# The nation has two `voices'

Tzanelli, Rodanthi

EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF cultural studies


Los Angeles, London, New Delhi,
Singapore and Washington DC
Vol 11(4) 489–508; 1367-5494
DOI: 10.1177/1367549408094984
www.sagepublications.com

# The nation has two 'voices'

## *Diforia and performativity in Athens 2004*

**Rodanthi Tzanelli**
*University of Leeds*

ABSTRACT This article explores the contemporary conditions of national self-presentation, inviting students of national identity to reconsider the nature of national self-narration through new conceptual tools. It is argued that contemporary nations have two 'voices': one is addressed to their members, another speaks to the nation's external interlocutors. Both voices contribute to the performance of identity: for nations which are the product of colonial and 'crypto-colonial' encounters, narration is characterized by a negotiation of the boundaries between private and public voices and slippage in utterance. The article introduces a new concept in the study of culture, 'diforia', which accounts for both this split meaning of utterance and national performativity in public. The concept is mobilized to examine and deconstruct a recent case of Greek diforia enacted in the context of the opening and closing ceremonies of Athens 2004.

KEYWORDS *ambivalence, Athens 2004, diforia, media, performativity, significant others*

## Of navels and nations

The starting points for this article were two moments in the history of nationalism studies. Together, they opened a Pandora's Box in the realm of identity politics. In the first case Smith defended the historicity of nations, explaining that they have ethnic pasts without denying that at some point in their life trajectory they mobilize such pasts to assert their identity. He attacked the modernization argument that Gellner (1983, 1994) advocated. Nations are not the product of the Industrial Revolution and of class stratification, he said, but of long and uneven histories. The idea that nationalism is an ideology invented by the ruling to control the emerging working class sounded preposterous to

a historical sociologist. Using Balkan nationalisms – especially the case of Greece – to support his thesis, Smith pointed out that nations with long ethnic pasts adopt a policy of cultural revolt to build a future. This revolt amounts to a use of historical traditions that belong to the ethnic past and involve an interpretation of these traditions in the course of forming a political-as-national community (Smith, 1981, 1995). 'Do Nations have Navels?' asked Gellner (1996) in his response, stating that the existence of national 'navels' – the 'birthmarks' that nations discover and display – is simply inessential and contingent. We still have to situate nations within the discourse of modernity, out of which they are born even though they often deny it.

The second moment arose with the publication of Gourgouris' book *Dream Nation* (1996), supporting a version of the constructionist argument of nation-building. Following Anderson (1991), Gourgouris understood nations as social formations that are 'imagined' as 'real' communities. This imagining is akin to dreamwork: nations continue to exist because they strive to achieve self-fulfilment, yet they never manage to stabilize self-perceptions. The book synthesized Homi Bhabha's and Slavoj Žižek's Lacanian work: nations reside in 'the archive of (self-) representation' (Gourgouris, 1996: 45), which involves the writing of national histories and the creation of symbols, and enables a process of *omphaloskopisis*, a constant navel-gazing essential in the production of national imaginations. This is the *topos* of the nation: to seek perfection and completion, but never to be able to achieve it. Again, Greece provided the subject material for Gourgouris' thesis: he argued that although Greek identity was conceptualized first as Hellenic (ancient Greek) in western political centres, the Greek nation as such emerged through a reimagining of such western conceptualizations (what he called, following Freud, a 'secondary revision' of them).

This article examines how such navels acquire the status of significant realities in our contemporary world. It is pertinent to argue that navel-gazing sustains the nation, but difficult to accept the solipsistic nature of *omphaloskopisis*. Nations are not created in voids; their spatio-temporal existence can be affected only by their significant others: rival ethnic groups, colonisers, former rulers. Nations do not only narrate to themselves or for themselves: they are products of collective cross-cultural representations and dialogues. Looking inwards also requires looking outwards to meet the world and tell stories of (self-)invention. Therefore, this article maintains that contemporary nations can be seen only as narrations of their navel, an exposure of what were once their private, intimate spaces.

The next part of the article explains that similar reflections inform the work of well-established writers on colonialism, post-colonialism and nationalism. As the title of the article suggests, nations have two voices: one which addresses the members of the national community; the other which addresses significant interlocutors, imagined or real, authorizing

the community's identity in the world. The article's use of post-colonial theory presents us with an extreme case of national communication with significant others (colonisers), but the core argument of such theories can be mustered for the study of the intersubjective nature of national identity in general. In media milieus the intersubjective conditions of national representation through narration have a strange effect: when the meanings of national narratives become ever-shifting, the two 'voices' merge. To explore this phenomenon, the article will develop the concept of 'diforia', which allows for a simultaneous understanding of slippage in meaning and convergence in voices. Diforia activates the performative of national identity, resulting in a separation of the private (internal) and public (external) worlds. Finally, it presents a recent example of diforia, involving the performance of Greek identity in the opening and closing ceremonies of the Athens 2004 Olympics, a striking example of how nations can use enunciation to enact their identity-as-difference. Greece's indeterminate position in western imaginations, as a symbolic colony and an autonomous nation, assists in its performative enunciation (this will be revisited in the third part of the article). For the moment, it is worth tracing the bifurcation of the national voice in theory.

## The two 'voices' in theory

Anderson (1991) contests that imagining is the primary force in the fostering of identity, enabling individuals to secure their national membership. Nations are imagined through language, not racial relations; thus racism and nationalism are separated analytically. Anderson supported the modernist thesis that imagined communities are the product of print-capitalism, as printing popularized national languages and made the exchange of ideas possible. Language is addressed to all potential members of the community, because 'it is always open to new speakers, listeners and readers' (1991: 146). Anderson's engagement with Durkheimian debates on the production of mechanical solidarity unwittingly sketched a portrait of national imagination: the conditions of collective self-narration are potentially intersubjective, because 'through language the nation presents itself as simultaneously open and closed' (1991: 146). This indirectly suggests that national languages become vehicles of messages and ideas destined to traverse the world and make the nation real for both its members and outsiders.

Partha Chatterjee's (1986) work on India has been one of the most incisive post-colonial critiques of Anderson's argument. According to Chatterjee, Anderson's 'modular character' of nation-building outside Europe is highly deterministic in the Marxist sense. Although Anderson maintains that national communities are imagined, nationalist discourse remains derivative of European nationalisms in his work. In contrast, Chatterjee studies examples of emerging national consciousness in formerly

colonized countries. The dominant theory of nationalism confronts us with a question of knowledge-as-power: do we not replicate colonial attitudes when we understand non-European nationalisms as 'second class', derivative phenomena? This approach does not explain a fundamental contradiction we find in nationalist texts: on the one hand, their emancipatory discourse demonstrates 'the falsity of the colonial claim that the backward peoples were culturally incapable of ruling themselves in the conditions of the modern world' (1986: 30); on the other hand, it accepts the intellectual premises of modernity on which colonial domination was based (Chatterjee, 1986). This contradiction merits investigation.

Chatterjee (1986) suggests an alternative understanding of national consciousness, explaining that the colonized do not develop their resistance *within* the structures of colonialist domination, but *outside* them. Anti-colonial Indian nationalism organizes its resistance against imperial power by dividing the world into two different domains, the spiritual and the material. In the material world of western civilization, the anti-colonial movement often fails to achieve self-determination. This is achieved in the 'spiritual' domain of culture, to which the colonizer is denied access (Chatterjee, 1993). The nation may be related causally to oppression, but it manages to develop its own voice – a voice that remains hidden and inaccessible to dangerous outsiders. So for Chatterjee, nationalist texts are the products of bifurcated nationalist discourses in which different arguments are strategically mobilized for different interlocutors. The argument rejects solely exterior constructions of national communities and places their creation in the domain of conflict. Violent though this conflict may be, it is creative, as it dialectically produces something new. Ultimately, Chatterjee's argument is not reducible to instances of direct colonial opposition, because it applies to identity awareness in general: in short, to subjectivity-as-agency.

Long before Chatterjee, Frantz Fanon (1967, 1970) had declared the futility of interaction between colonizer and colonized. Writing at the height of the Algerian anti-colonial struggle, Fanon urged his compatriots to disengage with their French rulers. The subjection to colonial rule is insidious because it renders itself invisible – it hides in the shadows of etiquette and the need to mimic, to be 'like them', rather than different. Fanon poignantly articulates the momentum of resistance: a repressed community attains national status when it develops an internal, independent voice. The need to wear a white mask, to conform and yet never be accepted as a full human being, needs to be shaken off. What an independent nation needs is a theatre without masks to perform its own political role. Fanon sees the external voice of the colonized as an impediment in the struggle for independence, and instead prioritizes the internal, national one, which helps post-colonial communities to re-engage with the world using their own unique vocabulary.

The internal voice returns in the reworking of Fanon and Chatterjee by Homi Bhabha, who laboured on a conceptual analysis of the post-colonial project and its emancipatory possibilities. Stressing the intersubjective emergence of identity in colonial situations, Bhabha (1994) explains that the language of the colonizer re-emerges as mimicry and mockery once it is adopted by the colonized. The mimicry that plagues the oppressed has a double effect, because it supports both imitation of the colonizers and their parody, subordination and resistance. This ever-present possibility of slippage discredits the colonizer's version of colonized otherness. The two notions of mimesis interact and cross continually, producing confusion and subverting roles in colonial discourse (Fuss, 1994). Implicitly, Bhabha sees the location of post-colonial cultures in parody, in the split voice of the oppressed. In 'DissemiNation' (1990, 1994) he highlights a dichotomy in cultural self-narration between pedagogy and performativity. Bhabha is more concerned with the emergence of culture 'within the nation' (1994: 148), recognizing the performative character of national communities in the shift from externality to interiority. Yet, it is precisely this process of performative self-integration that presents the nation as a struggle that takes place not at the centre, but in the unstable boundaries of exilic identity. Thus for Bhabha, what is nationalized comes from outside and brings difference into the community, which needs to be recognized. The pedagogical character of national narrative is the locus of instruction, because it is directed to the members of the cultural community, making collective imagining possible. Contrariwise, the performative consolidates the nation's relationship with humanity. Hence, Bhabha was talking about two sites of communication, the double voice of the present argument.

In crucial parts, Bhabha adopts Gilroy's (1987) political stance, which examines the role of black culture in Britain. Gilroy supported the development of black cultural difference as resistance to dominant modes of representation, and examined this difference in the context of dialogical role-making, of fostering an intersubjective engagement between black performance and other-observation. For Gilroy, black culture's own voice offers an alternative to dominant cultural practices. Because the voice of difference comes from within, it generates the predicament of collective self-narration: others are an inescapable condition of collective self-recognition, and they cannot be ignored, as public (self-)presentation needs an audience to be meaningful.

How are we to examine these modes of communication critically and interactively? Herzfeld (1997) is sceptical of Anderson and Gellner's understandings of nationalism, because they are inextricably related to the consolidation of élite power. For them, national identity is fostered from above, and national subjects are indoctrinated to accept it as their ultimate value. Herzfeld distances himself from such claims. In his work he pioneers the term 'cultural intimacy' to describe

> the recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality … reinforc[ing] the effectiveness of intimidation. (1997: 3)

He is trying to avoid the division of nation into élites (nation-makers) and the rest (passive subjects), explaining that the need to exclude from intimate understandings occurs at both local and national levels. National stereotyping does not exist independently from local self-stereotyping that may be constitutive of global power relations, but still can be mobilized in narratives of identity. The nation reifies itself in discourses of traditionalism in intercultural encounters – the Greeks smash plates to entertain foreigners and bargain for goods in an 'Oriental fashion' to assert their cultural difference, only to 'project familiar social experience unto unknown and potentially threatening contexts' (Herzfeld, 1997: 7). This operates as a 'simulacrum of sociality' in Baudrillard's (1988) terms, a projection of an image of intimacy outwards that leaves the core of culture intact.

At moments, Herzfeld's 'cultural intimacy' would presuppose the *a priori* existence of a fixed collective identity under attack by external forces. Especially in his earlier work (Herzfeld, 1985), he seems to separate the tendency in self-narration to project the desire of others from our own desire to be represented in intelligible ways. This would presuppose a clear-cut demarcation of the public and private spheres, of performance (what he calls 'social poetics') and the space of embarrassment (that of intimacy). His 'social poetics' corresponds to the Goffmanesque (1969) idea of 'self-presentation', a dramaturgical projection of a coherent self in society. However, his transition from Goffman's idea of self-formation, as something that exists coherently only in public, to that of collective self-narration as *actually existing* intimacy, begs a question: is there or is there not something behind, in the 'backstage' of performance? The division between public and private is also a pre-requisite in Fanon, Gilroy and Chatterjee's theses, and underlies Anderson's work on the power of imagination. It is worth considering this divide anew.

## Media and the inscription of diforia

A number of theorists have associated the phenomenon of globalization with cultural homogenization, identity loss and the advance of western cultural imperialism in the mass media (Price, 1993). In contrast, others have pointed out that in the case of nations, a great degree of resistance to global flows is expressed in the pathologization of cultural difference (Ray, 2002). Some have pointed out that nowadays we experience a reverse cultural imperialism, as there are massive media flows from developing countries to the developed world that disseminate narratives of subaltern

identity (Shreberni-Mohammadi, 1991). Alternatively, other scholars have claimed that the global distribution of cultural goods does not necessarily result in identity loss (Lull, 2000; Thompson, 1995). A corollary of this would be the claim that globalization leads to a proliferation of identities when it is associated with mobilities, such as labour reallocation and the subsequent fostering of social bonds that produce new or different discourses of cultural belonging (Appadurai, 1991).

Following Appadurai's rationale, we could claim that a problem inherent in the globalization-as-imperialism argument is the strange assumption that ready-made identities have to be safeguarded against external forces. Identity is placed arbitrarily within a discourse of modernity that promotes fixity and stabilization of meanings. The present article suggests that media globalization creates a new venue for the emergence of national representation. It takes the media as a starting-point, because they have become one of the most immediate sources of communication with cultural others (Greenwood, 1989) in ways similar to those of the preceding practice of textual narration (Bhabha, 1994).

Unlike the text, televised images and messages are addressed to millions of global viewers simultaneously, providing the nation with a 'public sphere' (Habermas, 1962) in which it can perform itself. This imagining belongs to the intimate space of the nation, which here becomes immediately available to outsiders. However, to return to Herzfeld's recent observations, the national intimacy projected outwards is just a simulation of the national private sphere. According to Baudrillard, in contemporary societies there has been a progressive disconnection of the sign and the signified; consequently, textual and visual meanings have become arbitrary and easily manipulated (Best and Kellner, 1997). Both producers and consumers of media images partake in this 'death of the real' (Baudrillard, 1983: 53) and the rise of a world that lives through simulations. However, in the case of national imaginations, simulations of social reality provide a platform for the production of new self-understandings. In media representations the national voice is coupled with the voice of cross-cultural narration to create a new national self-image. This coupling happens through what this article calls 'diforia': literally the double dissemination of the same signifier (*diforoumenos* denotes the carrier of double meaning, from *dyo* = two and *ferō* = carry) that defers decoding until it arrives at its destination. This is the hermeneutic moment of the nation: its narrative takes shape only when it is placed in appropriate contexts, internal and external. By the same token, diforia corresponds to the principles of dialogics: for Bakhtin, 'to be means to communicate dialogically', because 'a single voice ends nothing and resolves nothing. Two voices is the minimum for … existence' (Bakhtin, 1984: 252–3). An 'integral ideological position' requires individual or collective interlocutors, who assist in the production of identity-as-subjectivity.

Externally, the meaning is produced in alien cultural contexts. Henceforth this article will use the term 'significant othering' to describe external audiences, a concept used in Gilles Deleuze's genealogy of desire as a productive force. Returning to Nietzsche's critique of Hegel, Deleuze points out that 'slave morality' is never historically necessary, as it can be overthrown by the expression of a 'will-to-power' (Deleuze, 1983: 10). This happens when the 'slave's' anger of rejection supersedes the negativity of an imaginary revenge and begins to generate values – to promote self-affirmation through the acceptance of difference. The nation's significant others may have been accomplices in its actual subjection, especially if the nation itself is the outcome of colonial violence, but there are also nations that did not emerge in anti-colonial struggles or milieus of economic patronage. Diforia repositions 'others' outside national territorial codes: the internal voice, busy with the affirmation of national alterity, *never* engages with them. The main aim of diforic national communities is not to deny their 'others' or difference, but to enjoy their own difference in culturally-specific and historically-contextualized ways (Butler, 1987). Of course, the enunciation of diforia itself is the effect of centres of organized national power. Global diforic enunciations belong to the nation's representatives, yet also belong to national experience; they are born in the repository of collective memory, which the nation's representatives mobilize to legitimize national existence.

We often find that diforia establishes an elusive and competitive relationship with ambivalence, the interplay of related yet contradictory meanings that cannot be determined in the absence of interlocutors. For Bhabha (1994), the ambivalence of enunciation both empowers and disempowers the colonial subject, because it points to a temptation both to internalize colonial discourse and subvert it. Diforia does the same: it includes an understanding of the significant others' view of the subject – often it projects the significant others' desire to subject – but at the same time it contests this desire. Therefore, diforia and ambivalence share in the construction of what Bhabha has called the 'third space of enunciation' (1994: 37), the ambivalent space of cultural identity. Perception of the other's desire is based on impressions of significant others and their expectations. But then, this is one of the pitfalls of language communication in general: language represents, constantly (re)creating realities. Bauman recognizes in ambivalence 'the horror of indetermination' (1991: 56) inherent in strangers, in what resides outside the domain of the nation. Diforia tames the horror of indeterminacy: it recruits ambivalence in the service of national self-presentation, but wants to conceal it from the nation's significant others. It is expected that the others will receive a seamless picture of meaning that is culturally and/or morally credible to them. Thus we can claim that imagined communities harbour the stranger within them, in their performance of identity.

Why do nations feel this urgency for foreclosure? 'Ètrangers à nous-mêmes' (we are strangers to ourselves), says Julia Kristeva (1991: 4–5), because aspects of what we are remain emergent. Strangeness manifests itself within identity every time we become aware of it, and disappears when it is recognized by all. The stranger is 'without a home', always 'multiplying masks and "false selves" … never completely true or completely false' (Kristeva, 1991: 8). The nation's diforic voice, a 'simulacrum of sociality', does not remain outside national identity. Here we deal with a paradox akin to that which Kristeva (1991) identified in the function of the stranger: while speaking to the world, the diforic nation aspires to silence aspects of its inner self. This constant concealment of its inherent strangeness becomes the nation's new private domain, where it can retain its right to be different for significant others.

Diforia is not identical to disemia, an anthropological concept introduced by Herzfeld (1997). Disemia promotes the pairing of two conflicting moral codes that inform the same cosmological–cultural order, whereas diforia may communicate one moral code to two different audiences. To recall Kristeva, it is just that internal audiences decodify diforia in ways different from those of external audiences, but always in the context of other-awareness. It is precisely this practice that creates a proliferation of narratives of identity, a way 'of imagining and mak[ing] oneself for oneself' (Kristeva, 1991: 13). Of course, whereas we can examine enunciation of ambivalence in terms of diforia from the standpoint of the nation's intimate space, once the message is 'out there', we cannot be sure how it will be received. Examining the message from the receiving end, we can only talk about 'multiforia', an endless hermeneutic game that the nation cannot exactly control. The focus of this study is not the multiforia of external audiences, only the diforia that defines national perceptions of two-party communication.

This article recognizes diforia as the sibling of performativity because it is articulated through public acts, through the performance of collective selves who strive to find intelligible means and forms to introduce themselves. Its understanding of performativity does not coincide entirely with that of Judith Butler (1993), who uses the term to analyse the ways in which subjects are both subjected to discursive manifestations of power and emerging. Lest the mistake is committed of jumping from ontological to cultural categories, let us clarify that Butler did not develop the concept of performativity to analyse whole communities that are formed in historical time. Nevertheless, this article borrows from her thesis the idea that although subjects repeatedly perform the teachings of discourse, the experience of repetition ceases to be mechanical: 'as the appearance of power shifts from the condition of the subject to its effects, the conditions of power (prior and external) assume a present and futural form' (Butler, 1997: 16).

Shifting from the level of subjectivity to that of imagined communities, repetition of discourses of identity that originate within national centres of power or without activates diforia, because the meaning of enunciation and its performance are dependent on the context of cultural interaction. However, the space–time prior to the process of contextualization also makes multiforia possible: interaction produces a 'library' of multiple registers from which various interlocutors can choose; it makes representations of the nation possible in different cultures. Therefore, recalling the principles of Bakhtinian textual polyphony, we may highlight that the passage from diforia to multiforia and back again unmasks the 'plurality of independent and unmerged voices [and of] consciousness, with equal rights and each with its own world' (Bakhtin, 1984: 7). Performing multiple ideological positions in the media produces the nation's open, interactive consciousness, thus exposing the dialogic fabric of social life.

Diforia is neither an ahistorical concept, nor does it deny the nation's historicity. On the contrary, it becomes the medium of historical discourse, making the nation's biography available to the world. Here, Butler's performativity is recalled, according to which the power that produces subjects is the efficacy of speech to call the subject into being, but consider the performative as grounded in the sociopolitical origins of nation-building. For post-colonial nations specifically, the performance of diforia is inseparable from past and current geopolitical arrangements, which are contested and challenged in the field of language. Diforic enunciations correspond to geopolitics insofar as they reflect political action, rather than mere linguistic preformance. Although the present author is receptive to Butler's (1993) argument that subject resistance is made possible because language is polysemic and speakers cannot fix the meaning of their speech acts, national subjectivity-as-agency (collective identity) emerges on a symbolic level, that of culture. This will be explored through diforic media representations of the nation that provide us with an opportunity to implement this new concept in the context of Athens 2004.

## Fireworks or *necranastasis*? Greek diforia in Athens 2004

The process of Greek nation-formation is representative of past and present geopolitical visions of Western European belonging (Gourgouris, 1992, 1996). Greece was institutionalized in the early 19th century with the help of three powerful patrons (Britain, France and Russia) which strived for control over the southeastern Mediterranean region. Putting political and economic interests aside, the western desire to 'resurrect' the Greek nation originated in the belief that the modern Greeks were descended from Hellenic civilization, on which the West formed its self-image as European and 'civilised' (Bernal, 1991). Soon it became clear that modern Greeks could not live up to such western demands because of their many

alleged shortfalls: they were disorderly, 'Oriental' in their habits (just like their former Ottoman rulers), and had expansionist ambitions in the region – inconvenient for western economic interests. As Said (1978) explains, the denigration of the colonized assisted in the consolidation of Orientalist projects. In Greece's case, this denigration was coupled with an excessive western admiration for things 'Hellenic' (Herzfeld, 1987), such as ancient Greek philosophy, democracy and order. At various points in the history of modern Greece this past played for the Greeks the role of both the 'other/stranger', who lives outside Greek history, in the domain of western Orientalism, and the 'same', who belongs to the process of Greek ethnogenesis. The Greek internalization of such ideological topographies of identity was complemented by western interference in Greek politics between the 1850s and the Second World War, following the Greek civil conflict (1944–9) and the Cold War era. Finally, the calamitous dictatorship of 1967–74 consolidated the belief that Greece-as-Hellas is the cradle of European civilization, bestowing it also with a Christian Orthodox, right-wing dimension (Herzfeld, 2002a). Consequently, Greek foreign and domestic policies were over-determined by an 'underdog culture' (Diamantouros, 1983), a combination of Christian and 'Hellenocentric' exclusiveness, which renounces foreign interventions and attacks cultural difference.

Western attitudes towards the 'Greek Question' have been discussed as the site of 'crypto-colonialism' (Herzfeld, 2002b), a term which describes the effects of indirect subjection upon the construction of national cultures. During the 19th century, western anthropological writing on countries of marginal status such as Greece and Thailand fostered discourses on their inability to become autonomous nations. The occasional admittance in, or exclusion of, such cultures from 'civilization' consolidated their ever-changing position in colonial discourse and had consequences for national self-narration and domestic politics. Thus, even though the primary binarisms of colonial discourse were challenged, the crypto-colonial prerogative resulted in the creation of self-understandings of the nation as inadequate and dependent on powerful patrons. The internalized discourse of Greek exceptionalism – demonstrated in the fact that Greek culture, although European by historical association, is politically marginalized and constantly ignored in academic debates on European identity (Gallant, 1997) – ought to be challenged by critical scholarship. If anything, Greek exceptionalism echoes Anderson's modular argument, according to which Hellenic Greekness is constantly and 'retroactively' (Žižek, 1999) narrated for internal and external consumption. Internally, this fulfils the needs of the Greek imagined community to see itself as a uniform entity progressing in linear, historical time (Anderson, 1991). Externally, it provides the nation's significant others with a familiar reference point that secures the unanimous recognition of Greek modernity. However, as will be explained, Greece has a second voice which dissociates from

Western European paradigms, even when it seems to marshal them in unsophisticated ways.

The double function of Hellenocentric Greek self-narration was enacted in the context of Athens 2004. The opening and closing ceremonies became a platform for Greek national performativity, the presentation of a collective self that emerged through a process of creative repetition of the narratives that were summoned outside Greece, in western imaginations. The history of the Olympic Games itself is regarded as part and parcel of the Hellenic-Athenian 'gift' of civilization to Europe, if not humanity as a whole. Thus, their organization by Athens invited the Greek 'nation' to celebrate a universally recognized aspect of its 'navel' – to articulate a public voice based on its internal strangeness. Crypto-colonialism manifested itself even during the preparations for Athens 2004, with American and British accusations that Greece could not protect Olympic athletes from terrorist attacks, finish the preparations in time and deliver a good global performance (Tzanelli, 2004). Greek diforia allowed space for intervention in the western-born Hellenic myth, promoting the development of a secretive, internal voice in front of a multicultural Olympic audience.

First, let us glance at external perceptions of Athens 2004. Despite initial reservations, the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2004 Olympiad were acclaimed around the world as

> the most audacious performance [which] painted a dramatic picture of a country steeped in pride for its remarkable cultural heritage; a country which has made an almost incalculable contribution to contemporary civilisation. (Jack Morton Press Releases, 2004)

This statement replicates the western narrative of Greece-as-Hellas. Small wonder, as the two ceremonies were organized for the first time in the history of the games by a non-indigenous marketing company. Jack Morton Worldwide had organized the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2004 Ryder Cup in Bloomfield, MI and the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne, Australia (Inter-Public Group, 2004). The role of this British marketing agency was to create large-scale, globally televised ceremonies. Jack Morton was an actual agent in national public performance, because it played the role of a Greek other present in, and constitutive of, national self-narration. Nevertheless, Jack Morton did not have the last word on the content of the ceremonies, but collaborated in its creation with the Greek artistic director Dimitris Papaioannou (Embassy of Greece, 2004). This gave the Greek side the opportunity to project a self-image that may have responded to western desires and expectations, but simultaneously retained a difference that could be understood only by the Greeks.

The key highlights of the opening and closing ceremonies seemed to be perfectly intelligible for foreign observers. They were saturated by a willingness to open up the space of the nation to humanity, as the opening ceremony started with the words: 'Citizens of the world, welcome to Athens.'

Yet behind the hospitable tone, there was a second message born in the domain of the nation: the expression 'citizen of the world' is a reference to Isocrates, an Athenian orator (436–338 BC) who allegedly promoted what is known as panhellenism, the ecumenical Hellenic ideal of Greek education, language and culture. A student of Plato, Isocrates believed that Athenian Greek culture and language provided the main distinction between humans and animals. Isocrates' cosmopolitan pretensions were predicated upon a falsely inclusive agenda, as in his work the *cosmos* (world) was identified with the Athenian Greek cultural *ecumene*. The domain outside this *ecumene* was that of barbarity; one could be civilized only if one was immersed in things Hellenic. In Bhabha's terms, the mobilization of Isocratian teachings in the Olympic context is the transformation of national pedagogy (the educational 'preaching' of the 'nation' by western interlocutors) into performativity (the theatrical universalization of such 'preaching' for the rest of the world). The actual message of this 'welcome', comprehensible only to Greeks, addressed international audiences as subjects in need of pedagogy which can be attained through their visit to the 'cradle' of European civilization. Their cosmopolitan citizenship could be achieved only through their Hellenization. Despite the performative flair of this 'welcome', its diforic element articulated an intimate national voice that contested the western Hellenocentric project through its manipulative incorporation.

The message was manipulated further in the opening and closing speeches by the president of the Athens Olympic Committee, Anna Angelopoulou-Daskalaki, whose 'Kalos Ilthate' ('Welcome') was followed by a declaration that the rest of the world 'had been at the heart of Greek preparations'. In her opening speech, she discussed the organization of the Olympics by Greece as a 'unique Olympic homecoming', thus claiming the event as part of a Greek heritage unadulterated by foreign interventions. The 2004 Olympics were organized 'with pride and responsibility' by Greece: 'This is the new Greece we want you discover … [A Greece that is] going to fire the world's imagination.' Despite the political background of Athens 2004 preparations, Angelopoulou-Daskalaki's addressees were not just Greece's significant others. Of course, in the aftermath of 9/11 and the emergence of anti-terrorist discourse in Britain and the US, Greece and the Athens Olympic Committee found themselves amid a political commotion, suggesting that an economically weak country with its home-grown terrorist organizations could not possibly deliver on such a large-scale project. Constant criticism by the international press aggravated an already heavy atmosphere, and forced the Greek government to ask NATO for assistance with security preparations. Thus the small Greek state was caught in the mechanics of contemporary Anglo-American orientalizations (see Tzanelli, 2004). It was small wonder that in her closing speech, Angelopoulou-Daskalaki stressed questions of security, explaining that Athens 2004 is a 'modern achievement' and that 'Greece

was great for the Games'. However the voice in her speech ramified when she proudly exclaimed in Greek that the real gold medal of the Games belongs to the Greek nation, which assisted the Athens Olympic Committee in the narration of 'a beautiful story to the rest of the world'. Thus, she offered the trophy of victory to the Greeks, congratulating *them* only for this achievement. The rest of the audience simply did not figure in her speech. Her exclusive invitation to celebrate this accomplishment brings to the fore practices of navel-gazing, a pleasurable inwardness. The same symbolic reward was endorsed by the President of the International Olympic Committee, Jacques Rogge, who did not omit to 'thank Greece and Athens' for this spectacular Olympic event in Greek. The deafening Greek applause that followed this expression of admiration and gratitude in the stadium seemed to reciprocate his kindness. But the actual content of the applause had escaped Rogge's attention: at last he had recognized Greek achievements, contradicting his previous critical statements (Official International Olympic Committee, 2000, 2001) concerning the progress of the Olympic preparations. At the same time, through his use of Greek as a medium of communication, he had acted as a true 'citizen of the world'. Therefore, in this instance, diforia enabled the Greeks to celebrate their difference without feeling the need to make this demonstration transparent to significant others.

Although Jack Morton and Papaioannou assembled a presentation of 'Greek civilisation' steeped in references to Hellenic achievements, the most technically challenging part of their work, 'Allegory', which narrated the 'growth and evolution of Greek civilisation' (Jack Morton, 13 August 2004), opened with an ambivalent message. This involved the recitation of 'Mythistorema III', a poem by Nobel Laureate George Seferis. The poem seems simply to match the performative foreground of the ceremony, a succession of marble figures that in an international semiotic register would denote Hellenic Greek identity. However, Seferis wrote this poem to mourn the burden that Hellenic heritage creates for modern Greece and the country's inability to break free from this 'scarce resource' (Appadurai, 1981) of historical origins. According to the diforic semiotics of the poem, Greece operates as an autonomous entity in full charge of the preservation of Hellenic antiquity. This constellation of meanings returns us to Angelopoulou-Daskalaki and Rogge's rhetoric of the Greek burden to deliver a 'safe, secure Olympics' and to preserve and promote Hellenic heritage. (The image of Greece as a responsible political player will be revisited below.)

The narration of Greek history was not all about classical heritage. It is telling that the rest of the story escaped the attention of Barry Davies, the BBC presenter of the televised ceremonies, and never appeared on the Jack Morton website, as no significant other had the necessary knowledge to understand it. Following 'Allegory', 'Clepsydra', a chronological procession of images told the story of the Greek nation from prehistoric

to modern times. External observers marvelled at the colourful figures of antiquity, but never noticed that these were followed abruptly by Byzantine emperors, the warriors of the Greek Revolution against the Ottomans (1821–8) and men dressed in Cretan folk costumes. These arbitrary connections were homologous to official historical discourse written from a subaltern perspective, as they sought ways to conceal the mythical element of historical narrative (De Certeau, 1986) and fabricate a fictional Greek continuity from antiquity to Byzantium to the present. In effect, they hid a number of historical contradictions that efficiently excluded an imaginary 'West' from the message. Byzantium became in Greek history the essential link between Hellenic antiquity and Greek modernity (Tsoukalas, 1999), when the Tyrolian classicist Jacob Philipp Fallmerayer (1790–1861) challenged this continuity in the 19th century (Skopetea, 1999), offending the then newly-born Greek state. Byzantium's appearance in Greek Olympic narratives of belonging asserted its importance for modern Greeks, irrespective of contemporary western opinion. At the same time, the succession of Cretan figures further infused Greek self-narration with an element of specificity. Cretan identity is both marginal and central to Greek national self-narration: because in Greece and in countries such as Britain, the Cretans are closely associated with the Greek Independence War (1821) and Greek resistance to the Axis Forces, they have come to represent a set of Greek nationalist values *par excellence* (self-sacrifice and patriotism). However, within the state the Cretan periphery is stereotyped as uncivilized and uncouth. Thus, the geographical marginality of Crete becomes analogous to savagery, one that is harboured within the Greek nation (Herzfeld, 1985). The insertion of diforic self-reflections in 'Clepsydra' (Greece as a savage pariah and an intrepid nation) reflects the marginalization of Greece within Europe and an internal awareness of strangeness. A similar role was played by the debut of gypsy (Roma) communities in the narratives of the closing ceremony: Roma communities are nomadic groups in Greece, constantly persecuted by Greek authorities, defamed by the media and regarded as dirty foreigners by 'indigenous' Greek citizens. However, the Roma presence in the Olympic self-narration portrayed a flawless picture of Greek multiculturalism, conforming to contemporary European standards of ethnic tolerance. Nevertheless, their stereotypical presentation in the Olympic show (in Toyota vans filled with watermelons, surrounded by belly-dancing women), reminiscent of Greek racist jokes about Roma filth and sensuality, reinforced their marginality exclusively in the eyes of Greek viewers, who were culturally equipped to understand the meaning of this staging.

Greek diforia did not always escape the terror of Greece's self-recognition as a 'slave'. This self-recognition belonged to the workings of the internal voice that unearthed bitterness directed inwards from the interstices of early 20th-century Greek history. In the closing ceremony, the diversity of modern Greek music found its crescendo in the *rebetiko*, the *bouzouki*

music that arrived in the Greek metropolis during the immigration of Asia-Minor Greek refugees to Greece following the last Greek–Turkish war. Giorgos Dalaras, a famous Greek singer, sang an *amanes*, a sad composition that belongs to the self-same Asia-Minor heritage which today represents Greek musical taste internationally. Then, a group of exhausted Greek refugees entered the stage to accompany his singing. Before too long, the stage was crowded by a cheerful group of international tourists, complete with cameras and an inexhaustible energy to dance in the rhythms of *Zorba the Greek*, a stereotypical dance in today's Greek tourist destinations, often performed by Greeks for foreigners. The abrupt change of mood heralded better times for the nation, when Greece was ready to admit foreigners into the country as visitors. The 'on-stage' dancing that followed included every single internal and external element of the 'parade', sending out a message of friendship, betterment and reconciliation. Nobody noticed that as the *amanes* was fading in the *Zorbas* music, Dalaras was singing with added vehemence the following:

> You said your big deceitful words while you were first being breastfed,
> But now that the snakes have woken up,
> You guard your ancient ornaments,
> And you don't shed a tear, my mother, Greece,
> When you sell your children as slaves.
> You told your big lies while you were being breastfed,
> But now that the fire was rekindled,
> You prefer to look at your ancient beauties,
> And in the arenas of the world, my mother Greece,
> You always carry the same lie with you.

The acrimony of the lyrics speaks volumes on the practices of self-deception and the subservient attitude that Greece has adopted in the 'arenas of the world'. The ones who are 'sold out' are not the members of the Greek 'imagined community' (Asia-Minor refugees), but Greece itself, that bitterly internalizes and publicly re-enacts the Hellenic-Orientalist condition of slavery. In this moment of self-criticism the outsiders become irrelevant – their exclusion from self-reflection resembles Fanon's suggestion that the subaltern have to turn their back on colonial power and refuse to address it in any way.

The Olympic diforic narratives had the feel of Hollywood storytelling: their end had to correspond to the beginning. The opening of the Games by the President of the Hellenic Republic, Konstantinos Stephanopoulos, was accompanied by the sound of bells: an unambiguous symbol of Greek religious celebrations. Fireworks concluded every chapter of the opening ceremony. The elation and thrill of these symbols was not lost on millions of viewers: the Greek nation was celebrating an international show. However, behind its denotation a chain of connotations was missed entirely. In order to link it to the internal voice, we ought to have a closer look at the 'happy ending' of the closing ceremony, when the Olympic flag was handed over

to the next host city, Beijing. When the Olympic flame was lowered, a teenage Greek girl raised her lantern to light it. She then walked down the stairs of the Olympic altar, and passed the light on to other children. A Chinese boy and a Greek girl spread the Olympic light to the rest of the stadium, to an audience with its own lanterns. Candlelit now, the whole stadium remained silent, as if a magic presence filled the space. As the Athenian Olympic flame died, more music and fireworks erupted.

Conventionally, the scene can be read as the prevalence of the Olympic spirit, and in fact, this is what was conveyed to external audiences. The context of the whole performance is provided by the Christian Orthodox liturgy that commences on the evening of Easter Saturday, a few hours before Christ's resurrection. The priest in charge spreads the 'True Light' of God to the crowd, chanting 'Idomen to Fos to Alithinon' ('We saw the True Light', the light of God). Minutes later, when the clock sounds one minute past midnight, fireworks are organized by the crowd of Orthodox Greeks. This is how contemporary Greek communities celebrate the 'coming of Christ'. Orthodoxy is still a definitive characteristic of Greek identity; as such, it is utilized constantly in international politics to assert Greek difference. Therefore, this ritual meant something entirely different in the vocabulary of the internal voice: the resurrection (*necranastasis*) of the Greek nation, the second coming of Greek alterity in the sphere of world politics and European culture. In this manner, the Athens Olympic Committee and the Greek audience re-enacted cultural themes that belong to their Christian cosmological order (Sahlins, 1996), an act whose meaning was impenetrable for western audiences.

## Conclusion: diforia as identity

This article introduced a new concept that may enable cultural theorists, sociologists and anthropologists of culture to examine contemporary representations of national identity. It argued that diforia is characterized by two qualities: bifurcation in meaning, and performativity in public. As a practice, rather than simple enunciation, diforia informs, and is informed by, the emergence of imagined communities through the private construction of historical autobiographies. In the context of Athens 2004, diforia re-enacted the past of the Greek imagined community, a past formed in the Western European realm, to renegotiate and domesticate it. This symbolic denial of the morality of the slave was articulated in the confines of the internal national voice, but was projected outwards through the external voice. It may be erroneous to talk about deliberate concealment of the internal Greek voice; rather, Greek diforia encouraged a deliberate disengagement with the nation's significant others while retaining a channel of communication with them. National difference was celebrated somewhere between active disengagement and positive communication, defying (in the Greek case) the norms and regulations of

conventional orientalist relationships. The latter point begs the question of the concept's applicability in actual post-colonial nationalisms: like ambivalence and hybridity, diforia can assist in the production of resistance to powerful outsiders; unlike them, it can demonstrate itself in non-colonial intercultural communication. Others are an almost inescapable condition of our existence, collective or not: they are not only reference points and valuable interlocutors, but also strangers whose presence can violate our intimate space. The need for diforic enunciation is constitutive of the human condition, as it constantly creates and recreates individual and collective agencies in the world. As an innate aspect of national intersubjectivity, diforia rescues difference from extinction, even though in the back stages of national performance it works towards the formation of identity.

## References


Anderson, B. (1991) *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso.

Appadurai, A. (1981) 'The Past as a Scarce Resource', *Man* 16(2): 201–19.

Appadurai, A. (1991) 'Global Ethnoscapes: Notes and Queries for a Transnational Anthropology', in R.G. Fox (ed.) *Recapturing Anthropology: Workings in the Present*, pp. 191–210. Santa Fe, CA: School of American Research Press.

Bakhtin, M. (1984) *Problems of Dostoyevski's Poetics* (trans. C. Emmerson). Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Baudrillard, J. (1983) *Simulations*. New York: Semiotext(e).

Baudrillard, J. (1988) *Selected Writings* (ed. M. Poster). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bauman, Z. (1991) *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bernal, M. (1991) *Black Athena: The Afro-Asiatic Roots of Classical Civilisation. Vol. I: The Fabrication of Ancient Greece*. London: Vintage.

Best, S. and D. Kellner (1997) *The Postmodern Turn*. London: Guildford Press.

Bhabha, H.K. (1990) 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation', in H.K. Bhabha (ed.) *Nation and Narration*, pp. 291–322. Westport, CT: Routledge.

Bhabha, H.K. (1994) *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1987) *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Butler, J. (1993) *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*. London: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1997) *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Chatterjee, P. (1986) *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Chatterjee, P. (1993) *The Nation and its Fragments, Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

De Certeau, M. (1986) *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other* (trans. B. Massumi). Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Deleuze, G. (1983) *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Diamantouros N. (1983) 'Greek Political Culture in Transition', in R. Clogg (ed.) *Greece in the 1980s*, pp. 43–69. London: Macmillan.
Embassy of Greece (2004) 'Spectacular Opening Ceremony Celebrates Olympic Homecoming for the 2004 Athens Olympic Games', Washington, DC, 16 August. [Accessed 23 March 2005: http://www.greekembassy.org]
Fanon, F. (1967) *The Wretched of the Earth*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
Fanon, F. (1970) *Black Skins, White Masks*. London: Paladin.
Fuss, D. (1994) 'Interior Colonies: Frantz Fanon and the Politics of Identification', *Diacritics* 24(2–3): 20–42.
Gallant, T. (1997) 'Greek Exceptionalism and Contemporary Historiography: New Pitfalls and Old Debates', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 15(2): 209–16.
Gellner, E. (1983) *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
Gellner, E. (1994) *Encounters with Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
Gellner, E. (1996) 'Do Nations Have Navels?', *Nations and Nationalism* 2(3): 366–70.
Gilroy, P. (1987) *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*. London: Hutchinson.
Goffman, E. (1969) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
Gourgouris, S. (1992) 'Modern Greece in the "Third World"', *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 18: 99–112.
Gourgouris, S. (1996) *Dream Nation: Enlightenment, Colonisation and the Institution of Modern Greece*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
Greenwood, D.J. (1989) 'Culture by the Pound: An Anthropological Perspective on Tourism as Cultural Commoditisation', in V. Smith (ed.) *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*, pp. 171–86. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
Habermas, J. (1962) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Herzfeld, M. (1985) *The Poetics of Manhood: Contest and Identity in a Cretan Mountain Village*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Herzfeld, M. (1987) *Anthropology through the Looking-Glass: Critical Ethnography in the Margins of Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Herzfeld, M. (1997) *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State*. New York: Routledge.
Herzfeld, M. (2002a) 'Ethnographic Phenomenology of the Greek Spirit', in J. Revel and G. Levi (eds) *Political Uses of the Past: The Recent Mediterranean Experience*, pp. 13–26. London: Frank Cass.
Herzfeld, M. (2002b) 'The Absent Presence: Discourses of Crypto-Colonialism', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101(4): 899–926.
Inter-Public Group (2004) 'Interpublic Agencies Enjoy Unprecedented Success at Olympics', 1 September. [Accessed 22 March 2005: http://investors.interpublic.com]
Jack Morton Press Releases (2004) 'World's Most Ambitious Opening Ceremony Heralds Start of Athens Olympics', 13 August. [Accessed 22 March 2005: http://www.jackmorton.com/europe/press]
Kristeva, J. (1991) *Strangers to Ourselves* (trans. L.S. Roudiez). New York: Columbia University Press.

Lull, J. (2000) *Media, Communication, Culture: A Global Approach*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Official International Olympic Committee (2000) 'Athens Olympic Games Organization to be a Race Against Time' (25 August). [Accessed 2 July 2008: http://www.olympic.org/uk/news/media_centre/press_release_uk.asp?id=442]
Official International Olympic Committee (2001) 'IOC Praises Progress, Notes Slippage of Completion Dates for Some Sports Venues' (16 February). [Accessed 2 July 2008: http://www.olympic.org/uk/news/media_centre/press_release_uk.asp?id=440]
Price, S. (1993) *Media Studies*. London: Longman.
Ray, L. (2002) 'Crossing Borders? Sociology, Globalisation and Immobility', *Sociological Research Online* 7(3). [Accessed 4 October 2004: http://www.socresonline.org.uk/7/3/ray.html]
Sahlins, M. (1996) 'The Sadness of Sweetness: The Native Anthropology of Western Cosmology', *Current Anthropology* 37(3): 395–415.
Said, E. (1978) *Orientalism*. London: Penguin.
Shreberni-Mohammadi, A. (1991) 'The Global and the Local in International Communications', in J. Curran and M. Gurevitch (eds) *Mass Media and Society*, pp. 118–59. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
Skopetea, E. (1999) *Fallmerayer: Tricks of the Rival Fear*. Athens: Themelio.
Smith, A. (1981) *The Ethnic Revival in the Modern World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Smith, A. (1995) *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Thompson, J.B. (1995) *The Media and Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Tsoukalas, C. (1999) 'European Modernity and Greek National Identity', *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans* 1(1): 7–13.
Tzanelli, R. (2004) 'Giving Gifts (and Then Taking Them Back): Identity, Reciprocity and Symbolic Power in the Context of Athens 2004', *Journal of Cultural Research* 8(4): 425–46.
Žižek, S. (1999) *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Center of Political Ontology*. London: Vintage.

## Biographical note

Rodanthi Tzanelli is Lecturer in Sociology at the School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds. Her interests include the sociology of nationalism, the politics and ethics of culture industries and representations of deviancy, areas on which she has published in international journals such as *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *Sociology*, *Media Culture* and *Society and History of Human Sciences*. She is the author of *The Cinematic Tourist: Explorations in Globalization, Culture and Resistance* (Routledge, 2007). Her new book, *Nation-Building and the Dialogics of Reciprocity: Re-Visioning Identity in Europe*, is forthcoming in 2008 with Palgrave Macmillan. ADDRESS: School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT, UK. [email: r.tzanelli@leeds.ac.uk]