convey values and expectations which are always

evolving, in the process of being formed, but—and this is fortunate—  
never set so hard they cannot be changed again.<sup>xiv</sup>

Unlike other cultural critics who write on myth, Warner does not believe that myth is something that happens behind our backs.<sup>xv</sup> Nor does she view the loss of a sense of originality and authenticity in current myths as a source of regret.<sup>xvi</sup> Instead, she insists that we have the capacity, as tellers and re-tellers, interpreters and re-interpreters, to maintain the interaction between myth and history. “Every telling of a myth,” she writes, “is part of that myth; there is no Ur-version, no authentic prototype, no true account.”<sup>xvii</sup> Myth, in this context, is an interplay which dramatizes our cultural memories and our traditions as historical interpretations rather than idolizing them as timeless dogmas.

This is the understanding of myth that I bring to bear in recounting the myth of the Sphinx. For the story of the Sphinx is shrouded in mystery; each of its retellings betrays its narrator’s attempts to conceal her. Not much is known of her besides the fact that she was the means through which Oedipus could articulate the nature of man. Her role in the story of Oedipus thus predetermined, she becomes an outsider famous only for her riddle. But if Oedipus’ answer marks the place of humanity from which she is excluded by her monstrosity, ironically, his answer also marks his similarity with the Sphinx. As the modern classicist Jean-Pierre Vernant argues, “it is his victory over her that turns Oedipus not into the solution that he guessed, but the very question posed, not a man like other men but a creature of confusion and chaos,” a monster just like her.<sup>xviii</sup>

Pausanias traces this familial relationship between Oedipus and the Sphinx in his *Description of Greece*, a 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD text that exhibits the unease over legitimacy

between imperial Rome and Greece. In his version, she is the bastard daughter of Laius, Oedipus' father. He writes:

Because [Laius] was fond of her, [he] told her the oracle that was delivered to Cadmus from Delphi. No one, they say, except the kings, knew the oracle. Now Laius (the story goes on to say) had sons by concubines, and the oracle delivered applied only to Epicasta and her sons. So when any of her brothers came in order to claim the throne from the Sphinx, she resorted to trickery in dealing with them, saying that if they were the sons of Laius they should know the oracle that came to Cadmus. When they could not answer, she would punish them with death, on the ground that they had no valid claim to the kingdom or to the relationship. But Oedipus came because it appears he had been told the oracle in a dream.<sup>xix</sup>

Here we see her testing all the king's sons in order to distinguish the *nothoi* (bastards/fakes) from the *gnesioi* (legitimate/authentic). She kills all of them except Oedipus who, with his experience in his stepfather Polybus' court, shares her monstrous genealogy both as *gnesios* and *nothos*. He is Laius' legitimate son but, as a foreigner, an illegitimate Theban—the only legitimate Thebans being the *autochthonoi*, the earth – born, who sprang out of the earth from the dragon's teeth sown by Cadmus, Oedipus' ancestor and the founder of Thebes. Tellingly, in yet another detail of this version of the myth, she is not only Laius' illegitimate daughter but, also having sprung from the earth,

she is also a legitimate Theban. This genalogy of being earth-born, *autochthonous*, is supported by Theocritus' version that has her be the daughter of Chimaera, the granddaughter of Hydra, and the great-grand-daughter of Echidna, or Echidna's daughter by her son Orthus, Chimaera and Hydra's half sister and niece.

It is interesting that in Sophocles' tragedy, the account through which she was made famous, the Sphinx is simply the "horrible singer" who asks the riddle that leads to Oedipus' rise and fall.<sup>xx</sup> As we saw in Pausanias, however, the Sphinx was a powerful figure with a genealogical connection to Oedipus who used her knowledge in order to keep illegitimacy away. Both have claims to being autochthonous, both are threatened with illegitimacy. *She* uses reason to judge claims to power, *he* uses dreaming to claim it. Yet his story became that of Man and hers a footnote to it. Only by turning dreaming into reason, for that is how the answer to the riddle came to him, in a dream, can Oedipus's story be seen as that of Man and hers as its nightmare. According to this understanding of the myth, it is the *mythos*, and not what in transplantations of that origin became the *logos* of the Greeks, that is the ground of Europe's reason. This is the "precondition" that "we" Europeans, who have built our house of culture through "our dialogue with Greece," have ignored or forgotten and left buried at the foundation.<sup>xxi</sup>

The Sphinx's story shows us that this foundation is based on a catachresis, that is, on the abuse or perversion of a metaphor, the metaphor of Man. The question of what is Man is important within the discourse of modernity for it is man, or the subject, who defines it. Unlike earlier, pre-Enlightenment understandings of the modern which saw it as an irreversible break from the past, post-Enlightenment modernity has no fixed referent. As Reinhart Koselleck explains in *Futures Past*, his account of modernity's

semantic prehistory, modernity is the product of an act of historical self-definition through differentiation, identification, and projection that transcends the order of chronology in constructing the present.<sup>xxii</sup> Or, as Henri Meschonnic puts it, modernity “only has a subject, of which it is full.”<sup>xxiii</sup> He continues: “each time, the subject projects the values that constitute it onto an object...the object varies when the subject changes.”<sup>xxiv</sup> The “fact,” for example, that today’s “Greeks” were only yesterday’s “barbarians,” and yesterday’s Greeks were the ideal of “Man” while today’s are “struggling to be modern,” indicates not the “state of civilization” or “progress” of the Greeks, or the barbarians, but the changing desires of the subject doing the description.

This is the perspectivism, which it reads as ethnocentric, that the postcolonial critique of the discourse of modernity objects to and wants to change in its focus on the resolution of the riddle of modernity. For Bhabha that resolution, or intent to puzzle, is found in the “history of modernity’s antique dreams” from which the colonial and post-colonial are written out.<sup>xxv</sup> Gayatri Spivak, in her *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, brings our attention to the way the question of the subject, or Man, is articulated in the discourse of modernity. She focuses on the work of Kant, whom she considers as the beginning of the “Western” as such. For Kant in the *Critique of Judgment*, Man is someone who has a natural feeling for ideas and who has been properly humanized by culture/reason to apply them to nature. Someone who has not been through this process of making, Kant calls the raw man whom he also reads as “naturally” alien to culture hence impossible “to culture.” Spivak points to the problem in Kant’s definition of Man, centered in his work on aesthetic judgment, in particular the sublime, and brings our attention to the paradox of his argument for “a judgment programmed in nature, needing culture, but not produced

by culture.”<sup>xxvi</sup> She also points to the built-in necessity for the civilizing mission that this distinction of man and raw man provides through the pyrrhic victories of its attempts to bridge a gap that Kant defines as by nature unbridgeable.

But what if we were to follow Foucault’s interrogation of the archive of the modern and his recommendation that we “interrupt its slow development,” “cut [it] off from its empirical origins and original motivations” and force it to enter a new time and read Kant’s definition of Man against its proclaimed origins?<sup>xxvii</sup> This is what the postcolonial critique of the discourse of modernity asks us to do in order to see how postcolonial subjects are produced by the slow dislocation of this discursive discontinuity. Doing this work shows us that the figure of the uncultured, or “raw” man is a woman in the well-known version of Oedipus; Oedipus also in the account I gave. Both Oedipus and the Sphinx serve as examples of the human and not quite human. In this bridging or collapsing of the categories that divide Man, the story of the Sphinx does away with the pretext of the utopian non-place (whether it is the postcolonial now or Greece then) that theorists of modernity see as the starting point of its historiographical project. As Michel de Certeau explains in “The Historiographical Question,” this “non-place” is indispensable for any orientation but it cannot have a place in history because it is the principle that organizes history.<sup>xxviii</sup> As such, it is the object upon which the subject projects the values that constitute it, that is, produces it in time, without itself ever being *in* time. “It could be said,” de Certeau continues, “that it [i.e. the non-place] is myth transformed into a chronological postulate—at once erased from the narrative but everywhere presupposed in it, impossible to eliminate.”<sup>xxix</sup> This, as I have been arguing, is the case with the story of the Sphinx. What the story also shows us, however, through

the collapsing of the two categories of Man, is that culture's outside is written *within* it and not only in what has been left out of "modernity's antique dreams."<sup>xxx</sup> It also shows that the parts of the mind not accessible to reason are always already *part* of what has come to be defined as reason. It is only in these parts' and reason's subsequent transplantations that their unity is broken and defined as the experience of myth's untransplantability, an experience that, for Lefebvre who is interested in finding the contemporary relevance of the myth of Oedipus, helps define the everyday of modernity.

For Lefebvre, a Marxist whose work aimed at the social production of possibility at the level of historical time, that is, the time of the everyday, Greece brought and continues to bring the "essentials of social and political praxis to the logos."<sup>xxxii</sup> Both as an empirical critique of everyday life in the present and as a utopian promise of a concrete universality, Greece for him is an "historically tested utopianism" that can help free modernity from aesthetic-centered interpretations of the present. He calls these all sorts of modernisms, and finds their "obsession with the past," myth in particular, and unhistoricized use of it, "disconcerting." Myth, for Lefebvre, is "a form of thought and a profound sensibility which, though uprootable, is untransplantable,"<sup>xxxii</sup> Our experience of this untransplantability during our attempts to transplant it creates the dialectical movement that produces the unity of "the abstract and the concrete, of culture and spontaneity" that, for Lefebvre, makes myth one of the forms of thought that define the everyday.<sup>xxxiii</sup> So when he asks, in the opening pages of *Introduction to Modernity*, whether "the myth of Oedipus can reveal the hidden depths of being, of thought and of history," his answer is necessarily yes.<sup>xxxiv</sup> For him, "the seer who was blinded for trying to solve a riddle, and the blind man who in his wanderings became a seer symbolize the

...modern man” whose “need for coherence...must...not be allowed to become a fetish.”<sup>xxxv</sup> Yet it has become a fetish, despite our comfort with interruptions and new times. The need for coherence informs Lefebvre’s fetishization of Greece obvious in his retrospective construction of it as the universal whose historicity he claims to trace through Greece. A similar unconscious fetishization of coherence informs Bhabha’s discursive orientated critique of the discourse of modernity and leads him to read the postcolonial as modernity’s only and latest form, ignoring the plurality of forms of social difference.

In arguing that the Sphinx’s story shows us that culture’s outside inhabits its center, my aim is not to reclaim its centrality at a time when it seems to be faded nor is it to correct what the West’s epistemological structures have suppressed in the production of their everyday in order to make a case for the otherness of the Greeks. After all, as Stathis Gourouris has pointed out in *Dream Nation*, his book on nationalism, colonialism and the institution of the modern Greek state, “Neohellenism itself has been built on a history of heterological shifts” and on “the consistent necessity of Neohellenic culture to define itself as Other to all Others.”<sup>xxxvi</sup> “During the period of the Greek Enlightenment,” he writes,

which saw in Europe the guardian of its cultural continuity...and subsequently, during the early years after Independence, when the figure of the Ottoman was still deeply embedded in the national memory, Neohellenism’s Other was the Orient. But once Europe’s Philhellenism understood itself as a fantasy entirely foreign to present Greece and shifted to the pronouncements of Fallmerayer and

Gobineau, Neohellenism turned to its own Orient (Byzantium) in order to satisfy its required signification link of *identity* to *continuity*, and its Other became Europe.

To locate Greece within the discourse of modernity against the postcolonial as other now, would follow in this tradition and would be ethnocentric at worst, redundant at best. My task is to offer the frame for a new historicity of modernity, one that is not founded on what Socrates in Book III of *The Republic* calls a “noble lie” (*gennaion pseudos*), that is, our ability to persuade each other in our attempt at being part of the family of Man that we are all Greeks or all postcolonial now. He says all *autochthonoi*, all earth-born. The Sphinx’s story, in its collapsing of what is in and outside of reason, in and outside of culture, legitimate and illegitimate, helps us to rethink, some of modernity’s key formations. Citizenship is one of them, and since it is at the core of this myth, that is the one that I want to explore with you now. It is my contention that the story of the Sphinx can offer a different way of negotiating citizenship at a time when borders are multiple, and their walls, “essential for state institutions,” are “profoundly inadequate for an account of the complexity of real situations.”<sup>xxxvii</sup>

## II.

Contemporary conceptions of aliens and alienness in relation to territoriality have their origin in Kant’s vision of rights in his political writings, in particular in “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose” and “Project For Perpetual Peace.” “Hospitality,” Kant writes in a passage that exemplifies what he envisions perpetual

peace to be, “means the right of a stranger not to be treated with hostility when he arrives on someone else’s territory.” He distinguishes the stranger’s right from those of a guest: the former “may only claim a *right of resort*, for all men are entitled to present themselves in the society of others by virtue of their right to communal possession of the earth’s surface.” Yet, despite this right, the stranger “can be turned away,” preferably “without causing his death,” although all bets are off if he does not behave in a peaceable manner wherever he happens to be.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Reflecting the conditional nature of rights in Kant’s text is the shift we see from his ideal of world citizenship in “Universal History” to his grudging concession, in “Perpetual Peace,” that we ought to allow foreigners to travel unmolested, provided that they do not stay too long, and that they behave how we want them to.

The Kantian vision’s contemporary life is evident in current negotiations of cosmopolitanism and citizens’ rights (updated to account for the multicultural and postnational world in which we live) that call for benevolent recognition or are humanitarian pleas for inclusion.<sup>xxxix</sup> I am thinking of Charles Taylor’s *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition* here and Habermas’ *The Inclusion of the Other*. Such negotiations, despite their well-intentioned desire to prescribe an essential concept and normative content of human rights for all societies (itself reflective of Kant’s work), ironically fall into the trap of cultural relativism. How could they not, considering the racial context of Kant’s work on cosmopolitanism, a context that is part of *Project for Perpetual Peace* and is even more evident in his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* in which he defines and classifies the character of a person, the sexes, a nation, all the while excluding from nationhood proper Southern Europeans such as the Spaniards,

Italians, and Portuguese because of their mixture with Arabs and Moors, and not even including the Greeks, Russians, and Turks as first or even second class nations?

While Kant was “the first philosopher to consistently maintain the distinction between descriptive and prescriptive statements,” nevertheless, in his construction of the contract of civil society “he tacitly reintroduces empirical concepts into the normative approach” and, much in the same way as in his definition of Man, he “contradicts the underlying premises of the transcendental construction.”<sup>xl</sup> As Manfred Riedel points out, his “concept of right which merely seems to imply mutual freedom and equality has as its consequence one-sided dependency and renewed inequality.”<sup>xli</sup> This is so because Kant, even though he claims the “a priori,” hence “pure,” nature of his three principles of external human right—the freedom of every member of society as a human being; the equality of each with all others as a subject; and the independence of each member of a commonwealth as a citizen—nevertheless subsumes his principle of the “independence” of the citizen under the category of “property.”<sup>xlii</sup>

A citizen, for Kant, is someone who “serves no one but the commonwealth” and not someone who earns his living by “allowing others to make use of him.”<sup>xliii</sup> “The journeyman...the domestic servant...all females,” he writes, “and in general everyone who does not obtain the means of his existence through his own trade, but rather is necessitated to acquire them by being at the disposal of others, is not a civil personality and his existence is, as it were, merely an accident.”<sup>xliv</sup> It is not that Kant is arguing here that only those who have property are citizens; rather, for him, as Riedel explains, “dominion over a household is not required in order to be, as a citizen, one’s own master;” it is sufficient to be able to buy and sell any piece of property and thus work

one's way up from the "passive status to the active one."<sup>xlv</sup> This is how "independence" is subsumed under the category of "property" and, in being so, is introduced into "the contingent sphere of commodity exchange in society." As a consequence, "independence as a privilege of the 'citizen' becomes the right of 'man,' a right that 'everybody' can acquire," at a price, of course.<sup>xlvi</sup>

In the myth of Oedipus, for post-Enlightenment European modernity the original scene of the definition of citizenship and the right of man, we saw that this price was paid by the Sphinx despite her legitimate claim to what has come to be the primary means of defining citizenship: the myth of aboriginality, *autochthonism*, being earth-born. The price that Oedipus paid in the transplantation of the myth that contained his story as Man's origin was that part of his humanity not accessible to reason, in other words, his *autochthonism*. The price that we pay, since then, is the rearrangement of our desire towards a morality, a culture, whose laws we have authored and to which we must conform by disciplining ourselves, if we want to be part of the discourse of Man and not "raw." In the context of the example of citizenship, such disciplining involves willingly, and other times not, subjecting ourselves to what institutions characteristic of national sovereignty administer as the universal. This humanizing goes hand in hand with the social exclusion of all who are labeled as not quite human by the very processes whose project it is to normalize and socialize anthropological differences.

Those of us who teach in the humanities play a key role in this normalizing and socializing of differences. As the history of the rise of my discipline, English studies, illustrates in documents like the 1921 Newbolt Report, the first report on the teaching of English in England and the colonies, education in English literature "tames wildlings" at

home and abroad. J. S. Mill, in *On Representative Government*, saw it as the means through which the state can pleurably teach us to want to do the right thing.<sup>xlvi</sup> Spivak calls this “an uncoercive rearrangement of desires.”<sup>xlvi</sup> In the history of European culture desire is rearranged towards morality, that is, towards reason (remembering Kant again, who saw as the philosophical task of “freeing the will from the despotism of desires.”)<sup>xlvi</sup> What is known as the legacy of the Greeks has played a central role in this restructuring. The story of the Sphinx teaches us, however, that the moral imperative, culture, is not grounded by rational knowledge alone. It shows us that there is another space which is “outside us” and yet “in us,” half-archived, not directly accessible, but important in terms of our ability to use it to know the world through it. Inhabiting this space produces a different understanding of Man and of citizenship because it does not foreclose “rawness” in the effort to contain it in the family of Man. Instead, it allows for the element of infinity to be inscribed in the idea of citizenship. Then we would all be Greeks. But not the kind that Shelley had in mind in his famous quote. For the language of the Sphinx teaches us that to be Greek also includes being a Turk, or a Serb, an Albanian, a gypsy, a Greek even, but not one of the imagination, the product of Europe’s long dialogue with Greece as the site of its self-constitution. It also means to be a Pakistani, a Filipino, an Iraqi, all immigrant workers or refugees in Greece whose status under the current definition of citizenship is contingent, despite their right to have rights.

It was not so always, however, and here is where the story of the Sphinx can be useful in generating a new historicity for autochthony at the origin of modern Greece now. The first article of the first Constitutional text of modern Greece, the “Epidauros Constitution” of 1822, classifies as Greeks “natives [*autochthonous*] who believe in

Christ.” In this and in the other two revolutionary constitutions (1822-1827), there is no clear distinction between notions of “Greek citizen” and notions of “Greek Christian Orthodox.”<sup>li</sup> These “natives who believe[d] in Christ” were not only Greeks but also Serbs, Albanians, Bulgarians, to name only the main groups. Moreover, since in the pre-1850s Balkans social mobility frequently implied acculturation into the *ethnie* associated with a particular niche in the social division of labor—to call someone a Serb, a Bulgarian, or a Vlach, for example, usually meant peasant—class distinction meant ethnic distinction with Greek being the term not only for the ethnic Greeks but also for the rich Serbs and Bulgarians.<sup>li</sup> Today this class/ethnic conflation continues with the term Vlach applying not only to the homonymous minority in Greece but also to a poor, peasant Greek, someone not used to city ways. Adding to this *melange*, the ancient Greek word *ethnos* (ἔθνος), plural *ethnoi* and *ethnikoi*, was used by early Christians and Byzantines for heathens, dwellers in the country districts, and foreigners generally.<sup>lii</sup>

Thus, when in the National Assembly of 1844 discussion turned to Article 3 of the Constitution, which dealt with Greek citizenship, the Assembly was passionately divided on the distinction between *autochthonous* and *heterochthonous* (born in other earths) Greeks, a distinction later (in the 1870s) reformulated as one between inside and outside Greeks or *Elladites* (those residing in Greece) and *Ellines*, those not. The latter were also called *homogeneis* (of the same descent or race) and were the Greek diaspora at large.<sup>liii</sup> Today still, Greek law uses the term *homogeneis* to define the non-Greek citizen of Greek ethnic origin, thus a member of a Greek minority in a foreign country, a Greek-Australian, for instance, like me.<sup>liv</sup>

Clearly, descent is of crucial ideological importance for citizenship regulations in Greece. People of Greek descent, however, could also be excluded from their “blood community” for their political beliefs. This was the case with communists during and after the Civil War (1946-1949) when 22,266 deprivations of citizenship were imposed between 1948 and 1963 with 135 decrees or ministerial decisions.<sup>lv</sup> A Circular signed by the Minister of the Interior (of 14.3.1947) maintained that the 1927 Decree on the deprivation of citizenship could also be applied against those persons of Greek descent who have proved, by their anti-national behavior, that they are lacking the appropriate national consciousness.<sup>lvi</sup> In an attempt at conciliation, those who had fled Greece during the Civil War were later allowed to repatriate. They became part of the community of *homogeneis*, along with Greeks from Istanbul, Southern Albania, and the Russo-Pontians (Greeks from the ex-USSR). Each of these *homogeneis*’ roads to citizenship has been uneven, for some nonexistent, despite all having Greek descent. Some, like the Pontians, had access to citizenship and to favorable welfare benefits not available to Greek citizens, the most important one, reminiscent of the 1840s, being that they could become civil servants.<sup>lvii</sup> Others, like the Greeks from Turkey, held a strange form of quasi-citizenship: a highly confidential Ministerial Council decision dated 3.1.1976 stated that Greeks from Turkey not holding Turkish passports could get Greek passports but not Greek citizenship. Greek Albanians, meanwhile, have no access to citizenship, only a special *Identity Card of Homogeneis*.<sup>lviii</sup>

The heterogeneity of citizenship in Greece is not uncharacteristic of most nations. Even though in one sense there is only one kind of citizenship (the one that counts in the eyes of the state), in another there are “as many as there are roles in the complex ‘civil

societies' that are organized into nations."<sup>lix</sup> Today these roles are quite different from those of earlier times. Globalization has destabilized national state-centered hierarchies of legitimate power and allegiance, enabling a multiplication of non-formalized or only partly formalized political dynamics and actors such as the Pakistani and Albanian immigrants, Iraqi and Sudanese refugees that I mentioned earlier.<sup>lx</sup> This unsettlement highlights the changeability and variability of the rights-bearing subject that is the citizen and illustrates the need for what Balibar calls "citizenship without community" which he sees as a dialectic between constituent and constituted citizenship, that is, a dialectic between facts on the ground and imagined communities.<sup>lxi</sup> This is where the story of the Sphinx can help us map the ground on which these facts are lived and their stories told in way that does not assume a temporality that is ethnocentric in its representation of cultural difference.

#### IV.

I began my talk with a riddle and I want to end it with a poem about riddles and their end. "Riddle's End," written by contemporary Greek poet Yiorgos Chouliaras, whose work I translate, offers a poetic representation of the historicity I have been describing. Told from the position of the Sphinx and of Oedipus, the poem asks us to rethink the function of riddles.

Everyone remembers that Oedipus answered  
 --not exactly how, but that he did  
 while what he said can remain secret  
 as should all private conversations  
 with the beast that others before made ours  
 and now we settle on those who follow

Clearly before us stands a riddle  
 a question that you must humanize  
 your mind to answer that you live  
 otherwise you are already lost like the hero  
 of yet another autobiography of death

If we think of it as we always do  
 from the point of view of he who answers  
 it appears that we are touching some immortality  
 because we always climb higher with those  
 who live steadily stepping on the bodies of others

Might the issue not finally be  
 what the beast of questions was thinking  
 not when it bombarded passers-by with riddles  
 because it too had to secure its nourishment somehow  
 but when it accepted the answer

Was it weary of all that immortality  
 --it was asking, they say as an end, not its own  
 Did it realize that it was already weakening  
 this game if it continued longer

And Oedipus happened to walk by there first  
 when exhausted, the beast was already  
 fluent in a domesticated language  
 transmitting all that they told it in other words

The perfect riddle would be  
 an end to riddles  
 that appear to be replying  
 to the riddle of the end.

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<sup>i</sup> Martin West, *Greek Epic Fragments from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> BC* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2003), 41. He uses Asclepiades of Tragilus' 4<sup>th</sup> century BC version.

<sup>ii</sup> The history of the figure of the Sphinx is traced in Pierre Grimal, *Dictionary of Classical Mythology* (Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1991). First published in France in 1951. As his sources to his entry on the Sphinx Grimal cites Hesiod, *Theogony* 326, Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 3,5,8; Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, 391;

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Euripides, *Phoenician Women*, 45; Diodorus Sicelus, 4, 63; Pausanias, IX, 26, 3-5; Hyginous, *Fabulae*, 67; Seneca, *Oedipus*, 92; Athenaeus, 10, 456; Tzetzes, *Alexander*, 7.

<sup>iii</sup> Lefebvre, *Introduction to Modernity* (London: Verso, 1995), 226.

<sup>iv</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings Vol. 1, 1913-1926*, Marcus Bullock and Michael Jennings, eds. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press Belknap Series, 1996), 267.

<sup>v</sup> Benjamin, *Selected Writings Vol. 1*, 267.

<sup>vi</sup> Benjamin, *Selected Writings Vol. I*, 267.

<sup>vii</sup> Benjamin, *Selected Writings Vol. I*, 268.

<sup>viii</sup> Lefebvre, *Introduction to Modernity*, 226-227.

<sup>ix</sup> Lefebvre, *Introduction to Modernity*, 326-327.

<sup>x</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, E. Kofman and E. Lebas, eds. (London: Blackwell, 1996), 109.

<sup>xi</sup> This opposition between the rational and the mythical has ancient roots. As Jean-Pierre Vernant explains in *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece* (London: Methuen, 1982), 186-187):

The concept of myth that we have inherited from the Greeks belongs, by reason of its origins and history, to a tradition of thought peculiar to Western civilization in which myth is defined in terms of what is not myth, being opposed to reality (myth is fiction) and, secondly, to what is rational (myth is absurd)...the concept of myth peculiar to classical antiquity thus became clearly defined through the setting up of an opposition between *mythos* and *logos*, henceforth seen as separate and contrasting terms.

<sup>xii</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 253, 254.

<sup>xiii</sup> Marina Warner, *Managing Monsters: Six Myths of Our Time* (London: Vintage, 1994), 14.

<sup>xiv</sup> Marina Warner, *Managing Monsters*, 14

<sup>xv</sup> I am thinking of Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). First published in 1976. Also Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Jonathan Cape, 1972). First published in France in 1957.

<sup>xvi</sup> Here I am thinking of Fredric Jameson, "Third World Literature in the Age of Multinational Capital," *Social Text* 15 (1986), 65-88.

<sup>xvii</sup> Warner, *Managing Monsters*, 8.

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- <sup>xviii</sup> Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, trans. Janet Lloyd (New York: Zone Books 1990), 138. See also Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* and Henri Lefebvre's section "Oedipus" in *Introduction to Modernity*.
- <sup>xix</sup> Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, trans. W.H.S. Jones (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1969), IX 26, par. 2, 3-5.
- <sup>xx</sup> Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex* (Athens: Greek Government Education Editions, 1981).
- <sup>xxi</sup> Lefebvre, *Introduction to Modernity*, 227.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*. Trans. Keith Tribe. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press), 246.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Henri Meschonnic, "Modernity, Modernity," *New Literary History* 23 (1992), 419.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Meschonnic, "Modernity, Modernity," 419.
- <sup>xxv</sup> Bhabha, 250.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1999), 12.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith, (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 4.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> de Certeau, "The Historiographical Question," *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 91.
- <sup>xxix</sup> de Certeau, "The Historiographical Question," 91.
- <sup>xxx</sup> Bhabha, 250.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Lefebvre, *Introduction to Modernity*, 226.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Lefebvre, *Introduction to Modernity*, 330.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life, Vol. I*, 76.
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> Lefebvre, *Introduction to Modernity*, 3.
- <sup>xxxv</sup> Lefebvre, *Introduction to Modernity*, 3, 5.
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> Gourgouris, *Dream Nation: Enlightenment, Colonization, and the Institution of Modern Greece* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1996), 275.

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- <sup>xxxvii</sup> Balibar, *We the People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*, trans. James Swenson (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 5.
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> Immanuel Kant, "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch," *Political Writings*, trans. H. B. Nisbet. Hans Reiss, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 105-106.
- <sup>xxxix</sup> Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992); Jurgen Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988).
- <sup>xl</sup> Manfred Riedel, "Transcendental Politics? Political Legitimacy and the Concept of Civil Society in Kant," *Social Research* 48 (1981), 611-612.
- <sup>xli</sup> Riedel, "Transcendental Politics," 611-612.
- <sup>xlii</sup> Riedel, "Transcendental Politics," 603.
- <sup>xliii</sup> Riedel, "Transcendental Politics," 606-607.
- <sup>xliv</sup> Riedel, "Transcendental Politics," 610. Riedel is citing Kant from *Gesammelte Schriften*, the Prussian Academy of Sciences Edition, 22 vols. (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1902-38). Here specifically, Vols 6: 314 and 8:295.
- <sup>xlv</sup> Riedel, "Transcendental Politics," 610-611.
- <sup>xlvi</sup> Riedel, "Transcendental Politics," 611.
- <sup>xlvii</sup> See my "Multinationalism or Multiculturalism?" in David Bennett, ed., *Multicultural States: Rethinking Difference and Identity* (London: Routledge, 1998), 69-87.
- <sup>xlviii</sup> Spivak, "Righting Wrongs," in Nicholas Owen, ed., *Human Rights, Human Wrongs: The Oxford Amnesty Lectures 2001* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2003), 173.
- <sup>xlix</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment of Judgment*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner Press, 1951), 282.
- <sup>l</sup> Nikos Chrysoloras traces the ties between the church and Greek nationalism from the new state's institution to today in "Religion and Nationalism in Greece," Paper presented at the *Second Pan-European Conference*, Standing Group on EU Politics, Bologna, 24-26 June, 2004.
- <sup>li</sup> See Victor Roudometof, "From Roum Millet to Greek Nation: Enlightenment, Secularization, and National Identity in Ottoman Balkan Society 1543-1821," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 16/13(1998), 13.

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- <sup>lii</sup> D.A. Zakynthinos, *The Making of Modern Greece: From Byzantium to Independence*, trans. K.R. Johnstone (Oxford: Blackwell, 1976), 189.
- <sup>liii</sup> Elli Skopetea, *To Protipo Vasileio kai I Megali Idea 1830-1880* (Athens: Politypo, 1988), 67 (in Greek).
- <sup>liv</sup> Papasiopi-Pasia, *Greek Citizenship Law*, Athens: Sakkoulas, 1994), 45, 93 (in Greek).
- <sup>lv</sup> Nikos Alivizatos, *The Political Institutions in Crisis 1922-1974: Aspects of the Greek Experience* (Athens: Themelio, 1982), 487, 491 (in Greek).
- <sup>lvi</sup> For an account of the history of the civil war, the politics around it, and their effect on contemporary Greek culture, see Yiorgos Chouliaras, "A History of Politics Versus a Politics of History: Greece 1936-1949," *Journal of Modern Hellenism* 6 (1989), 207-221.
- <sup>lvii</sup> Law 2790/2000, amended by Laws 2910/2001 and 3013/2002
- <sup>lviii</sup> Law 1975/1991, art. 17, amended by Ministerial Decision n. 4000/3/10/1998 and Common Ministerial Decision 4000/3/10-e/2002, Ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs, Public Order, Labor and Defense. See also Dimitris Christopoulos, Konstantinos Tsitselikis, "Treatment of Minorities and Homogeneis in Greece: Relics and Challenges" (Athens: KEMO, 2003). Miltos Pavlou, "Greek State Policy from 'irredentism' to 'homecoming'/'immigration': the case of two repatriated kin minority groups," (Athens: KEMO, 2002).
- <sup>lix</sup> Balibar, *We the People of Europe*, 195.
- <sup>lx</sup> Saskia Sassen, *The Global City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).
- <sup>lxi</sup> Balibar, *We the People of Europe*, 66.