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The Postcolonial Unconscious, Or the White Man's Thing

Juliet Flower MacCannell

*The good is what keeps us a long way
from jouissance.*

(Lacan, *Seminar VII* 185)

When I was invited to speak about Lacan and postcoloniality I had a single mental and visceral response, which I can best sum up with a slightly incredulous inflection: "Post?colonial?" How hopeful, yet how unsecured that term sounds. Globalized economic systems, run down information superhighways and the "glamorous tentacles of media colonization" (Phillips 13),¹ are taking to a higher power Lacan's early image for our latter-day, psychotic pseudo-patriarchy—"la grand'route—être père." More intent on acquiring sales than national territories, more focused on conquering corporate, and not mere human, bodies, colonialism has surely only shifted ground where the subject's alienation is concerned. The Disney version of life is about to touch us all. Yet, although its effects are visible to everyone, the way neo-colonialism subjects us remains obscure. We can look for analogies in those compelling, and uncannily familiar, depictions of colonization's psychic ravages offered by early anti-colonial writers, like Fanon and Memmi. However, recognizing that what was once a seemingly restricted human problematic is now the general case requires more analytic power, lest we risk unwittingly reinforcing colonization's most damaging features. In this paper, I explore what I call the "colonial complex." It is both personal and political. I will describe and specify it. For me, it is an *ethical disorder*, a complex now ironically re-transplanted to European cultures from the very places to which it had sought to expel and export it.

In my view, if there to be any relationship at all between psychoanalysis and postcolonial analysis, the

subject must be the focus: not the poststructural, dispersed subject, or not only that subject, but the classical subject in its three dimensions—as *sovereign individual*, *citizen under law*, and *person before God* (Teshome Gabriel's formulation). Well before poststructuralism, the "classical" subject suffered traumatic blows to these categories—it just didn't know it. Its failure of knowledge became a major component of its colonizing force. So I will amend my statement: it is the unconscious subject of colonialism that must be analyzed.

I. THE COLONIAL COMPLEX

Classical colonialism concocted a heady brew, combining and separating races, sexes and classes as it disrupted economies and nations. A potent mix, it raised the stakes for any *postcoloniality*: will that new compound be poison or medicine? For the individual, each of these factors—race, sex, class—is intimately crucial for one's identity; for the colonized personality, any of these in combination is doubly traumatic. The trauma is not a simple byproduct of encounter with "otherness" (a rather general animal condition). Lacan teaches that any and every human identification is first accomplished through subjection to the unary signifier, and it is always and everywhere "alienating." Its unconscious correlate is a disavowed "kernel" (that Lacan calls the real of the fundamental fantasy) which, although it is within us, also is *extimate*, as if proceeding from the Real, and consisting of whatever impossible *jouissance* cannot be absorbed by one's symbolic (i.e., alienated) identification.

For the colonized, "symbolic identification" is doubly inscribed (identification with a primary and then a secondary "unary trait"). The bicultural individual has to perform complex maneuvers to balance the competing claims to their alienation, as artists and writers are currently struggling to make salient (Coco

Fusco, Guillermo Gomez-Peña, Greg Sarris, e.g.). But as the early writers on colonialism signal, there is a much graver pathology in the situation that has not been adequately addressed psychoanalytically. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon compared the advent of the colonizer with what might happen were in- or non-human aliens to land here: "If Martians undertook to colonize the earth men—not to initiate them into Martian culture, but to colonize them, we should be doubtful of the persistence of any earth personality" (Fanon 95). He goes even further: under colonialism, "White alone means human" (Fanon 98). The urgent danger Fanon perceived in colonialism—the loss of human personality—seems extreme, but it indexes his perception of the gravity of the psychic injury involved. He blames the psychoanalysis of his time for not providing answers as to how such psychic annihilation is possible, reserving his harshest criticism for Octave Mannoni's *Prospero and Caliban*: "What we wanted from M. Mannoni was an explanation of the colonial situation. He notably overlooked providing it" (Fanon 94), having resorted instead to a thesis of colonial dependency.

If, as Renata Salecl writes, there is always a "specific way people relate to . . . traumatic determinations (nation, race, sex) around which they form their identity" (77), we have not yet made clear under what circumstances race and nation can claim equal status with sex in psychoanalytic theory as source of trauma at the psychic and not simply social, political and economic level.² It also remains obscure why and how determinations of race and nation can be *realized* as traumatic by the subject. Is there an analytic process to correspond to colonialism's extreme pressure, a way to pinpoint where one's fundamental fantasy has collided with another's, and has rendered the Real a doubly unavoidable and doubly unbearable issue? When Partha Chatterjee calls for a postcolonial freedom to imagine (Chatterjee 5-13),³ one feels instinctive sympathy, but one also has to be drawn up short with horror at the realization that colonization might have accomplished such an abrogation, not only of a private, but of an entire people's imagination. Similarly, Albert Memmi's earliest and most poignant claim against colonialism is that it stopped not only the colonized *individual* but the colonized's *society* from

going on, from finding its own newness.

Thus, for me, the question becomes: how on earth was the colonizer able to do this? What empowered this secondary, and more aggravated assault? It seems to me that it is only this assault which distinguishes the specific brutality of colonialism from all other and simpler forms of conquest and territorial occupation (Devi xi).⁴ I believe I can focus the issue more clearly by putting Lacan together with certain immediate pre-Kantian and post-Kantian writers (Rousseau and Kleist) and with those—Fanon, Memmi, and Marguerite Duras—who have most eloquently articulated the pathology of the colonized (and, ultimately, of the colonizer as well). Psychoanalysis must be able to specify the psychic injury peculiar to colonization (Memmi 99-100).⁵ But it has to address less the individual as subject of knowledge, than as the subject of politics.

THE SUBJECT

The classical political subject was first fully transformed in early modern Europe by bloody religious (and therefore economic) warfare—the Protestant Reformation, the Counterreformation, the several Inquisitions, the institution of Capitalism, etc. Second, the painful birth, through literary and philosophical labor, of the political subject as *individual* and, simultaneously, as *member* of a collective body called "The People" (Rousseau) worked its transformations. Finally, the death agony of God helped transform the legal category of *person* into its shadow-form, the *personality*. These mark the acquisition of a new subject suited for modern democracy, a form of governance which fundamentally altered the European social order. It is not accidental that reaction against this new subject opened, as well, the door to colonial governance, the very antithesis of democracy.

A key component of this new formation of the subject in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was the emergence of an idea of "a people" *not* determined by divisions into natural (economic) classes. It ironically parallels the emergence of an entirely new set of opposed beings, *the colonizer and the colonized*. But I would not say, à la New Historicism, that the birth of modern democracy depended structurally on colonialism, that the acquisition of the "rights of man" was a function of, or a cover for, the elaboration of a

capitalist-exploitative-racist logic. Rather, I would examine how the earliest formulations of the terms of democracy were blocked precisely as a result of the colonial adventure, which itself was, in no small measure, a negative response to democracy.

Hannah Arendt has ably shown (185-249)⁶ that Europe exported to its colonies a decidedly pre-Rousseauian (Joan Copjec would say pre-Kantian) form of social and political thought well after the modern democratic model had been decisively formulated. It did so in the mode of a sloganized democracy, rather than of a working program derived from revolutionary democratic thought. The most pernicious effect of this export, according to Arendt, was that it hindered political democracy's development in Europe itself, even though she herself is no real fan of democracy. (She even claims that the distortions of nationalism created under colonization merely aggravated or accelerate democracy's inherent weakness, its susceptibility to totalitarianism.) However, while Arendt's explication is supremely insightful, it is focused on *the European* and the how colonialism affected and infected his political development. Although, as a woman and a Jew, she certainly—unlike many political theorists—makes common cause with the colonized, she does little if nothing to assess the harm done to the colonized psychically as well as politically. So I will now return to my earlier pronouncement that the colonial complex is an ethical disorder, adding this time the missing ingredient: that it has to do with the Good.

**THE GOOD:
KLEIST'S GUILLAUME DE VILLENEUVE
AND CONGO HOANGO**

The European colonizer, sailing forth under the flag of Christendom, wrapped himself and his exploits in the mantle of God. Yes; but psychically, this mantle took the form of the Good. "Being good" oneself legitimates placing others into the service of the Good. More than possessing simple military superiority (or a more elaborately lethal technology) marks colonial power. Its distinctive character is that it is always a purveyor of goods, in both the material and the spiritual senses. Moreover, this purveyance seems to accelerate and become more destructive after the enlightenment has

"unmasked" the early Christian colonial impulse. Let me provide an example from a remarkable, but often overlooked, story by Heinrich von Kleist to illustrate. "The Betrothal in Santo Domingo" dates from 1805:

On Monsieur Guillaume de Villeneuve's plantation at Port-au-Prince in the French sector of the island of Santo Domingo there lived at the beginning of this century, at the time when the blacks were murdering the whites, a terrible old negro called Congo Hoango. This man, who came originally from the Gold Coast of Africa, had seemed in his youth to be of a loyal and honest disposition, and having once saved his master's life when they were sailing across to Cuba, he had been rewarded by the latter with innumerable favours and kindnesses. Not only did Monsieur de Villeneuve at once grant him his freedom, and on returning to Santo Domingo make him the gift of a house and home; a few years later, although this was contrary to local custom, he even appointed him as manager of his considerable estate, and since he did not want to re-marry provided him, in lieu of a wife, with an old mulatto woman called Babekan, who lived on the plantation and to whom through his first wife Congo Hoango was distantly related. Moreover, when the negro had reached the age of sixty he retired him on handsome pay and as a crowning act of generosity even made him a legatee under his will; and yet all these proofs of gratitude failed to protect Monsieur de Villeneuve from the fury of this ferocious man. In the general frenzy of vindictive rage that flared up in all those plantations *as a result of the reckless actions of the National Convention*, Congo Hoango had been one of the first to seize his gun and, remembering only the tyranny that had snatched him from his native land, blew his master's brains out. (Kleist 231, my emphasis)⁷

(Whenever I teach this story, my students universally side with M. de Villeneuve, a man of such evident good will—until I explain to them what the National Convention was, and the difference between the idea of natural and conventional rights.)

Kleist has it that the literal exploding of de Villeneuve's purveyance of "the good" is authorized by the Declaration of the Rights of Man, and his percep-

tion is quite astute. It was the power to declare these rights, to demonstrate that they were neither inherited nor natural (both "rights" that could only belong to the noble, land-owning, warrior castes), that in fact abrogated the old discourse of the Good.⁸ Rights were, from that time forward, *conventional*, the product of a *social* contract. Let me be clear about what that contract meant. A Congo Hoango *could*, henceforth, with reason rise up against an arbitrary man-made law creating a hierarchy of unequal rights; he *could not have done* so against a natural law. Kleist, who suffered a "Kant crisis" as he gave up his Leibnizian ideals, is dead-on accurate about the power of the new social contract to eviscerate the old discourse of the Good, to put the subject into an entirely new economic, social, but also psychic relation to it.

GOOD AND THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

Rousseau attempted, in my opinion, to do for "society" what Descartes did for the "subject": to found it, and its conditions, free from all inherent and pre-determined characteristics or properties. Rather than the individual mind, the collective social body is Rousseau's chosen theme. He turned Descartes, so to speak, on his feet: if Descartes founded the subject as thinking substance, free of all attributes, Rousseau founded a political substance, "the social body," free of all acquired and inherited properties. The consequence in Descartes, according to Lacan (*Seminar XI*), was the simultaneous opening of the subject of the unconscious. Rousseau's efforts likewise opened, I would argue, the political unconscious.

Rousseau had insisted—and Kant tried to follow him here—that in his time a new subject was in the process of being born (Rousseau, "*Du Contrat social*" 290).⁹ It was to be subject to no natural or divine law, but only to a law of its own, the product and origin of a social contract whose contracting "second party," as Althusser has pointed out so superbly,¹⁰ had absolutely no existence before the contract was signed. In contrast to *positive law* as it had previously existed, this law was *negative*, insofar as Rousseau identified historical society—which he called "civil society" (society as we know it, and, as historical beings, the only way we have ever known it)—with the exploitation of man by man. Its *positive law* was, therefore, only designed to secure the

right of the "first comer" to property, and of perpetual wealth to the earliest and most aggressive—the ruling warrior castes. (These are the castes that found all society, and all "right" in Hegel, too).¹¹ But Rousseau tried to imagine himself beyond this situation, not, as many believe, by a return to primitive nature, but by the specific creation of an *alternative idea* of "civil society" forged by a new body: *the people*. It is this concept, so vexed to this very day, and one that Marx fully eschewed (see Balibar), with which, nonetheless, Rousseau intended to counter the aristocratic, noble landowners, and knightly, warrior castes.

In what did this "body" of the people consist?

Since *civil society* ("*la société civile*") was, for Rousseau, intrinsically antagonistic, founded as it was in and by exploitation, deception, inequity, and injustice, he proposed not sealing and healing the breaches (and thereby eternalizing the iniquitous *status quo*), but the reverse: making permanent a split in it. The people *as a whole* had to look at the people as a whole to determine its *general will*. There could be no special exceptions to this totality. Just as Descartes had tried to divest his cogito of them, Rousseau proposed divesting the *corps moral et collectif*—individual and group—of all "acquired" or "inherited" *properties*. (This is Rousseau's word.) "Properties" is to be taken in every sense of the term, since in his *Second Discourse* Rousseau declared that the very first properties acquired by human beings upon their entrance into *civil society* were those of "Rich" and "Poor"; all other qualities ("*propriétés*") were merely derivations of these two: "*Tous ces maux sont le premier effet de la propriété et le cortège inséparable de l'inégalité naissante.*" (*Social Contract* 140; "*Du Contrat social*" 160, see also 170, 173, 175).¹²

As Rousseau dated all human history from the advent of exploitation and the separation into classes of *haves* and *have nots*, he proposed the alternative of dispossessing everyone *from the standpoint of the whole*, thereby creating *equality before the law of the whole*. This required 1) freedom from definition by socially bestowed properties under an iniquitous order and 2) a new model of fraternity founded not on blood, but on a destitution and mourning for a loss common to all. Rousseau's "general will" thus proposed what amounts to the *law of castration*, the possibility of cre-

ating a community of "strangers," natives, migrants and immigrants alike (*Social Contract* 96-103).¹³

Rousseau structured his "general will" as a will not of all, but as the sum of "not alls." What remains after every individual will is stripped of its naturally or socially inherited properties is the "general will."¹⁴ Rousseau thus envisioned a kind of clean sweep, a whole new constitution where the "pluses and minuses" of "the sum of private wills" (his words) would cancel each other out.¹⁵ Rather than assenting to a symbolic order that simply hid the antagonisms that created it, Rousseau's "general will" attempted to mark society as a loss held in common—not, as many imagine, of a maternal "nature" but a loss of the positive, symbolic, and therefore, *enslaving* marks civil society bestows on us.¹⁶ What Rousseau meant is that, as Kant after him believed, we had to give up *the notion of the Good, the Good of the whole*: it was never anything but the special (economic) interests of the propertied classes. We enter the new social contract by renouncing this Good. For Rousseau, giving up the "Good" enabled, for the person, what he called "*une autre sorte de jouissance*," and, for the collective, the democratic revolution.

Rousseau's idea is stunning, and inspiring. But inasmuch as it casts us free of the symbolic, it places us directly into confrontation with the Real thing, and not its secondary properties. What therefore happened in the course of human understanding, whenever it took up Rousseau's lead, was never quite bearable. His was a definition open to misconstruction, taken too literally or too ideally; mainly, it was just fiercely opposed.¹⁷ Most destructively, what was largely instituted following Rousseau's initiative was not *democracy* rooted in a law of *desire*, but an *unconscious* internalization of *the law of the good*—in the form of the Superego. It forever altered the person's relation to that "other" *jouissance* Rousseau's work had hoped to inaugurate.

COLONIZATION, SUPEREGO, AND THE LAW OF THE GOOD

*How much radical alienation of freedom there is in
the master himself.*

(Lacan, *Seminar XI* 188)

As a way of further clarifying the specific trauma of colonialism, let us now consider Rousseau's political body, the "*corps moral et collectif*," using the language of psychoanalysis. Looked at by the waning light of Oedipus, Rousseau's social body takes on deeper significance for the colonial complex. The waning of Oedipus, Freud tells us, is marked as the acquisition of an *internal* sense of law in the form of the Superego, or conscience. Freud sees it as the overcoming of one's mythified relation to one's parents. But, as Lacan noted, this "internalization of the Law" (the form Superego must take) has ultimately "nothing to do with the Law," Oedipus (Lacan, *Seminar XI* 310). The Superego is indeed a moral voice, a voice of conscience, a call to duty. But at the same time, it is a dark ambiguity. Its internal appearance takes the form of a thing: that is, the form of a bad object within us. As an internal yet alien entity, it issues "strange, paradoxical, and cruel commands" (Lacan, *Seminar VII* 73). On the one hand, it appears as a "reality principle," a command to sacrifice one's good (*jouissance*) to a whole (society) where it could play none but a pernicious part. On the other, it constitutes an unconscious command to "Enjoy!"—liberation from the law of the father, from myths, from the gods, the parents and their desires. It becomes the lure of an impossible enjoyment.

Like Rousseau at the societal level, Kant had also ruled out the "*Gut, das Ding*" as determining Reason for the individual. But at the "level of the unconscious," Lacan tells us,

Das Ding presents itself . . . as that which *already* makes the law. . . . It is a capricious and arbitrary law, the law of the oracle, *the law of signs*. . . . *That is also at bottom the bad object that Kleinian theory is concerned with. . . . The subject makes no approach at all to the bad object, since he is already maintaining his distance in relation to the good object.* He cannot stand the extreme good that *das Ding* may bring him, which is all the more reason why he cannot locate himself in relation to the bad. . . . At the level of the unconscious, the subject lies [about evil]. (Lacan, *Seminar VII* 73, emphasis mine)

The Superego does not impede the conscious subject from finding its own way to desire; but it leaves the unconscious subject at the mercy of this extimate

Thing. To find its desire, the new complex subject of democracy was supposed to break its ties to the idea of substance—refusing equally to abandon itself to its historical, social and cultural (inherently unjust) “properties” or to its “nature.” It would have to see its own symbolic character, but, so to speak, *see through it* at the same time. That the subject was thus to be made free for a relation to enjoyment, however, did not resolve the fact that it was also simultaneously, so to speak, unmade for it. Superego pressure means, as Slavoj Žižek points out, giving way on your desire in the name of some “common” good. Looked at more closely, this “common good” is usually, at bottom (if one follows Rousseau here), a particular, private good—that of a specific *person* or *class*. The paradox of the Superego (the “new” reality principle) is that you are to obey social commands (the Desire of the Other), but, since the Other doesn’t exist, you are also commanded to enjoy in a way that *betrays* this desire. Desire is, nonetheless, *the only legitimate basis for democracy*. The horror is that this betrayal, this sacrifice made to the Superego never satisfies it.

The level of sacrifice goes beyond mere slavery, mere dupery. It touches and ruins the heart. It attacks the kernel of your being, the lesion where *your good* and its *sacrifice* meet. This is what Renata Salecl calls the “place of traumatic enjoyment” (87): to be “good” socially means avoiding the bad object. But, as Lacan puts it, “only the object to be circumvented” assures the subject “its consistency” (*Seminar XI* 181). This paradoxical element, the Lacanian “kernel” is the real around which the fundamental fantasy of one’s identity is formed. It is also precisely where “some act, some sentence . . . can unmake the subject’s world” (Salecl 87). This Thing (*das Gut*) must be confronted, by a traversal of the fantasy, in order for the subject to realize their desire, i.e., to find their own path to partial enjoyments. Failing that, the bad object (“the Good”) remains lodged in and centered in the unconscious.

Now, the lesion where one’s “Thing” (*Das Ding*)—the “place of traumatic enjoyment around some traumatic element”—is located in an unconscious fantasy that “brings consistency to our desires” can also be falsely sutured—by someone else’s Thing. This is the situation—with devastating results—of the colonized subject. After the eighteenth century,

the new democratic subject encounters, on the one side, unbearable Superego pressure to enjoy, and, on the other, manifold political, class and economic pressures against enjoyment by all. This unresolved complex is handed off or loaded on to the colonial subject, inflicting damage at many levels, and constitutes as it were, the black man’s burden. Colonialism provided both a means for the colonizer to evade the realization of desire, and an expulsion of his guilt by inflicting his suffering from the Thing onto the colonized.

II: THE SERVICE OF GOODS AS THE AMPUTATION OF DESIRE

The complex democratic subject of the post-Enlightenment, positioned by yet resistive to the moral, political, and religious orders, was made desperate by a traumatizing, irrational, disordering Superego, which brought the subject closer than is comfortable to the possibility of *jouissance*.¹⁸ The Good—common, communal, what is to be sacrificed for—could no longer be viewed without the hint of its pathological, individual psychic basis, which was, in turn, a function of an inequitable political order. The political condition of the colonial situation shows the same terrible ironies. While democracy, the advent of the superegoic form of law, and its complex subject all emerged in European thought as a response *against* the realm of *goods* (à la Aristotle) as being the proper arena for the evaluation and definition of the political subject, where having and being were no longer the measure of worth, this realm persisted and flourished within the unconscious—and in the colonies, not less in the form of their undemocratic political and economic context, than in the form of mental pathologies. (And although these pathologies appeared at first to be milder in a Europe modified by social reformist efforts to rationalize inequalities, the outbreak of tremendous pathologies in the twentieth century has made abundantly clear that Europe did not escape the consequences of this twisted ethical dilemma.)¹⁹

Colonization instituted abroad the exploitative “civil society” Rousseau had tried so desperately to undermine in his writing at home. Thus, while Rousseau’s critique of “civil society” and of positive right was a good beginning for shaping a new free European political subject,²⁰ at the level of the subject’s

relation to *jouissance* no revolution was enough advanced. The reappearance of the Thing, the bad object-in-the-form-of-a-good played no small part in the second coming of exploitative civil society in the colonies. Politically translated, colonialism blunted *nascent democratic thought* because its very form required *renaturalizing* rights (to rationalize racialization) and reconfirming the *power of the Good*, only no longer at the overt and cynical level of "the good" promulgated by a conqueror, but at the level of an *unconscious appeal*, working through the Superego.

The *démontage* of the Good at the conscious, political and theoretical level could not prevent its continuing to operate inside, *extimately*, in the unconscious. In the colonial case, it was aggravated by the fact that the colonizer after the Declaration of the Rights of Man had to expel his "good," to disavow it; projecting his Thing onto the colonized proved handy. If he clung to the discourse of the Good, he still provoked, consciously or not, a dialectic of envy about his goods in which he unconsciously engaged with the colonized. If he tried to do "good" he was no less capable of lying, as Lacan says, to himself about evil.

THE WHITE MAN'S THING:

THE RACIAL BODY IN COLONIAL FANTASY

It is "*das Gut, das Ding*"—the White Man's Thing—that increases the power of exploitation in the colonial situation. It insistently replaces the kernel of the other's identification with its own. Its field of operation is less overtly that of commodities than it is today, though commodification and the service of goods structures its effects. In colonialism, the Thing operates directly through the body as racialized: it becomes the weak point or lesion where the alien "good" is inserted. Lacan says that something in the body is structured in the same way as a subject's relation to the signifier, akin to the relation of fantasy to its object: *\$_{oa}* (*Seminar XI* 182). The operation goes beyond, though it parallels, the original senseless subjection to the signifier; it bespeaks the letter and its agency over the body. That agency is the color of skin.

Ironically, racialization was historically an effect of the *class* struggle involved in democratic revolutions (Le Conte de Gobineau, Boulainvilliers, etc.).²¹ But in colonization, not only is its class base obscured, it

blends with the problematic of the good to compound and devastate the subject on the basis of the body. This is what happens precisely to Toni in "The Betrothal in Santo Domingo." Its sequence is chillingly depicted as we continue in Kleist's story, which contains, I think, precious insight into the way colonization does its damage. In the story the first trauma of enslavement is followed by a second and graver stage of pathology.

KLEIST AGAIN: GUSTAV AND TONI

Toni is a *mestiza* (one-fourth Negro), the daughter of Babekan (common law wife of Congo Hoango). Babekan is a *mulatto* with a Spanish father: Toni is not Congo's daughter, but was fathered by a French nobleman who refused to acknowledge his daughter. The illegitimate birth caused Babekan to suffer sixty lashes from the good M. de Villeneuve, her master, injuries which left her permanently disabled. Toni and Babekan are ordered by Congo Hoango to slay any whites who happen by; and even to lure them to their destruction if necessary, by having Toni seduce them. Toni, however, must not, under pain of death consummate the seduction. A young Swiss, Gustav van der Ried, trying to make his escape from the advancing black armies, seeks help for himself and his family, whom he has left behind in the woods, at the former estate of de Villeneuve. Babekan orders her daughter to try to look as white as possible to entrap Gustav, and they both profess loyalty to their white portion. Gustav, who has kept his sword with him, even though he had promised he was unarmed, feels his way through the potentially dangerous situation with his own form of seduction. He first tells the women the horrible story of a Negro slave girl's revenge on her wicked former master, a "Judith and Holofernes" kind of tale of retribution: she sleeps with the man, who thinks she has forgiven all, knowing she is infected with the plague. Next, alone with the daughter, Gustav tells Toni she "resembles" someone from his past, Marianne Congreve, his fiancée who protected him from the wrath of the revolutionary Terror in Paris,²² sacrificing her life to his (a story that causes Toni to throw "her arms round his neck . . . mingling her tears with his" (247):

[K]nowing that there was only one way of finding out whether the girl had sincere feelings or not he

drew her down on to his knees and asked her whether she was already engaged to be married. 'No!' she murmured, lowering her great black eyes with a sweet air of modesty; and without stirring on his lap she added that a young negro called Konelly who lived in that neighbourhood had proposed to her three months earlier, but that she had refused him because she was too young. The stranger, embracing her narrow waist with his two hands, replied that in his country there was a proverb that a girl of fourteen years and seven weeks was old enough to marry. As she gazed at the small golden cross he wore around his neck, he asked her how old she was. 'Fifteen,' replied Toni. 'Well then!' said the stranger. 'Has he not got enough money to set up house with you in the way you would like?' Toni, without raising her eyes to him, answered: 'Oh no! On the contrary,' she added, letting go of the cross which she was holding in her hand, 'Konelly has become a rich man as a result of the things that have happened recently; his father has gained possession of the whole settlement that used to belong to his master the planter.' 'Then why did you refuse his offer?' asked the stranger. He tenderly stroked the hair back from her forehead and said: 'Perhaps he didn't attract you?' The girl shook her head briefly and laughed; and when the stranger, whispering playfully into her ear, asked whether it was necessary to be a white man in order to gain her favour, she suddenly, after a fleeting pensive pause, and with a most charming blush spreading suddenly over her sunburnt face, sank against his breast. The stranger, moved by her sweetness and grace, called her his darling girl and clasped her in his arms, feeling that the hand of God had swept away all his anxieties. He could not possibly believe that all these signs of emotion she showed him were merely the wretched antics of cold-hearted, hideous treachery. (244)

It is completely undecidable at this point which of the two is tricking the other, or if neither is, and Kleist is depicting a genuine spontaneous mutual "love": Toni may be doing her job of seduction courageously, given the context of Gustav's physical power over her (he has laid his heretofore hidden sword on the table);

Gustav may be genuinely attracted to her, in his limited, racialized way: "but for her complexion which repelled him, he could have sworn that he had never seen anything more beautiful" (243). Decision will come through sex:

There is no need to report what happened next, for it will be clear to anyone who has followed the narrative thus far. When the stranger regained possession of himself and realized what he had done, he had no idea what its consequences might be; but for the time being at least he understood that he was saved, and that in this house he had entered there was nothing for him to fear from the girl. (247)

Gustav is "saved" by his taking of Toni. But Toni has, in one of Kleist's famously elided scenes of sexuality, experienced a traumatic blow which for her is irreversible.

Seeing her sitting on the bed, with her arms folded across her and weeping, he did everything he could to console her. He took from his breast the little golden cross which was a present from his dead fiancée, the faithful Marianne, and leaning over Toni and caressing her with the utmost tenderness he hung it round her neck, saying that it was his bridal gift to her. As she went on weeping and did not listen to him, he sat down on the edge of the bed, and told her, stroking and kissing her hand, that he would tomorrow morning seek her mother's permission to marry her. He described to her the little estate he possessed on the banks of the Aar; a house sufficiently comfortable and spacious to accommodate her and her mother as well, if the latter's age would permit her to make the journey; he described his fields, gardens, meadows and vineyards, and his venerable aged father who would welcome her there with gratitude and love for having saved his son's life. As her tears continued and poured down over the pillow he embraced her passionately, almost weeping himself, and begged her to tell him how he had wronged her and whether she could not forgive him. He swore that the love he felt for her would never fade from his heart and that it had only been the turmoil and confusion of his senses, the strange mixture of desire and fear she had aroused in him, that had led him to do such a deed. In the

end he reminded her that the morning stars were glistening in the sky and that if she stayed in this bed any longer her mother would come and surprise her But since she made no answer to anything he said and simply lay there motionless among the scattered pillows, cradling her head in her arms and sobbing quietly, and since daylight was already gleaming through both the windows, he had no choice but to pick her up without further ado; he carried her, hanging over his shoulder like a lifeless thing, up the stairs to her bedroom, and after laying her on her bed . . . he once more called her his beloved bride and kissed her on both cheeks, then hurried back to his room. (247)

When morning comes, Toni awakens pure white. Not literally, of course. But her entire identity has now become sensitized, as it were, to Gustav's "good." She tells her mother it is "shameful and contemptible" to violate the laws of hospitality as they had been, that her home is a "den of murderers" (249). She defends the young Swiss because "he is not even a Frenchman by birth" and therefore not an enemy, claiming that he is "entirely noble-minded." Moreover, she now proclaims she has a "soul" which is sickened by the killings. In short, she has been converted to the "good." But what has happened, psychically, is that her good has been displaced by Gustav's. She has essentially been made to choose between being a plague infected ex-slave or self-sacrificing lover a la Marianne—her only choices, by Gustav's reckoning—in his realm, that of pure evil and pure good. The story henceforth is comprised entirely of her efforts to save Gustav. (Note how she repeats Congo Hoango's original action of rescue, not of an actual, but of a psychological master.)

Toni manages to find Gustav's family, arm them, and have them arrive to liberate him. She has tied him to his bed to ensure that no one suspects her of disloyalty to Congo Hoango. But Gustav, unaware of her plan, once he is freed by his relations and armed, shoots Toni "right through the breast" (265) in front of his horrified family, who know the reality of the situation, and who blame him severely. Facing their horrified disgust, Gustav places the pistol in his mouth, blowing out his brains and scattering pieces of his skull which stick to the walls of the room. Though most

students react to a first reading of the story as though it were a tale of a romantic love-death, in which he does not want to go on without her, more than Romeo and Juliet is at issue here. What is at stake, rather, is *the good*. No longer unequivocally "good" in the eyes of his fellows, or no longer its exclusive possessor, Gustav cannot continue to live.

What makes colonization so traumatic an encounter for the racialized subject is always something like the story of Toni. We can even go one step more, to reinterpret the problematical *ethical* position of colonizer and colonized here as parallel to that struggle with the peculiar, yet compelling power that an *Ideal ego* and its *Good* has over any subject of the Superego, as aggravated in the case of the colonial subject.

The Superego must be dealt with if the subject of a new ethics, demanded by the birth of modern democracy and real post-coloniality is ever to replace the older ethics of "the good." Democracy needs not a greater, clearer, better, more expansive version of "the good"—a superpower—but rather an accounting for this idealization of the one who has the power to deprive us of it. We must question fundamentally the continued sway "the good" has over us as we blind ourselves more and more to its truly evil character in the condition of the passing of Oedipus. This "good" is nothing other than *das Ding*, the unapproachable and unfathomable and unmovable entity around which the subject moves and against which it defends itself.²³ Under the Superego, replacing the ego ideal of the Oedipal father ("the power to do good") with an ideal ego does not remove the supposed power of the good inherited from Aristotelian ethics (and the pleasure principle), but rather restores and further distorts it. It is to idealize and render yet more powerful precisely that imaginary other who, in Lacan's beautifully succinct definition, "has to the power to deprive us of the good" (234), much as Toni actually idealizes Gustav's definitive replacement of her good with *his*.

"Second stage" colonialism is, therefore, most damaging to the colonized psyche precisely when the colonial subject incorporates a *bad* object—the colonizer's "good," the white man's thing—in the form of a *good* that "determines their reason." Far more damaging than simple enslavement,²⁴ or pitched battle with an alien adversary, it blocks the colonized subject

from finding their own desire. It insists the Other's *jouissance* is the *only* good.

DURAS'S *INDIA SONG*: THE "GOOD BREAST"

If, in the colonies, as Duras wryly remarked, the colonizers learned to take a bath every day, and acquired many gifts from those they colonized (see Gandhi's purported remark on what he thought about Western Civilization: "It would be a fine idea."), there was no possibility of exchange, structurally speaking. Colonization brought what I would call the realm of "goods" to the foreign bodies it conquered and occupied. As the purveyor of goods, in all senses of the term, colonization provoked a dialectic of (unconscious) *envy* no less in itself than in those it conquered.²⁵ The colonial "shock" is not the simple confrontation with Oedipal "civilization"—as human, the colonized in the pre-contact state is already marked by the field of the Other. Nor is it the realization of childhood trauma replayed as dependency or the infancy of need and demand (Mannoni). It is the insistent insertion of a *dialectic of goods* (unconscious relation to *bad*, conscious relation to *good*, objects) in place of one's own way of relating to the Thing.²⁶ Witness Fanon, who keenly conveys the colonized's sense that the colonizer has exclusive possession of the Thing—made clear by the fact that there can be no exchange (Fanon 94-6).²⁷ Witness Memmi's complaint that all creation within one's own culture is stymied by the advent of the colonizer—blocked not only by the colonizer's goods but by an overvaluing, as goods, of a set version of one's own culture and its "traditions."²⁸ Witness Chatterjee's plea for imagination.

And, finally, witness *India Song*. Marguerite Duras's astonishing film will help us make the ultimate analytic reduction of the pathology of *the good* in colonialism. Duras's portrait of Anne Marie Stretter in *India Song* sketches out the basic mechanism which becomes decisive for the psychic violence done to the colonial subject. And in a marvelous revelation, to be captured perhaps only on film, she reveals the nature of the White Man's Thing: the white woman's breast.

India Song is, in my opinion, a brilliant analysis of the very problematic of the subject's relation to *jouissance*, fantasy, and the Thing as good and bad object in the colonial case. It is the story of Anne

Marie Stretter (Delphine Seyrig), wife of the French ambassador to Calcutta. She is an apathetic woman with numerous lovers (of whom her husband is perfectly aware) who yet holds herself aloof from one man, the Vice-Consul of Lahore (Michael Lonsdale). He appears to be driven to madness by his love, evidenced by his shooting both at himself (in the mirror) and (really) at the lepers of Lahore. About to be banished from Lahore to a different post, he attends a stiff, formal diplomatic party, at which he demands Anne-Marie Stretter dance with him. She acquiesces, and as they dance he tells her that he is going to cry out that he wants to spend the night with her. Speaking in a flat affectless tone, this "mad" Vice Consul tells her precisely what he will shout out; and that he wants to make a scandal, so everyone will know of his love for her. He then proceeds calmly to leave the embassy for its grounds, and to scream out repeatedly pleas for her to let him stay the night ("*Je veux rester avec elle!*"), along with her maiden name, "Anna Maria Guardi." What the film clarifies in a way that simply reading the text cannot, is that these screams resemble the demands for love voiced by a spoiled, unsatisfied child—increasingly so as they devolve into inarticulate repetitions of her maiden name, "Anna Maria Guardi," which comes to resemble nothing so much as variations on sobs of "Mama."

In a following scene, we see Anne Marie Stretter lying on a floor in the heat, wearing a long dark dress, with, however, one breast bared. The camera stays still on the breast, in close up, for quite some time. Two of her lovers (not the Vice Consul) enter and lie down beside her. The scene, far from being at all erotic and "sexy" is filled with apathy and a sense of enervation. (In the book, the men have to lift her arms up for there to be any activity at all.) The Vice Consul starts to enter the room, but hesitates in the doorway, at which point Anne Marie Stretter sits up and covers up her breast.

The model of sexuality, love etc., purveyed by the scene here is that of mother and son—the "son/lover" (the Vice-Consul) being the one exception to maternal sex—but so cynically and superficially stylized that the Europeans clearly have voided it of all primary sense—it is given but lip service and no more. This breast is *not an object a*, the stand in for the Thing whose encounter must be missed, "the object to be circum-

vented," for the Vice Consul and her other lovers.²⁹ Instead, this breast has been made into a *good* for "consumption" by the eyes (not the mouths) of the Indian servants who move silently, rigidly across the spaces occupied by these white bodies.

What the European Vice Consul and his "love story" have done, thus, is to have successfully represented himself, his culture, his skin, his "mother's" breast as a "good," an *ultimate good*, a good the colonial other is simultaneously warned, by precept and example, can never be exchanged *fairly* for any goods he or she might have. They might give their all, this "Good" will remain a forever unattainable form, like the "eternal feminine." The white woman (or rather her lifeless white breast) is what the Vice-Consul so passionately, yet cynically and histrionically, dramatizes for the natives as being such an ultimate, unattainable highest good. The inert body of Anne Marie Stretter, vapid, vacant, a mere shadow of a human womanly presence,³⁰ is being sold—or rather, *advertised*—to the natives here. Their very status as "inferiors" *depends* on their realization of her absolute unattainability in her idealized form. She is the Ideal Ego par excellence.

Duras's film aims to demystify the maternal body as a "good." The imitation of maternity and its ultimate, untouchable, good, by Anne Marie Stretter, who "gives herself to all," like a good mother, and yet to no one at all, is already a travesty of that body—a "sublime" body, a "thing of nothing." As such, it is a pure *commodity*, which (so the scenario is written) once the Indian or Malagasy or Congolese has even had a whiff of, he must simultaneously pursue and forsake if he is to be any good (Žižek 255-60).³¹ Always just below the possibility of attaining, doing, and being "good" himself, he nevertheless is to forsake all other goods in its pursuit. Once the other is given to understand this body as ultimate, with no other comparable, colonization has taken root, and taken its toll. *f*

III. HOPEFUL SIGNS?

Are there alternatives? With tone and imagery, if not specific theorizing, Homi Babha suggests for me a post-colonial stance that could circumvent the taken-for-granted sense we in the West have of nation, state, culture as a (utilitarian) realm of goods, ill-fitting gar-

ments for any really post-colonial version of community. Babha describes his "locality of culture" as "oppositions overcome." Rather than this Derridean locution, what he really means is more like Lacanian "excess," or a sublimity disjoined from good (and evil), from the "moral" Superego:

[M]ore complex than 'society', more connotative than 'country'; less patriotic than *patrie*; more rhetorical than reason of state; more mythological than ideology; less homogeneous than hegemony; less centered than the citizen; more collective than 'the subject'; more psychic than civility; more hybrid in the articulation of cultural differences and identifications—gender, race, or class—than can be represented in any hierarchical or binary structures of social antagonism. (Babha 292)

Voiced here is an incipient ethics of *jouissance*, the advent of recognizing the power that resides in excess.

...

In terms of other hopeful signs, I rather like the way that the post colonial is beginning to make an appearance on the world stage. Two recent news items show a certain clever inventiveness in countering the blows of coloniality: "Mexican Village Revolts Against a Golf Course" and "Rain Forest Dwellers Suing Texaco."

NOTES

¹ He continues: "Hollywood's ability to leap deftly even the greatest hurdles of reality and create myths independent of place, time and facts, will always be its greatest strength."

² An interesting tack is taken by playwright Hélène Cixous, in her play about Cambodia, which she followed with one about the national trauma of the India/Pakistan partition.

³ "If nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain 'modular' forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine?" (Chatterjee 5); and later: "The project, then, is to claim for us, the once-colonized, our freedom of imagination" (Chatterjee 13).

⁴ See Mahashweti Devi's search for the pre-Aryan tribals in India, a quest she analogizes to the Native American effort to recapture their culture.

⁵ Albert Memmi:

Sooner or later . . . the potential rebel falls back on the traditional values. This explains the astonishing survival of the colo-

nizer's family The young man will marry, will become a devoted father, reliable brother, responsible uncle and, until he takes his father's place, a respectful son. Everything has gone back to the order of things. Revolt and conflict have ended in a victory for the parents and tradition.

But it is a pyrrhic victory. Colonized society has not taken even half a step forward; for the young man, it is an internal catastrophe. He will remain glued to that family which offers him warmth and tenderness but which simultaneously absorbs, clutches and emasculates him With good grace now, he submits, as do the others, to his father's authority and prepares to replace him. The model is a weak one. His universe is that of the vanquished. But what other way is there? By a curious paradox, his father is simultaneously weak and possessive. The young man is ready to assume his role of the colonized adult—that is, to accept being an oppressed creature.

⁶ See her classic study, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, especially Chapters 7 and 8 on race and bureaucracy, government by decree and the general "lawlessness" of imperialism. Her thesis precisely parallels Aimé Césaire's: that even the most seemingly "normal" practices of the colonist against the colonized placed a permanent distortion in Western life, first at the level of ideas, especially concerning "rights" and "nation." Arendt argues that these concepts, hard won in revolutionary struggles in the Enlightenment, returned to a Europe distorted by colonial racism. Once in the colony, faced with others the colonist needed to subject, "rights" were "naturalized" (to legitimate the "natural" superiority of the European colonizer). This permanently, according to Arendt, interfered with the delicate progress of a social contract whose contracting parties had no substantive qualities. This idea was virtually lost for European thought, which suffered instead new "nationalisms" that were thinly veiled forms of racism and imperialism (e.g. pan slavism). Europe, caught in the ideals of democracy, did not recognize this "nation" for the evil clone of Rousseau's democracy it had become. (Today's various right and left wing "identity" politics should take note.)

⁷ Kleist seemed to sense immediately the future significance Haiti would hold for freedom and fantasy in democracy. This significance has recently been described by Willy Apollon (forthcoming) as

the war of the slaves against the masters [which] took place in the line of the great French Revolution in which the people, spectators of the pomp of the great and noble, suddenly became actors in their own destiny. But when the slaves of St. Domingo revolted and created their own space for the possible, they had no language through which to express the unheard of. Two

worlds opened that henceforth set each against the other in a highly ambiguous coexistence, but one that formed the axis of Haiti's political history. On one side were the new free men, former slaves, for whom the voodoo structure offered a language where an esthetics was possible. On the other side were their allies for the period of the war of independence, the emancipated, former free men, mastering the language of their former masters and succeeding them in the objective possession and control of natural resources, and thus able to manage a national space in dialogue with an emerging international order. Two languages and two spaces therefore existed, opposed in their own esthetics because of the divergence in their interests and in their means of survival and hinged together by the force of the history of control and combination of one by the other for two centuries. . . . The Caribbean comes down to the determination of that crucial moment, in the unique history of each group, where the parting of the ways took place; where common, socio-political contexts transformed themselves objectively into different histories with divergent socio-cultural stakes.

⁸ I suspect that the nervous insistence on speech act theory in deconstruction fashionable these days has something to do with a dim awareness of this connection.

⁹ In the first version of, "*Du Contrat social, ou essai sur la forme de la république*" (290), Rousseau speaks of the act of association as producing a "*corps moral et collectif composé d'autant de membres que l'assemblée a de voix*" whose "*moi commun*" would grant it formal unity, life, and will. He called it a "*personne publique*." Each "*personne*" has a "*volonté générale*" whose force is only a means toward an end: "*le bonheur du peuple*." (*Du Contrat social* 509). English quotations can be found in *The Social Contract*.

¹⁰ See Louis Althusser's comments on the discrepancy of the two recipient parties to Rousseau's social contract (129-133).

¹¹ Hegel placed the first moral values of civil society, a realm of self-seeking, in the ruling warrior castes (*Sittlichkeit*). Individual private moral subjectivity appears only with the relatively weaker bourgeoisie (*Moralität*).

¹² In a parallel way, Salecl points to the Kantian subject as a cogito delivered from all substantial remainders (82). Kant claimed Rousseau as his inspiration.

¹³ This is a key part of his reflections on religion in *The Social Contract*, Book IV, Chapter VIII, "On Civil Religion."

¹⁴ "The latter considers only the general interest, whereas the former considers private interest and is merely the sum of private wills. But remove from these same wills the pluses and minuses that cancel each other out, and what remains is the general will."

The Social Contract, Chapter III, "Whether the General Will can Err" (Rousseau, "Du Contrat social" 371; *The Social Contract* 31-32).

¹⁵ Later utilitarians would try something different, creating a will of all from the sacrificial logic of these pluses and minuses. The difference between Rousseau and the utilitarians is that he does not believe that the distribution of goods will do any good at all in righting inequities; the ruling classes can simply create scarcity (or even excess) to mask the fundamental dialectic of envy the good evokes.

¹⁶ This parallels Lacan's notion of the Desire of the Other. We have to go through "the desire of the Other" because the subject is what it is only because it is subject to the signifier. But Lacan also speaks of another need—for the subject to "get himself out" from domination by the signifier:

The subject as such is uncertain because he is divided by the effects of language. Through the effects of speech, the subject always realizes himself more in the Other, but he is already pursuing there more than half of himself. He will simply find his desire ever more divided. Effects of language are always mixed with the fact, which is the basis of the analytic experience, that the subject is subject only from being subjected to the field of the Other, the subject proceeds from his synchronic subjection in the field of the Other. That is why he must get out, get himself out, and in the getting-himself-out, in the end, he will know that the real Other has, just as much as himself, to get himself out, to pull himself free. It is here that the need for good faith becomes imperative, a good faith based on the certainty that the same implication of difficulty in relation to the ways of desire is also in the Other. (Lacan, *Seminar XI* 188)

These emphatic appeals to "break out" of some "integrated . . . symbolic universe" share topicality with Albert Memmi's classic mythography of the colonizer and the colonized. Memmi's 1957 work, written during the colonial wars in Algeria, Tunisia, Indochina, among others, locates with unerring precision the colonized subject's fundamental dislocation as far as memory and the power to invent new forms is concerned.

¹⁷ The inference, drawn all too often, was that Rousseau's new state would call forth an "uncivil society." But make no mistake, Rousseau was not Diderot, and his "sauvage," or man in the wild, was no sentimentalized Tahitian (spontaneous, sexy, and uninhibited). The problem for Rousseau is deeper, more constitutive of the human being.

¹⁸ The stake of the unconscious subject's problem with "the good" becomes, according to Lacan, the following:

Will it or will it not submit itself to the duty that it feels with-

in like a stranger, beyond, at another level? Should it or should it not submit itself to the half-unconscious, paradoxical, and morbid command of the superego, whose jurisdiction is moreover revealed increasingly . . . ? If I may put it thus, isn't its true duty to oppose that command? (Lacan, *Seminar VII* 7)

¹⁹ The desire to think about postcoloniality took impetus from the spectacle of European destructiveness in the form of Nazism: Césaire, in his *Discours sur le colonialisme*, claimed that Europe had actually practiced Nazism in training in its colonies, "employed only against non-European peoples." "That Nazism they encouraged, they were responsible for it, and it drips, it seeps, it wells from every crack in western Christian civilization until it engulfs that civilization in a bloody sea" (quoted in Fanon 91). Césaire's 1956 text postdates Hannah Arendt's 1951 classic.

²⁰ Rousseau drafted constitutions for Poland and Corsica, predicting that the Tyrrhenian island would produce in the next generation a person who would astonish the world and change the face of Europe largely because he saw there the possibility that a "people" could be founded not on natural rights, not on their inherent individual rights as children of God, but only on the rights they bestow on themselves as a whole.

²¹ While democracy was and remains the object of fierce resistance by conservative, autocratic and the aristocratic classes, it has proved impossible—at least until now, with our racism, universalism, and the renaturalizing of the realm of rights—to put the democratic genie back in the bottle once it was let out. The assault has been relentless, and has had major successes. First among these, perhaps, was the devious device of theorizing racism. The Conte de Gobineau, a French aristocrat, created racial theory in the wake of the French revolution, to account for the unprecedented loss by the aristocratic classes (Frankish, therefore Germanic, and inherently superior to what he called the "celto-latins"—the mob, the democratic "gallic" rabble whom his ancestors had once so easily conquered. He claimed that every exceptional Frenchman was one of "the true surviving sons of the Merovingians" (cited in Arendt 173). By displacing a class conflict onto a racial one, and decrying the degeneracy of his race as cause of the loss, de Gobineau pitted what he called "race" against the democratic term "nation."

²² Stressing the link of the good to the noble, Gustav goes on: It was her death alone that taught me the very essence of all goodness and nobility. God knows,' he continued, bowing his head in grief upon her shoulder, 'how I allowed myself to be so utterly reckless as to make certain remarks one evening in a public place about the terrible Revolutionary Tribunal which had just been set -up. I was denounced, my arrest was sought; and since I had been fortunate enough to escape to the outskirts

of the city, the bloodthirsty band of my pursuers, failing to find me but insisting on some victim or other, even rushed to my fiancée's house; and so infuriated were they by her truthful declaration that she did not know where I was, that with outrageous cynicism, on the pretext that she was my accomplice, they dragged her instead of me to the scaffold. No sooner had this appalling news been conveyed to me than I emerged from the hiding-place into which I had fled, and hastened, pushing my way through the crowd, to the place of execution, where I shouted at the top of my voice: "Here I am, you inhuman monsters!" But she, already standing on the platform beside the guillotine, on being questioned by some of the judges who as ill-fortune would have it did not know me by sight, gave me one look which is indelibly imprinted on my soul, and then turned away, saying: "I have no idea who that man is!" And a few moments later, amid a roll of drums and a roar of voices, at the behest of those impatient butchers, the iron blade dropped and severed her head from her body. (246)

²³ Let me recall here the attention Lacan gives to the word "*défendre*" with its double meaning of defense and forbid. One's defense of one's goods is spoken the same way as depriving oneself of these goods in French (*Seminar VII* 229).

²⁴ The master-slave relationship is at least still a human relationship as long as there exists a community "willing and able to guarantee any rights whatsoever": it is loss of this community that has been "the calamity which has befallen ever-increasing numbers of people" (Arendt 297). Colonization works in the realm of the inhuman, *das Ding*.

²⁵ It is impossible to ignore the economic context of psychoanalysis. Fanon reserves his greatest criticism of Octave Mannoni less for "not hav[ing] tried to feel himself into the despair of the man of color confronting the white man" (Fanon 86) than for failing to recognize that a "racist structure" is "fundamentally the result of the economic structure" (87; re South Africa). "All forms of exploitation" are "identical because all of them are applied against that same 'object': 'man' (88).

²⁶ Here an underlying economic difference subtends the psychic: gift as *exchange* is precluded by the *marketing of goods*.

²⁷ Colonization interrupts permanently the normal human ways of welcoming the stranger, the ways of exchange or the gift. Eighteenth century terms like "humanity" and "good will" are sprinkled in Fanon's description of the pre-colonial days, twinned with "courtesy." In "what Césaire calls 'the old, courtly civilizations,'" characterized by "humanity," "good will," and "courtesy," Fanon writes, "the foreigner was called *vazaha*, which means *honorable stranger*; . . . shipwrecked Europeans were welcomed with open

arms. . . . [T]he European, the foreigner, was never thought of as the enemy" (Fanon 99). Colonialism made a drastic difference in this elementary human encounter, but its nature remains obscure to Fanon:

Alterity for the black man is not the black but the white man. An island like Madagascar, invaded overnight by 'pioneers of civilization,' even if these pioneers conducted themselves as well as they knew how, suffered the loss of its basic structure Something new had come into being on that island, and it had to be reckoned with . . . a new element having been introduced, it became mandatory to seek to understand the new relationships. (97)

Unable to pinpoint precisely its special trauma, Fanon invokes a range of possibilities, speculating that both colonizer and colonized are transformed ("since Gallieni, the Malagasy has ceased to exist" 94); or that the Malagasy alone is altered: "The Malagasy alone no longer exists, . . . *he exists with the European*" (96). He finally conveys in the strongest terms an utterly inexplicable *dehumanization* of the Malagasy—"white alone means human" (98).

²⁸ Stirred and stirred up by Octave Mannoni's *Prospero and Caliban*, Fanon recognized that both he and Mannoni reject a normative psychoanalysis for being too easily pressed into colonial service, too inattentive to the specific situation of the colonized, racialized subject. Lacan's non-normalizing psychoanalysis, however (in particular his replacement of the metaphor and *Nom du père* with the *objet a*) proves a much more sensitive tool. Memmi, too, is aware of psychoanalytic paradigms. He depicts a "social and historical mutilation" accomplished first by a pseudo-Oedipal revolt against the colonized's family, next, by the lure of identification with the culture of the colonizer, and finally, by acquiescence in the way that the colonizer has selected as the "good" or salvageable parts of his own culture:

As an adolescent, it is with difficulty that [the colonized] conceives vaguely, if at all, of the only way out of a disastrous family situation. . . revolt. The ring is tightly sealed. Revolt against his father and family is a wholesome act and an indispensable one for self-achievement. It permits him to start his adult life—a new unhappy and happy battle—among other men. The conflict of generations can and must be resolved by social conflict; conversely, it is thus a factor in movement and progress. The young generations find the solution to their problems in collective movements. . . . It is necessary, of course, that that movement be possible. Now, into what kind of life and social dynamic do we emerge? The colony's life is frozen; its structure is both corseted and hardened. No new role is open to the young man, no invention is possible. The colonizer admits this

with a now classical euphemism: He respects, he proclaims, the ways and customs of the colonized. (Memmi 97-8).

The earliest theorization of colonialism that implicates it in a manipulation of the unconscious appears in Memmi's "mythical portrait of the colonized" (80-89). Memmi, like Fanon, credits psychoanalysis, but also discredits it for the colonial case:

Psychoanalysis or Marxism must not, under the pretext of having discovered the source or one of the main sources of human conduct, pre-empt all experience, all feeling, all suffering, all the byways of human behavior, and call them profit motive or Oedipus complex (Memmi xiii).

Yet Memmi knows the score psychoanalytically where the need for Oedipus is concerned:

The most serious blow suffered by the colonized is being removed from history and the community. Colonization usurps one's free role in either war or peace, every decision contributing to his destiny and that of the world, and all cultural and social responsibility. . . . The colonized man feels neither responsible nor guilty nor skeptical, for he is out of the game. . . . He has forgotten how to participate actively in history and no longer even asks to do so. . . . All memory of freedom seems distant. (91-2)

²⁹ In the sense of the *object a* as object of the "subject's claim to something that is separated from him, but belongs to him and which he needs to complete himself" (Lacan, *Ethics* 195). It is made into a simulated one for the colonized, however.

³⁰ To be contrasted in absolute terms with the life-force of the Beggar Woman from Savannahkhet in the film. She is never seen in the film, but her laughing, mad voice contains every bit of feminine animation that exists there.

³¹ See Žižek (255-60) on how this sublime body emerges from the illegal violence linked to the founding of law. Whereas in democracy what emerges is a sublime body of the "people," in colonization, what we see coming forth is a "sublime" body of the commodity, founded on a law of the master.

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