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Chapter

‘The Writing of the Empire’: Economies of Writing and ‘Otherness’ in Henri Fauconnier’s *Malaisie*

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Abstract

The development of colonial and postcolonial literatures usually follows a tripartite periodization: (1) a phase during which works are produced by 'representatives' of the colonial order, those able to represent this order by virtue of being white and European; (2) a succeeding phase in which texts are produced under the auspices of the colonial order by culturally incorporated natives who are bound by the hegemonies of this order as a condition of undertaking literary production; (3) this phase is then overtaken by one existing after the Second World War—here independent postcolonial literatures arise in which the cosmography of Western superiority is supplanted. However, there are texts produced in phase (1) that do not possess the allegedly typical features of the works belong to it. My claim resides in the possibility that such periodizations do account for a kind of 'Western' text in which the author risks being changed, as he/she submits her/himself to worlds of possibility displacing authorized notions of 'being Western', etc. Using de Certeau and Edward Said, I provide a reading of Henri Fauconnier's Prix Goncourt-winning 1930 francophone novel *Malaisie* that develops the concept of a 'paracolony', where I show what tends to be overlooked in most discussions of colonial and postcolonial literatures.

Keywords: Henri Fauconnier, Michel de Certeau, Edward Said, postcolonial literatures and theory, paracolony

1. Introduction

It is something of a commonplace among those who write on colonial and postcolonial literatures to periodize the development of these literatures in terms of something like the following tripartite schema:

There is an emergent or initial phase during which works are produced by 'representatives' of the colonial/imperial order, that is, those who can represent this order by virtue of being white, Western, and European;

This phase is then succeeded by one in which literature is produced under the auspices of the colonial order by culturally incorporated natives who are bound, whether

overtly or tacitly, by the hegemonies of that white, western, and European order as a condition of being able to engage in literary production;

The second phase in turn is overtaken by one which came to exist after the Second World War, and in it there develop independent literatures produced in a postcolonial (i.e. putatively 'nonwhite', 'nonwestern', 'non-European') context in which the cosmography of Western superiority and dominance is supplanted or displaced. A periodization of this kind is found in the excellent *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. Its authors—Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin—say of the first phase:

its representative texts can never form the basis for an indigenous culture nor can they be integrated in any way with the culture which already exists in the countries invaded. Despite their detailed reportage of landscape, custom, and language, they inevitably privilege the centre, emphasizing the 'home' over the 'native', the 'metropolitan' over the 'provincial' or 'colonial', and so forth. At a deeper level their claim to objectivity simply serves to hide the imperial discourse within which they are created. That this is true of even the consciously literary works which emerge from this moment can be illustrated by the poems and stories of Rudyard Kipling. For example, in the well-known poem 'Christmas in India' the evocative description of a Christmas day in the heat of India is contextualized by invoking its absent English counterpart. Apparently it is only through this absent and enabling signifier that the Indian daily reality can acquire legitimacy as a subject of literary discourse [1].

Kipling is certainly not alone in being an exemplary instance of what transpires, 'structurally' as it were, in this first phase of historical development—to his name one can add those of Conrad, Forster, Melville, Flaubert, and numerous others. Since I believe the claims which lie at the heart of this periodization to be largely probative, I will not here dispute their gist or substance. At any rate, this historical schema seems to account for the broad outlines of what has taken place in the mainstreams of colonial and postcolonial literary production.

It is my contention, however, that there are texts produced in the first phase of this periodization which do not possess the allegedly typical or constitutive features of the works, 'literary' or otherwise, which are characteristically held to belong to it.¹ The basis of my claim resides in the possibility, to be canvassed here, that such periodizations do not consider a certain kind of 'Western' or 'European' text, one in which the author risks being changed, in which the writer submits her/himself to worlds of possibility which displace received or authorized notions of 'being white', 'being Western', 'being European'.

In this connection, therefore, I am mindful of Michel de Certeau's essay on Jean de Léry's *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Bresil*, a work published in 1578, which

¹ It is also very likely that there will be literary works produced in the other stages identified by this periodization which do not possess the defining features of the stage in question. Regarding the second stage of this periodization, for instance, I am mindful of Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridization, according to which the dominant Western/European language is always used by the colonial subject in a way that undermines it: the subject, by virtue of never being entirely like the colonizer, 'English' (say) but somehow never quite English, subverts the dominant language in using it, 'problematizes' its capacity to be authoritative and representative, because (s)he is perforce different from the colonizer, is never quite (in this case) 'English' enough. See [2]; and [3].

recounts its author's voyage to the Bay of Rio in the years 1556–1558.² In his discussion of this work—a work described by Levi-Strauss as 'that masterpiece of anthropological literature'³ de Certeau shows how de Lery constructs a literary object, the 'Brazilian savage', that enables him to engage in a 'return' to Europe (and thus himself) through the mediation of this 'exotic' other. And yet, as de Certeau compellingly indicates, this exercise in mastery is ultimately a failure: the de Lery who returns to Europe is unavoidably 'decentred' by his attempt to signify ethnographically the 'being' of this 'savage'. This 'savage' remains, irremovably, an exteriority which calls de Lery's discourse into question, or, as de Certeau puts it, '[the] savage becomes a senseless speech ravishing Western discourse' [p. 236]. The 'savage', or rather the speech of the 'savage', becomes a condition of possibility of the ethnographer's writing—but it is, precisely, a condition that the ethnographer cannot 'write' or institute, and this because speech is perforce irreducible to writing (even though it is 'translatable' into writing; ethnography being the scriptive translation or rendition of this speech; ethnography (for de Certeau) being speech (that would otherwise be senseless) rendered into writing/meaning). A 'metaphorical disruption', a passage across genres which maintains their separateness even as it necessitates a movement between them, enables the ethnographer's *hearing* of the 'savage's' speech to become his, the ethnographer's, *writing*, his discourse.

The ethnographer substitutes one word for another, and by virtue of this is fated to subvert the word: the pivot for this substitution lies in a surplus, an exteriority, extraterritorial to the scriptuary space of the ethnographer's writing. The ethnographer invokes and constructs the other, he produces a knowledge of the other in his capacity as the *sujet suppose savoir*, but this knowledge is, inescapably, a knowledge founded on what the speech of the other makes believed (for the ethnographer). The 'savage' other gives to the ethnographer the latter's belief, but it is the condition of having this belief/knowledge that the ethnographer consent' to being diverted, displaced, by this inaccessible other. The recognition framed in the avowal 'I am not that (other)', which is the basis of the ethnographer's belief, interrupts or disrupts the ethnographer's self-recognizing enunciation 'I am this'.⁴

I make this excursus into de Certeau's 'hermeneutics of the other', not so much because I find it to be entirely persuasive (I do not⁵), but because, the difficulties which beset such Lacanian 'theorizations' of otherness notwithstanding, it still adds a necessary and salutary complication to the account of the other provided by the authors of *The Empire Writes Back*. If, in Kipling's poem, the absent signifier of the English Christmas is used precisely to enable its Indian counterpart to become a subject of discourse, then, as de Certeau shows, the signifiers situated in the dominant discursive space (e.g. those of the 'white', 'European', 'Western' and their cognates) are themselves destabilized by their counterparts in the subaltern discursive space. The absence or the marginalization of this or that space of signification is certainly an important consideration that cannot be overlooked; but what is just as significant, if

² [4]. See also [5].

³ See [6]. Quoted in de Certeau: p. 212.

⁴ Here I employ formulations to be found in in Edward Said's *Orientalism* [7].

⁵ For a critique of the discourse of 'otherness' which has come to permeate significant areas of presentday anthropology, see [8]. See also [9]; and [10]. While I accept de Certeau's contention that it is the 'savage' who gives the ethnographer 'his' belief, I hope to show that this bestowal, in at least one significant instance, is not one that takes place according to the logic delineated by de Certeau. My invocation of de Certeau is therefore confined to its critical implications for the kind of periodization to be found in *The Empire Writes Back*. I shall not use de Certeau for my reading of Henri Fauconnier's *Malaisie*.

not more central, is not so much the recognition per se of the discursive displacement in question as the matter of the (always irreducible) politics which subtends the particular relationships that obtain between dominant and subaltern discursive spaces.

2. *Why Malaisie?*

As I have indicated, I want to make try and make this point via a discussion of Henri Fauconnier's now little-known novel *Malaisie*, a francophone work that is perhaps unusual in that it has as its theme the British, and not the French, colonial experience.⁶ A consideration of *Malaisie* will also enable me to query, as part of a more general treatment of some issues usually posed under the rubric of 'the hermeneutics of the other', Edward Said's contention, made in his deservedly influential *Orientalism*, that there is a fundamental distinction to be observed between British and French orientalisms, inasmuch as the Orient was for the British traveller/writer a place of sovereign territorial possession (India being paradigmatic in this regard for British orientalism), while for his/her French counterpart it was a place that 'echoed with the sounds of French defeats, from the Crusades to Napoleon.'⁷

My reading of Fauconnier's *Malaisie* will necessitate the production of the concept of a 'paracolony', and it is through the elaboration of this concept that I hope to show precisely what tends to be overlooked or underemphasized in most discussions of colonial and postcolonial literatures.

Malaisie is a barely disguised autobiographical novel, set in British Malaya just after the First World War. Its main protagonists are the narrator Lescale and his friend Rolain, both Frenchmen, rubber planters like the book's author, and survivors of that War. The plot is disarmingly, if not distressingly, conventional, and evokes strongly the potboiler storyline that made Conrad's *Victory* a bestseller in its day. Lescale had a brief but for him unforgettable encounter with the older Rolain in the war trenches, and resolved afterwards to follow him to Malaya. The narrative begins when he has arrived in Malaya and meets up with his friend on Armistice Day in 1921. Lescale becomes the manager of the plantation owned by Rolain, who introduces him to the essentially British mores of the colonial rubber planter and to the cultures of the Indians who work on the plantation and the Malays 'boys' who are their house-servants. During a trip to the East Coast of Malaya, Rolain's sensitive and emotionally-frail servant Snail falls in love with the daughter of the local Rajah, an experience in the end so disconcerting for him that he runs 'amok'. He kills the Rajah with a kris and becomes a fugitive, though, being 'amok', he is now fated to kill again as soon as an opportunity presents itself. Rolain and Lescale make a vain attempt to rescue Snail when the latter runs into the local police, and when they fail, Rolain, to spare Snail the certain and ignominious death that awaited him at the hands of his pursuers, affords his servant a death 'with honour' by stabbing him with the offending kris. It is now Rolain's turn to become a fugitive in the jungle, and the book concludes with a farewell scene between Lescale and Rolain.

⁶ Fauconnier's novel was published in Paris in 1930 and translated into English by Sutton E. as *The Soul of Malaya*. London: Elkin, Mathews and Marrot; 1931. I have consulted Sutton's version while making my own translations.

⁷ See [11]. Though to be fair Said is talking about the Mediterranean region and not the Far East, which is where *Malaisie* is set.

Malaisie, not unexpectedly, is replete with the stereotyping orientalisms that Edward Said and others have so productively identified and analyzed. It contains characterizations of the colonized as 'lazy', as 'children' who respond 'well' to physical chastisement, and so forth; it presents, 'unproblematically', dialogues between European characters which refer to 'half-caste swine', to Chinese being 'indistinguishable' from each other, to 'the secrets of Orientals', etc.; it depicts Malaya as an exotic, Dionysiac space in which the hyper-civilized European, weary of a routinized existence, can encounter the 'nameless' and 'timeless' springs of a vitality now irretrievably lost to 'his' culture⁸; it views Malayan cultures as zones of possibility in which the desires of the colonizer can be sated by all manner of unfettered plenitudes (supplied, in this case, by a stream of eroticized, mysterious, and largely docile 'natives' who inhabit a land that knows no 'limits').⁹ But while Fauconnier's novel deserves to be indicted for being what it is—that is, the instantiation of an orientalist fantasy—it nonetheless displays an unusual capacity to undermine again and again its own and other such orientalisms, and this is something that must be

⁸ The narrator in *Malaisie* describes his first night in the jungle thus:

Smail had extinguished the lamps. The night was black. Reclining near a window to get the cooler air, I could not distinguish its square contours. The silence around the house had become a calm murmur, like the sound of a gliding river with distant noises on its banks. I felt lost and enchanted. I recalled my first night on board the steamer that brought me East. But the impression of embarking into the unknown was now more profound. Then I passed gradually into a vague dream, in which I seemed to recover the pleasure that our ancestors must have experienced in bygone times when they crouched in some hidden shelter (p. 29).

This passage clearly depicts the Orient as a dark, silent, unknown, dreamy, pleasurable, eternal (i.e., timeless and unchanging) space. Another passage provides an explicit repudiation of Europe: 'For the skin needs to breathe, drink, see, hear. In Europe clothes are a substitute for skin, and sensations reach us through layers of wool, we have the sensibility of sheep' (p. 178).

⁹ During a river journey the narrator in *Malaisie* tellingly declares in a torpid reverie:

[that] dream of all childhood, the impossible dream that a child tries to realize even if only in his games, here it is in my life. We are in a boat, on a river at the foot of the mountains. I don't want to know its name. As a child I used to say: 'Orinoco', 'Irrawaddy'. But now the marvellous resonances of these names seem artificial, I want a river without a name, and a land without limits. We shall head for the sea along a tortuous course—shall we reach it? I never tire of gazing, in a blissful stupor, at the surging currents, the ripples of the surface, the incredible little whirlpools (p. 158). Or again: 'Then, I recall, Rolain spoke of distant lands he had known, of a life abundant and free in the great equatorial forests' (p. 12).

acknowledged and probed. Malaisie possesses this capacity in large part because, unlike Conrad or Flaubert (for example), Fauconnier lived, and not just sojourned, among the people he wrote about. Malaisie shows its author to have had, among other things, a colloquial familiarity with the Malay language, a deep knowledge of the orally-transmitted folklore of its speakers, something attested to by his detailed accounts in this novel of one of Malay culture's very distinctive and specialized practices, viz. the public, and often competitive, recitation of a verse form known as the pantun.¹⁰ One could go on in this vein about Fauconnier (the author of an identifiably gay prize-winning novel prior to World War 2. Nevertheless, the possession of virtues such as those I have attributed to Fauconnier, if indeed they can properly be said to be virtues, does not unmake or mitigate his troubling vision of the Orient.

For orientalism, as they say these days, is a discursive formation or imaginary, and its distinctive properties, whatever they are, have therefore to be specified through something like an analytics of this particular discursive formation or imaginary. Orientalism, and here I state what has become a commonplace in recent decades, is a system of knowledge, a practico-theoretical assemblage for the generation and dissemination of affects, forces and intensities, for the production of 'knowledges' of identities (or identifications) and subjects (or perhaps more appropriately 'subjectifications'). Fauconnier's vision of Malaya has therefore to be studied as precisely such an assemblage, even if it happens at the same time to be one that does manage at various stages to subvert what it produces.

3. Theoretical explorations

'In this country I was an infant of three years old', Malaisie, p. 103

At least three related but different considerations, all pertinent to the discussion thus far engaged in, emerge from my reading of Malaisie.

Firstly, the judgment, made by Edward Said and others, that orientalism is inextricably bound up with a propensity to exoticize the subjects of its discourse(s), however sound and salutary it may happen to be, is perhaps not sufficient if allowed to stand on its own. Exoticism, in orientalism, as Said, et al., remind us, is part of an amalgam of perspectives and constructions which create the oriental 'other' as a spectacle to be enjoyed and consumed by the Westerner/European. But, in the process of constituting and confronting the spectacle, the Westerner/European does not merely employ the Manichean binary divisions identified by Franz Fanon (black-white, good-evil,

10 Here Fauconnier is very different from Flaubert. Flaubert, after his visit to Egypt, wrote thus of the night he spent with Kuchuk Hanem, the renowned Egyptian dancer and courtesan:

Watching that beautiful creature asleep (she snored, her head against my arm: I had slipped my forefinger under her necklace), my night was one long, infinitely intense reverie—that was why I stayed, I thought of my nights in Paris brothels—a whole series of old memories came back—and I thought of her, of her dance, of her voice as she sang songs that for me were without meaning and even without distinguishable words. Quoted from Said, *Orientalism*: 187. Originally in Flaubert, G., *Egypt: A Sensibility on Tour*. Stegmuller, F. ed. and trans. Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics; 1996: pp. 220, 130. This episode recalls Lescale's account of the nights he spent with Palaniai, the Tamil rubber tapper, but with one evident difference: Lescale speaks Palaniai's language, for him Tamil is not, as Hanem's language was for Flaubert, something 'without meaning and even without distinguishable words'.

self-other, etc.¹¹)—the Westerner/European also engages, concomitantly, in 'his' own 'becoming-other'. The 'othering' of the native and the 'becoming-other' of the Westerner/European are processes which mediate and complement each other in complex and possibly unexpected ways, ways that (as I hope to show in the case of Malaisie) cannot in principle be registered entirely by the Manichean binary logic and aesthetic delineated by Fanon and his successors.

Secondly, the related disposition on the part of the literary orientalist (understood here of course as a type) to constitute the native 'other' as an object of erotic interest must likewise be seen in the context of an accompanying 'becoming-other' on the part of the Westerner/European. The eroticizing of the native 'other' in Malaisie is a function of the operation of several intersecting erotic economies, and in a central instance in the novel the typical structure of many literary depictions of this eroticizing logic is breached: that is, instead of the standard instance whereby the native 'other' is the putative object of an erotic investment on the part of the white man (one just has to think here of the Jim-Jewel relationship in Conrad's *Lord Jim*), Fauconnier's narrative positions the body of the native 'other' in a complex homoerotic economy whose 'final' object is not a native 'other' but precisely another white man (i.e., 'the Same' or 'nonDifferent' in Lacanian parlance), albeit in this case a white man who as it happens is also at the same time homoerotically invested in the native 'other'. That is, there is in Malaisie a proliferation of the trajectories of desire which subverts or complicates the standard erotic dialectic between white man and native 'other' (be it an 'other' who is female or male). But more about this later.

Thirdly, there is in Malaisie an economy of national identity and identification, of national difference and differentiation, which repositions, in the mode of yet another 'becoming-other', *this* white man in relation to *that* white man, and thus in relation to the native 'other' in ways that escape the typically dialectical movement of a Saussurean-Lacanian diacritical logic. The specific configurations of this economy in Malaisie have, among other things, interesting implications for a 'theorization' of the phenomenon of 'going native'.

It is possible, therefore, in several different ways, to read Malaisie as a text which 'undoes', constitutively, the binary logic and aesthetic taken by many students of the colonial and postcolonial imaginary to be the distinctive and characteristic feature of its discursive formations.¹² This is not to imply in any way that the subjects of colonial and postcolonial regimes are somehow not really constrained or subjugated by the economic, political, and cultural orders which ensure their subordination. But what a reading of the kind I propose calls for is an attempt to retheorize the nature of this subjugation or subalternization. I shall conclude this paper by making some suggestions in this direction, especially in connection with the question of the hermeneutics of the 'other'.

4. The 'writing' of the empire

The 'writing' of the Empire or of the Orient is precisely that—a mode of textuality, a discourse, a notation. But also affiliated with these discursive items in this case are technologies of imaging (to use a notion of Teresa de Lauretis's), particular kinds

¹¹ See [12]. See also [13].

¹² See note 11 above for some representative writers.

of scopic regime.¹³ The 'writing' of the Orient can and does take the form of a script for the orchestration of images, and *Malaisie* functions in precisely this way: one of its distinctive features is the narrative it provides of the operation of a technology of imaging in which the native 'other' becomes an object to be beheld and visually ravished by the onlooking white man. The narrator in *Malaisie* exclaims: 'In this country I was an infant of three-years old', and this is because he *sees* like a 3-year old. He sees like an infant because he has not yet acquired the optic, appropriate to Malaya, that would enable him, Lescale, to look at himself and the world 'upside down' (p. 180), to see that the Malays have the sun *under* their skin, unlike the white man (178), and so forth. But to acquire this distinctive, non-European, mode of visualization, and the special, stereoscopic logic of reversal—characterized, *e.g.*, by the trope of an 'upside-down' perspective, of 'the sun under one's skin' (the Malay) versus 'the sun shining on one's skin' (the European)—which subtends it, the narrator has to submit himself to a pedagogy of visualization, with his friend Rolain, and their Malay servants.

Ngah and Smail, as his instructors. Together they enable Lescale to discern and embody those configurations of forces and intensities, those ways of organizing the power of life (*Malaisie* is a profoundly Nietzschean text) that for Fauconnier is 'Malaya'. European that he is, Lescale always wants to 'understand' (p. 238), so he has first to be submitted to a pedagogy which will enable him to undergo a kind of derealization, to experience a series of 'estrangement-effects', and in so doing to be placed in a position that will enable him to 'see' Malaya (and, by extension, himself) for the first time.

In *Malaisie* the jungle, not surprisingly, is par excellence the site of these 'estrangement-effects'. The jungle is depicted as the place where sight is defeated or interrupted by sound (p. 536); it is the negation of civilization (pp. 32, 53–54); it is beyond time (pp. 81–82). The jungle in *Malaisie* functions very much as a Lacanian Real—it is depicted by Fauconnier as the immensity, the sheer profligacy, of nameless sound that disrupts and overturns the Symbolic.¹⁴ Through his immersion in this pedagogy of derealization, Lescale undergoes a number of becomings, becomings that enable him to make some novel and even extraordinary identifications. He grasps, without perhaps knowing how he has really done this, that the fundamental impulse in Malay culture (as he sees it)—its 'soul'—is 'animistic', so that the boundaries between things, events, personages, etc., are utterly permeable, that for the Malay no place of division or point of separation is ever absolute. His surrender to this impulse in Malay culture brings about the realization, already possessed by his eminence grise Rolain, that this is perhaps not just the way things are 'for the Malays', but that this is perhaps how things really and always 'are' *simoliciter*: that nothing is durable; that everything is subject to dissolution; that reality is the invention of desire; that the individual is 'no more than a fermentation that swells and bursts' (p. 135); that 'purpose' is a fiction

¹³ [14]. De Lauretis discusses imaging in connection with the cinematic apparatus: 'The cinematic apparatus, in the totality of its operations and effects, produces not merely images but imaging. It binds affect and meaning to images by establishing terms of identification, orienting the movement of desire, and positioning the spectator in relation to them' (p. 137).

The cinematic apparatus is of course a technology of visualization par excellence. None the less, there is a sense in which the novel can be regarded as a scriptive apparatus for the regimentation and orchestration of images, images that have however to be generated by the reader. Fauconnier's descriptions of the sounds of the jungle function as a kind of disruptive Real can be found on p. 18, and pp. 24–26.

¹⁴ Fauconnier's descriptions of the sounds of the jungle function as a kind of disruptive Real can be found on p. 18 and pp. 24–26.

(p. 155); that there is no place for contraries (p. 190); that destiny is a series of tardy accidents (pp. 195–196); that 'events are advents—accident become flesh, entering the human domain' (p. 196); and so forth.

It is impossible to resist the thought that Fauconnier was deeply influenced by Nietzsche's doctrines of the eternal return, the power of the false, and of the overman, that for him the Malay is/was somehow the living embodiment of these Nietzschean doctrines. Of course this is exoticism—what could be more pernicious in the eyes of those of us who have been sensitized to such matters by Fanon, Said, Bhabha, Trinh Minh Ha, and others, than to render 'the Oriental' as a Zarathustra, as the one that Nietzsche called the last man? But the text, and hence *this* text, is a flux of passions and actions rather than a chain of signs—it has therefore to be analyzed, in the manner of a 'dramatology', as a productive staging of imagings, passion, forces, and actions. When this is done, we see that what Malaisie produces is something quite strange.

Fauconnier's narrator, as I have indicated, is made to undergo a pedagogic series of becomings, he becomes 'other', he undergoes, in the terminology of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, a succession of deterritorializations. Lescale realizes that as a 'fermentation', a crystallization of forces and energies, he can be moved on, he can become indefinite, then definite, then indefinite again; he can become 'other'...'other'...'other'...'other'... Malaisie renders this process or movement: Lescale finds his own fluid reality, his own specific becomings, permeated and endlessly displaced by the things around him. Surrendering to the animism surrounding him, he becomes panther (pp. 29–30), tiger (p. 77), animal (p. 84), durian fruit (pp. 86–87); he becomes Tamil (pp. 73–74), buffalo (p. 119), spirit (p. 119), fish (p. 129), insect (p. 137), the sea (pp. 171–172), the body of an angel (p. 171), and so forth. Lescale even learns another way of speaking when he realizes that, unlike French or any other European language for that matter, the Malay language is for him a 'literary' speech, a speech replete with the forms of a pure effectivity. The passage which shows him coming to this realization is worth quoting in full:

Imagine, for example, this dialogue between two young Malays: the subject is a green coconut.

What can they have to say about this subject?

Listen:

Osman, with lowered eyes, but with confidence:

'Where do the leeches come from?'

And he sighs.

Mat, reflectively, shakes his head:

'The hook is broken.'

Osman protests:

'Would a lamp be lit?'

And Mat responds with a cruel laugh:

'Very sweet is the sugar cane on the opposite bank.'

This conversation could take place in a putative lunatic asylum, my reading gives me the key to it. Here is the translation into good modern French:

The subject is a young woman.

Andre, with lowered eyes, but with confidence:

'Ah! I've taken a fancy to that girl!'

And he sighs.

Julian, reflectively, shakes his head:
'Old boy, you'll have to whistle for it'
Andre protests:
'Then why does she make eyes at me?'
And Julian responds with a cruel laugh:
'Don't you see she's having you on?'

Here indeed are images, but images without life, clichés, the first expressions that came to mind, of unknown origin. In the Malay dialogue, on the contrary, all is allusion. It would be incomprehensible if one did not know the pantun of the leeches that came from the marshes to the rice fields, the pantun in which the sugar cane on the opposite bank symbolizes illusion or betrayal, the pantuns of the hook and of the lamp.... Such a dialogue implies a literary formation that seems astonishing in a people who are still primitive. But can one speak of literature when a mode of expression has become instinctive? The Malay shys away from any coarse expression of his thoughts and sentiments. The apparent preciousness is no more than modesty (pp. 161–163).¹⁵

Lescale, in becoming acquainted with what he takes to be Malay's highly distinctive speech-forms, and thus undergoing a kind of 'becoming-Malay', is inserted into a world which effectively alienates him in his 'being-European' (this passage contains a resonance that can only be retained in the French—Lescale refers to the Malay dialogue as one that seemingly takes place in a lunatic asylum (un asile d'aliens), and the French term carries a connotation—of this dialogue having as its site of enunciation that place which is inhabited by 'aliens' (but of course it is he, Lescale, who is the 'alien')—that is certainly lost in translation).

5. 'Becoming-other'

This 'becoming-other' is something that Lescale comes to know for himself when he realizes he is constituted precisely, in theoretical language, as a flux of deterritorialization and proliferation. In the following passage Lescale gains this knowledge by successively becoming-night, becoming-bee, becoming-river:

The night is a living thing that overwhelms me, in which I am dissolved. Is this I—this extended body? This curiously solid object that also appears as a void, like armour of a previous age? I contemplate it and float around it.

What floats is a puff of dust that thinks as a swarm of bees vibrates. It can be displaced with a single movement and is maintained by a million wings. Fragile

¹⁵ It is noteworthy that Clifford Geertz describes the culture of a neighboring society (Java) in terms that are very like Fauconnier's depiction of Malay culture:

Yet, in the midst of this depressing scene there was an absolutely astonishing intellectual vitality—a philosophical passion, and popular one besides, to track the riddles of existence right down to the ground. Destitute peasants would discuss questions of freedom of the will; illiterate tradesmen discoursed on the properties of God; And, perhaps most important, the problem of the self—its nature, function, and mode of operation—was pursued with the sort of reflective intensity one would find among ourselves only in the most recherche settings indeed.

See [15].

cohesion, of contradictory life-forces, troubled desires, unknown instincts. That swarm is I, and I am fearful of myself.

I repeat 'I', 'I', until the word lacks any meaning, and then would seem to be attaining its true meaning, outside reality.

The individual

The river, what is it? The course that one may see, simplified, on maps—or the water it contains? The course is provisional, the water flows, it evaporates, is replaced from other sources, harmless, but maybe the next day full of cholera. Nothing dissembles more than drops of water. But the river is always called Sanggor.

Am I a million drops of spirit in a changing body, as illusory as a landscape?
(pp. 120–121)

These becomings-other constitute for Lescale a line of escape, or several lines of escape: each becoming-other establishes the relativity, the mobility, of its counterparts. Just as in Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and in Freud's account of the Wolf-Man (and this is Deleuze and Guattari's reading of these narratives).

Gregor Samsa's becoming-insect and the Wolf-Man's becoming-wolf are lines of escape from situations that are irretrievably Oedipal, familial; so in the reverie described in the above passage Lescale is embarked on a becoming-other constituted by a line of escape from a space that is defined and contained by the predicates 'white', 'European', 'Western'.¹⁶ But note: this line of escape is not one that culminates in an exchange or mixing of predicates.

Rolain and Lescale are drawn, solicited, by a new, heterotopian, space, in which it is not possible to trade or reverse such predicates. The protagonists in *Malaisie* are shown by Fauconnier to be assemblages of multiplicities (Lescale, e.g., is all those who populate the assemblage whose title is 'Lescale'), dynamic panoramas of becomings (Lescale, e.g., is those variable relations of becoming that obtain between 'him' and all those 'he' approaches), condensations of forces (Lescale, e.g., is a matrix of those forces which are transmitted to 'him' and those forces which 'he' transmits).¹⁷

This is the space of a new and very different possibility, one in which the very difference between white and nonwhite, European and nonEuropean, Western and nonWestern, becomes unpronounceable. The displacement of an Occidental/European space of enunciation-visualization is registered so emphatically in *Malaisie* that Fauconnier even marks it at the level of 'nature' (as opposed to something that can be called 'the social' or 'the cultural'): hence during their fateful journey to the coast Rolain opines that, unlike Malaya, in Europe 'birds don't sing, they warble' (p. 156). At the same time it has to be acknowledged that this new space does not, and indeed cannot, abolish the powerfully effective spaces of domination and oppression which are the spaces of coloniality and postcoloniality: the social and cultural topography outlined in *Malaisie* covers these spaces of unfreedom just as much as it does the heterotopian space that is the zone of Lescale's disconcerting reverie. But what this heterotopian space does is to function as the 'unthought' of the spaces of the spaces of

¹⁶ For Deleuze and Guattari see their *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Polan, D, trans. Minnesota: 1986. See especially p. 54. See also [16]. See especially pp. 26–28.

¹⁷ Here I use a few conceptions derived from [17].

coloniality and postcoloniality: the very conditions of possibility of this heterotopian space necessitate the preemption of the discursive assemblage that is coloniality and postcoloniality.

Each becoming-other in *Malaisie* expresses a possible world unknown to its main protagonists—the worlds enveloped within the jungle and in Malay speech are there to be explicated, not so much in the sense that they are worlds which they (and here I have Rolain and Lescale specifically in mind) have to 'see', but that they are worlds in which Rolain and especially Lescale (who is after all the subject of this apprenticeship) are to be seen. Lescale comes to know, to see, that these are the worlds, hitherto unknown to him, in which he is henceforth to be rendered visible (to himself).

Lescale has to see others—the Malays who inhabit these possible worlds—looking at him before he can come to *see* himself. He is drawn, involuntarily, into the barely imaginable, fabulous, worlds of something like a 'paracolony', albeit a 'paracolony' in the midst of Empire. Possible worlds in which his soul can be redistributed in ways that decompose the 'realities' of Empire and Europe.

In this redistribution of Lescale's being across the worlds of a 'paracolony', he discovers that he, and the worlds into which he is drawn, are only concretions of a historically determined desire. The upshot is that he and these worlds can be dismantled by other, alternative, configurations of desire, a dismantling that does not involve an act of negation on the part of Lescale and the inhabitants of these 'paracolony' worlds. In taking the 'lines of escape' constitutive of these worlds, Lescale and his friends find a liberty that is not defined in relation to a 'master', a 'master' who, in the manner prescribed in Hegel's master-slave dialectic, has to be negated by the slave before the latter can become 'free'.¹⁸ In the domain of this 'paracolony', liberty is attainable in principle without recourse to strategies of a mastery, of a counter-domination that is only the obverse of the mastery and domination embodied in the figure of the colonial overlord. In the admittedly rare spaces of this 'paracolony', the actualities of mastery and domination are comprehensively dissolved. (More will be said about this in the next section.)

6. Sexual and erotic economies

It is virtually impossible in so brief a space to do justice to the several complex intersecting erotic and sexual economies to be found in *Malaisie*. And not only that, but also to take into consideration the cross-determinations between these sexual/erotic economies and those of race and class. My subsequent remarks, inevitably, will be somewhat cursory and schematic.

It is fairly obvious that the central conjuncture investment in *Malaisie* is the one that obtains between Lescale and their Malay men-servants Smail and Ngah. does have an intermittent sexual liaison with Palaniai, the wife of his Tamil gardener, but, significantly, the emblematic figure who presides over this particular erotic conjuncture is mythic, namely, Teiresias, who, in Rolain's words 'deemed love to hold more joys for women than for man, because a woman surrenders herself more completely, and because to be loved by a man is something more rare and exhilarating

¹⁸ Here I follow Deleuze and Guattari (*Kafka*: p. 59) in distinguishing between an 'escape' (which does not require an act of negation on the part of the escapee) and a 'freedom' (which requires precisely such a negation, but which in the process imposes a specific, and thus delimiting, horizon—that of a relation to the master—on the slave's quest for liberty).

and exalting' (p. 158). In other words: Fauconnier, with a Proustian resonance, has Teiresias pronounce the love of woman (Palanaiai-Lescale) to be inferior in principle to the love of men, the love between men (Rolain-Lescale-Smail-Ngah). Palanaiai's function in the narrative is not so much erotic/sexual as it is 'ethical'. She puzzles Lescale because she evinces neither a 'modesty' nor an 'immodesty' in their love-making, that is, in his eyes she is able to elevate carnality into a domain that for him is manifestly 'paraethical' (though Lescale immediately compensates for this potentially uncomfortable knowledge by diminishing or trivializing her when he says of Palanaiai that 'the choice candy (bonbon) Malaya offered me, on behalf of India, resembled one of those chocolates wrapped in multicolored paper and filled with a sugary liqueur' (p. 64)).

Lescale is infatuated with Rolain, but their relationship is mediated in very decisive ways by their servants. I can only state it somewhat schematically here: in Malaisie the enabling condition of an erotic relationship between the two colonial masters is supplied by their relationships with their 'native' servants, so that the becoming-Smail/becoming-Ngah/becoming-Malay, etc., of the masters places them in a possible world in which they can grasp, or be in, the truth of a homoerotic reciprocity. That is to say, this possible world—which functions precisely to displace Rolain and Lescale as ones who are white, European, etc., is a world of transgressive erotic possibility otherwise foreclosed to them. But this possible world is situated in a constellation of numerous possible worlds, each of which affects the others. Worlds that, in Malaisie, are expressed by sorcerers, individuals of different races and nationalities, persons of mixed race, a variety of landscapes, the brutal futilities of combat in the First World War, states of consciousness (the becoming-amok of Smail being the most significant of these—this particular becoming is, for Fauconnier, the expression of a kind of pure difference), and so forth. All these possible worlds are mutually implicated in the sexual/erotic economies contained in Malaisie, but they all serve to promote the conditions in which a homoerotic reciprocity can genuinely exist.

It may be tempting to explicate these sexual/erotic economies in Lacanian or quasi-Lacanian terms. Thus, going by these terms, it could perhaps be said that in Malaisie the condition of possibility of a homoerotic reciprocity between the nonDifferent (in this case two Europeans) was supplied by a relation with the Different or the Other (the Malay servants), so that one's displacement into, or deterritorialization by, the stranger enabled one to become familiar with the putative nonstranger (the nonDifferent or the Same), made it possible for there to be a 'return' (on the part of the familiar/and-yet-now-not-familiar) to a space of erotic possibility whose basic character is that of the constitutively Familiar. According to this line of thought, the displacement into the stranger brings in its train two other displacements, inasmuch as it is a condition of this homoerotic reciprocity that both the potential subject (who is white, male, and European) and the potential object (who also happens to be white, male, and European) of this reciprocity be displaced before it can be actualized. Now, admittedly, a lot of sympathetic unpacking needs to be done before the logic of this situation can be fully and adequately explicated according to notions derived from Lacanian strands of thought. But it is not difficult to see that this Lacanian or quasi-Lacanian framework is ultimately too wedded to a template of a dialectical thinking to be adequate to the complexities of the erotic/sexual economies of Malaisie. Of course it is a commonplace that Lacan's procedure involves a ceaseless overturning of binary oppositions, but this very overturning is predicated, irremovably, on the overall diacritical logic of the binary. It is true that Lacan's dictum 'every subject is a signifier

for another subject', when coupled with his claim that subjectivity is a formation 'like a language', necessarily entails that subjectivity is constituted in terms of its difference from other signifiers/subjects, a difference that in principle is endlessly repeatable.

But this account is still predicated on the Saussurean 'axiom' that signs only have their meaning by virtue of their reciprocal difference (this of course being the 'axiom' that motivates the Saussurean conception that language is a system of abstract equivalence which at the same time is constituted entirely of difference). This 'axiom' is therefore a very direct and powerful expression of the logic of identity and difference. By contrast, the account of the erotic/sexual economies in *Malaisie* that I have been trying to give is derived from a quite different logic—it is a logic that Brian Massumi has called a logic of 'hyperdifferentiation', that is, a logic which utilizes nonbinary modes of differentiation.¹⁹ I will take up this discussion in the concluding section of this paper when I consider the binary logic which underlies Fanon's thinking on the structure of the 'other'. At this point all that needs to be said is that the logic of an irreducible hyperdifferentiation adverted to here allows us better to theorize the potential plurality of 'becomings-other' which subtend erotic/sexual economies like the ones in *Malaisie*. This theorization, since it is undertaken along such resolutely nondiacritical lines, will accommodate the possibility of antagonism without subsuming it under the principle of a binary differentiation. It needs also to be pointed out that psychoanalytic accounts (whether Lacanian or otherwise) of erotic/sexual economies tend invariably to invoke the logic of a triangulation, and that such a logic simply does not address the complexity of these economies as they are depicted in *Malaisie*. The narrative in *Malaisie* shows these economies to be multiply constellated, in that its protagonists, in so far as they are sexual subjects, do not have their sexual and erotic identifications constituted on the basis of a differentiation from an 'other' who is necessarily, according to the logic of triangulation, a 'third'. In *Malaisie*, there are sexual/erotic 'others', certainly, but these constitute 'fourths', 'fifths', and so on, each of whom is related to its counterparts in ways that do not conform to a dialectical logic. This feature of *Malaisie*'s erotic/sexual economies is generated by the positioning of these economies in the wider sphere of what I have called a 'paracolony'. In this 'paracolony' we find principles of differentiation which proliferate identifications according to several, if not many, logics, logics which in some cases may noncommensurable, and hence not in any kind of direct or discernible opposition to each other.

7. Economy of national difference and differentiation

A salient feature of *Malaisie* is the narrative it provides of another economy, in this case the economy of national difference and differentiation. Rolain and Lescale, as was the case with Fauconnier, are Frenchmen living and working in a British colony. A great deal of the novel's humor has to do with culturally-generated and

¹⁹ On this see [18]. See especially pp. 91, 177–1778 n. 73, 178 n. 74. It is with some trepidation that I characterize Lacan as a 'dialectician'. Not only are his writings (and this is to state the obvious) extremely difficult, but there is no real consensus on Lacan's adherence to the (Hegelian) dialectic. Thus, for example, Borch-Jacobsen, M. in his *Lacan: The Absolute Master*. Douglas Brick, trans. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press; 1991, argues that Lacan's radically different analysis of psychosis in the 1950s prompted him to abandon the dialectic after 1955. See pp. 85–90. On the other hand, Forrester, J. in his *The Seductions of Psychoanalysis: Freud, Lacan and Derrida*. Cambridge: Cambridge University; 1990), treats Lacan as a dialectician in the Hegelian tradition as mediated by Kojève. See p. 104.

nationally-inflected differences of viewpoint, taste, etc. Thus, for example, Lescale and Rolain are mystified and gently amused by the kind of English 'tribalism' that manifests itself, emblematically, in the life of the colonial club: they encounter in the colonial club a perplexing combination of the subtly arcane rituals and the beery simplicities of a certain class of English male. None of the English characters in Malaisie appears even remotely desirous or capable of engaging in a conversation about Malay poetry or the influences that underlie Wagner's music (say); of wanting to move beyond a typically bluff, sportive, and schoolboyish camaraderie. The reader is left with no doubt that Rolain and Lescale prefer the company of their 'native' servants to that of their British counterparts.

This difference of outlook generated by a difference of national identity has at least two significant consequences. Firstly, it produces what is in effect a 'counter-colonialism' (which is not conflated with an 'anticolonialism'—Rolain and Lescale remain colonialists even when they distance themselves from the British). Rolain and Lescale, even though they remain colonialists, undermine, through their actions and demeanors, the rival, dominant British colonialism. More often than not it is done unwittingly, but there are times when this is deliberate. One such occasion is when they entertain their servants to a dinner party, in which all four eat rice and curry in 'native' fashion (i.e., with their fingers). Their conversation turns to Potter, the English rubber planter for whom Lescale had worked when he first came to Malaya. Lescale says:

... I thought of Potter. What would he say of this repast in the company of 'natives'?

'He would become aware of the fact', said Rolain, 'that four gentlemen [the English word is used by Rolain] can eat with their fingers!'

'He would be aware of nothing', I responded, 'but our moral decay!'

'That is possible. Potter is English, his moral code is simple: do as everyone else does. But if everyone acted like everyone else, no one would ever do anything. Without the anarchists, humanity would perish, or turn into an ant-hill. Organization is the great danger...'

'Do not speak French, Tuan, today we are your guests!'

'He is right', said Rolain, 'we spend our time quibbling. Much better say like Smail, when he hears the rain: 'Chandrawasi is shedding his plumes'. He would prefer to speak of the fabled bird, although he knows it is the rain on the branches' (pp. 114–115).

It is clear from this passage that Rolain sees himself as an embodiment of the anarchistic principle he talks about, the principle that in his eyes overturns the conformist British colonial mores exemplified by Potter. This displacement of the British is one of Malaisie's primary themes, and its effect as a kind of 'counter-colonialism' is evident in the above passage, when the dismissal of Potter and his fellow Englishmen paves the way, in this conversation at any rate, for the legitimation, the hearing, of the 'superior' speech of the 'native' servant Smail. (It is important not to be too sanguine about this 'counter-colonialism, since if Smail is 'licensed to speak' it is because he is granted this as a privilege by a colonialist—Rolain.)

The displacement of British colonialism by a kind of anarchic 'counter-colonialism' is accompanied in Malaisie by a parallel phenomenon, viz., that of 'going native'. The British simply are not capable of eating in the way that Smail and Ngah do, nor do they wear the *sarong*, which is what Rolain and Lescale do. On their idyllic trip to the coast, the Frenchmen follow the example of Smail and Ngah in shedding their clothes. When they receive a sudden visitation from the British District Officer, La Roque, it turns out that, as indicated by his name, he is of French ancestry anyway, and, moreover, he shows them a kind of solidarity by swimming naked himself. The British are evacuated from the zones in which the Frenchmen 'go native', and it is precisely in these zones in which the anarchic 'counter-colonialism' of Rolain and Lescale manifests itself. It is also here that their deep affinity for Malay culture shows itself in very practical ways. It is almost as if their belonging to a minority in terms of national identity (even though they remain Europeans) places them in something like a 'structurally' homologous position to those who are consigned to subalternity by the British colonial system. I do not want to make too much of this: Rolain and Lescale are not committed in any way to the abolition of subalternity as an 'oppositional' political project.

They remain colonialists. All that can plausibly be maintained here is that their version of 'going native'—marked as it is by a certain kind of 'Frenchness', and motivated as it is by the pursuit of an ineffable *jouissance*—is expressive of a disposition, a way of being in the world, that I think can appropriately be called 'paracoloniality'. And it is made evident to the reader that this version of 'going native' is precisely what motivates the homoerotic economy of Malaisie, for it is by shedding their 'Europeanness' that Rolain and Lescale can escape the confines of a compulsory heterosexuality inextricably bound-up with that 'European' identification.

8. Conclusion

I want to conclude by making some observations about the diacritical logic which underlies so many accounts and analyses of coloniality and postcoloniality. As I suggested earlier, Fanon is an exemplary instance in this regard. In his well-known description of the colonial world as 'a world divided into compartments, ... a world cut in two', Fanon shows how the division of the colonial city into the European and the native quarters or sections typifies the way in which the colonial dispensation is constructed via a negation of its Oriental/subaltern opposite:

'The settlers' town is a strongly built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage cans swallow all the leavings, unseen, unknown and hardly thought about. The settler's feet are never visible, except perhaps in the sea, but there you're never close enough to see them. His feet are protected by strong shoes although the streets of his town are clean and even, with no holes or stones. The settler's town is a well-fed town, an easygoing town; its belly is always full of good things. The settler's town is a town of white people, of foreigners.

The native town belonging to the colonized people, or at least the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation, is a place of ill-fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other, and their huts are built one on top of the other. The native town is a

hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The native town is crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. It is a town of niggers and dirty Arabs' [19].

Fanon goes on to say that 'the colonial world is a Manichean world' (p. 41), the logic of which is therefore starkly binary: the colonial constructs 'his' identity by making the 'native' into 'his' antitype, just as the colonist's town and the native's town are each other's antitypes. And Fanon is not alone in analyzing the colonial world as a system which functions on the basis of a dualistic logic: Edward Said has characterized Orientalism as a set of institutionally-sanctioned discursive formations which also obeys the same logic of 'type' and 'antitype'.²⁰

My attempts to identify and clarify the somewhat different, because 'nonManichean', logic of 'hyperdifferentiation' that runs through Malaisie must not be seen as an attempt to repudiate the positions of Fanon and Said.

It is if anything a complementary codicil, but an important one nevertheless. It is virtually incontrovertible that there are important senses—identified by Fanon, Said, et al.—in which the colonial and postcolonial imaginary has a structure that is resolutely Manichean. At the same time, however, there is, at least in the very specific context purveyed in Malaisie, a side to this imaginary which is not expressed by a diacritical logic of the kind identified by Fanon. The colonial world, I am submit, is somewhat more complex and differentiated than such a logic can allow. The colonial world is shot-through with conflict and antagonism. But it is not obvious that the best way to theorize this opposition is necessarily one that invokes, exclusively, a dialectical logic.²¹ The economies of 'otherness' and 'othering' which define the colonial world are not always best understood solely in terms of a logic whose basic form is that of 'type' and 'antitype'.

²⁰ See Said, *Orientalism*: passim.

²¹ The bypassing or circumscription of a dialectical logic proposed in this paper will have implications for the position of someone like Homi Bhabha, who has invoked the category of 'hybridization' as a means of overcoming or negating the stark and absolute oppositions of a Manichean logic. If, as is the case with Malaisie, there is from the outset a colonial world whose character is best understood in terms of a logic of 'hyperdifferentiation', then there is in principle no necessity to use a notion like 'hybridization' to overcome a dialectical logic.

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