CHAPTER TWELVE

We, the Non-Europeans

Engin F. Isin

Is the crisis of Europe *not* more fundamental than the current economic crisis that engulfs it? Although it is tempting to immerse ourselves in the question of crisis in the present, I want to present a more fundamental crisis implied in the question 'what is called Europe?' This is not equivalent to asking 'what is Europe?' I want to enter this question with Jacques Derrida. When, in May 1990, he delivered a lecture on 'the other heading' during a colloquium in Turin on 'European Cultural Identity' he was in many ways responding to the question of Europe and how to approach it. Yet, I want to argue, Derrida's question of Europe is much older than that. To put it emphatically, Europe had been a 'question' for Derrida from the moment he encountered Edmund Husserl and engaged with a cluster of problems that Husserl had articulated as 'the crisis of Europe', a cluster that inspired various reflections on Europe by Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre and Emmanuel Levinas. So there is a danger in beginning with 'the other heading' and forgetting that Derrida's ethical and political problem of Europe had exercised him practically all his public life.

What I wish to address in this chapter is how Derrida's question of Europe can be brought into sharper relief with late Edward Said's (2003) lecture on Freud and the non-European. I want to draw a lesson from the fact that 'late' Said had become exercised by the question of Europe or 'what is called Europe?' from a different angle than his earlier work *Orientalism* (1979). In 2003, his Museum of London lecture on Freud, Said indicated a path after orientalism, a path towards thinking about Europe through non-Europe. I want to argue that Said articulates, through Freud, a problem that was much deeper than orientalism, of which orientalism was a symptom. That is why I want to consider this path as 'after' orientalism. But before I go on I'd better say something about why I want to read Derrida with Said.

It is true that Derrida and Said rarely, if at all, are discussed or read together. This is not quite accidental and there is a good reason for this (see

Karavanta and Morgan 2008). Said was critical of Derrida. He found a 'crippling limitation in those varieties of deconstructive Derridean readings that end (as they began) in undecideability and uncertainty' (Said 2004: 66). For Said, the readings that Derrida provides 'defer too long a declaration that the actuality of reading is, fundamentally, an act of perhaps modest human emancipation and enlightenment that changes and enhances one's knowledge for purposes other than reductiveness, cynicism, or fruitless standing aside' (Said 2004: 66).

Moreover, Said thought that Derrida would not recognize the demand that we as citizens 'enter into the text with responsibility and scrupulous care' (see Spivak 2005). This view can perhaps be traced to an early essay where Said misunderstood Derrida and Michel Foucault as occupying opposed positions on reading (Said 1978). Since Marzec (2008) and Radhakrishnan (2010) discuss Said's vexed relations to Derrida and Foucault respectively I will not deal with that question here. Just as I am not interested in consigning Derrida and Said to their separate posts (postcolonialism and poststructuralism), I am not quite interested in making Derrida and Said speak to each other – a posthumous reconciliation. Rather, my aim is to selectively read, or at least invite you to read, Derrida with late Said on the question of Europe as the question of the non-European. For I am convinced that both Derrida and Said converged on the fundamental crisis of Europe as being the inability to approach the non-European with the openness that it required. I will shortly elaborate on this notion of 'openness' but my view is that Said and Derrida together present a fuller picture of the depth of the question of Europe and non-Europe than does either thinker alone. To put it differently, the question is not even 'what is called Europe?' as I suggested above but 'what is called non-European?' For both Derrida and Said this question is simultaneously an ethical, political, psychoanalytical and philosophical question, each aspect irreducible to the others and yet each complicating the other.

Let me start with Said's reflections on Freud and the non-European, then discuss the question of the non-European in Derrida and draw these readings together with reflections on social and political thought in Europe today to conclude the chapter.

Said begins his London lecture with the observation that Freud's knowledge of other cultures was deeply inflected by his education in Judaeo-Christian tradition, especially European humanism and scientism. Perhaps for this reason Said says that Freud was not bothered much by the other as a general problem but as a problem of the non-European. This may appear as a strange statement since Freud can arguably be considered the classic figure in the invention of the other. Yet the other that preoccupied Freud, Said suggests, is a 'European' other (Said 2003: 14). According to Said 'Freud was deeply gripped by what stands outside the limits of reason, convention, and, of course, consciousness: his whole work in that sense is about the Other, but always about an Other recognisable mainly

to readers who are well acquainted with the classics of Greco-Roman and Hebrew Antiquity and European languages' (Said 2003: 14). So Said paints a picture of Freud as a quintessential European intellectual both in disposition and audience and of Freud's concern with the Other as a problem of the non-Europe.

Both in *Totem and Taboo* (Freud 2001a) and in *Moses and Monotheism* (Freud 2001b) Said finds an implicit resistance by Freud to establish an insurmountable difference or gap between the European and the non-European (Said 2003: 19). For Said it is this resistance, albeit implicit, that can be said to constitute Freud's ethics towards the non-European. But Said thinks that Freud goes even deeper and claims that the very fabric of the European is made up of non-European elements. This is, for Said, the kernel of Freud's politics of the non-European. The main impetus for this claim is about the identity of Moses. Said notes that Freud becomes adamant about Moses's identity: 'Moses was an Egyptian, and was therefore different from the people who adopted him as their leader – people, that is, who became the Jews whom Moses seems to have later created as his people' (Said 2003: 35). What Said observes it not so much the historical accuracy of Freud's interpretation – in fact he remains unconvinced and unsatisfied – but its audacity, given how aware Freud was of the dangers of his interpretation and how uncertain he was about it (Said 2003: 39). What Said highlights, and this is of utmost importance to us when we discuss Derrida's articulation of the question of non-Europeans, is that 'in excavating the archaeology of Jewish identity, Freud insisted that it did not begin with itself but, rather, with other identities (Egyptian and Arabian) which his demonstration in *Moses and Monotheism* goes a great distance to discover, and thus restore to scrutiny' (Said 2003: 44). Freud's audacity was to have argued that the founder of Jewish identity was himself a non-Jewish Egyptian. Said concludes from this that 'identity cannot be thought or worked through itself alone; it cannot constitute or even imagine itself without that radical originary break or flaw which will not be repressed, because Moses was Egyptian' (Said 2003: 54). This may be thought, as Judith Butler did, an expression of what philosophers would call ineradicable alterity to indicate that otherness is an absolute condition of identity (Butler 2012: 31). Yet, the ethico-political question that it opens up yields surprising if not counterintuitive responses.

Consider Bonnie Honig's interpretation. In her brilliant reading of Rousseau and Freud on democracy and foreigner, she puts it starkly the 'Moses is foreign to the people he founds' (Honig 2001: 26). Yet: Honig warns against participating in the myth of the foreigner as the founder by recognizing that there was more to Freud's recognition that Moses is foreign to the people he founds. For Honig it is not because Moses was foreign that the Israelites experienced trauma but because the law imposed by Moses was *so* alien that its founders had to be narrated as foreign (2001: 31).

Honig argues that Freud misses this point by assuming that the foreignness of Moses consisted in his being Egyptian whereas it can be thought that the law he imposed in founding a people was the source of his foreignness. This is an intriguing argument which Honig uses effectively to illustrate the meanings of democracy, but on the question of otherness of Moses, Said provides another, perhaps a more nuanced, possibility. The question is not whether Moses is foreign or not and the sources of foreignness, but that the founding of a people cannot occur without its outside. A people cannot constitute or imagine itself, as Said finds Freud saying, without that radical originary rupture. Reading Said, Butler concludes that 'it is not the Moses who leads the people out of the wilderness who is most important here, but rather the one who wanders, a motif that is affirmed time and again by Jewish philosophers' (Butler 2012: 215). The ethico-political question becomes how does a people respond to this rupture or trauma of being founded by the one who wanders.

It is this ethico-political question that Derrida considers as the problem of the non-European. For both Said and, as I shall now discuss, Derrida, the European is always already the non-European. Non-Europe is Europe's rupture or trauma, if you like. But this is not a thesis of identity. Again, as Butler notes, 'it is clear that what [Said] likes most in Freud's embrace of Moses as the non-European, the Egyptian founder of the Jews, is the challenge the figure of Moses poses to a strictly identitarian politics' (Butler 2012: 31). It is not a claim that European is equivalent to non-European or that there is no difference between the European and the non-European. It is a thesis of impurity. It is the assertion of an impossibility of any social group – a people, a nation or a profession – being able to identify itself with itself without any relation or reference to the other or without having already the other within itself.

Rudolph Gasché (2009) closely examines how Derrida approaches Europe through its trauma. It is helpful to discuss him briefly as he struggles with the very meaning of Europe and how the name Europe already contains the ethico-political question we just named. Gasché illustrates how Derrida inherits a tradition in which Europe never figures as a geographic or political entity but is always something other, which has been called by various names. Gasché (2009: 9) reminds us how Europe is called an idea (Husserl), a figure, an image (Valéry), a category (Badiou), a schema (Guénoun) and 'a little thing' (Derrida); he could also include a 'vanishing mediator' (Balibar).

If Europe is not merely an entity, what are its origins as a name? As Gasché says, although Europe as a name originates in the seventh century BC, it is doubtful that it meant the same thing in subsequent centuries. Arguably, the name was inherited by the Greeks from Asia, where its possible meaning – 'dusk' – designated the 'land of evening'. Intriguingly, Gasché surmises, the Greeks may well have not thought of themselves as Europeans but those who were glancing towards dusk, looking towards the

land of evening. Thus, in later centuries, by naming itself as Europe, Europe arguably constituted itself with a name that originated outside itself. In a very strong sense, and following Derrida, Gasché says this is perhaps what Europe evokes: it calls itself by the name of the other (Gasché 2009: 10). Europe comes to name itself, is able to name itself, only through the other, or the name inherited from the other. This is the same motif that we saw earlier Said drawing from Freud. Europe comes to itself from outside of itself.

> What the name Europe refers to is thus not primarily the proper name of a land but a name for a movement of separation and tearing (oneself) away in which everything proper has always already been left behind. It is thus an extension prior to all confinement within oneself, thus constituting an exposure to the foreign, the strange, the indeterminate. (Gasché 2009: 11)

But just why did 'Europe' become the name of the continent? Peter Gommers (2001) considers various possible explanations. He considers, for example, etymological, topographical and mythological explanations (2001: 62–7). Yet these ostensibly true explanations fail in giving a full account why Europe became the name of the continent. Gommers then provides an intriguing fourth account. This involves divine name-givers of non-Greek, if not 'oriental' origin. This is how it goes. In ancient Greece a goddess Europa was worshipped at the Pelasgian oracle of Dodona. This goddess 'became' the partner of Zeus – as the name of a goddess Europe is found as geographical names across Greece. Yet, the Phoenician princess has had the honour through centuries of being the name-giver of Europa due to her relation to Zeus; however, it now appears that the Phoenician princess is an incarnation of the Pelasgian goddess (2001: 67). This is, of course, the well known myth of Europa. But, as Michael Wintle (2009) illustrates, if we oppose myth to truth we will entirely miss the performative force the myth of Europa played in forging an image of Europe. So what was the 'relation' of Europa to Zeus? The myth of Europa, the daughter of the Phoenician king born on the oriental coast of the Mediterranean, and abducted (or fled) to Crete by Zeus disguised as a bull becomes the name-giver of Europe not only in ancient history but, more importantly, in modern history where the myth of Europa becomes iconized in numerous art, science and philosophy depictions (Wintle 2009; Gasché 2009: 10–12). Of course, there are various ways of interpreting the performative force of this myth. If we read it as an abduction of Europa by Zeus we can see it symbolizing the colonization of the orient by 'Europe'. If we read it as an escape of Europa from oppression (as many paintings depict Europa appearing with ecstatic femininity on Zeus with masculine virility) then Europa can appear as a symbol of liberation. So the 'relation' between Europa and Zeus is afflicted with tension and ambiguity. Martin Bernal has

illustrated how the figures Homer and Hesiod played on this tension and ambiguity (Bernal 1987: 85).

Europe is not a proper name and the name comes to Europe from outside. The name Europe designates an obscure part of the world where the sun sets. 'The name itself names Europe's origin in a movement of departure from everything native' (Gasché 2009: 13). Europe always glances towards the distance being always ahead of itself with the other (Gasché 2009: 14). How then must Europe respond to this rupture or trauma? This question yields a surprising answer. *Europe is, or rather must stand for, an openness to the world.* 'To elicit the name Europe is not only to evoke the continent and its history – Europe as a geographical and political entity, as well as the history of its many accomplishments and its many failures – but something else as well (even though one does not know exactly what this is)' (Gasché 2009: 16). That something else may well be the demand to remain open to its impurity. This demand to remain open is radical as it is not about toleration, hospitality, accommodation or recognition of an imagined or otherwise 'other' but it is about getting to grips with its own impurity of being already meshed with the other.

For this reason, and perhaps unfairly, Gasché criticizes post-colonial thought for creating a blind spot of Europe by assuming its unity and hegemony and glossing over its ambiguity instead of articulating it as a question. Yet, it was post-colonial thought and literature that struggled against inheriting words and deeds as one finds them but translating them into other vocabularies and languages. This was expressed most forcefully and poignantly by Derek Walcott when he imagined a colonial subject (in this case Caribbean) delivering herself or himself from servitude by creating a language which goes 'beyond mimicry, a dialect which had the force of revelation, as it invented names for things, one that finally settled on its own mode of inflection' (quoted in Burkett 2001: 131). But in articulating Europe as a concept that takes its name from outside, Gasché provides a strong sense of the kind of thing Europe is (Gasché 2009: 17). This sense is clearly indebted to Derrida, as Gasché readily admits, but it also locates Derrida within a project, or rather, as belonging to a project, or better still, as inheriting a task, a task that is Europe.

Derrida himself intimated this with his emphasis on the relationship between inheritance and responsibility, or rather, inheritance as responsibility. For Derrida, being European means taking responsibility for the heritage of thought that reflects upon what Europe is. This is not a responsibility that is chosen. It imposes itself upon us. For Derrida, being what we are is first of all this inheritance and this inheritance is our task (Gasché 2009: 265). Derrida goes as far as to say that 'we are insofar as we inherit' (Derrida 1994: 68). Taking responsibility for this inheritance means keeping the openness of the concept of Europe through its relation to the other, non-Europe. The task consists in a double movement of being faithful to the concept of Europe and remaining committed to its openness

(Gasché 2009: 266). It requires recognizing that Europe is the name of an identity involving conflicting demands and that it produces a mode of being that is infinitely open to what is other than itself. It is in this sense that Europe is a project that is yet to come (2009: 286). It also means a critical openness. The responsibility that this inheritance imposes upon itself as an intellectual responsibility is not about peddling Europe's ostensible values in a list of Enlightenment accomplishments. As Hannah Arendt put it starkly in the preface to the first edition of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), 'we can no longer afford to take that which was good in the past and simply call it our heritage, to discard the bad and simply think of it as a dead load which by itself time will bury in oblivion' (1951: ix). This was because 'the subterranean stream of Western history has finally come to the surface and usurped the dignity of our tradition. This is the reality in which we live' (ibid.). For her, 'all efforts to escape from the grimness of the present into nostalgia for a still intact past, or into the anticipated oblivion of a better future, are vain' (ibid.). Five decades later Derrida would echo Arendt: 'without Eurocentric illusions and pretensions, without the slightest pro-European nationalism, without even much trust in Europe as it is or in the direction it is taking, we must fight for what this name represents today, with the memory of the Enlightenment, of course, but also with a guilty conscience for and a responsible awareness of the totalitarian, genocidal, and colonialist crimes of the past' (Derrida 2006: 410).

It is in this sense that Europe is an ethico-political question of non-Europeans. We, the non-Europeans, are a problem for Europe, Europa (of Phoenician origin who is abducted or escaped from oppression), Derrida (of Algerian-French and Jewish upbringing) and Said (of Arab-Christian and Palestinian upbringing) seem to announce, only in so far as Europeans are already contaminated by non-Europeans. It is also in this significant sense that 'the question of Europe is not merely one question among others' (Gasché 2009: 287). It is a question that projects itself beyond its boundaries and beyond its limits, especially those of a geographical, political and cultural nature. The question of Europe is always 'at once a chance and a danger" (2009: 287).

The preliminary conclusion I want to draw from this argument is that the starting point of reflecting on Europe cannot be its ostensible unity or value. Perhaps this is an obvious if not a banal conclusion. But if the beginning point, its originary promise, is its openness, or rather, its commitment to openness, defining itself with other than what it is, placing itself and its impurity always under question, then the question of Europe is at once inside and outside, itself and the other. We have just seen that taking the myth of Europe seriously means not to dismiss it but to draw out the performative force of its ambiguity as the source of an ethico-political question about ourselves (European or non-European). If the question is not about Europeans as such but Europeans as non-Europeans then Europe is that name which signifies the commitment to place itself under question

regarding what it itself is not. That is why Europe is not a geography, a polity, a culture or even a civilization, but stands for the radical openness of that space which took as its name the name of the other. That is also why we, the non-Europeans, are a historical problem – and not toleration, hospitality, accommodation or recognition – *for* Europeans.

How did Derrida struggle, consciously or unconsciously, with this ethico-political problem? When Derrida insists that it is 'essential to study and take seriously into account … beginning with the Greece of Plato and Aristotle, of Hellenism and Neoplatonism, what gets passed on, transferred, translated from Europe by pre- and post-Koranic Arabic, as well as by Rome', I would like to think that he is expressing this ethico-political question about ourselves opening the question of the impurity of European philosophy (Derrida 2005: 31). He pleads:

> we feel strongly the seriousness of the question of whether philosophy was born in Greece or not, whether it is European or not, whether one can speak of Chinese philosophy, whether one can speak of African philosophy, or whether the destination of philosophy is marked by a singular source, thus by a singular language or a network of singular languages. (Derrida 1995: 377)

For Derrida, then, the fact that Europe's origin is not identical to itself should lead to a historical understanding of the multiple sources of its identity not ostensibly placed outside but located within. Derrida was convinced that it is wholly inappropriate to regard the identity of Europeans historically as solely Greek, with some additional Jewish, Christian, and Islamic elements. Rather, Europeans are all these things and these things are all open to them at once.

The openness that Said anticipates in his reflections on Freud and the way Derrida approaches Europe as an open project (Derrida 1992b) are radical in the sense that they place ethico-political demands on us, Europeans and non-Europeans alike, to reconfigure our relations with our multiple sources of identity and identifications. For Europeans the urgency of this reconfiguration becomes immediately apparent with regard to the ancient Greeks.

For major European philosophers Europe always comes into existence with the ancient Greeks. As Enrique Dussel argued, the single line of development Greece–Rome–Europe is an invention of the dominant Eurocentric thought in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Dussel 2000: 466–7). For Dussel, 'Today, this is considered to be the standard, traditional sequence. Few consider this to be an ideological invention that first kidnapped Greek culture as exclusively western and European and then posited both the Greek and Roman cultures as the center of world history' (Dussel 2000: 468). To put it differently, the birth certificate of Europe as philosophy is staged as inescapably Greek (Gasché 2009: 291). Derrida complicates this relationship with Greece as Europe's birth certificate. It is not that

he disowns that originary moment. It is that he multiplies the sources of Europe as philosophy. Derrida accepts that what we rigorously recognize as philosophy as such does not exist elsewhere than Greece. Philosophy, as thought of as being and existence, was born in Greece. To make this recognition requires neither orientalism (or occidentalism depending on the point of view of evaluation) nor historicism. But it means also to recognize that it will have traces of non-Europeans in it.

A year after his Turin lecture Derrida was invited in 1991 to respond to two contributions by Éric Alliez and Francis Wolff, who had discussed the relations of Derrida, Foucault and Gilles Deleuze to ancient Greeks during a colloquium organized by Barbara Cassin. Derrida's presentation was subsequently published as 'Nous autres Grecs' (Derrida 1992a) and has been recently translated into English as 'We Other Greeks' (Derrida 2010). As the translators note, the phrase Derrida uses in the original title can mean 'we who are Greek', but can also mean 'we too are Greeks' as an affirmation, or, 'we Greeks of another kind', as a claim of difference (2010: 17, n1). As the editors note, this is perhaps the most extensive if not the most explicit of Derrida's reflections on his relationship to ancient Greeks (2010: 17).

This piece clearly illustrates that the question of the inheritance of the ancient Greeks is a troubling question for Derrida. It places us in the presence of

> an intrusion of the other, of the wholly other, who forces the limits of identification and the relationship of language, the corpus, or the system to itself. It is thus a question of locating the traces of this intrusion (traumas, inclusion of the excluded, introjection, incorporation, mourning, and so on) rather than defining some essence or self-identity of the 'Greek', the originary truth of a language, corpus, or system. (2010: 19, n.2)

To be sure, Derrida welcomes the efforts of the organizers to discuss resonances and resemblances amongst contemporary philosophers to identify a generation of approaches to the Greek question. Yet he says this is not enough. 'We and the Greeks' as a question is too fractured and impure to shape a generation. Derrida does not feel comfortable with being associated with a generation. For Derrida it is equally urgent to recognize the limits of these resonances and analogies (2010: 21). By saying that he has his own Greeks, followed by a pun, 'to each according to his Greeks' Derrida, in my view, signals the impossibility of a generation that will delimit all the resonances and analogies (2010: 19–20). He notes, for example, his difficult relationship to the way Nietzsche or Heidegger relates to the 'Greek thing' and for whom the Greek never appeared as a question. Rather, for Nietzsche and Heidegger it was a question of which Greeks. Neither ever considered the question of Greeks

as a question of inheritance: what is being inherited, why is it inherited and how it ought to be inherited? Quite rightly Derrida wonders why in the twentieth century many scholars have chosen Greek words to name historical formations such as '*epoche*' (Heidegger), 'paradigm' (Kuhn), 'episteme' (Foucault), and '*themata*' (Holton) (2010: 22, n.11). These acts of naming are not constative acts. They are performative utterances that bring into being a particular relationship of inheritance between the modern and ancient Greeks. For Derrida these acts perform three things at once: '(1) the invention of the new, namely, a concept that is irreducible to those circulating in everyday language; (2) the supposed invention of the new as archaeological rediscovery: restoration, reactivation, or liberation of an occluded or even a forbidden memory; (3) finally, the authority attached to the use of rare words or of ancient languages considered to be learned languages' (ibid.). All three are performatives that, despite their claims to discontinuity, establish continuity with the Greeks as their source of authority. As for his own Greeks, Derrida resolutely and emphatically asserts:

> It is not only the non-Greek that attracted me in/to (*chez*) the Greek (it's a question of knowing in short what *chez* means), not only the other of the Greek (the Egyptian, the Barbarian, or whoever is determined by the Greek as his other, and so is excluded-included, posed as opposable), but the wholly other of the Greek, of his language and his *logos*, this figure of a wholly other that is unfigurable by him. This wholly other haunts every one of the essays I have devoted to 'Greek' things and it often irrupts within them: under different names, for it perhaps has no proper name. (2010: 25)

Derrida insists that we must resist an either/or injunction where we as Europeans are obligated to announce ourselves as Greeks by an automatic inheritance or as having broken with them by a law of liberation. 'If we are still or already Greeks, we ourselves, we others (*nous autres*), we also inherit that which made them already other than themselves, and more or less than they themselves believed' (2010: 27). It follows that,

> if the legacy of the thought (of truth, of being) in which we are inscribed is not only, not fundamentally, not originarily, Greek, it is no doubt because of other convergent and heterogeneous foliations, other languages, other identities that are not simply added on like secondary attributes (the Jew, the Arab, the Christian, the Roman, the German, and so on); it is no doubt because European history has not simply unfolded what was handed down to it by the Greek; it is especially because the Greek himself never gathered himself or identified with himself. (2010: 31)

Approaching it from another angle, Said similarly critiqued identitarianism by identifying its two moves. First, Said says 'if you know in advance that the African or Iranian or Chinese or Jewish or German experience is fundamentally integral, coherent, separate, and therefore comprehensible only to Africans, Iranians, Chinese, Jews, or Germans, you first of all posit as essential something which, I believe, is both historically created and the result of interpretation – namely the existence of Africanness, Jewishness, or Germanness, or for that matter Orientalism and Occidentalism' (Said 1994: 31). This is the first of the two moves of identitarianism. Through the second move 'you are likely as a consequence to defend the essence or experience itself rather than promote full knowledge of it and its entanglements and dependencies on other knowledges. As a result, you will demote the different experience of others to a lesser status' (1994: 31–2).

I mentioned earlier that for both Derrida and Said the fundamental crisis of Europe is the inability to approach the non-Europeans with the openness it demands. This may have sounded like a call for hospitality. Yet, notwithstanding Derrida's work on hospitality, Derrida's call with Said's is in my view more radical than that gesture. Calling attention to the fundamental crisis of Europe is no less than re-evaluating the multiple origins that constitute Europeans and their relationships to non-Europeans. It requires not only revisiting the 'Greek thing' and the inheritance that it implies but also re-evaluating a whole series of ostensible differences that have been put into play especially over the last few decades. It also requires exposing a whole series of differences that have been concealed within Europe as the question of others within Europe.

The infinite task of Europe is infinite not because it is over the horizon beckoning us to orient ourselves towards it. It is infinite because many contemporary problems are rooted in the fundamental crisis of Europe's inability to approach the non-European with the openness it demands. As William Connolly (2006) indicated recently, the task is not a heroic undoing of Europe but one of painstakingly and patiently revealing, rediscovering and remapping its subjugated knowledges and inheritance or, more provokingly, its minority lineages, traces and movements. For Connolly, 'The task is to modify the terms of engagement within Europe writ large by projecting the minor tradition of enlightenment more vibrantly onto the field of politics, and to build upon that entry to inspire a new spiritualization of political engagement inside and outside Europe' (2006: 90–1). Yet, symptoms of confronting this ethico-political question are all around us, to which I now want to turn by way of concluding this chapter.

One such symptom, for example, is the way in which European social and political thought always begins with its distinctiveness as the originary place of democracy, liberty, rights and citizenship. As Euben puts it: 'Those who take the West as shorthand for a series of "values" – for example, democracy, liberalism, constitutionalism, freedom, the separation of church and state – rarely recognize the extent to which such values are defined

in contradictory ways and are belied by the very diversity of practices within the West' (Euben 2006: 4). Yet Said and Derrida urge us to go beyond this sentiment and affirm that Europe is not only diverse but its diversity, its minorities, are made up of many elements both European and non-European. European thought has been unable to open itself up to the possibility that such fundamental institutions are not originary but connected with non-European histories, or rather, originate from dialogical relations between European and non-European histories. European social and political thought has not been able to approach non-European forms of thought with the openness they demand because it has created an insular aura about its origins and distinctiveness, and even (and this is something that Said has taught us) superiority. Examples from its history are many but the contemporary difficulty of creating at least a modicum of comparative political thought, for example, attests to its continuing hold on the life of the European intellectual life (Freeden and Vincent 2013).

When this insularity and closeness persist in European social and political thought it is not surprising to find xenophobia, not as prejudice against non-Europeans both within Europe and without but as an endemic condition of politics (Bonjour et al. 2011). Today differences among Europeans generate responses that are just as xenophobic and searing with resentment as responses to non-Europeans (El-Tayeb 2011). From the acrimony surrounding the accession of Turkey into the European Union to utterly dangerous and disingenuous approaches to China and India, and from disparaging statements about Greek, Italian, Spanish or Portuguese political cultures to the treatment of the Roma and Sinti peoples in Germany, France and elsewhere, yet again, the contemporary symptoms of the fundamental crisis of Europe that Derrida and Said invite us to see are clearly visible.

How do we respond to this task in social and political thought? How do we assume responsibility for it despite its immense challenge? An intriguing proposal was made by Étienne Balibar in his *We, the People of Europe?* (2004). Balibar reflects on the idea of Europe as a vanishing mediator – inspired by Frederic Jameson (1973) – to mean a figure that enables an imaginary of the new during the process of transformation of a society, as the old gradually fades away (Balibar 2004: 233). It is an imaginary of the moment between no longer and not yet. This may sound as though Balibar reflects on Europe merely as a historical project; he actually uses 'translation' as a metaphor for the project of Europe. Balibar thinks that this idea of the vanishing mediator is not much different from the process of translation of ideas from one idiom to another. For Europeans – Balibar now speaks as belonging to 'we, the people of Europe' – this might well constitute the exceptional character of Europe, as translator or mediator of cultures. He admits that Europe is not the only space in the world to translate cultures from one language to another, but argues that 'nowhere – not even in India or in China – was it necessary to organise to the same

degree the political and pedagogical conditions of linguistic exchanges' (2004: 234). Balibar expands this task of Europe as vanishing mediator in two ways. First, he includes Arabic, Turkic, Urdu and other languages that are already spoken within Europe. Second, he also stretches the idea of translation from language to culture. For this utopia or myth – for Balibar admits its enigmatic character and its impossibilities – Europe can become an interpreter of the world, translating cultures and languages in all directions (2004: 235). Although Balibar immediately recognizes that the practice of translation cannot be enclosed within the borders of Europe since these languages can never remain within the national cultures of Europe, burdening Europe with an exceptional project raises all the questions that Derrida and Said ask of the European project. Why imagine Europe as an exceptional space (of translation)? Why consider Europe as a unique space of interpretation (of other cultures)? Why consider non-Europe as if it is already outside Europe? I am afraid imagining Europe as an exceptional or unique space with sui generis burdens runs the risk again of placing Europe outside history when the task is, as both Derrida and Said suggest, to place it back firmly within (rather than outside) history – *of* world history.

It is tempting to place European history within world history only since the fifteenth-century colonization and the rise of European empires. After all, is it not European colonization that rendered continents with names that Europe invented? Can we imagine Asia outside European colonization? Can we imagine Africa without European empires? Can we, after all, imagine the Americas without European colonization? If Europe created a world that we inherit we need to understand how it diffused itself through five centuries. We can read such diffusion as European diffusionism spreading out from a centre and transplanting itself in other continents, which Blaut (1993) named as a colonizer's view of the world, or it can also be seen as Europe having incorporated the others within itself. It is in this sense that the impurity of Europe is the task we inherit. Still, the task we inherit as Europe has deeper resonance now in world history than in the last 500 years. I hope I have shown, with Derrida and Said together, that becoming open to that history symbolized by the myth of Europa or Moses is also part of that task and that the crisis of Europe is embodied in the traumas of Europa and Moses.

I argued that Derrida and Said together provide a unique perspective on thinking about Europe as a political question. That both developed their insights as non-Europeans makes them especially European in the sense we have seen in this chapter. Derrida (1992b: 7) called himself an over-colonized European hybrid, and Said (1999: 295) described his life as always out of place and dissonant. Throughout this chapter, you will have noticed, I alternated between their voices as Europeans and non-Europeans. Balibar calls this multidirectional linguistic and cultural translation a utopia or a myth to indicate perhaps the impossibility of the task; it also places urgent and immediate demands on both Europeans and non-Europeans

to place themselves *within* world history. For practitioners of social and political thought especially, the demand is no less than to re-evaluate many of the central concepts with which we perform ourselves as Europeans and others as non-Europeans: democracy, rights, citizenship, law, territory and state. Tracing the impure histories of these concepts, the ways in which they traversed different cultures and spaces, and the ways in which each rationalized and justified pure origins while masking other differences is now an intellectual responsibility for both Europeans and non-Europeans. This should perhaps be the task of social and political thought – merging and joining disparate elements and multiple languages to assemble new concepts while considering the traces of the way in which they have been constituted as distinct. Whether we conceive this task as deconstructing or decolonizing, given how difficult it has been for only one of those institutions named above – citizenship – the task ahead for social and political thought is no mean challenge.

Acknowledgements

References

Arendt, H. (1951), *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Balibar, É. (2004), *We, the People of Europe?: Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Bernal, M. (1987), *Black Athena*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Blaut, J. M. (1993), *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History*. New York: Guilford Press.

Bonjour, S., A. Rea and D. Jacobs (eds) (2011), *The Others in Europe*. Bruxelles: Institut D'Etudes Europeennes (IEE).

Burnett, P. (2001), *Derek Walcott: Politics and Poetics*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.

Butler, J. (2012), *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Connolly, W. E. (2006), 'Europe: A Minor Tradition'. In D. Scott and C. Hirschkind (eds), *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 75–92.

Derrida, J. (1992a), 'Nous Autres Grecs'. In Barbara Cassin (ed.), *Nos Grecs et Leurs Modernes: Les Stratégies Contemporaines D'appropriation de L'antiquité*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 251–76.

Derrida, J. (1992b), *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Derrida, J. (1994), *Specters of Marx: State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. London: Routledge.

Derrida, J. (1995), *Points ...: Interviews, 1974–1994*, ed. Elisabeth Weber, trans. Peggy Kamuf. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Derrida, J. (2005), *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Derrida, J. (2006), 'A Europe of Hope', *Epoché* 10 (2): 407–12.

Derrida, J. (2010), 'We Other Greeks'. In Miriam Leonard (ed.), *Derrida and Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 17–39.

Dussel, E. (2000), 'Europe, Modernity, and Eurocentrism', *Nepantla* 1: 465–78.

El-Tayeb, F. (2011), *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Euben, R. L. (2006), *Journeys to the Other Shore: Muslim and Western Travelers in Search of Knowledge*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Freeden, M. and Vincent, A. (2013), *Comparative Political Thought: Theorizing Practices*. London: Routledge.

Freud, S. (2001a), *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: Totem and Taboo and Other Works*, ed. J. Strachey, 13. New York: Vintage.

Freud, S. (2001b), *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: Moses and Monotheism, an Outline of Psychoanalysis and Other Works*, ed. J. Strachey, 23. New York: Vintage.

Gasché, R. (2009), *Europe, or the Infinite Task: A Study of a Philosophical Concept*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Gommers, P. H. (2001), *Europe: What's in a Name*. Leuven: Leuven University Press.

Honig, B. (2001), *Democracy and the Foreigner*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Jameson, F. (1973), 'The Vanishing Mediator: Narrative Structure in Max Weber', *New German Critique* 1: 52–89.

Karavanta, M. and Morgan, N. (2008), 'Introduction: Humanism, Hybridity, and Democratic Praxis'. In M. Karavanta and N. Morgan (eds), *Edward Said and Jacques Derrida: Reconstellating Humanism and the Global Hybrid*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 1–21.

Marzec, R. P. (2008), 'Said, Derrida and the Undecidable Human: In the Name of Inhabitancy'. In M. Karavanta and N. Morgan (eds), *Edward Said and Jacques Derrida: Reconstellating Humanism and the Global Hybrid*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 304–23.

Radhakrishnan, R. (2010), 'Edward Said and the Possibilities of Humanism'. In A. Iskandar (ed.), *Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 431–47.

Said, E. W. (1978), 'The Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions', *Critical Inquiry* 4 (4): 673–714.

Said, E. W. (1979), *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage.

Said, E. W. (1994), *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage.

Said, E. W. (1999), *Out of Place: A Memoir*. London: Granta.

Said, E. W. (2003), *Freud and the Non-European*, ed. Jacqueline Rose. London: Verso.

Said, E. W. (2004), *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Spivak, G. (2005), 'Thinking About Edward Said: Pages from a Memoir', *Critical Inquiry* 31 (2): 519–25.

Wintle, M. J. (2009), *The Image of Europe: Visualizing Europe in Cartography and Iconography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.