National and Post-national Dynamics in the Olympic Design: The Case of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games

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> We need to think ourselves beyond the nation. This ... is to suggest that the role of intellectual [and design] practices is to identify the current crisis of the nation and in identifying it to provide part of the apparatus of recognition for post-national social forms.
> –Arjun Appardurai, *Modernity at Large*[1]

Following Arjun Appadurai's call, this paper will attempt to pinpoint the "crisis of the nation" as revealed in the representation of a "new Greece"[2] at the 2004 Athens Olympic Games. Taking as a case study Santiago Calatrava's design of the Athens Olympic Stadium (Figure 1) and its use during the opening and closing ceremonies of the Games, I will examine questions of selfhood, otherness, and national identity in contemporary Greece as a means of proposing that alternative types of allegiances must be envisaged. As has been the case with most modern Olympic Games, Athens 2004 was conceived as a national rather than a civic event. The redesign of national identity was a conscious goal of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games organizers, who saw the Olympics as an opportunity to brand the look of a "New Greece." The aim of the organizers was to overhaul the country's outdated image as a nation caught between a glorious antiquity and technological backwardness, as well as convince the international community of Greece's modernity and Europeanization in both cultural and economic terms. The image of a "new Greece," it was thought, would stimulate new foreign and domestic investments and increase the country's prestige.

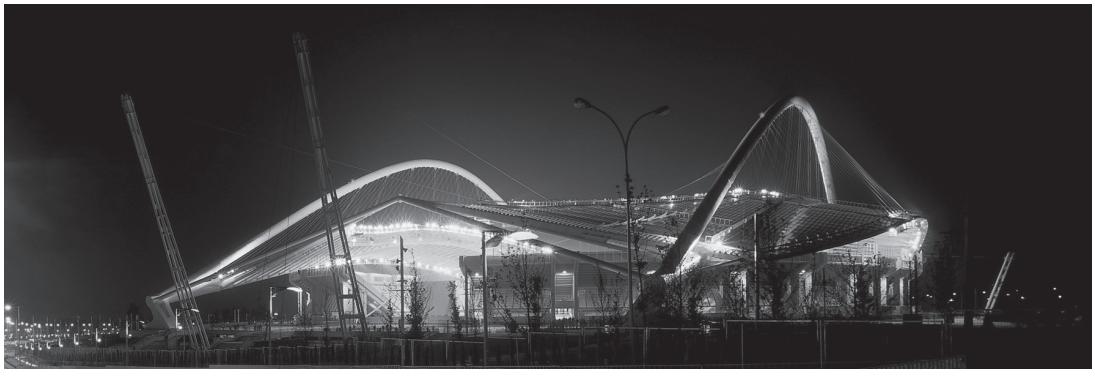

Figure 1
Athens Olympic Stadium designed by Santiago Calatrava, 2004, © Erieta Attali.

The very size and complexity of the Olympics, however, necessarily led to meanings and ideologies that the organizers could hardly predict or control. National identities are not always clear-cut: What happens when they are layered, disputed, or negated? Drawing upon Saskia Sassen's thesis on the unbinding of subjectivities in the global city, I will claim that a similar unbinding and reworking of identities is latent in the Olympic Games, even though such operations occur on a limited basis and in a non-prescriptive manner. Sassen writes:

> The global city is reconfigured as a partly denationalized space that enables a partial reinvention of citizenship. This reinvention takes the institution away from questions of nationality narrowly defined, and towards the enactment of a large array of particular interests.… I interpret this as a move towards citizenship practices that revolve around claiming rights to the city.… In global cities, these practices also contain the possibility of directly engaging strategic forms of power, a fact I interpret as significant in a context where power is increasingly privatized, globalized, and elusive.[3]

Finally, as an antidote both to the employment of design in ethnic "branding" and the insurgence of nationalism witnessed increasingly in recent years, I will claim that both intellectuals and designers should strive for a serious and committed engagement with what constitutes the category of the "other," as a means of questioning the myth of the nation-state and developing post-national forms of allegiance.

Despite the fact that they are awarded to cities rather than nations, the Olympics function as arenas that celebrate national character, subsuming under it individual or other achievements. Competition usually is inseparable from such celebrations. Indeed, nations see the Olympics as opportunities to exhibit their achievements in the international spotlight, often in contest with one another. This strong relation between the Olympics and nationalism is historically grounded. The very institution of the modern Olympics (together with other international gatherings, such as world expositions) was reinvented in the nineteenth century, a period coinciding with the dawn of the nation-state. According to the constitution of the Olympic Games as defined by their founder, Pierre Frédy, Baron de Coubertin, national attachment is at the heart of the concept of the games. Besides expressing human kindness and peaceful internationalism, most Olympic Games are anchored quite specifically to the nation that hosts them. Theorists of Olympic studies, such as Jackie Hogan, see the Olympic Games as "key sites in the discursive construction of nation" and as major representations that "constitute discourses of national identity"[4]—or what Stuart Hall has called the "narrative of nation"; that is, "a set of stories, images,

landscapes, scenarios, historical events, national symbols, and rituals which represent the shared experiences, sorrows, and triumphs and disasters which give meaning to the nation."[5] In recent times, massive demographic changes and globalization have challenged the relevance of the nation-state as a dominant political model, leading to the search for new political forms that can better respond to such conditions. If national identity derives from belonging to a "people," then according to Dierdre Curtin, a professor of European and international law at the University of Utrecht, the "post-national idea is premised precisely on the separation of politics and culture, of nationality and citizenship," and presupposes that national (cultural) plurality can coexist alongside political unity.[6] The post-national obtains even greater urgency in Europe today with the process of European integration and the overall crisis of identity occasioned by large numbers of non-European immigrants and residents, especially those who are non-Christian. Today, almost every country in Europe is experiencing a crisis of identity in light of its numerous newcomers. This situation has led to various forms of conflict ranging from cultural tension to incidents of hostility and violence between "insiders"—citizens—and "outsiders" or "newcomers."[7] As an alternative to denying the processes of cultural heterogeneity and allowing ethnicity-based antagonisms to grow, geographer Ash Amin suggests that one option would be to "recognize the coming Europe of plural and hybrid cultures … and seek to develop an imaginary of becoming European through engagement with the stranger in ways that imply no threat to tradition and cultural autonomy."[8]

The Olympic Games clearly are capable of illuminating these entangled networks that expand far beyond the politics of a given place, whether that place is the host nation or a specific participant country. As cultural artifacts embedded in the societies that produce them as well as in those distant societies that become their consumers or, potentially, their judges, the Games are open to the diverse interpretations of their audiences and constituents. Citizens' involvement in the Olympic preparations, through volunteerism and public debates, often extends beyond the control of the officials and strengthens the premises of civil society, leading to criticism of or even resistance to the plans of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Thus, the Olympic Games, precisely because of the major public attention they attract, become arenas open to what media theorist Daniel Dayan calls "hijacking."[9] The Olympics are constantly being, or threatening to become, "hijacked" by a wide range of agents: local and global markets, governments, celebrities, activists, terrorists. As a result, the games fluctuate between becoming nationalistic and, at the same time, denationalized.

It is important to point out that Greece follows the "ethnic" rather than the "civic" model of citizenship; privileging ideas of nationhood that are centered on the belief in an archaic past uninterruptedly embodied in the present. Within this view of nationhood

as pure, continuous, and insular, "otherness" is reluctantly accepted, since "ideal" citizens are primarily those who partake in the national culture through continuous blood relationships. This deeply imbued idea of modern Greece's descent from antiquity has prevailed throughout the country's recent history, and is a major hindrance to the function of a constitutional regime based on citizens' equality. Minority identities, such as those of nonethnic Greek and non–Greek Orthodox populations, continue to be marginalized and excluded from the national narrative.

The following sections critically analyze two specific examples of design in the Athens 2004 Olympics. In the first case, by examining Calatrava's design for the new Olympic Center under the rubric of Europeanization, I question Greece's desire for "alterity" as a means of achieving "newness." In the second, I discuss the use of the Calatrava stadium for the opening and closing ceremonies of the Athens Games, and question the nature of inclusion: Who constitutes the nation, and what alliances and constellations emerge out of this mental territory in both its historical and geographical definition?

From Hellenism to Europeanism: Layers of Selfhood and Otherness Reflected by Santiago Calatrava's Redesign of the Olympic Center

It is significant that the design of the Olympic Athletic Center, the major landmark of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games, was awarded to the Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava, who was educated in Switzerland and has furnished major European cities with his work. Inviting an internationally renowned architect to design a national landmark has become a norm in contemporary times. In the case of Greece, one might ask, does the engagement of a non-Greek architect to design a building of national significance indicate that Greece has moved away from an ethnocentric conception of selfhood?

Calatrava's project was intended to "unite aesthetically"[10] the existing Olympic Athletic Complex through a series of building renovations and new constructions. The most important was the construction of a roof that became known as the "Calatrava roof," which was an addition to the existing stadium, and the landscaping of the surrounding Olympic park.[11] The project, both in its plan and morphology, is dominated by the shape of an arch, which Calatrava explained as an athletic metaphor: "like the way an athlete throws the javelin, or a long jumper jumps."[12] Following local criticism that the work was inappropriate within the landscape of Attica, however, Calatrava changed his rhetoric, describing the work in terms of Greece's architectural legacy. He referenced the Acropolis of Athens and the Byzantine church Aghia Sophia to convince the public that his project was continuous with the Greek tradition. The way in which the choice of color for Calatrava's roof was explained to the public also is indicative of such intentions. Calatrava initially announced that the roof glass would be tinted blue in homage to the

color of the Greek sky and sea. In subsequent interviews, Calatrava pushed his argument even further, interpreting his choice of colors as a direct reference to the Greek flag, thus providing his work with strong nationalistic nuances.[13] Yet despite these explanations, Calatrava's architectural language has almost always been based on arched forms, an approach that he applies worldwide, regardless of regional architectural languages. Calatrava's attempts to relate his architecture to Greek heritage and grand nationalist ideals are not uncommon. The need to feed the public such references is typical of nations based on romantic myths of purity and uniqueness. For example, Kenzo Tange's National Gymnasium for Tokyo's 1964 Olympics has been characterized as "a national shrine … a modern equivalent of Ise,"[14] Japan's sacred shrine, whose status is analogous to that of the Parthenon in Greece.

Despite Calatrava's explanations, the Greek public did not unanimously accept the building as its own. Many critics believed the scale of the Olympic stadium roof was inappropriate and out of proportion to the Attica landscape. The well-known film director Nikos Koundouros, for instance, described Calatrava's roof as completely extraneous to Athens:

> Whatever happens around us is not ours. The forged Olympic Games are not ours either. Calatrava and the monster he planted in Attica land are alien. And the other monster [a surveillance zeppelin (author's explanation)] that wanders in our sky is also alien.[15]

For others, the scale and expenditure of the work reflected Greece's obedience to the rules of globalization:

> Nowadays, all public works … obey the rule of gigantization, constructing various ziggurats, with the help of high-technology and postmodern aesthetics. This is the building of globalization that aims at … monumentalizing the unmatched magnitude of money.[16]

These voices were part of a broader discourse focused on fears that globalization would weaken Greek identity; and they were symptomatic of an increasing xenophobia that may be attributed to the growing influx of immigrants to the country since the early 1990s. But to what degree was Calatrava a foreigner to Greece? Is it true that his building carried a Spanish stamp, as was declared by a local journalist,[17] or that his project was the result of an "alien" invasion in Athens? It is no coincidence that Calatrava was presented to the Greek public not as a stranger, but rather as a fellow Mediterranean; a strategy that established a secondary level of discourse that emphasized affiliations with the broader geographic region. Modern Greek citizens, despite their competition with Spain for tourism, have been indoctrinated with ideas of geocultural determinism for more than a century, and the belief that Greeks share a common

Mediterranean temperament with Spain is quite well established. As Calatrava himself declared after the work was completed:

> There was a prejudice that the Greeks couldn't get this done.... My attitude was that they're fellow-Mediterraneans so there wouldn't be a real problem.... So I told everyone we'd finish in time.[18]

The invitation to a Spaniard was not surprising given Barcelona's success in hosting the 1992 Olympics. Greek organizers mentioned several times that Barcelona served as the model for Athens 2004 because of the City's symbolic and physical rejuvenation after the 1992 Olympic Games.

Presented as a modest student of "Greekness," linked to the Greeks though his Mediterranean affiliation but also as a connoisseur of European culture, Calatrava appeared as an architect whose work manifested both symbolic values and technical excellence. If the references to Greekness in the design of the roof confirmed New Greece's continuity with its past, the design of the surrounding Olympic park embodied Europeanization, hinting to the ideal future to which many Greek citizens aspire. The Olympic park was envisioned as a place for both Athens residents and visitors—an open, 100-hectare space accessible only to pedestrians, which included 2,500 new large trees, 8,500 smaller trees, and 160,000 bushes. The park is markedly different from the conventional public spaces of Athens, which typically lack greenery and are criticized by many Athenians as degrading and uncivil.

Most important, beyond cultivating greenery, Calatrava also wished to nurture new public attitudes in the city:

> In my opinion the Olympic Athletic Complex is a tool in Athens, a space for education and creation. And at the same time it is a constant forum. It brings to the city a space of dialogue, which is very important not only for the Maroussi district [where the park is located] and the northern suburbs.[19]

For Calatrava, the park was symbolic of "universalism," an ideal that he wished to see take root in the City of Athens beyond the end of the Olympics:

> Athens chose to show a work that is almost experimental, avant-garde and modern … and through this choice … the element of multiculturalism and universalism emerged, which is one of the most attractive elements of architecture. What I like very much is that this work has been made by Greeks, Italians, Spanish, Chinese people, Poles.[20]

To no surprise, Calatrava's commission within the context of an overall political scheme was intended to foster Greece's Europeanization process. Calatrava's origin and identity as a

European was instrumental. "Intended Europeanization" (in other words, modernization)[21] was an obvious priority for the Simitis (Pasok) administration, which was responsible for the major portion of the Olympic preparations and oversaw the successful inclusion of Greece in the European Monetary Union, or Eurozone, in 2001. In architectural and urban terms, this Greek idea of Europeanization combines rationalism and beautification in an attempt to counterbalance the disorder of the typical Greek city. The Olympics introduced to Athens the aesthetic unification of a disordered site, the advanced technology used in its buildings, and the very idea of a park—all marks of Europeanization. On the other hand, the choice of indigenous vegetation and the referential framework of Greek architectural heritage represented a renewed, branded version of particularism, embedded within the overall framework of modernization. Here, the old idea of European supremacy and political fragmentation peacefully coincides with the ideology of a new (in market terms only), economically unified Europe to which Greece belongs without compromising its ethnic purity.

Calatrava's mention of multiculturalism is at the very least contradictory, if not misleading, within the old idea of Europe. If multiculturalism is based on the principle of equality among different cultures, Calatrava's interpretation of universalism seems to be based on a Euro-centered notion of universalism; tied to the Enlightenment notions of civilization and progress, and a belief in Europe's superiority over the rest of the world. Calatrava, in his various statements, seemed to be content with the involvement of individuals of many different nationalities in the construction of the Olympic works, yet participation among them was not equitable. The unique 10-cm-thick steel used for the Olympic stadium roof was made in Germany; its large tubular members (3.6 meters in diameter), prior to final welding in Athens, were manufactured by the Italian company Cimolai; supervision of the overall construction was undertaken by various Greek contractors; and the actual laborers were immigrants of various ethnicities, mainly from the Middle East and the Balkans. This "multiculturalism," then, implies certain geopolitical hierarchies and remains an unresolved issue in contemporary identity politics in both Greece and Europe. The Olympic project, in terms of both its symbolic value and its construction process, reconfirms majority tendencies in contemporary Europe that tend to be highly exclusive of the many non–European cultures that now exist in the region as a result of the intense cultural and demographic flows of the last twenty years.[22]

Although architectural historiography usually ends at the point that a building is offered to its clients, it is important to counter a building's ambitions with the way in which it is actually used in its "afterlife," both as a symbolic and a material artifact. The following section discusses the identity politics that emerged during the open-

ing and closing ceremonies of the Athens 2004 Games at the Olympic Athletic Center.

Ethnic Origins and the Politics of Inclusion in Dimitris Papaioannou's Athens 2004 Olympic Ceremonies

As history has shown, a stadium, with its mammoth size and rhetoric of grandeur, is an ideal setting for national propaganda. According to Rubén Gallo, since the early-twentieth century, stadiums have become the perfect constructs for enacting what Walter Benjamin described as the "aestheticization of politics."[23] Borrowing a term from Gallo, we can argue that the "stadiogenic"[24] effect of Calatrava's design for the Olympic stadium—reinforced by incorporated mechanisms for improving televised images—reached its zenith on August 13, 2004, during the opening ceremony of the Athens 2004 Games when not only the world, but also Greek citizens, witnessed the very idea of "new Greekness" materialize before their eyes.

According to Olympic Studies scholar John McAloon, opening ceremonies are "rites of separation from 'ordinary life,' initiating a period of public liminality."[25] For the Athens 2004 opening ceremony, following the directions of the Greek avant-garde choreographer Dimitris Papaioannou,[26] architect Lili Pezanou's design converted the stadium's arena into an artificial lake (a major construction work that required 2,162 cubic meters of water) around which the spectacle unfolded. The opening ceremony marked a significant point of departure from the parochial spectacles of Greek folklore and military pageants to which modern Greeks are accustomed.[27] Despite Papaioannou and his team's[28] background in the alternative scene, the ceremonies, particularly the one that opened the Games, elaborated on themes reminiscent of the work of established—but at the same time slightly deviant—figures of postwar Greek art: composer Manos Hadjidakis and painter Yannis Tsarouhis. Papaioannou combined their work with cultural elements characteristic of the younger generation born in the 1960s. The director

Figure 2
Athens 2004 Opening Ceremony of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games, Courtesy of Athens News Agency.

used an aesthetic language that fluctuated between minimalist austerity and sensuality (the last being in line with the mannerism of the old masters, Hadjidakis and Tsarouhis), at times celebrating Greek history and at others the bodily freedom one experiences in the water, which was the central motif of the show.

Two key segments of the choreography were titled *Allegory* and *Clepsydra*.[29] *Allegory* began with a kinetic sculpture shaped as a female *kentauros* throwing a javelin, which triggered a 17-meter figure, styled after the head of a Cycladic idol, to emerge slowly from the lake (Figure 2). The head opened up in Russian-doll fashion to reveal a figure shaped after a sixth-century *kouros*, and a fifth-century one nested inside it. Each of these figures broke up into numerous abstract forms (Figure 3), which then became platforms for a series of projections on a universalist theme. Subsequently, the fragments fell into the water, transformed into entities reminiscent of islands or vessels. A more detailed view of Greek art unfolded in the section entitled *Clepsydra*. A series of floats appeared on stage, loaded with tableaux-vivant representations of significant moments in Greek art. The sequence began with enactments of prehistoric art and continued with archaic, classical, Byzantine, Ottoman, and eventually modern art.

Papaioannou created a spectacle that removed the emphasis from the political to the realm of aesthetics; evoking a wide range of emotions ranging from nationalist pride to universalist celebrations of humanity. The pride in technology and progress that was articulated by politicians in the discourse surrounding the Olympic stadium was, on August 13, transformed into a collective experience of awe. Papaioannou did not adopt a language that could be labeled as Greek: Greekness provided the content, not the form. But his use of technology and contemporary artistic strategies functioned synergistically with the content, and the ceremony indeed had the effect of "aestheticizing politics"; satisfying both those who looked for (achieved or intended) Europeanness, and those who sought

Figure 3
Athens 2004 Opening Ceremony of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games, Courtesy of Athens News Agency.

(inherent) Greek uniqueness. This refreshed but otherwise textbook version of Greekness provided by Papaioannou, with its consciously apolitical language, could not but rely on established perceptions of Greekness that he and his domestic viewers have inherited and shown little interest in disputing.

The transformation of the stadium's stage into a nocturnal waterscape recalled, in my interpretation, a double birth: that of cosmos and nation. The evocation of a universal, cosmic space was identified with Greece's prehistory and the birth of Greek civilization. This implied a double-sided union: a cultural continuity from prehistory to the present in the specific geographical area of Greece (an historical inaccuracy);[30] and a restatement of the belief that the birth of Greek civilization coincides with the birth of the world's civilization (a national myth). The pluralism suggested by the portraits of people of all racial backgrounds projected onto the statues' fragments opened up the subject of universalism, although soon afterwards, the symbolism returned to Greekness, thus collapsing the open, universal cosmos with the specific topos of Greece. This identification of the cosmic landscape with the specific topography of the Greek archipelagos continues a tradition that emphasizes the Aegean as the Greek landscape par excellence, and Greece as the navel of earth. Thus the segment *Allegory*, as a rite of passage from cosmos to topos, acritically reaffirmed what was already known, at least for the Greek audience: that modern Greece is the natural descendant of the ancient Greek civilization which, according to the perception prevalent in Greece today, represents the beginning of European civilization. The sequential representation of Greek art in the *Clepsydra* series restated the belief in Greece's continuity from prehistory to the present.

In the opening ceremony we also witness the idea of Hellenism shrinking into a landscape that has been privileged since the 1930s: the Aegean Sea, which most audiences are familiar with through tourist iconography. By emphasizing the seafaring character of Greece, the mainland and particularly the mountainous areas of Greece are downplayed as the beholders of Greekness, even though in the premodern past it was precisely the mountain, with its associated notion of pastoralism, that was considered the stronghold of patriotism. Such an emphasis on the Mediterranean character of Greece also reproduces the mythology of Greece's separateness from its Balkan neighbors and assumes Western Europe as Greece's ultimate bond. As historian Christina Koulouri has described:

> While we would expect that the national identity (of Greece), the Balkan identity and the European identity are organized in a scheme of concentric circles, … this is not happening. The reason is that the cultural content and the cultural capital of Europe and the Balkans are defined in antithetical terms; therefore it is difficult for them to coexist as supplementary parts of the same sum. Greece therefore

> accepts its Balkan identity only within the framework of anti-Western positions.… Thus … even though the relevant position of Greece within the Balkans has changed from the 1990s, Balkan identity keeps representing a weak identity that is not a subject of negotiation.[31]

Although, on an aesthetic level, the ceremony appropriated the vocabulary of the Euro-American vanguard (Papaioannou has stated numerous times that Robert Wilson is his model), the ceremony's content reproduced an insular view of Greece in which both internal and external otherness were concealed, obscuring the influences of numerous cultural encounters and cross-pollinations in ancient and recent Greek history. Historian Angelos Alefantis criticized the ahistorical and hyper-aestheticized emphasis on the water as one that concealed the cultural pluralism integral to Greece's history:

> In the multiple symbolism of the ceremony … there was no interest in showing even a bit of earth where people lived and the dead were buried. And there were many types of living and dead in this corner of the world: Minoans, Mycenaeans, Pelasgians, Lelegs, Greeks, Galatians, Goths, Romans, Bulgarians, Turks, Saracenes, Arbanites, Slavs, Latins, Frankish, Venetians, Catalans, Vlachs, Cumans, Jews, Armenians.… If you want in half an hour to talk about 3–4,000 years, it is necessary that you will do a selective reading, there is no other way.[32]

This overarching identity of the Greek nation as a continuous entity that unfolds from prehistory to the present was counterbalanced by the closing ceremony of the Athens Games. If the opening ceremony celebrated archetypal or mythical figures, the closing ceremony presented distinct and recognizable cultures of contemporary Greece. The production began with a mock Greek wedding, which then became a platform for incorporating local celebrations from all regions of Greece. These festivities were followed by the Exodus concert, a live show by representatives of the contemporary folk music scene in Greece. Nevertheless, the diversity displayed at the closing ceremony, with its emphasis on the sub-national, was a rather safe one, because it simply corresponded to the regional divisions of Greece without revealing the country's true ethnic and religious diversity, especially considering the recent influx of immigrants. Here, the aesthetic language of the event was largely based on the ethnic, world-music genre, capitalizing on its contemporary popularity as an exotic commodity within the global market. On a musical and performative level, it might be argued that the closing ceremony nullified the opening ceremony's claim that Greece belongs to the West, as most of the closing ceremony references in fact tied Greece to the Balkans and the East rather than to the Mediterranean or Western Europe.

Even though the regional approach was a "safe" way of presenting internal diversity, the closing ceremony did take one unconventional step in the direction of answering the question of who is included in the Greek national body. Toward the end of the wedding section, in which recognizable segments of contemporary Greeks paraded and celebrated, a group of gypsies (Rom) joined the party (Figure 4). This provocative statement on the part of Papaioannou was met, however, with sharp disapproval by the majority of Greek citizens. As one journalist wrote, expressing such criticisms:

> My admiration for Papaioannou did not blind me. I saw that the closing ceremony … was atrocious. Tons of people were running disorderly on a plastic floor, and glamorous, ethnic gypsies were selling glamorous, ethnic watermelons.[33]

Beyond the obvious disappointment over what was perceived as a fall from high art to low culture, these comments hide a degree of shame for Greece having exposed its "dirty laundry" in front of an international audience.[34] Elements, such as the Roma and the overall endorsement of contemporary folk scene, allude to Greece possessing an "Eastern" rather than a "European" sensibility; a fact seen as incompatible with the ideals of modernization on which the other Olympic displays were based.

Despite the appearance of the Rom as indicators of internal "otherness," the ceremonies did not engage directly with the complex issue of demographic flow that prevails in Greece today. Yet, as part of an athletic event, neither could the ceremonies remain unaffected by this issue: sports in Greece today, as everywhere else in the world, bypasses all borders when it comes to recruiting and naturalizing foreign athletes; and has become a barometer of the new, complex ethnoscapes emerging worldwide. The flag-bearer of the Greek Olympic team, for example, was the Albanian-born weight-

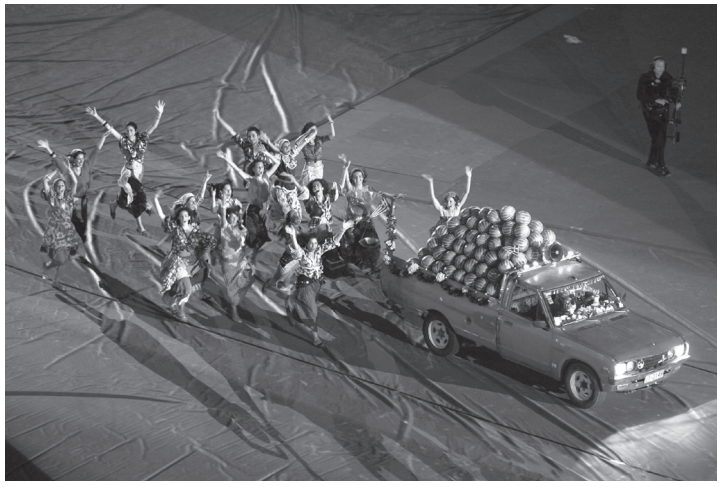

Figure 4
Closing Ceremony of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games, Courtesy of Athens News Agency.

lifter and medalist Pyros Dimas, who immigrated to Greece in 1991 (he was known as Pirro Dhima until 1990, when he was competing for Albania). According to anthropologist James Verinis, the case of Dimas demonstrates that the "irregular, anomalous anti-hero may be well included and sanctioned through the ritual of the Olympics."[35] Verinis's commentary and Alefantis's criticism on the lack of cultural pluralism in the opening ceremony suggest the need to expand the Greek national narrative from an emphasis on roots and essence to the question of encounters. Despite a long history of crosscultural encounters, Greece has valorized endurance and continuity in its national narrative rather than change. An unconventional view of Greece's cultural history—one that searches for "contaminations" rather than "purities"—would instead reveal the influences of cultural encounters with others, both neighbors and conquerors, such as Italians, Turks, and various Balkan populations.

The idealized notion of Europeanization is clearly not the only issue at stake in contemporary Greece. Rather, the "apparatus of recognition for post-national social forms" suggests that Greece must also look toward the East—to the Balkans, southeastern Europe, the Black Sea, and the Middle East—following the trajectories of Greek immigration patterns in the past as well as the present in order to come to terms with its internal and external otherness. If, at least idealistically, Europeanization has been Greece's ultimate goal, the closing ceremony of the Athens 2004 Olympics clearly revealed Greece's much more complex ties. From a post-national perspective, the ceremony becomes an indication of the fragility of the normative at the very moment when what is repressed comes to the surface, undermining the grand national narrative and bringing the conventional national idiom into crisis.

Similarities can be drawn between "new Greece" and the "new" Europe that is emerging today as a site of transnational and trans-European attachments. As Ash Amin writes:

> Slowly, [Greece as the whole] Europe is becoming Chinese, Indian, Romany, Albanian, French and Italian, Christian, Islamic, Buddhist or New Age, American, Disneyfied, one-earth conscious, ascetic, or locally communitarian. It is becoming a place of plural and strange belongings, drawing on varied geographies of cultural formation. And thus it is constantly on the move in cultural terms.[36]

Hijacking International Events

It is questionable whether sports alone may be truly effective in initiating processes of inclusion and acceptance. Nevertheless, the public realm, as it unfolds from sport arenas to media spaces and street culture, requires assertive gestures that enact a shift from a nation-bound paradigm to one that is open to plurality and multiple belonging.

If the discourse that surrounded Calatrava's design

revealed the politics of selfhood and otherness that define Greece's views of Europe, the Olympic ceremonies exposed the politics of inclusion and exclusion within the national body itself. Despite the message of multiculturalism that Calatrava attempted to send, the Olympic complex in Athens is not a space that signifies an open city with porous borders that, unlike the closed nation-state, welcomes "otherness."[37] On the contrary, within this overall scheme the otherness that seems to be welcomed is solely that of the European—still an "other," the alter ego of the contemporary Greek citizen as personified by Calatrava, the European architect par excellence.

As this discussion has illustrated, Olympic design has the capacity to mobilize identity politics and reveal the "crisis of the nation" as it is experienced by both citizens and others. Ben Carrington, among other critics, has argued that the nationalist/internationalist constellation within which Olympism operates is problematic in terms of achieving a global civil society based on the principle of cosmopolitanism. While internationalism is a doctrine that operates within the logic and affiliation of the nation-state, cosmopolitanism in its neo-Kantian form, claims a global civil society within which individuals see themselves as world citizens united by a common sense of species connection.[38] I propose that the national basis of the Olympics—as well as of major international cultural events such as the Venice Biennale that have been, until recently, acritically received—must be questioned. The constituents of these events should interrogate rather than sustain the myth of the nation and perform a cultural "hijacking" of international events as a means of disputing established categories of nationhood and otherness, thereby promoting alternative types of allegiances across national borders. At the moment that, using again Sassen's words, "power is increasingly privatized, globalized, and elusive" what is needed is directly engaging forms of power and reinvention of citizenship which designers as cultural agents could help express and cultivate. Instead of resorting to ethnic or parochial glorifications of the nation and its myths, or conforming to the market's demands for ethnically identified design, designers should use their practice as a means

1 Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 158. Words in brackets added.

2 The head of the Athens 2004 organizing committee, Gianna Daskalaki-Angelopoulou, presented the Athens 2004 Games as a celebration of the idea of "new Greece" in her speech at the opening ceremony on August 13, 2004.

3 Saskia Sassen, "The Repositioning of Citizenship: Emergent Subjects and Spaces for Politics," *The New Centennial Review* 3:2 (Summer 2003): 43–44.

4 Jackie Hogan, "Staging the Nation: Gendered and Ethnicized Discourses of National Identity in Olympic Opening Ceremonies," *Journal of Sports and Social Issues* 27:2 (May 2003): 101. 5 Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity" in *Modernity and Its Futures*, S. Hall, D. Held, and T. McGrew, eds. (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), 293. Quoted in Hogan.

6 Dierdre Curtin, *Post-national Democracy* (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 1997), 51–52.

7 Examples are the controversy that followed the publication of editorial cartoons depicting the Islamic prophet Muhammad in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* in 2005, or the murder of the Dutch film director Theo Van Gogh by the second-generation Dutch-Moroccan citizen Mohammed Bouyeri in 2004.

8 According to Amin, "in a multi-ethnic and multicultural Europe, a failure to give open publicity to the principle of empathy with the stranger, and all that it represents in shaping identities as well as ensuring cultural change, will play into the hands of ethno-nationalists and xenophobes—abundant in number in both majority and minority communities—interested in perpetuating the fiction of homeland cultural identities in Europe." Ash Amin, "Multi-Ethnicity and the Idea of Europe," *Theory, Culture & Society* 21:2 (April 2004): 4.

9 Daniel Dayan, "Narrative, Counter-Narrative and the Beijing Olympics: Hearts, Minds and the Projection of Modern China" lecture at the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, November 28, 2007. Also see Daniel Dayan, "Beyond Media Events" in Monroe Price and Daniel Dayan, *Owning the Olympics: Narratives of the New China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 399. Monroe Price in his essay "On Seizing the Olympic Platform" in the same book (page 86) uses the term "hijacking" in order to describe the "hunger by a multitude of groups," in this case civil society advocacy groups, "to gain the extraordinary benefit of huge investments in platforms established by others and, in so doing, take advantage of elaborately created for and to advance political and commercial messages. Media events become marked by efforts by free riders or interlopers to seize the opportunity to perform in a global theater of representation."

10 The commissioners asked for the "aesthetic unification" of the Olympic Athletic Complex, which was built in a hodgepodge manner since the early 1980s.

11 The total cost of construction of the Olympic complex was 220,000,000 Euros ($320,000,000), out of which the cost of the Olympic stadium roof alone was 130,000,000 Euros ($190,000,000).

12 *Special Focus-Athens Olympic Sports Center 2004* (information kit) (Athens: Athens 2004, 2002).

13 Yannis Foskolos, "Olympiaka Erga, 'Empneustika apo tin arxaia kai byzantini paradosi sas.'" (Olympic Works: "I was inspired by your ancient and Byzantine tradition.") Interview with Yannis Foskolos, *Ethnos* 1 (June 2004). (www.ethnos.gr [home page], accessed June 1, 2004).

14 Philip Drew, *Tensile Architecture* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979), 172.

15 Nikos Koundouros, "Mia gigantiaia kompina" ("A gigantic scum"), *Eleftherotypia* (August 7, 2004). (www.enet.gr [home page], accessed August 7, 2004).

16 Angelos Elefantis, "Oi Olympiakoi Agones kai h Aristera" ("The Olympic Games and the Left"), *I Avgi* (August 2004). (www.avgi.gr [home page], accessed August 1, 2004)

17 Filippos Syrigos, "Kampriole Calatrava" ("Cabriole Calatrava"), *Eleftherotypia* (February 22, 2004). (www.enet.gr [home page], accessed February 22, 2004)

18 Kerin Hope, "Classic Cool Santiago Calatrava, Architect of Athens' Ambitious and Stylish Olympic Complex, Refuses to be Drawn on the Question of Money," *Financial Times*, Weekend Magazine (August 14, 2004): 8.

19 Maria Daliani, "Santiago Calatrava: 'I Ellada Axizei ton Sebasmo olon'" ("Santiago Calatrava: 'Greece Deserves the Respect of All'"), *Ta Nea* (June 23, 2004). (http://ta-nea.dolnet.gr [home page], accessed July 23, 2004)

20 Ibid.

21 According to P. C. Loakimidis, in intended Europeanization, "there is a strong intention and thus a purposefully framed scheme by the political actors to transfer into their political systems the logic, dynamics, organizational traits, behavioural and regulatory patterns associated with European integration (governance patterns)." As a result, there is a purposeful action on the part of the political elites to copy the European model. P. C. Loakimidis, "The Europeanization of Greece: An Overall Assessment," *South European Society & Politics* 5:2 (2000): 73–94.

22 Gerard Delanty and Paul R. Jones, "European Identity and Architecture," *European Journal of Social Theory* 5:4 (November 2002): 455.

23 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illumination* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 241–242.

24 Rubén Gallo, *Mexican Modernity: The Avant-Garde and the Technological Revolution*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 201.

25 John MacAloon, "Olympic Games and the Theory of the Spectacle in Modern Societies" in *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance*, John MacAloon, ed. (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984), 252–53.

26 Papaioannou founded the fringe dance company Ground Squad in the 1980s. After studies at the Athens School of Fine Arts, he received training at the La Mama Experimental Theater Company in New York, and in alternative theatrical forms such as Japanese Butoh dance.

27 Such were those of the Greek expatriate musician Vangelis Papathanasiou, whose "Olympian" music for the film *Chariots of Fire* was awarded an Oscar in 1981 for best musical score. Papathanasiou, however, was widely criticized by the Greek public for the extremely high budget (1.100.670.000 drahmas, approximately equal to $4,700,000) of his 2001 performance *Mythodeia*. His opening ceremony for the International Field and Track Championship in 1997, produced soon after Greece won the bid for the 2004 Olympic Games, likewise engendered embarrassment for displaying a new Greek kitsch. See Pavlos Agiannidis, "Vangelis Papathanasiou, 'I Mousiki einai h aylos Ylopoihsh tou Theiou'" ("Vangelis Papathanasiou: 'Music Is the Immaterial Materialization of the Divine'"), *Ta Nea* (June 23, 2001). (http://ta-nea.dolnet.gr [home page], accessed June 23, 2001)

28 The team was composed of Yorgos Koumentakis (Co-Creation and Music Concept Creator), Lili Pezanou (Production Design), Angeliki Stellatou (Choreographer), Eleftheria Deko (Lighting Designer and Director), Robert Dickinson (Co-Lighting Designer and Director), Sophia Kokossalaki (Costume Designer), Athina Tsangari (Video Director), Lina Nikolakopoulou (Ceremony Texts), Christophe Berthonneau (Pyrotechnic Design), Roula Pateraki (Narration Workshop Director), Alexandros Balabanis (Hair Design), and Petros Petrohilos (Make-up Design).

29 Every Olympic opening ceremony is required to follow a protocol specified by the Olympic Charter, as well as an artistic program open to its creative team, to present the culture of the host city/nation. The protocol includes the athletes' parade, three speeches (by the president of the organizing committee, the president of the International Olympic Committee, and the head of state declaring the Games open), the playing of both the Olympic and the host-nation's anthem, the entry and raising of the Olympic flag, the last stage of the Olympic torch relay culminating in the lighting of the Olympic cauldron, the symbolic release of the dove as a tribute to peace, and the oath-taking by a competitor and a judge.

30 According to Dimitris Plantzos, since the 1930s, prehistoric Cycladic art has become emblematic of Hellenic culture and its roots. From a historical perspective, this is inaccurate, since the Cycladic, being a prehistoric civilization, predates the conception of Hellenism and the appearance of Hellenic culture. Members of the Greek 1930s Generation (writers, poets, visual artists, and intellectuals such as Yorgos Seferis, Odysseas Elytis, Yannis Tsarouchis, Yannis Moralis, Nikos Chatzikyriakos-Gkikas, and others) were the early proponents of *ellinikotita* (Greekness) as an aesthetic native to the Greek land, but considered through modern aesthetics. This group rehabilitated the Cycladic "as a bona fide Hellenic form of art, endowed with all the basic qualities of what in the Classical period would become the glory that was Greece." Dimitris Plantzos, "From Here to Modernity: Cycladic Art as a Twentieth-Century Phenomenon," Alexander Papamarkou lecture at Columbia University, Program in Hellenic Studies, February 26, 2007.

31 Christina Koulouri, "Elliniki Balkanikotita h Balkaniki ellinikotita" ("Greek Balkanness or Balkan Greekness"), *To Vima* (October 10, 2004). (http://digital.tovima.gr [home page], accessed October 10, 2004)

32 Angelos Elefantis, "Simvola kai Theamata" ("Symbols and Spectacles"), *I Avgi* (August 29, 2004). (www.avgi.gr [home page], accessed August 29, 2004)

33 Lina Thivani, "Parti enilikiosis, As megalosoue pia, As…psihraimisoume" ("Graduation Party: Let's Grow up, Let's… Cool down") *Ta Nea* (July 9, 2004). (http://ta-nea.dolnet.gr [home page], accessed July 9, 2004)

34 In recent years (and during the pre-Olympic period in particular) Roma dwellings in Greece have been dismantled to make room for the construction of cultural or athletic venues. Such was the case in Athens, with the 2004 Olympic Games; in Patras, the Cultural Capital of Europe in 2006; and the Votanikos area, the site of a new soccer stadium in Athens. Despite efforts at improvement, the living, health, and sanitary conditions of the Roma in improvised settlements still remain a major social and humanitarian emergency. *Migration, Citizenship, Education*. (www.migrationeducation.org/23.0.html, accessed June 15, 2004)

35 According to Verinis, "the Albanian and Vlach/Aroumanian identification of his [Dimas's] name, rather than bearing connotations of the 'dirty' and 'barbaric,' embodies pure ethic qualities that set him apart from the corrupt, sedentary life of the ordinary modern citizen." James Verinis, "The 'Aftóchthonous' 'Pallikária' of the Hellenic Peninsula: Historical/Cultural Continuity, the Olympic Games, and the Immigrant Heroes of Greece," presentation at "Reconfiguring Identities in Greece and Abroad through the Athens 2004 Olympic Games" panel chaired by Jilly Traganou, conference of the Modern Greek Studies Association, Chicago, November 2005.

36 Ash Amin, **"**Multi-Ethnicity and the Idea of Europe": 2. Words in brackets added.

37 Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (London: Routledge, 2001), 17; and Ash Amin, **"**Multi-Ethnicity and the Idea of Europe": 2.

38 Ben Carrington, "Cosmopolitan Olympics, Humanism and the Spectacle of Race" in *Post-Olympism: Questioning Sport in the Twenty-first Century*, J. Bale and C. Krogh, eds. (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 86–88.