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THE MAD DOG AND THE ENGLISHMAN

A critical history of the running amok as spontaneous naked savage

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I would like to take this opportunity to state that this work from its conceptualisation to its realisation is indubitably of my making. While it is as indubitable that I am new to the field of critical theory, many ideas that pertain to this work seem novel to me if no one else. These include the derivation of a secular-ethical critique based on a methodological fragment comprising a small 'sample of critical moments'; writing/ writhing from the body; the text (discourse) as antagonistic (rather than 'gnostic') and its fragmentation of the (textual) body of the adiscursive ahistorical subject/ object; genealogical descent as descending on the body in search of our lowly or impure origins (e.g. of disease, disorder, and our anthropological or biological/ racial origins); and the link between Foucault's functionalist thesis on power with the Enlightenment doctrine of the universal struggle for existence/ survival. I am more than obligated to the likes of Foucault or Edward Said for the great insights offered me when surveying the 'discursive formations' of the Western or disciplinary tradition. I however also do not believe in merely paying blind obeisance and have instead fashioned a work that I consider to be significantly different in approach and content to, for example, a *Madness and civilisation* or *Orientalism*. I hope of course to publish much of this work elsewhere and assert my 'moral right' over this work in its entirety.

Rajeendernath Panikkar

PREFACE

I began this work with the intention of writing a genealogy of amok, the Malay malaise, not long now incorporated into the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), as a culture-bound syndrome. A reading of Foucault's genealogy, and especially of its innumerable critiques, convinced me of the incompatibility of matching an approach steeped in the Western tradition with a 'syndrome' of a people who were long colonised by this West. Foucault's conceptualization, and attributions, of power were also instrumental in my rejection of his incitement to 'write genealogies' (Sawicki, 1991; p. 15), as a method of resisting the 'often oppressive rationalities of discourse in the human sciences' (Lash, 1991; p. 259).

In departing from the genealogical approach I have also gravitated to a postcolonial critique of the writing of the Malay and his amok, which I consider to be far more compatible, given his/ her colonisation by a succession of European imperial powers. Not coincidentally, as he is one of Foucault's most vehement critics, I have refracted this critical history of amok through Edward Said's secular-ethical working of the postcolonial thesis. This is my attempt to avoid what Said views to be the 'retreat of intellectual work' from the 'actual society in which it works' (Ashcroft, 2003; p. 264), and into 'the 'labyrinth of textuality' constructed out of 'the mystical and disinfected matter of literary theory' where a 'precious jargon has advanced' (Said, 1983; p. 4). I have then very deliberately attempted to minimise this 'precious jargon' to make this work more accessible.

I have not included a literature review in this work and instead furnish the excuse that it is (this work) a literature review of sorts. It is a literary critique of the historical writing of the Malay and his malaise. A final word concerns the likely controversial use of the term, the 'White Man', which reprises a longstanding, and antagonistic, racial dichotomy which I and many others believe to be fundamental to 'modern' history. Though I explain my use of this term in my work, I make my sincere apologies to those who feel aggrieved with my continual reference to the 'White Man'. At times I have felt as aggrieved but, in considering various alternatives, could not in all honesty disregard the only too apparent authority this self-proclaimed 'White Man' has exerted on history, and more particularly, in the context of this thesis, on the Malay World.

R. Panikkar

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CONTENTS

Contents	Page no.
PREFACE	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
CONTENTS	iv
PART 1: INTRODUCTION, ANTECEDENTS AND FOUNDATIONS FOR A CRITICAL HISTORY ON THE MALAY AND HIS AMOK ..	1
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND ANTECEDENTS	2
Biograph	2
My view of postcolonial Malaysia	3
CHAPTER 2: DRIVING AND GUIDING A CRITIQUE OF THE HISTORY OF THE MALAY AND HIS MALAISE	8
‘Writing genealogies’	8
Foucault and the non-secular non-ethical critique	9
Moving from literary theory to postcolonial critique: the Saidean approach to critical work	11
‘Writing genealogies’ and ‘writing for power’	13
Foucault’s functionalist view of power	16
Deriving a methodological fragment for this critique: a secular -ethical approach comprising a small sample of critical moments.....	23
More critical moments: the anti-colonialism of Frantz Fanon (the ‘Black Foucault’).	29
Writing in a ‘wordly’ style	32
CHAPTER 3: SOME KEY CONCEPTS	34
Representation and race in colonialist discourse	34
The syndrome in contemporary psychiatric discourse.....	35

And some necessary disclaimers	39
CHAPTER 4: WRITING/ WRITHING FROM THE BODY	40
Blending literary theory with the literary tradition	40
Contemporary literature and the principle of power	45
Toni Morrison's <i>Beloved</i> as critical historiography	47
The African-American tradition V modernity	52
Critical/ literary theory as institutional (corporate) anorexia	56
Concerning the 'modern subject' of genealogy	57
PART 2: WRITING THE RUNNING AMOK: THE HISTORICAL CONSTANT OF THE 'WHITE MAN'	60
CHAPTER 5: PSYCHIATRY AND THE CULTURE-BOUND SYNDROME	61
Culture and race in psychiatric discourse	63
Of the varieties and races of man: primordial man and the native	69
The Malay 'race'	75
The Malay of contemporary Malaysian society	80
CHAPTER 6: THE 'INDIAN' AMOK	82
Amok as a culture-bound syndrome of the Indian of the Malabar Coast	82
The historical constant of the "white man" and his amok	88
CHAPTER 7: THE HISTORICAL TRUTH OF THE MALAY AND HIS MALAISE	92
The martial amok of the Malay.....	92
The solitary amok of the Malay	94
CHAPTER 8: EPISTEMIC SHIFTS IN IMPERIALIST DISCOURSE	103
The 'new world of voyages' and 'new world learning'	103
The pragmatic scholar and his science	104

Shifts in the writing of amok	107
CHAPTER 9: PSYCHIATRIC DISCOURSE ON AMOK: THE INNATELY DISORDERED MALAY	109
The innately disordered Malay	109
Amok as metaphor for the nature of the native/ savage	110
The absence of catharsis in Amok	112
The Malay as a 'spontaneous native'	113
PART 3: THE MALAY AS POLYMYTH: CONCERNING HIS AMOK, TREACHERY, INDOLENCE, BIGOTRY, MORAL TURPITUDE	114
CHAPTER 10: THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE MYTH OF THE 'TREACHEROUS MOHAMMEDANS'	115
Isabella Bird and <i>The Golden Chersonese</i>	116
Wallace's science in service of the colonial project on the Malay Archipelago.....	120
Wallace's contradictions and the modernist tradition of anti-modernism	128
Malay civilisation as stagnant.....	129
<i>The Malayan trilogy</i> : Anthony Burgess's ideological project on Malaya.	131
CHAPTER 11: THE EMERGENCE OF THE MYTH OF THE INDOLENT MALAY	134
The Enlightenment discourse of the infantile and indolent naked savage	136
William Robertson and the natural or 'naked' brown savage	140
A ranked modern ethnography	143
Marsden's naked brown savage: the native of the Malay Archipelago	148
The White Man's chimera	153
Running amok as a contradiction of the ideal man of reason.....	154
The racialised nature of Modernity	157

The racialised nature of Modernity	157
CHAPTER 12: REPRISING THE MYTH OF THE LAZY MALAY IN POST- INDEPENDENCE MALAYSIA	158
Mahathir, modernity, and the indolent Malay	159
Malay resistance to colonial occupation and modernity	166
EPILOGUE	170
Postscript	171
REFERENCE LIST	173
APPENDICES	Diskette
READING 1	Diskette
READING 2	Diskette

*Mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun,
The Japanese don't care to, the Chinese wouldn't dare to,
Hindus and Argentines sleep firmly from twelve to one
But Englishmen detest-a siesta. . . .*

*. . . In the Malay States, there are hats like plates which the Britishers won't wear.
At twelve noon the natives swoon and no further work is done,
But mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun.*

*It's such a surprise for the Eastern eyes to see,
that though the English are effete, they're quite impervious to heat,
When the white man rides every native hides in glee,
Because the simple creatures hope he will impale his solar topee. . . .*

*Mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun. . . .
. . . In a jungle town where the sun beats down to the rage of man and beast
The English garb of the English sahib merely gets a bit more creased.
In Bangkok at twelve o'clock they foam at the mouth and run,
But mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun.*

*Mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun.
The smallest Malay rabbit deploras this foolish habit. . . .
. . . In Bengal to move at all is seldom ever done,
But mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun.*

[Abbreviated from *Mad Dogs and Englishmen*; Noel Coward, 1932]