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THE POST-: THINKING DEPENDENCY

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Abstract: *Taking its conceptual cue from Fredric Jameson's "'Postmodernism. Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism'" and Jacques Derrida's essay "Racism's Last Word," this piece tries to think the post- at once in its dependence -- that is, in its relation to something other than itself (postmodernism, postcolonialism/post-colonialism, post-apartheid, post-Communist and so on) -- and as a thing in itself. Therein lies the difficulty, of course, the impossibility of wresting the post- out of its relation. To this end, this essay uses Jameson and Derrida to take up the difficulty of disarticulating the post- from its relation so that concepts such as postmodernism and post-apartheid figure critically but not, it is important to note, in such a fashion as to obscure entirely the "meaning" of the post- in its knotted, entangled singularity.*

Cast always in the role of prefix, the post-, of grammatical and conceptual necessity, never stands by itself. We know this from our routine encounters, scholarly and otherwise, with, to invoke only the most obvious, post-communist or post-Cold War (these two terms invite, of course, equivocation and debate, in no small measure because they cannot, although there are tendencies that favor this strategy, be reduced one to the other), post-apartheid, post-Reconstruction, postmodernism, post-colonialism¹ (or, postcolonialism, sans the hyphen, as some exponents might prefer). And the post- proliferates, into many forms, some of which turn on a singular figure – as in post-Mandela South Africa (especially acute in the anticipation of his passing) or post-Pinochet Chile (a more celebratory mode) – or some of which address a larger concern – such as post-Zionist, which raises the question of whether the state of Israel can become an unexceptional democracy. So much of our contemporary political discourse seems to be shaped by these various, and other, posts-. There are further developments in this regard, not the least of which is doubling of the post-. Already we can speak of the “post-postmodern,” as Jeffrey Nealon does in his book of the same title – *Post-Postmodernism: Or, The Cultural Logic of Just-In-Time*, a work inspired, of course, by Fredric Jameson’s

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¹ The history of the term “postcolonialism,” as regards its coherence, its subjects (to whom does the term apply?, when might it first be said to be applicable?, is everyone, in some form or other, postcolonial?), has been subjected to perhaps the greatest number of critiques. See, to cite just two examples, Ella Shohat’s “Notes on the ‘Post-Colonial’,” (*Social Text* 31/32) and David Chioni Moore’s “Is the Post- in the Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique,” *PMLA*, January 2001, Volume 116, Number 1. Shohat’s essay provides a key reference point for Moore’s argument.

Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late-Capitalism, one of the two texts central to this essay. The other is Jacques Derrida's "Racism's Last Word," a delineation of how to take up the many evocations (one cannot say "nuances") of the term "apartheid."

To engage the post-, it is conceptually necessary to assert – as the opening gesture – that the post- signals a relation to something. More succinctly phrased, the post- always marks a dependency on something. The post- marks a dependency on something other than itself so that every thinking of the post- must, of conceptual necessity, at once extend beyond the post- and return to it. Cognizant of the many debates spawned by terms such as postmodernism and postcolonialism, this essay – drawing on Jameson and Derrida – seeks to narrow the focus by attending to the post- as a concept in itself – to not be (too) sidetracked or distracted, difficult as this is, by what follows the hyphen. What kind of thinking resides in the post-? What does thinking the post- make possible? What conceptual ground does it open up? Appropriately, of course, the post- is conceptually self-interested so that it, apparently, refuses to yield itself as itself. The post- will not easily reveal itself as itself. Instead, it seems to make its possibilities visible only through dependency. To this end, the essay uses Jameson (postmodernism) and Derrida (through extending "racism's last word" to its successor, post-apartheid without forgoing the philosophical force of apartheid) in order to get at the crucial questions about the post-, although thinking through (its) dependency as appears to be a conceptual necessity, while attempting to keep as singular a focus on the post- as possible.

Dependency.

For whatever the philosophical connotations of the "post" as an ambiguous locus of continuities and discontinuities, its denotation of "after" – the teleological lure of the "post" – evokes a celebratory clearing of a conceptual space . . . (*Notes on the 'Post-Colonial' 39*)

Because of its constitutive dependency, the post- demands its own thinking, a thinking that may begin in or with the temporal, the moment, the era, (Shohat's denotative moment) "after," but that cannot be restricted to the chronological. And yet, because of its deeply chronological marking, the post- cannot escape the chronological. (In political terms, it is possible to say, the post- is nothing other than the – fullest – time of ideology itself, that moment when the ideology must be thought most assiduously even as it is being – technically – superseded but never, of course, superannuated. The post- enables us to know the political time, to understand the history of the time – an ongoing history of the present – we are addressing. The post- makes time familiar to us because the post- might very well stand as the pure, coagulated, massively overdetermined time of the political.)² Simultaneously, however, thinking the post- must proceed conceptually, framed by a series of questions: what is the post-? What is inscribed in it? What does that

² I owe this understanding of the chronology, what we may conceive as the "pure time of the post-" (granting that such a conception might, in the first place, be possible), to a question posed at a conference on dependency held in Wrocław, Poland, by Bogdan Ștefănescu.

inscription mean? And, if the post- is to be approached as the project of writing political dependence and difference, Shohat's "ambiguous locus of continuities and discontinuities," then it must needs be of an ongoing nature. Every encounter with the post- as a "concept," demands, as Jameson insists in *Postmodernism*, that command of the concept "comes at the end, and not the beginning, of our discussions of it."³ It is only possible to arrive at some comprehension of the post- by thinking our way – via the divergences of dependency, the thick inscrutability of the thing – toward, by trying, impossibly, to think (only) for the post-.

Since the post- is dependent, its meaning is derivative and, as such, the post- is, a priori, in a struggle against itself. Jameson makes this clear in his delineation of postmodernism: "Postmodernism, postmodern consciousness, may then amount to not much more than theorizing its own condition of possibility, which consists primarily in the sheer enumeration of changes and modifications" (Jameson, ix). The post-, then, constitutes its own dialogical – it can only account for itself by explicating, within its own conceptual framework, its "own condition of possibility." In order, following Jameson, to "theorize itself," the post- must construct itself as that conceptual space in which thinking the thing itself, its relation to, its dependence on, its derivation from what it is not, what it follows, is the first order of business. The post- must account for the difference that made it, named as the preponderance of "changes and modifications."⁴ For Jameson, these transformations amount to nothing other than history: "It is safest to grasp the concept of the postmodern as an attempt to think the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically" (Jameson, ix). How does one "think historically?" Do we begin by prosecuting the "changes and modifications" that distinguish one age from another? In any case, what process has brought about such a state as the present one, an age that has "forgotten how to think historically?" More tantalizingly, what have these new postmodern conditions, where it is necessary to teach the thinking of history, made possible?⁵

Most important, perhaps, is the recognition that in the designation "post-" is lodged the determination to signal that something, something significant, has – is – taking place. "Changes and modifications" (the fall of the Berlin Wall; a single protester confronting a tank in Tiananmen Square in June 1989; "the dissolution of

³ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1991, xxii.

⁴ Shohat has a similar name for this tendency: "the relationship of difference and sameness, rupture and continuity" (Shohat, "Notes," 104).

⁵ It is, of course, impossible to hear Jameson's invocation – his call to think historically – without understanding his work (and Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International*) as a response to Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and The Last Man*. Jameson and Derrida, each in their own, turn to Marx in order to refute Fukuyama's claims that, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, history has come to an end – the triumph of capital. Derrida addresses this state of affairs directly in *Specters of Marx* while Jameson gives the condition of late-capital the full treatment in *Postmodernism*.

the Soviet Union”⁶ – all critical to Jameson’s and Derrida’s thinking) do not occur by themselves. They are the work of a history, fundamental changes, that produces the post-. They are history; they are the post-’s history. The post- is forged in the process through which things change; at the very least, the post- is a sure sign that things will no longer be as they were, that history is being made – to phrase the matter colloquially. And yet, as Jameson is at pains to point out, this is the dialogic of the post-: the post- commands its own peculiar dialogic: things remain almost as they were.

It is in the inability to delineate fully this interplay, if you will, between how things ostensibly change and how they remain, in an obdurate, dissembling fashion, the same, that Shohat’s work on the postcolonial falls conceptually short. While she acknowledges the ambiguity inherent in the “continuities and discontinuities” and gestures toward “difference and sameness, rupture and continuity,” Shohat cannot quite manage, as Jameson does, to argue for difference even when there is, on the face of it, no difference to be detected. Jameson is much more intrigued by how the putative lack of difference demands, as we will see shortly, a precise accounting for difference.

Because things appear to be the same, or, not different enough, the post- is the event that does not quite fulfill the terms of the (Badiouean) event.⁷ After all, the event changes everything – if not immediately, then certainly in its supplementarity. In terms of the post- everything is changed but things appear recognizably the same. Or, the force of the “thing” (the moment or mode that precedes the post-) is such that the force of the residual, that which was and continues to be, makes the post-eminently recognizable – as something resembling something else. Or, the thing is just recognizable as itself in the post-. This force of indistinction, the (“superficial”) lack of difference, is precisely Jameson’s point about the difference between modernism and postmodernism. This is a difference that sometimes strikes one as no difference at all. Thus, the attribution of difference is always a precarious exercise. Even if there is, ostensibly, no difference, there is still a difference. And the name of that difference, as has already been hinted and as Jameson makes clear in *Postmodernism*, is history.

The “Last Word” is Never the Last Word.

This name apart will have, therefore, a unique, sinister renown.

Jacques Derrida, *Racism’s Last Word*

The post- invokes, carries in its very name, in its every utterance, something fundamentally constitutive – and, something, it must be said, fundamentally residual

⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International*, translated by Peggy Kamuf, New York: Routledge, 1994, vii.

⁷ In his work on the event, Alain Badiou argues, as we are well aware, that the event is only knowable in its supplementarity. We come to know the event in its having passed, in its supplementary manifestations, if you will.

and old.⁸ In these, the difficult days of the post-apartheid state (which, it can be argued, began even before the inauguration of the post-apartheid state so it is already familiar, and possibly even old), it is worth recalling Derrida's critique of the apartheid state. Reflecting upon the anti-apartheid art exhibition which is the focus of his essay "Racism's Last Word," Derrida offers something akin to a promise. The exhibition, he promises, "will not only keep the archival record of a failure or a despair but continue to *say* something, something that can be heard today, in the present" (original emphasis).⁹ Derrida's "something," for all or perhaps because of its apparent imprecision, is politically evocative. Derrida's "something," "something" that obtains with a "unique, sinister renown," is audible (its resonances are distinct, arresting, drawing us toward thought); it speaks to, always with the force of the interrogative, the post-apartheid state. This "something" makes us listen more closely, more critically, to the timbres that echo from the politics of the post-apartheid state. Or, we can go so far as to say it indicts the post-apartheid state even before the founding of the post-apartheid state. That is the unspeakable, fearsome promise, the critique of the present (articulated before the present so that the present belongs before itself to history) has a potential afterlife, contained in Derrida's underscored "say" (we must heed it: we must attend to what can be said, to what is being said when it is said). Something of significance is being said; it is imperative that we listen if for no other reason than it "manifests the lowest extreme of racism" (Derrida 292).

What does the thing itself, apartheid, say that will outlive apartheid, that "can be heard today?" What will the thing that was indicted come back to say to us "in the present?" That something, that which came before the post-, will clearly, audibly, reaching back across itself, and, of course, deep into itself, make the "archival record of failure or despair" a thing for contemplation. There is always, as we already know (we know it because we must speak it, we must give the name another life, the name that comes phonetically after but conceptually before – post-apartheid) another name in the post-, that name which at once haunts and constitutes it, something that Derrida only partially anticipates in his opposition to apartheid. "Confined and abandoned then to this silence of memory," Derrida writes, "the name will resonate all by itself, reduced to the status of a term in disuse. The thing it names will no longer be" (Derrida, 291). In one regard Derrida is correct: the "name will resonate all by itself." And, its resonance will not be hollow. It will reverberate through disarticulation: the "thing it names is no longer" and yet it is, (something) other than itself but as felicitous to itself as it can be under the sign of the post-. The thing achieves a post ipso facto "sovereignty" (or, it may simply be a recognizability) through its ability to live in the name of the post- but apart from it.

⁸ Moore's point is precisely this: that postcolonialism, in one form or another, is an "old" phenomenon. His project, however, is to argue for its extension onto the new (national, regional) formations that emerge out of the post-Soviet era – and area, of course. Moore wants us to think about the Baltic states, the Caucasus, Central and Eastern Europe in a postcolonial fashion.

⁹ Jacques Derrida, "Racism's Last Word," *Critical Inquiry* 12, Autumn 1985, 293.

Apartheid has survived in, as, or through its (amended) name. The name that will “no longer be” is distinct and audible in its new articulation: “post-apartheid.” There is nothing hollow or insubstantial about this resonance. It is, rather, purely historic. Or, it is particularly historic, possessed as it is of its peculiar “renown.”

That is the force of apartheid, a force against which the post- has no effective defense. Apartheid speaks. It speaks today, in the “lowest” register of racism. It says something, about racism, about history, about discrimination and injustice to us, to all of us. That is why apartheid is the most untranslatable word that demands, without end, its infinite, endless translation. Every society fears that moment when it finds itself pressed to provide an equivalent, never equal, term. How does one translate the “lowest extreme of racism?” Every society, as Jimmy Carter’s use of the term in the title of his book *Peace, Not Apartheid* makes clear, stands poised – in the moment of crisis, that is, in the face of its own injustices, discrimination, inequity – to invoke the term, to translate it into a contemporary usage for its purposes. (Carter is calling for historic redress for the Palestinians and apartheid is the term that, economically and historically, more effectively than any other, enables him to make his critique.)¹⁰

Audible in every translation is, of course, the word itself: “apartheid,” no matter the pronunciation, the guttural inflection, those hard Afrikaans diphthongs, most notably “-gh,”¹¹ the audibility of “-heid” as “hate” (does this syllable need any translation?), ominously, eerily accurate and evocative, possesses its own resolute life. To hear “-heid” as “hate,” in any language (?), is to know, always, the indictment and denunciation contained in the “lowest extreme in racism.”

Apartheid is dead, long live apartheid – infinite is its usage, always historically alive. No society wants to be open to such a translation, to be subject to such an indictment. Derrida’s last word in racism is the charge to be most avoided. “Post-apartheid,” on the other hand, has no such resonance, induces no such fear, nor, we should acknowledge, does it inspire any such thinking – about redress, racism, historic inequity. “Post-apartheid” has no equivalent political purchase. Extended through hyphenation, the protracted thing (post-apartheid) – here Derrida is right – falls into “disuse.” In becoming post-, apartheid loses its un-translatability and in so doing it loses its political efficacy. But, never, of course, without retaining its capacity to haunt all political discourse because apartheid remains uncannily evocative; it always regains its interdictory force in the moments least expected. Who knows when “apartheid” will rear its head again? When it will return to its un-

¹⁰ The un-translatability of apartheid functions, we might say, in a way that is both in contradistinction to and evocative of the word “führen” (“lead”) in Germany. Because of the historic denotations of the word, its coagulation into a singular figure who made a proper noun of it (“Führer”), it is almost impossible to speak about – in German society – the nation’s ability to take the lead in organizations such as the European Union, in which Germany is the leading member (in terms that extend well beyond its fiscal wealth), and which is central to its place in the world. It is, of course, possible to speak of apartheid but it is never possible to speak the word without the shadow of racially-inflected indictment.

¹¹ In this regard, see the conversation on the poetic harshness of the Afrikaans language between “John” and his cousin in J.M. Coetzee’s novel *Summertime*.

translatable self? Or, for that matter, where it will enunciate itself, so forcefully as to overwhelm the term post-apartheid?

Apartheid's un-translatable force is that it demands, time and again, that it be fitted for the particulars of the occasion. And every time the term is invoked, it is the indictment that brings the full weight of the racist South African situation to bear – technically, from 1948 to 1990, but that is to indulge in the chronological, hardly the way to think apartheid because it both precedes 1948 and goes beyond 1990. The practices of South Africa's white minority are audible in every evocation. Apartheid lives infinitely beyond itself, in excess of itself; it at once outlives itself as much as it lives as something other than itself; it lives as something in the post- in which the condition of apartheid is all too discernible. This condition simultaneously reverses and animates Derrida's position when he argues that the exhibition "commemorates in anticipation – not its own event but the one that it calls forth" (Derrida 293). The exhibition seeks to "call forth" the end of apartheid but it also, because of what the post-apartheid condition is not (where "failure and despair" have assumed new political guises in which race is configured entirely differently, in which yet another "postcolonial" elite has revealed itself to be a national bourgeoisie of the variety indicted by Frantz Fanon), "calls forth" the event that has not lived up to its promise. The "commemoration in anticipation" did not anticipate that "its own event" would "call forth" so resonantly the ways in which post-apartheid South Africa would demand the event of its own undoing. In order for historically disenfranchised South Africans to achieve equality and justice in post-apartheid South Africa, they must undo the black-dominated ("their" representatives) post-apartheid regime. Drawing upon Henri Lefebvre, Jameson ruefully goes along with the notion that "history has worked this way . . . by way of catastrophe and disaster" (Jameson xi). It is precisely the omnipresence of "catastrophe and disaster" that makes the "calling forth" of the thing itself so ominous, so unsettling, and yet so eminently thinkable. History, as it were, prepares us for itself. The road to history runs only along the rutted tracks of history, battered as these tracks are with the debris of "catastrophe and disaster." Their names are familiar to us: postcolonial elites the world over, post-Communist apparatchiks who learned quickly how not to relinquish power by re-making (or, not) themselves (as democrats or avowed post-Communists), the post-apartheid regime.

The Dialogic of the Post-: The Argument Within

Apartheid's resonance also makes audible what is distinct about the post-. The post- is an argument against itself, a fraternal disagreement between the thing it is and the thing that succeeds it; or, phrased dialogically, the post- is an argument within itself. This is an argument, against its (own) secondariness (it is what comes after; it is always in dependency), that the post- cannot hope to win. Still, in its better enunciation, the post- constitutes a crucial political commitment. In formations such as post-apartheid South Africa or post-dictatorial Chile or post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe, there is in the post- the commitment to the search for truth, justice, reconciliation or democracy (the end of totalitarianism). In this way, the post- is nothing less than the mandate to redress the severe political

lacks (injustices) of its predecessor. The post-, in these terms, is the writing for, the writing of a promise: it inscribes a political ambition, a desire for what was not. Often, the post- is the only political hope available and as such it is made to bear a considerable political burden. As we well know, there are few political moments more hopeful – or idealistic (and necessary) – than the post- in its initial articulation. As such, imbued as it is with these new horizons, the post- takes on the memorable political name of “Commission.” This is a structure designed to achieve the nation’s new political goals, to address – by producing a political praxis – the failures of the past in the present. That is the work assigned to the “Commission.” Among the instances of these political projects there are the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (South Africa), the National Truth and Justice Commission (Haiti), and the National Truth Commission (Mauritius), to mention just three.

As a political instrument of the post-, the commission is charged with a historic responsibility. It is asked to bring to life, to bring into being, that which is not yet, that which must be wrested out of failure and despair. All the while, of course, fully aware that the something – that force of disruption – continues to reside resolutely, stubbornly, in both the thing itself and the post-; here we are confronted with the Jamesonian difficulty of trying to distinguish between the thing itself and the post-, or, at the very least, to distinguish the something in the post-. The work of the post-, then, is nothing less than the superannuation of the thing itself – an impossible (ontological) necessity in order for the thing to become itself.

The only way in which to dialogically think the thing itself and the post-, as Jameson insists, to apprehend both historically.¹² The thing must be thought in relation to what it becomes, more often than not against its historical will. Apartheid, except for the black majority and committed white activists (notable exceptions, both), does not want to become post-apartheid; antebellum America, apart from the slaves and a handful of abolitionists (again, critical exceptions), does not want to become Reconstructionist America. (In many cases, of course, the failed promise of Reconstruction rendered former slaves no more masters and mistresses of their own fate than they had been during the antebellum period. It would take the Civil Rights movement to realize that promise and there are still places in the US today – not restricted to the South by any means – where the effects of both Reconstruction and the Civil Rights campaign have not registered fully.) The thing is stubbornly felicitous to itself, which is why it, and its history, demand nothing less than a violent confrontation. It is the post-, then, in its very designation, in its every iteration, that calls upon us to think all presents historically. Now always, however, attendant to the Jamesonian question of whether or not the present, this present, has “forgotten how to think historically” about all posts-, to think the post-within the dia-logic of dependency.

In this way it becomes possible to understand that the post- constitutes, in and because of itself, a struggle with the present. Writing toward the postapartheid,

¹² Jameson seeks to address this conundrum through what he names “identity and difference.”

Derrida is inherently aware of the “constraints” of the present: “it is necessary to appeal unconditionally to the future of another law and another force lying beyond the totality of this present” (Derrida 298). That is what the post- always inscribes: the desire for a present beyond permanent hyphenation. That is, a desire for its own history. The post- has no proper place since it can only putatively or nominally – and therefore precariously, drawing itself into question yet again – mark beginning or end. The post- is neither the alpha nor the omega in part because it is always subject to another beginning and yet it lives under the threat of imminent disclosure – it is always proximate to, it always promises, in its name, both beginning and end. The possibility of an end, of course, threatens the very being of the post-. There is, in this way, always something already dead – something passing, or maybe even past – about the post-; the post- contains within itself the broken promise of something else (that something that came before) and, critically, something that is already dead.

No wonder then that there is something profoundly uncertain about the post-. It is haunted by what it is, what it is not and what it will never be. It cannot be as it is because it is, to coin a phrase, an orphan of history. And, like all historical orphans, the post- has no proper name, nor, apparently, any claim to such a name. Its name is imposed (chronologically and conceptually) upon it; its being begins with, and so depends entirely upon, the suffix. The post- is the most enduring, resilient name for lack: for what (it) is not. Or, more properly phrased, what it is not stands in sharp contradistinction against that which it is – or was, and now, in some hauntology or other, remains constitutive of it, the “thing,” Derrida’s “something.” Because of what it is (which is almost indistinguishable from what it is not), the post- inscribes itself, writes itself, relies on itself, as the threat to exceed, undo, surpass, that which was. It does so in search of, we presume, its own proper name. (What else could it be?) The post- seeks the name, a name, that it can give itself – or, preferably, take for itself. In that search (here Jameson’s notion of “identity and difference” resonates), the post-, again, gives us pause to think.

To think that which is and that which is strained toward – to think toward, in the direction of, the name. The post- reaches for that which is beyond itself in order, we recognize, to be itself. To think that which is and that which is strained toward – to think toward, in the direction of, the name, that name that marks it as distinct, as itself, for itself, not merely that which comes after, full of the thing’s residue, burdened by an identity imposed upon it. In order to be itself, to come into itself, to present itself as itself, the post- reaches for that which is beyond itself. Lurking within this conundrum is, of course, the existentialist question: to be what? After all, a name is not equivalent to an identity, to a conceptual sovereignty. Furthermore, “To be” is always, as all students of Shakespeare know, the question bequeathed to us by literature; it is the question above all others. It is a princely question, the memorable core of this most arresting of Hamlet’s soliloquys. It is, moreover, the question that indicts the young intellectual: what does it mean to be when one bears, is overdetermined by, the name that seems impossible to fully inhabit because it is a name with its own history? The name, “Hamlet,” is nothing less than a royal precedent – it is the prince’s heritage. Since he cannot be (as his

father was, the king) Hamlet (what is the prince to the king? Heir? Threat? Progenitor?), we might conjecture, can the prince be someone, something, else? How does one live, a question known to many heirs, with the burden of a historic name? As the prince seems to know (surrounded as he is by foreboding, surrounded as he is by his father's usurper), the post- signals that something has changed, however difficult it is to identify exactly what that something is. Like Hamlet, the post- is itself the recognition that some kind of transformation is, as it were, afoot; in the post- it is always afoot.

The post- marks the strange, unsettling desire for sovereignty of that condition which is not yet, which, it imagines, is to come. Or, differently phrased, for what the present will – wants to – become. The post- is the present's quest for the proper name of that which supplants – emphatically takes the place of – the post-. This condition provokes its own questions: what will be the proper name that replaces the post-? Is it possible for the post- to acquire its own name? Can such a proper name ever come into being? An unforgettable proper name? A proper name to call one's own (is this Hamlet's deepest wish, to have his "own" name, to disassociate from his father)? Are we to live forever under this uncertainty? And yet, the post- seems to cast a shadow that, while retaining an ominous patina, is philosophically life-giving, life-sustaining. The post- nurtures, makes thinking, historical narrativizing, possible. The post-, the pure time of the political, is that time in history that is signaled – inaugurated – by the hyphen: -. The post- is that infinite, infinitely fillable time that recalls Benjamin's empty homogeneous time that is neither empty nor homogeneous – as Jameson so carefully deliberates – and yet never without such a prospect.

The post- points to a time that is open, that has been opened up by the post-itself, a time that closes down, always – in both instances – incompletely. The post-always has to do with something that it is and is not. The post- appropriates (culture, in postmodernism's case; the perpetuation of structural inequity through the creation of a new old form of racial elites, as much the case in post-apartheid South Africa as it is in the old Soviet bloc. Putin's seemingly interminable reign makes this eminently, autocratically, visible as the old KGB agent cozies up to, among other previously unlikely allies, the Orthodox Church) incompletely; it is, of course, also appropriated into something; it appropriates the something it is not but that it alludes to (that which, provocatively argued, makes it) into something that it never truly itself is. The post- engenders its constitutive incompleteness because it eschews any notion that even remotely invokes "authenticity." In this way, the post- is a particular form of the limit: that form that invites its own undoing, and remaking, so that the post- is inherently autoimmune.

Only the post- can, finally, undo the post-. The post- keeps the name of the past alive in itself so that the post- is always a shadowy death – it bears within itself the autoimmune prospect of undoing itself. In every proper political name, there lies an incipient post-. The post- is its own best friend; the post- is its own worst enemy. Nothing is as dependent as the post-; nothing is as conceptually opposed to the post-as the post-. No wonder then that the post- gives us to thinking because the post- is always in the process, dialogically, of course, of thinking itself. In this way,

dependency is but another name, perhaps the proper name, for the ways in which the post- draws us to thinking our dependency on the history we are making, on the history we are, like Hamlet, heir to, of the world – beyond dependency – the post- strives to make possible, seeks to bring into view. Regarded in this light, what could be more dialogical, more conceptually generative, more thought-provoking, than dependency? It is only by taking up the issue of post- dependency that something conceptually critical becomes visible: it the post- that can make possible, in a(n expansive) single gesture, the simultaneous thinking of postmodernity, post-communist Central and Eastern Europe and (the catastrophic history of the present that is) post-apartheid South Africa. It is no small invitation to thinking, then, that every post- opens up onto every other post-. In more ways than one, the post- never stands by itself.

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