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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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requirements for the degree of

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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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*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]

**PART 1**

**INTRODUCTION, ANTECEDENTS AND  
FOUNDATIONS FOR A CRITICAL HISTORY OF THE  
MALAY AND HIS MALAISE**

## CHAPTER 1: ANTECEDENTS AND INTRODUCTION

### Biograph

Born of Indian migrants in post-independence Malaysia I am very much a child of postcolonial Malaysia, infused with the rhetoric of independence, anti-imperialism and nationalism. When I say Indian I should specify that I am of Malayalee descent. My parents were born in Kerala, formerly the Malabar Coast of the southwest of India, and once were of the colonized peoples. The Malayalee are renowned, in India and Malaysia at least, as Marxists, unionists, and inveterate curmudgeons and itinerants, traits that Arundhati Roy readily testifies to (Roy, 2004). My parents also infused me with an appreciation of those dispossessed, and that most precious of all things for me, a love for the literary tradition (of writing fiction). Our bookshelves were lined with the great texts of both East and West, of the Mahabaratta and Macbeth, of Tagore and Tolstoy. I have somehow combined the two, and of all my individual and customary values, beliefs and practices, of all the things I believe in and the things I do, none is as irretrievable as my relationship with, my love for the literature of the dispossessed. Perhaps I remain that child of the (late) sixties fixated on those enduring memories of M. L. King, Malcolm X, Gloria Steinham, the Solyuz/ Apollo flights, the Vietnam War, Kent state, and the great independence, civil liberties and feminist movements.

The following story is probably apocryphal. Years ago, almost two decades now, my father, learned man that he is, once took me to task for my knee-jerk bias towards those oppressed and dispossessed. ‘You should be objective and neutral’, he admonished me, a stance he thought more befitting my status as a scientist. I retorted that far from being neutral it is often the intellectual who is only too ready to align himself with the oppressor, citing that Orwell had in *Homage to Catalonia* written of the alacrity with which the German and French intelligentsia rushed to join the ranks of the Nazis. I thought little more of this at times heated exchange, until I went in search of this much-treasured book. I eventually found it in my father’s suitcase in our hotel room (I was returning from one of my visits home, and he had insisted on driving me all the way to Singapore). Presumably he had planned on using it for course or lecture material for the strategic studies unit he ran at University Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, on his return.

Having lived a little more than the first half of my life in Malaysia, I arrived in New Zealand in the mid 1980’s to pursue a tertiary education, but stayed on when that

opportunity was offered me. I regularly visit Malaysia, staying for several months at a time, as I have both family and a familiar environment that gives me much pleasure, and often enough pain, to return to. I am as attached to my other home, New Zealand, having stayed because it seemed to me that, in the 1980's at least, that this was as close to an egalitarian society as I had encountered<sup>1</sup> in my limited experience. This society is now a distant memory erased by the implementation of the disproportionating ideologies, of the 'realities', of the globalised marketplace of competing labour forces, or the 'postmodern' industrial revolution. It's imagining, however delusional or illusory, remains with me.

I was once of the pure sciences, highly trained in the 'hard' technologies of chemistry and genetics, but not as it turns out in the arcane maneuverings of corporatised science for 'public good' (really more public subsidized privatised or corporate gain). I have come to realize ironically however that the sophistic (professional) 'neutral' scientist and public good have long been at odds. The scientist, as once was I, has long been embedded in the culture of the corporatist (rather than merely capitalist) mode of production, rather than that of the public. Having rejected and been rejected by corporate science, I chose to follow what I thought to be a more ethical as well as 'useful' path, that of the psychologist (as opposed to say philosopher). Deluded I might have been but at the very least it has allowed me, with the kind assistance of the exceptional individual, some freedom to express my resistance to the contaminated truths, those heavily prescribed inevitabilities of modernity.

### **My view of postcolonial Malaysia**

Frantz Fanon argued that the nationalism of the modern nation state, instead of liberating the colonized, evolves into forms of racism and separatism in which colonial hegemony is replaced by the bourgeois nationalism of the dominant ethnic group (Fanon, 1963 & 1968). It might seem that more than five hundred years of modern imperialism have taught us, the once colonized, very little apart from the highly cultivated, modern methods of oppressing others<sup>2</sup>. This new hegemony is expediently and ironically, propagated through many of the same mechanisms, processes,

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<sup>1</sup> I recognise of course that many groups, including Maori, and other 'minoritised groups', 'Chinese' especially, and women, had a very different experience of this egalitarian society.

<sup>2</sup> The most disturbing colonial practice reprised, for me, is the system of indentured labour, really slavery. The indentured labour of Malaysia today are, for example, the Indonesian maids that serves the demands of practically every middle class household, and the construction and plantation workers and restaurant hands from the 'poorer' nations of South Asia.

apparatuses and institutions that are the legacy of the coloniser. Notable examples of these dominant ethnic groups are perhaps the Hindi speaking predominantly 'Aryan' north Indian of India, the Malay of Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia, and the Chinese of Singapore and, one could as easily say, the English of the United Kingdom, or the German of a now unified Germany. That this new hegemony has developed should come as little surprise as colonisation appears to have wrought essentially what it, functionally speaking, is meant to. A 'new' territory is occupied by an opportunistic organism and its physical and social/ cultural landscapes converted to benefit the colonizing organism, perhaps irretrievably in many instances. What is alarming to me, however, is the vigour with which we have adopted all much of what we once, and very recently at that, as vigorously opposed and discredited.

Dr. Zahwia Yahya, a noted Malaysian postcolonial/ critical/ feminist theorist of Malay ethnicity and author of as elegant and incisive a work on colonialist discourse as I have come across, expresses little surprise at this development. She offers that its enduring legacy is a measure of the force with which colonial ideology has been inscribed on the 'national' and, more especially, the Malay<sup>1</sup> consciousness (Yahya, 2003). In this instance the opportunistic organism was the European who had serendipitously 'discovered', and brutally and rapidly conquered the rich and diverse civilisations of the East (Orient), the West (Americas) and the South (Africa), in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century, through the 'new world of voyages' (Andaya, 2001; Chomsky, 1993; Hampson, 2000; Menzies, 2003; Said, 1993; White, 2002). Independence may have brought about exchange rather than change, as separate groups compete to occupy the colonial legacy, its ideologies and suprastructures of government, commerce and even custom. It is as if inevitably, as with Foucault's notion of power or Darwin's evolutionary mechanics, a new era of dominance/ hegemony has emerged from this struggle for liberation from the break with a preceding hegemony (Darwin, 1901& 1964; Foucault, 1977).

As one of that very minority race of Indians of the fledgling nation of Malaysia I can attest to these views promulgated by Fanon first, and by Foucault later. I have much of which I can accuse the Malay, the politically dominant, if nothing else, 'race' of Malaysia, and it comes easily enough as I view the environmental and social wreckage wrought by a contemporary and unswerving 'drive to modernity' (Bunnell, 2004;

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<sup>1</sup> Ironically, and tragically, it is the Malay, albeit of an elite group, that is most vehement in continuing the colonialist notion of the Malay.

Mabry, 1998; Mohamad, 2002; Shamsul, 1996). The 'Indian', the 'Chinese', the 'African', and for that matter the English, American or Russian, however, have done as much and only too often, much much more.

There is little that is more familiar to me than this ancient intermingling of the three main 'races' of the 'Malay', 'Chinese', and 'Indian'; the 'plural society par excellence' as Professor Shamsul calls it, with more than a little irony and skepticism of course (Shamsul, 1996; p.16). Growing up in immediate post-independence<sup>1</sup> Malaysia, my neighbourhoods were an amazing diverse ethnic and cultural mix. Being well acquainted with the customs, values and beliefs of this great plurality, I walked into the homes of a Muslim Malay, Catholic Indian, or Buddhist Chinese with the utmost comfort, practicing as they did as if by second nature. It seemed as natural to be proud to be part of such a diverse society that so casually, outwardly at least, embraced and celebrated difference. I was well aware of racism but had little idea that racialisation was itself racism. I spoke of race as most did, as a natural/ scientific fact that very visibly 'biologically' segregated this multi-cultural society, along colour lines<sup>2</sup>. It was, and still is, common to speak of our 'natural' attributes, inclinations, customs, beliefs and values in terms of the race paradigm that significantly structures this plurality *par excellence*. A very notable example is former Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, who will not even deign to use the word ethnicity in place of race. As a unified multi-racial society both under the British, and now the dominant political party of independent Malaysia, the Malay, Chinese, and Indian races purportedly lived in harmony, bar the odd racial or communist insurrection, practising our particular customs and beliefs, doing the things that we were 'best suited' to.

One belief that is still pervasive in this racial plurality is that the Malay is somewhat backward and needs help to rise to the level of the Chinese especially in terms of intellectual and economic achievement (as per a 'look eastwards' policy). The cause of this backwardness is purportedly the Malay's inherent indolence, probably the most commonly held racial belief in Malaysia. To this day I am informed of this fact in the everyday conversations I have with family, friends, and acquaintances, and even strangers and 'foreigners'. My parents to their great credit never prescribed these views. That the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defined the Malay as a lazy but gentlemanly

<sup>1</sup> Independence from the English was gained on August 31<sup>st</sup> 1957.

<sup>2</sup> A racial hierarchy privileging those light-skinned is as firmly entrenched in Malaysian society, as it is anywhere in the world.

race<sup>1</sup> was, however, a source of amusement to my father. To tell the truth while I never spoke of the Malay as such, and still do not, I might have in other subtle ways have subscribed to this pervasive belief, especially with regards to his/ her academic abilities. The Malay was perhaps somewhat backward and superstitious, practiced magic of both kinds, and was given to running amok without warning. These commonly promulgated beliefs, however, do not match my actual experiences of living intimately with Malay for more than thirty years. I have yet to witness an amok attack or any magical powers bar the occasional and to me commonplace act of his shamans.

While familiarising my self with that master text of psychiatry, clinical psychology, and psychopathology, the *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (DSM-IV & DSM-IV-TR; APA, 1994 & 2000), I was a little surprised and even amused to find amok classified as a culture-bound syndrome (CBS). It soon occurred to me however that most if not all the CBSs are syndromes of cultures that could be classified as other than western, modern or developed. Not only were these the exotic syndromes of the so-called third world peoples, I was also struck by the highly pejorative nature of their writing. Reading historical, and psychiatric or psychological descriptions of amok only reinforced this impression. At some point, inevitably, it struck me that this writing was largely, even entirely, fictional, having no material existence outside of my very intimate experiences of Malay people, and their culture.

Of all the means or even methods of taking the life of another authenticated by this history, none are as dramatic in its senseless ferocity, none as gratuitous as that of the legendary running amok. In comparison an assassination is politically motivated, and murder is an act that similarly requires reason, *mens rea*, for its modern legal assignment (Alexander & Kessler, 1997; Binder, 2000; Slobogin, 2003). That the Malay customarily, according to history at least, 'runs amok' in his homicidal acts, and does so as if spontaneously, suggests that he is largely bereft of reason and thus not culpable. The fate of the homicidal Malay was either death or confinement to the psychiatric institution of the day (from the middle of the nineteenth century. Ellis, 1893; Spores, 1988).

Psychiatric and lay characterizations of the Malay malaise of amok are invariably as dramatic and incendiary as the act itself - so much so that they tend towards cliché. It

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<sup>1</sup> A characterisation not long ago removed on petition by the Malaysian government

was at this moment that something transcending that relativistic notion of competing beliefs, ideologies, values, epistemologies, et cetera, of great clarity coalesced. The still persisting discourse on the Malay was a fiction, even delusion, of a colonialist writing that I already thought of as being oppressive. It seemed appropriate that I then sought a means of 'using' this psychiatric discourse on amok, and the Malay, as a means of exposing the mythical nature of the Malay. It is improbable to me that I could have, given his savage nature, lived peaceably amongst this Malay for decades, and even more impossibly, survived to write this tale.

## CHAPTER 2: DRIVING AND GUIDING A CRITIQUE OF THE HISTORY OF THE MALAY AND HIS MALAISE

I have realised for sometime now that I have rapidly retreated from the theory/ method obsessive, deontologised mainstream methods employed in defining the human condition. Having arrived at the social sciences disillusioned with the 'pure' natural sciences, I am now as sceptical of 'scientised' psychology particularly in light of what I construe to be the ritualistic and authoritative expediency with which constructs are derived, and our behaviours, words and thoughts sampled, analysed and categorised. All as if they were intrinsic to some inestimable truth, our 'will to' which as scientists and intellectuals is wholly and unquestionably righteous. Mainstream psychology seems as divorced from philosophical inquiry as mainstream physics or chemistry, so aligned is it with what Husserl calls the 'natural attitude' (Anderson, Hughes, & Sharrock, 1986; p. 85).

### 'Writing genealogies'

Foucault and Derrida, for obvious reasons, loom large in my brief foray into the ontologised inquiries of psychology<sup>1</sup>. As much 'fun' as Derrida's deconstructionism promises to be, I am steeped in an 'eastern' tradition that views text itself as sacred and have little desire to scar it, as if I had danced the dance macabre on a minefield. The narrative for me is the one true thing, and which is the aim of language itself, that stands between sense and non-sense in this world. What after all are narratives but our-stories of meaning making, be they grand or petit or fictional or fact, however indistinguishable ultimately the one may be from the other? And how sense-less then would we be without our stories?

In linking text with the arrow of time I also specifically engage with the historiographical approaches of Michel Foucault, particularly that called genealogy, surely the method *de jour* of the aspiring or recently anointed critical theorists in of the human sciences. Historiography as critical theory/ literary theory or criticism is very much the domain of Foucault and his project (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982; Said, 1983; Stevens, 2003; Tamboukou, 1999). Having however embarked on that first task, though necessarily limited, of reading Foucault's genealogy, and waxed and waned over

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<sup>1</sup> Our postgraduate courses on critical psychology contain a large dose of French literary or critical theory.

its seductive combination of poetics and resistance ('radical chic'), I have, almost inevitably, rejected his specific instruction to 'write genealogies' (Sawicki, 1991; p. 15).

This momentous, for me, reference to 'writing genealogies' derives from an account of a conversation between Jan Sawicki and Foucault that occurred during a seminar on the *Technologies of the self*, held at the University of Vermont in 1983. Discomfited with being the focus of this conversation, Foucault suggested that Sawicki not expend energy talking about him and instead do as he was doing, namely 'write genealogies'. This suggestion initially introduced for me a specific 'condition of possibility' that I believe to be very largely excluded by the instrumental (cold and dispassionate) rigor of conventional scholarship. My preference in writing critically is to write in a lyrical, partisan but nevertheless erudite fashion, as would a John Steinbeck, an Edward Said, Toni Morrison or Foucault himself. Said for his part may have described this type of critical work as a form of secular-ethical criticism (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2001; Said, 1994). Having duly conducted my reading of Foucault's historiographical approaches I have, however, come to view this instruction as Foucault's bid in 'the endless play of dominations' (Foucault, 1977; p. 148). A very successful one, I might add, considering the burgeoning economy that has grown out of his investments in the knowledge industry. In my view, albeit informed by my limited reading, too many of Foucault's disciples have glossed over the very glaring omissions, the particular specificity or neo-liberalism/ new conservatism of his project, while vigorously promoting it as a panacea for the 'dislocatedness' of academic endeavour (Deacon, 2000; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982; During, 1992; Lash, 1991; Rabinow & Rose, 1994; Sawicki, 1991; Stevens, 2003; Tamboukou, 1999).

### **Foucault and the non-secular non-ethical critique**

Foucault's limited, non-secular applications of his critical inquiries are often dismissed as an issue, highly problematic though it may be given its fervent and often reprehensible Kantian and Nietzschean antecedents. As budding critical theorists we are expected to pay blind obeisance to Foucault's 'good intentions', and those of his lineage (effectively the Western Canon) (Deacon, 2000; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982; During, 1992; Foucault, 2003b; Lash, 1991; Stevens, 2002; Tamboukou, 1999). Having conducted a reading of genealogy facilitated by several Platonic like<sup>1</sup> interpretations of his 'great' project, I am expected to take stock of Foucault's good intentions and

obediently write my own genealogy (of amok), fulfilling his self-serving argument of the 'play of dominations'. It is very clear to me that genealogy has emerged as the dominant method from this epistemological 'play', or more accurately, 'struggle' (from which the dominant strain then emerges). Far from being the victims of their inevitable only too human limitations (so often resulting in inhuman applications), that 'men of their times' syndrome, it seems very evident to me that they (of the lineage of the Western Canon) were/ are complicit with modern imperialism and its various manifestations through its history (of some 500 years; Chomsky, 1993; Fanon, 1963; Said, 1978 & 1993).

Foucault's genealogy can be thought of as the dominant method of those inquiries into the human condition by the social sciences, that has emerged to be, and already is, repeated formally ad nauseum until another method *de jour* emerges from our next crisis of failure, that struggle with the poststructuralist anxiety (of pure textuality) 'which often haunts contemporary critical practice' (Ashcroft, 2003; p. 261). This anxiety can be said to derive from critical theory's arguable tendency towards relativism or nihilism, which Habermas suggests derives from a complete immersion in the local (non-secular) which gives us no way to judge it (ethically, morally and aesthetically), and is thus doomed to accommodation with the given (Habermas, 1981 & 1986).

Edward Said also attributes this tendency to the undue emphasis placed on anarchic linguistic play within critical theory (Said, 1983). I would go so far as to say that our 'heroicization' of a Foucault or Derrida, which is a transcendental narcissism of sorts (because we aspire to be like them), blinds us to their and their project's innate faults, and dooms us to repeat what Jane Flax views to be their contaminated solutions (Flax, 1990). Adorno (1973), and Deleuze and Guattari (1994) consider that the crisis of failure of critical theory is inevitable, as once concepts and theories leave their philosophical home to enter its 'marketplace' of competing theories to become a method, their 'critical ethos is drained away' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994; p. 99). One could then also say that that I have already, very rapidly, had encountered this crisis. There is that 'Brechtian' question of social relevance to be addressed. In rejecting Foucault I have also as inevitably gravitated towards a style of postcolonial critique, and one greatly influenced by Edward Said. I am, after all, of the postcolonial world, as is my intimate, the 'Malay'. Said firmly located his postcolonial critique in the social

context, in accordance with his passionate belief that intellectual work needed to resurrect its connections with the political realities of the society within which it occurs (Ashcroft, 2003; Said, 1976, 1983 & 1994).

### **Moving from literary theory to postcolonial critique: the Saidean approach to critical work**

The concept of the text as 'worldly' or 'circumstantial', or the locatedness of theory as worldly, material or circumstantial, is Said's strategy for lending social relevance to his intellectual work (Ashcroft, 2003). For Said, text has a 'sensuous particularity' as well as historical contingency and is possessed of a specific situation (i.e. text as event) that places restraints on the interpreter and his/ her interpretation (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2001; Said, 1983). The text exists in the world and does so for conveying and producing meaning and crucially, for me, reinvigorates the oral tradition restoring, by linking it with text, its critical and fundamental necessity to any and all social process. In this view one purpose of language is for making and conveying meaning rather than providing that structural function of enabling not merely access but a one-to-one correspondence with reality, or rigidly 'fixing' the universal coordinates of the universe and its contents. One could say in this view, that what the literary tradition, as opposed to literary theory, sets out to do has to do with conveying and producing a non-discursive language for 'making meaning', and not 'inscribing truth'. This meaning then has certain restraints imposed on its interpretation by the textual object that is the product of his writing.

Said draws from an Eleventh century debate centered 'textually' on the Koran, to generate his proposition of text as 'worldly', between two schools of Islamic thought on linguistic theory, the Zahirites and Batinists. It long anticipated the twentieth century debate between the structuralists and generative grammarians, from which literary theory effectively emerged (Said, 1983). Zahirite derives from the Arabic word for clear, apparent, and phenomenal, while Batinist connotes that which is internal or hidden. Favouring the Zahirite focus on the phenomenal words themselves rather than the Batinist connotation that meaning in language is concealed (gnostic), Said views text as 'worldly' or 'circumstantial' or as an 'event' itself. The textual object and the situation (signifier and signified) then exist at the same level of surface particularity (Said, 1983). Accordingly, the Koran is absolutely circumstantial rather than indisputable immutable fact or truth, and is read in such a way that that worldliness

does not dominate the actual sense of the text (and thus avoids being deterministic). As a sacred text it speaks of historical events but is itself not historical, 'it repeats past events, condenses and particularizes, yet is not actually lived experience; it ruptures the human continuity of life, yet God does not enter temporality by a sustained or concerted act' (Said, 1983; p. 37). In this view the Koran lacks the omnipotent and omniscient will ('to truth') of God<sup>1</sup>. Its circumstantiality consecrates the Koran instead as the word of both God and man, i.e. divine and human language (an ongoing dialogue between man, God and their universe so to speak; Said, 1983). In many parts of the East the text in general is viewed as sacred and treated as such. In Indian custom, for example, books are kept off the floor lest one steps on them, a sacrilegious act for which it is customary to offer a prayer as penance.

In the Zahirite view the Koran (as circumstantial) evokes the memory of actions, the contents of which (the memory) repeat itself eternally in ways identical with itself. The Koran represents text of a particular imperative configuration that is controlled by the paradigmatic imperatives (fundamental to its operation) of *iqra* (read or recite) and *qul* (tell). The reading and telling imperatives structure the circumstantial and historical appearance of the Koran, and its uniqueness as an event. These imperatives are also complemented by the juridical notion of *hadd*, meaning both a logico-grammatical definition and a limit. The delivery of an utterance (*khobar*) is then the verbal realization of a signifying intention lying between the injunctions to read and write of the imperative mode. This signifying intention is synonymous exclusively with a verbal intention, as opposed to psychological (internal or masked), that is worldly - 'it takes place in the world; it is occasional and circumstantial in both a very precise and wholly pertinent way' (Said, 1983; p. 38). Language is thus viewed as being regulated by real usage, according to certain lexical and syntactical rules, and not by abstract prescription or speculative freedom (Said, 1983). Zahirite linguistic theory opposed the Batinian view of reading of text as masking a hidden level beneath the words (a gnostic view of text), and which thus allowed infinite interpretations (and as infinite misreadings and misinterpretations) of the sacred text of Islam. The readings and interpretations of the Koran and by extension of any text, though they may vary in number, are hence limited by real usage, by its social implementation; as opposed to its limited circulation of text in the archives of high theory. A more detailed analysis of the Said's reprise of this

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<sup>1</sup> In this view the Koran should not be disseminated as (divine) truth.

millennium old literary debate, and his view of Foucault's historiographies, is contained in Reading 2 in the appendices to this work (see CD-Rom attached).

A technique that is then critical to Said's critical approach is 'repetition', which 'imposes certain constraints upon the interpretation of text, it historicizes the text as something which originates in the world, which insists upon its own being' (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2001; p. 6). Repetition lends materiality to text though there are some very obvious caveats to this technique which make it 'double-edged'. Repetition is critical to method and hence to our 'textual attitude' towards the other and the world. In addition, as an idea crucial to this thesis, it is the persistent repetition of a discourse/narrative on the other against the others silence/ absence that gives materiality or perhaps more accurately establishes, for example, the colonialist discourse on the Malay as historical truth. Repetition, ironically, as will be demonstrated in this work is of as much significance to colonialist discourse as it is to its pre-eminent form of critique, the form of postcolonial critique influenced by Said. That the colonialist discourse on the Malay does not match the material worldly experience of the Malay renders it as fiction or myth, though perhaps only for the Malay (and not the coloniser). It is here that Said's notion of writing back to power most comes into play. It is of little use if this technique of repetition is invoked against the silence/ absence of the coloniser/ oppressor. Thus one writes back to, as opposed to the oppositional against, power, which, in the Saidean view, has an origin. In the instance of the colonialist discourse this origin is the colonising organism - the authors (who is not decentred/ dead) and their audience of this colonialist discourse which excludes, which is written against the silence of, the colonised (who is, metaphorically and often literally; dead that is). My own view of Said's contemporary reworking of the 'circumstantiality of text' is that it locates text between the anarchic linguistic play of contemporary critical work and the immutable truths that are the pursuit of modern disciplinary inquiry.

### **'Writing genealogies' and 'writing for power'**

The most pertinent criticisms of Foucault's project, and of Foucault himself, that relate to my rejection of 'writing genealogies' derive from Edward Said, who himself readily acknowledged his great debt to Foucault (Ashcroft, 2003; Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2001; Said, 1978 & 1983). Said radically departs from Foucault in his critical work, and very deliberately rejects its critical impulse (as futile), because of its non-secularity and its functionalist/ deterministic thesis on power (the latter already alluded to above). For

Said, Foucault in his *Archaeology of knowledge* speaks of ‘discourse as something that has its own life’ and which can ‘be discussed separately from the realm of the real’ or the ‘historical realm’ (Ashcroft, 2003; p.269). In *Orientalism*, his first major work, Said emphatically rejects this thesis of the dislocatedness of theory/ discourse (or the ‘death of the author’) by making ‘discourse go hand-in-hand with an account of conquest, the creation of instruments of domination, and the techniques of surveillance that were not rooted in theory but in actual territory’ (Ashcroft, 2003; p. 269). Those that are ‘absent’ in Foucault’s work virtually comprise the entire lacunae of the western tradition, the other who lacks. Amongst these are the colonized, a silence that seems astonishing given the tumultuous colonial and post-colonial period during which he produced his critical work, and that even Satre, a onetime mentor whom some consider a fellow nihilist, concerned himself with to a significant and greatly influential extent<sup>1</sup>. France, and the West in general, was in the process of loosing its vast empires, and no Frenchman could have been ignorant of the great ructions over Algeria or Vietnam, to say nothing of the general disintegration of the global colonial network (or to be more precise its transformation – one great epistemic shift that Foucault studiously ignored).

Foucault (1977) portended the possible destruction of mankind as a consequence of this will to truth or knowledge, a ‘passion for knowledge which fears no sacrifice, fears nothing but its own extinction’ (p. 163). It could said that at the base of the history of disciplinary knowledge, which roughly translates to the modern subject and its historical ontology, is a male-violence that contributes to our misery, as disenfranchised subjects ‘literally’ constituted by the western (discursive/ disciplinary) tradition. Those modern ventures of slavery, colonization and imperialism, to say nothing of the great wars and the unceasing state of warfare augmented by the great armoury of the sciences (human and natural), have destroyed or assisted in the worldwide destruction of countless numbers of peoples and cultures, to say nothing of the physical environment and other beings. This prolonged and extensive destruction begs the question of what else needs to be destroyed before modern civilization is deemed to be at some critical point leading Foucault, or anyone else for that matter, to prophesise the destruction of mankind. Fanon says of this cynical (an)nihilistic western tradition,

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<sup>1</sup> Satre was well acquainted with Fanon, and the Black American literati exiled in France including Richard Wright and James Baldwin. Satre also wrote the preface to Fanon’s *The wretched of the Earth*.

Let us waste no time in sterile litanies and nauseating mimicry. Leave this Europe where they are never done talking of Man, yet murder men everywhere they find them, at the corner of every one of their own streets, in all corners of the globe. For centuries they have stifled almost the whole of humanity in the name of a so-called spiritual experience. Look at them today swaying between atomic and spiritual disintegration. (1990; p. 251)

Written in 1963, Fanon's searing prose seems as relevant now as it was then. We have played out before our very eyes a microcosm of the imperial/ colonial ventures of old, in the conquest and occupation of an Iraq rendered impotent by a decade of sanctions (hundreds of thousands of children and the poor were killed) by the richest nations of the world, its violence magnified many time over by modern, and not necessarily just military (consider the role of western media), technology. It is a conquest and occupation accompanied by a well-rehearsed but not well-practised discourse on freedom, justice and democracy.

Said, who having abandoned Foucault's and western critical theory gravitated towards Fanon's anti-colonialism, has commented that for the most part these matters were very largely ignored by Foucault, a view reinforced by my readings to date of the latter's works (Ashcroft, 2003; Said, 1994). Given Foucault's great reputation I was a little perplexed by this omission considering the complicity of the western knowledge tradition with that of imperialism, the complicity of the 'new world of learning' with the 'new world of voyages' or to be blunt the 'new world of conquests' (Bernasconi, 2001; Hampson, 2000; Said, 1978 & 1993). In *The price of the ticket*<sup>1</sup> (1960), James Baldwin, perhaps the 'patriarch' of the African-American literary tradition, however, has this to say of Foucault's lineage:

*Negroes [African-Americans/ Black people] want to be treated like men:* a perfectly straightforward statement containing only seven words. People who have mastered Kant, Hegel, Shakespeare, Marx, Freud, and the Bible find this statement utterly impenetrable. This statement seems to threaten profound, barely conscious assumptions. (Cited in Wosen & Widgery, 1991; p. 290) [My insertion].

<sup>1</sup> Also the name of a film about the life and work of James Baldwin. In this film, one scene captures part of an interview with James Baldwin on American TV (with Studs Terkel, 1962). When asked how he would define himself and his work, Baldwin reflects for a moment then smiles broadly and impishly, as if struck by sudden self-realisation, and replies "I am a polemicist". His spontaneous and incandescent reaction burns brightly in my imagination to this day.

I cannot but help feel that Foucault, unlike Satre (one time a mentor and acquainted with both Baldwin and Fanon<sup>1</sup>), is one who would have found this 'straightforward statement' impenetrable. Embedded as I am in the postcolonial world and having emerged out of a very different, 'eastern', tradition I cannot help but feel repelled by the Foucauldian project. My 'numberless beginnings' and those of the Malay and his amok are not to be found in any genealogy of the modern subject because the Malay (and I) does not quite qualify as a 'modern subject'. There is little beyond the aesthetics, its poetic descriptions, of Foucault's critique's that resonates for me, though it should then also be understood that it is not a wholesale rejection of Foucault that I intend. My first, and very deliberate, act of this critique is to locate myself within that space which Foucault seems to have deliberately kept away, that territory from which imperialism and the western tradition began and emerged together in the violent subjugation of the 'deficient' races, the human lacunae, of the world.

#### **Foucault's functionalist view of power**

In terms of modernity or modern knowledge, Foucault argues that the modern self acts as a mere cipher for the circulating system of signs that is (the field of) modern disciplinary language, or discourse (Foucault, 1977 & 1980; Said, 1986). The author, reader and their relation to the text is decentred (as is meaning). As ciphers for power in a network of (disciplinary) power, we have no access or cannot possess (sovereign) power. We act within this network of power, driven as Foucault says by an agonistic and antagonistic impulse confined within a network or relationships of forces and struggles; a will to struggle. Foucault insists in this uncontrolled and directionless, essentially 'entropic' (the increasing disorder of the universe), view of history or anti-history, that

there aren't given subjects of the struggle, one the proletariat, the other the bourgeoisie. Who fights against whom? We all fight each other. And there is always within each of us something that fights something else (Foucault, 1980; p. 207-208; Sarup, 1988; p. 81).

This is his explanation for the basis of disciplinary power, that there is something natural in us that wants to fight, struggle, and that we are mere ciphers for this instinctive universal struggle (Said, 1986; Sarup, 1988). Privilege, and pleasure, are reduced to mere products of, as is the modern subject, or are constituted by, a notion of

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<sup>1</sup> Satre wrote the foreword to *The Wretched of the Earth*

power premised on what I call the 'doctrine of the struggle'. In this view it can be argued that, incredibly and even outrageously for me, that privilege and pleasure, like power, can not be autonomously seized, possessed or exercised (as a capacity). I also offer that for Foucault, knowledge is not so much constituted, but rather produced through conflict or struggle (oppositional), what Said might call a coerced knowledge. What we know of the self, the other and the world is refracted through struggle, in fact *the struggle* (universal struggle for existence); produced from conflict and coercive.

Foucault opposes the philosophical tradition which invests the subject with absolute autonomy/ agency, and its 'stifling anguish of responsibility' (Sarup, 1988; p. 83). Where structuralism had reduced all relations as a function of the linguistic, symbolic and the discursive Foucault, especially amongst the poststructuralists, linked this linguistic model with power and the self (the power/ knowledge/ self nexus), perceiving the former view to be of limited value to the inquiries of the human condition. Foucault however in grasping for an explanation for this view of power as an automatic, and ultimate, principle of social reality promotes a deterministic functionalist thesis of the human, or any, condition. The ultimate principle of social reality is ultimately nihilistic (Said, 1986). In possessing (sovereign) power we view ourselves as being able to possess and seize power, to give and take life. Foucault argues, however, that we have through the modern/ disciplinary tradition instead become products of disciplinary knowledge and power, driven by an automatic, and thus functionalist, impulse of unascertainable origin, nominally 'nature' (instinct) that we have no access to. A similar and contemporary (nihilistic) biological view is that we are mere ciphers for DNA competing on its behalf for biomolecular struggle and dominance. Regarding the relationship between power and knowledge Foucault suggests that

knowledge does not slowly detach itself from its empirical roots, the initial needs from which it arose, to become pure speculation subject only to the demands of reason; its development is not tied to the constitution and affirmation of a free subject; rather it creates a progressive enslavement to its instinctive violence. . . . (Foucault, 1977; p. 162-163)

Derived from a quintessentially Nietzschean view of history, Foucault's view of the present, or the present location of the modern subject, is not the (Cartesian/ Kantian/ Hegelian) progress of an autonomous self/ individual, rather as one progressively enslaved by reason, and the product of instinctive violence of 'the struggle' (as it seems is every- and anything). This present/ self has emerged from the past though not in a

fixed, frozen product (of knowable fixed coordinates) that can thus be defined as such as by discourse. Where the metaphysician freezes the present and the past, the genealogist attempts to leave the forces of history in motion, to 'the endlessly repeated play of dominations' (Foucault, 1977; p. 148). The location of this struggle at the origin of things, of numberless beginnings, is the location of a system of subjection and an aim of the genealogical endeavour. This struggle is also the basis of the Foucault's (and Nietzsche's) functionalist thesis on power, and of his project. In reducing power to this 'natural struggle', the great privileges of power, including pleasure, are considered irrelevant to the will to truth/ power. Edward Said in contrast considers the very obvious and great privileges, and pleasure, that come with power to be of fundamental concern to any critique of the modern tradition (of imperialism from which modernity is inseparable) (Ashcroft, 2003; Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2001). It is little wonder then that Said considers that Foucault not so much writes *of* power but *for* power, and that he takes much pleasure in doing so (Said, 1986). In inciting us to 'write genealogies', a form of critical history, infused with a Kantian/ Nietzschean like appropriation of literary aesthetics he asks of us to do the same, an invitation I explicitly refuse in preference to accepting the Saidean invitation to instead write back to power (Ashcroft, 2003; Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2001; Said, 1994).

In Foucault's agonistic view we act as mere ciphers for language/ power/ knowledge, locked in an agonistic relationship with the world/ reality in a textual (modern/ discursive/ disciplinary) world (Said, 1986; Walzer, 1986). The potential for a radical subversion of this textual world, however, is realized by Foucault's (and Derrida's) clearly stated aim of describing and producing variations on knowledge (countervailing powers) that neither fits 'into the prepared moulds provided by the dominant culture, nor the wholly predictive forms manufactured by the quasi-scientific method' (Said, 1983; p. 182). In opposing this type of quasi-scientific knowledge<sup>1</sup>, Said (1983) suggests that Foucault also promotes a 'gnostic' doctrine of the text, in which the text's 'intention and integrity are invisible ... that perhaps the text hides something' implying that it also 'states, embodies, represents, but does not immediately disclose something' (p.184). This masking by discourse I interpret to be the 'progressive enslavement' of the modern subject by the 'often oppressive rationalities of discourse in the human

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<sup>1</sup> The Batinian view of reading of text which Said rejects in preference to the thesis of the circumstantiality of text (see pp. 12-13).

sciences'<sup>1</sup> (Lash, 1991; p. 259). For Said, Foucault (and Derrida) treats text as a 'network of power-knowledge' which then allows critical readings that penetrate this mask, and to create an opposition to the original text. Said calls this opposition produced by that critic, the critical/ literary theorist, a type of 'countervailing power or counter-memory opposed to the hegemonic discursive practices of his or her time' (Said, 1983; p. 184).

This counter-memory is also described by Foucault as a 'counter-history' (Prado, 1994), and as a 'non-discursive language' or the 'non-discursive critique of the often oppressive rationalities of discourse in the human sciences' (Lash, 1991; p. 259). 'Writing genealogies' is a form of historical critique that has its beginnings in Nietzsche's deliberate interrogation against a conventional notion of history. Conventional or Kantian/ Hegelian history is that objective and positivistic, convergent and teleological, uni-vocal meta-narrative that is a 'natural' linear regression that plots man's putative progress with time (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982; Said, 1978 & 1993; Sarup, 1988). A blunt interpretation might be that the universe/ the natural is ordered and the ordered mind, or reason, can make order or scientifically explicate them in terms of ordered (vectored) language, i.e. discourse, and coherent and unified theories and narratives<sup>2</sup> that, to be as blunt, overwhelmingly privileges the European, or more accurately the munificent 'White Man' who, not surprisingly, is the author of this 'natural history' (Fanon, 1963; Foucault, 1977; Said, 1978 & 1993; Sarup, 1988).

This 'White Man' is then invariably amorphous and monolithic, heroic, masculine and aggressive, who located himself in an as amorphous geopolitical North, and now also West, who is master of a free will and destined to be master of the world/ nature (de Olivera, 2003; Rorty, 1986; Said, 1978 & 1993; Schrift, 2000). Fanon, and later Said, remarked that it is this self-professed White Man to whom this history belongs<sup>3</sup>, it is he who he progresses, and in doing so brings civilisation to the stagnant even regressive 'races' (including that race of woman) (Fanon, 1963; Said, 2001). For de Olivera (2003) this human being uniquely endowed with reason will fulfil in history his moral

<sup>1</sup> Inline with the notion perhaps, that what you do to the other you also do to yourself.

<sup>2</sup> Einstein, for example, was convinced, to his dying day, of the existence of a grand unified theory (GUT). He had but to look no further than the 'White Man', its author, as the unifying constant of modern theory.

<sup>3</sup> I am paraphrasing here; Said said that 'one of the things that you learn about imperialism is that it is always the natives who don't have maps, and the white people who do' (Said, 2001; p. 270), or should it be it is he who makes the maps (e.g. the peace maps for the current Palestinian/ Israeli conflict).

destination (destiny) – a highly specific and privileging teleology that betrays the historical constitution of its subjectivity.

It is common enough to hear or read about the progress of the West, its linear or epochal evolution, and the traditional stagnant East. The East is possessed of a history, and thus progresses, when engaged with the West, or rather when the West ‘intervenes’ when, for example, it brings democracy to the East. The East, the Orient and the Oriental, is anthropomorphised in terms of the ideal race or human that is the ‘White Man’. It’s (the East) customs and behaviours are interpreted and measured against his constituted subjectivity. This inscrutable impermeable Orient and Oriental otherwise can only stagnate or dies a fated natural death, circumstances conspicuous amongst other things for a deficient meta-narrative, and thus for their silence/ absence in history (subjects like children should be observed and not heard). The contemporaneous great civilising force that is modernity, that project of the Enlightenment is then unmistakably, and it can only be, a thing of this White Man.

Nietzschean genealogy specifically relating to *Zur genealogie der moral* (*The genealogy of morals*, 1887) was effectively aimed at displacing a Kantian/ Hegelian linear/ dialectically synthesised (epochal) progressive natural history of man. In its place Nietzsche offered a history that is discursive, socially constructed through language which is then itself socially constituted, rather than one that depicted an essentially Aristotelean, linear mechanical sequence of natural events (Stevens, 2003). This counter to the natural progression of an evolving man (descent) was appropriated into French literary theory by Foucault, who wrote a series of historiographies in the 1960’s and 1970’s (de Olivera, 2003; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982; Stevens, 2003). It is a form of literary theory that can be said to be of a Kantian lineage, via Hegel, Marx, Saussure and Nietzsche, amongst many. Kant may be said to have begun modern literary criticism with his literary critiques of (Cartesian) reason<sup>1</sup> and judgement, i.e. his literary criticism of the Cartesian discourse on reason. Kant also incorporated criticism into the aesthetic realm, and argued that aesthetic production, judgement and criticism was limited to the aesthete, those of an intellectual elite whose work was elevated to ‘high theory’. Considered beyond the machinations of the common man, art (aesthetics

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<sup>1</sup> Descartes *Discourse of reason* being the primary text for Kant’s imposition on the limits of reason which essentially began structuralism

and the aesthete) was thus vested with the elite and divorced from communal ground (Kemal, 1999).

Edward Said considers Foucault's forms of 'dislocated' countervailing power, his historiographies that 'map' epistemic shifts, to be ultimately nihilistic (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2001; Said, 1983 & 1986). Genealogy decentres, through a combination of its archaeological work and functionalist premise of power, the sovereignty of the author over the 'often oppressive rationalities of the discourses of the sciences'. Archaeology in 'objectifying the objectified' and 'empirifying the empirified', provides the counter of expanded representations and many truths to, and thus fictionalises, that status of the one truth contested for by the disciplinary endeavour (a play of or struggle for dominations). The one truth that has emerged from 'the play of dominations/ forces' is decentred and becomes only one amongst many 'localized knowledges' in a circulating field of discourse that is steeped in the instinctive violence of the (universal) struggle for existence for which we as its modern subjects are mere ciphers (Said, 1986). The danger inherent in this all-important moment of poststructuralism has, however, become only too apparent to me today. The notion of the death of the author can be said to have been appropriated by the academy/ corporate/ governmental nexus to impose the decentered ideologies of a 'realities of the market place' doctrine that overrides the very real privations of billions of the increasingly impoverished. This is a 'dictatorship of reason' with no human author because it is that reality (thus absolving its author of the very inherent and gross oppressions of its praxis) of a 'globalised market place of competing labour' produced by the instinctive violence of a natural universal struggle for survival (where the many oppressed are then its true ciphers) - the new (post-modern) globalised industrial revolution with its circulating field of ideologies (as with any commodity in a Marxist materialist take on the 'natural struggle').

What is more pertinent to my rejection of the Foucauldian project is that its countervailing powers, including genealogies, are locked in a functionalist/ deterministic mode of production. The genealogist in adhering to the genealogical project of 'leaving the forces of history in motion' submits his/ her countervailing power to 'the play of dominations'. It is very evident to me however that genealogy has emerged as the dominant method from this play/ struggle, and lost its value as a countervailing power (lost its critical impetus). Some might say that it could only have

been so given Foucault's very deliberate location and antecedents - his very concrete location in French theory and his/ its Kantian/ Nietzschean antecedents (Fraser, 1996; Habermas, 1986; Rorty, 1986; Said, 1983; Stevens, 2003). Among them are Habermas, Richard Rorty and Nancy Fraser. Fraser's (feminist) interpretation of Habermas's view of Foucault's inquiries holds particular appeal for me (1996). Accordingly Habermas views Foucault's critique of modernity as a zealous attempt to be as radical as possible (as with Nietzsche and Heidegger) in aspiring to a total break with the Enlightenment (Fraser, 1996). Habermas's view is in a similar vein to Rorty's accusations of radical chic and post-modern bourgeois liberalism, and is centred around Foucault's supposed rejection of humanism on conceptual and philosophical grounds (Fraser, 1996). In their view the public agonising and privations of Nietzsche and Foucault largely concern those bourgeois issues of deriving, or even appropriating, methodologies for their as contaminated critical inquiries of the very limited view that is conventional history (Fraser, 1996; Habermas, 1986; Rorty, 1986). It is little wonder to me that Foucault severely limits the scope of his critical inquiries, that he embraces so few with his approaches, and that his other is very much the other of the West, of its Enlightenment and its project of modernity.

If the discursive product reflects the author-self that is its origin, then what seems very evident to me is that Foucault in framing his project indulges in the very 'transcendental narcissism' that he instructs us to avoid in 'writing genealogies' (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982; Tamboukou, 1999). His critical work concerns a modern subject that seems to me to be made very much in his own image. There is no reflection of the colonised, and of the many 'othered' in the Foucauldian discourse. Fanon was only too aware of the transcendental narcissism, of their self-annointed privileges, of the colonialist intellectual (what else were the French theorists, including Foucault, but colonial intellectuals).

The colonialist bourgeoisie, in its narcissistic dialogue, expounded by members of its universities, had in fact deeply implanted in the minds of the colonized intellectual that the essential qualities remain eternal in spite of all the blunders men make; the essential qualities of the West<sup>1</sup>, of course. (Fanon, 1990; p. 36)

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<sup>1</sup> Fanon was referring to the universal values of the western tradition, derived in the main during the Enlightenment.

In light of Fanon's comments Foucault's glaring omissions, his conservatism and bourgeois, really neo-liberalism, seem less surprising. Foucault in many respects seems very much (self)made in the image of the lineage that he adores. He is a good Kantian/Nietzschean and like them, of the Western Canon and highly practised in constructing the other (Bernasconi, 2001; Deacon, 2000; Said, 1978 & 1993). It must be said though that where Kant and Nietzsche were actively, even aggressively (the West's hostility to the other), constructing the other, Foucault was more subtle in this practice. He remained steadfastly silent (a type of erasure?) even when pressed on, and thus excluded the condition, for example, of the colonised. It seems to me also that where the text is 'gnostic' in the instance of Foucault's discursive products, is not so much in layering and obscuring the modern subject but in dissembling the very obvious privileges that he sought and was duly accorded, in pursuing the western tradition of scholarship. Fanon, the 'black Foucault' (Said, 2001), asserts that these are the privileges that derive from the narcissistic dialogue between the colonialist bourgeoisie and the academy (Fanon, 1990).

Foucault seems to me thus to have constructed a non-secular non-ethical approach to the inquiry of the human condition, one underpinned by his theorisations on power. Power, or what we do to each other, is reduced to blind 'natural' instinct, a universal 'struggle' for existence which is an entropic descent of and into chaos, as opposed to some version of an ordered history of man or anything else for that matter. That ultimately, according to this view, we are largely, if not entirely, devoid of agency in this struggle seems to me to be highly unethical especially when it also so conspicuously ignores the self-vested privileges inherent in exploiting and constructing the other.

**Deriving a methodological fragment for this critique: a secular -ethical approach comprising a small sample of critical<sup>1</sup> moments**

I am looking to establish some rules of thumb for writing a historiography rather than make concrete enunciations of what it is or is not. I did not embark on this thesis with any great scheme or method in mind. More than anything it is my growing scepticism, and not a little outrage, of the highly pejorative representations of the Malay and his malaise by western psychiatric and lay discourse that is the first moment that gives and

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<sup>1</sup> These are moments crucial to this work, as well are moments of critical approaches derived from a variety of sources

maintains the impetus to this work. This work is meant to speak back to the historical truths that have been written against the forced silence of the colonised. This work materializes from the reading of a nucleus of highly influential 'first' texts, namely the APA's DSM-IV and DSM-IV-TR (APA, 1994 & 2000), Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), Frantz Fanon's *The wretched of the Earth* (1963)\*, William Marsden's *The history of Sumatra* (1783)\*, Alfred Wallace's *The Malay Archipelago* (1869)\*, Isabella Bird's *The golden Chersonese* (1883)\*, Hugh Clifford's *Studies in brown humanity* (1898)\*, Frank Swettenham's *Malay sketches* (1900),\* Anthony Burgess's *Malayan Trilogy* (1956)\*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), John Spores's *Running amok: a historical inquiry* (1988). In the main other texts are read as consequence of reading these 'first texts' of this work. These texts were sampled from my reading history, dating back in some instances to my childhood, mainly on the basis that I know them to be connected with the colonised.

I do not profess to have any grand theory or method in writing this critique, beyond organising it around a small sample of moments derived from the critical work of, amongst others, Said, Fanon, and Foucault (and thus Nietzsche), and naturally enough some that are my own. It is my strategy to make this work irreproducible, as I hardly want to either replicate other work or tender it into 'the market place of competing methodologies' (not that I claim that it is good enough to). My sample of 'moments' should, based on my unique life experiences, hypothetically differ from any other individual were he/ she asked to select a similar strategy for critical work. There will also undoubtedly be moments that are common if not similar to our selections, thus incorporating both individuality and commonality in this approach.

Those borrowed Foucauldian and Saidean 'moments', in particular, that pertain to this work include a scepticism of conventional, convergent history, and of method/ theory ('the oppressive rationalities of scientific discourse'); locating this critical work in both the disciplinary (discursive fields) and colonial traditions, and in their mutuality. One moment of my own is to immediately locate this work in, and as unequivocally for, the existence of they dispossessed - as a polemic of, and for, the dispossessed and of their humanity above all else. It is not however a work that is deliberately inserted Foucauldian-like in the 'market place of competing ideologies' to let the 'play of forces' decide its fate; which ultimately might then be that of appropriation, blind

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\* These are the original dates of publications for these works.

repetition, and innumerable misreadings and misinterpretations (although this is obviously unavoidable), and God forbid, corporatised (very unlikely). It is work that is inviolable of my material experiences of being Malaysian and living intimately with Malay, and is specifically aimed at resisting, opposing and ultimately rejecting the still-persisting myths of the colonised by the coloniser.

This work is engaged in the very first instance with psychiatric discourse but will likely divert, as psychiatry is inseparable from, as is any of the sciences, of the western tradition in its entirety (Said, 1978; Stevens, 2000; Tamboukou, 1999). In this work I use an essentially Foucauldian notion of discourse, which is a 'system of statements' that is of the western tradition (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2001; p. 14). This system of 'signs and practices' is a firmly bounded area of social knowledge within which the world the world comes into being and its speakers and hearers, writers and readers, come to hear their place in the world (the construction of their subjectivity)' (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2001; p. 14). I however attach a qualification to the Foucauldian notion of discourse, one pertaining to his functionalist thesis of knowledge/ power/ self. Discourse, to my mind, is ordered speech/ text, and can be said to be vectored (directional) as are, for example, velocity and weight compared with the directionless speed and mass. It is Foucault's functionalist thesis on power, after all, that makes his project on the knowledge/ power/ self nexus, ultimately, a problematic one.

As a work written back to psychiatric discourse, this critique is also written back to its nearest ally amongst the human sciences, that part of a deontologised or scientific psychology complicit with, and even subservient to, psychiatry. This specific overlap can be said to be the locus of a tradition of inquiry on the human condition that is complicit with imperialism in that it, intentionally or otherwise, is informed by and perpetuates an imperialist/ colonialist discourse that is some five hundred years in the making (Chomsky, 1993; Jahoda, 1999; Said, 1978 & 1993; Spivak, 1988). I cannot but help think again here of Fanon's view of this complicity (Fanon, 1963). The 'narcissistic' dialogue between the western scholar and the colonialist bourgeoisie, which produces the 'colonialist discourse', has endowed both with great privileges. I define a colonialist discourse as that specific set of statements organised around a specific coloniser/ colonised relationship, the English coloniser and the Malay colonised being one such relationship, which dissembles (masks) the political and material aims

of colonisation, and which is a focus of the postcolonial thesis, thus separating it from the genealogical critique (Alatas, 1976; Said, 1978 & 1993; Yahya, 2003).

There are still colonies existing in this supposedly enlightened era, and the conquest of the geo-political East and South by West and North is only too evidently an everyday occurrence. Far from being some conveniently expedited and distant memory, as we have 'progressed' beyond this painful though 'necessary' period of our evolution, modern imperialism is as potent as it has ever been (Chomsky, 1993; Pilger, 2002; Said, 1978, 1993 & 2001; Yahya, 2003). The great social struggles between the imperial and dominated societies continue to this day, and hence it is most salient that the 'post' in postcolonial theory refers to 'after colonialism began' rather than after colonisation ended (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2001; p. 15). This work is written as a postcolonial critique against a specific colonial discourse, while cognisant of the continuing struggle against this centuries old imposition, and its evolving guise. It adheres to postcolonial theory in that it is concerned with the impact of imperial/ colonial language on the colonised, particularly with those effects of the modern or imperialist discourses, such as the human sciences (Ashcroft, 2003; Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2001; Said, 1993). This particular 'moment' marks my irretrievable departure from the Foucauldian critique which generally, if ever, does not dwell on the privileges and pleasures of power (Said, 1986; Sarup, 1988).

A criticism of Said's *Orientalism*, which can be said to be the first text of post-colonialism, is that the voice (his/ her resistance to Orientalist discourse) of the 'Oriental' is not heard (Ashcroft, 2003; Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2001). This work is however as concerned with the responses of the colonised to the complex of signs and practices this colonial discourse represents, with one very necessary and obvious caveat. The scope of this work is limited to a thesis written for a thesis and can thus only hope to do so much.

The lay and scientific texts of the colonialist discourse on the Malay and his malaise are the 'site' of the 'archaeological work' of this historiography. I maintain here that while Foucault directs us to read 'Don Quixote, Descartes, and a decree by Pomponne de Belierre about houses of internment in the same stroke' not merely as 'literature' (fiction as opposed to truth), "philosophy" (approximating reality), or "law" (delimiting practice), but as both conditions and effects of the period in question (Foucault, 1974; p.

127), this is what I (and no doubt many others) have been doing for much of my life; informed not by literary theory, of which till very recently I had little idea, but by the literary tradition. I feel thus that I arrived into literary theory from the literary tradition, and from a secular one at that, thanks to my parents and my Malaysian education. I add, where Foucault might have been reluctant to, Dostoevsky, Tagore, Neruda, Said, Morrison, and the numerous others of those othered by the western tradition, including many of this West. I see no reason to discard this 'baggage' in my venture into critical work.

Though my writing even in my own estimation veers towards the polemical, my intention is not to insist on any truth, beyond those of the possessed and dispossessed by, ironically enough, truth. I also then cannot abide by the simple and tepid thesis of the 'text as gnostic'. What seems very evident is the extreme and overt hostility of much of the writing that I have to come across to date; not surprising given that many offer that it coincides and is complicit with western imperialism (Alatas, 1976; Said, 1978 & 1993; Yahya, 2003). This hostility which is of that of the West to the other, and a critical Derridean moment that Said incorporates in his work (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2001), is something that I am only too well aware of. The text does not merely mystically or mysteriously 'hide something'; it is antagonistic rather than gnostic. It violently oppresses those possessed and dispossessed, as violently as the innumerable conquests, colonisation and oppression of the many othered of the West which are of a 'chronicity' already exceeding five hundred years in its various manifestations (Chomsky, 1993; Said, 1993). I ground this critique of colonialist/ imperialist discourse in the worldliness of its oppressions, in the very real and incalculable loss and grief of its victims and survivors, and their courageous, resilient, and often graceful irrepressible resistance. This is then perhaps the key 'moment' of this work.

It is my view that when Foucault invites/ incites us to 'write genealogies', he invites us to descend on the 'impure' body from the elevated site of high theory. This is the site occupied by the western tradition (of pure reason), where Foucault's lineage, including Descartes, Bacon, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche and Heidegger, were/ are resident. Descent, which separates the present from a unifying, constitutive past, is the key or 'first Nietzschean moment', *Herkunft*, of genealogy as historiography (including Foucault's; Stenson, 1987; p. 450). It is 'that moment of separation' both Nietzsche and Foucault use in 'debunking the noble schemes of value by pointing to their lowly origins'

(Stenson, 1987; p. 450). These lowly origins seem to me now to be little more than the impure origins of Kantian metaphysics (Deacon, 2000; de Olivera, 2003; Stevens, 2003). Genealogical descent has been written as a disruptive shift, bend or break in the linearity of a convergent natural history of man and his universe. When considering the privileges of this lineage, descent however seems to me much more like a downward movement from their elevated site. Foucault, and Nietzsche, when they incite us to 'write genealogies' initiate us into the rites of descent, incite us into availing ourselves of the self-vested right (and privileges) of descent, of their lineage. That this descent is made through revisiting the Western Canon, its 'field of entangled and confused parchments' (of which *Don Quixote* is one), on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times' (Foucault, 1977; p. 139), only emphasises for me his project's conservation of this highly privileged tradition.

'Writing genealogies' seems to me little different from the psychiatrist who descends on the disordered body, 'struggles with it' to search for the mental disorder; the surgeon/medical practitioner who descends on the (impure) diseased body to search for the (impure) disease entity; and the anthropologist (e.g. the Leakeys) who unerringly descend on and surgically excavate the 'dirt' (soil) of Africa, in search of the 'lowly/impure' origins of man amongst the black ignoble savage<sup>1</sup>. The genealogist descends on the body of the modern subject from an elevated, dislocated and decontextualised site of high theory (a site that does not seem far off disembodied pure reason) to seek our impure/lowly origins. This descent, crucially, is underpinned by Foucault's, and poststructuralism's, deterministic conceptualisation of disciplinary power as automatic, and disinfected of human agency and privilege. To my mind Foucault like Rousseau, Kant, Darwin and Nietzsche before him, supports the doctrine of the universal struggle for existence, which is entrenched in western thought and which, not surprisingly, favours the dominance of the White Man. It is in fact fundamental to his project as it was to the Nietzschean, and Darwinian, project. Foucault project is more likely directed against the progressive enslavement of the same White Man to a discourse that is the product of this struggle. I reject this instruction and chose instead to *write from the body*, a location more aligned with the literary tradition than with literary theory, to reflect my experience of the condition of the colonised.

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<sup>1</sup>The black ignoble savage is a representation that is explained and explored in Part 3 of this work.

What is as significant to me as this reprehensible image of descending is the contrast between history and descent implicit in 'writing genealogies'. Where the Enlightenment tradition of inquiry conceived of a (Kantian) natural history that was linear and what I call mechano-causal (Aristotlean/ mechanical and causal), or epochal, univocal meta-narrative, Nietzsche and Foucault in particular rewrites this history as a genealogy as man's chaotic shifts with time (from his lowly numberless beginnings). Dominance when it emerges from the play of forces, the struggle, is reduced to random accident. Rather than making meaning, it seems to me that genealogy goes so far as to, even deliberately, unmake meaning making its agenda, ultimately and even deliberately, nihilistic.

**More critical moments: the anti-colonialism of Frantz Fanon (the 'black' Foucault)**

Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) is of crucial influence to Said's postcolonial thesis. He viewed the space of colonial politics and culture as the representation of a primitive 'Manichean division along the binary axes of white/ black, good/evil, primitive/ civilised, etc' (Prasad, 1992; p.74). One could argue that this Manichean dualism is reminiscent of the binary oppositions that deconstructionism is premised on. Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* (1963), for Said, preceded Foucault's *Madness and civilisation* (1965) in describing, though in different ways, mechanisms of exclusion and confinement (colonizer/ colonized and sane/ insane) that were embedded in European institutions (its 'colonies' and insane asylums respectively) existing since the Renaissance (Said, 2001). What is also different for Said, however, is that Fanon's work came out of an ongoing and profound social movement, the Algerian revolution (against the French coloniser), as opposed to being derived within the limited confines of the academy. The *Wretched of the Earth* is then the result of a collective struggle, in which Fanon himself was heavily involved, as is say the work of a Pablo Neruda, Rabindranath Tagore, Yeats, or a John Steinbeck.

*Madness and civilisation* emerged instead from a very different tradition, that of the 'individual scholar-researcher acquiring a reputation for learning, brilliance, and so on' (Said, 2001; p. 39). It has more limited circulation and worldly or circumstantial value limited by and large to the academy and its archives. Fanon's work represents a certain practice of historiography that emphasises an active commitment to revolutionary change, solidarity, and liberation, is thus for Said, as it is for me, the more significant,

powerful and relevant of the two. Foucault even a decade after the publication of *Madness and civilisation* maintained that he believed in no positive truths, ideas, or ideals. It is only towards the end of his project, two decades after the death of Fanon (in 1961), did the potential for great political force coalesce in his work (Said, 2001).

It is through his insistence of these prior theses that Said implicates a prolonged and effective resistance to colonisation and imperialism, which then provides an alternative route for a contemporary postcolonial resistance to modernism. This resistance or countervailing power is one that is embedded in the common or collective struggle rather than in high theory resident entirely in the archives of the academy. Foucault's project, fluent or fragmented, method or negation, theory or fiction, and prosaic or poetic, was resident within the academy to the extent that he resented public or common acclaim of his work (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983). It is again difficult to escape the conclusion that he was, almost, to the last a 'good' Kantian (and Nietzschean). I would argue that his particular writing of power (or resistance) incorporates that Kantian appropriation of aesthetics into high theory or critique. Kant in doing so isolated cultural and aesthetic realms from the worldly domain of everyday common usage in his doctrines on method (particularly through his *Critique of judgement*; Verhaegh, 2001; Zuckert, 2002).

It could be said that Foucault, good Kantian that he is, does little different. Where Foucault diligently follows this particular tradition of the Enlightenment, in contrast the tradition of modern and nationalist literature is of the worldly realm of the collective common struggle, and not elevated above it as high theory. Accordingly Foucault's subversion of the aesthetic forms of literature, such as his poetics, can be read as a form of western bourgeois liberalism or radical chic, so evident in his nihilistic agenda, as described by Rorty (1986). Like Toni Morrison's literary critiques of American society, Said's postcolonial thesis has at its crux aesthetic forms that are firmly embedded in everyday, worldly usage of language. Towards the end of his work *Orientalism* Said argues that the secular-ethical stance, effected by maintaining distance from literary theory, allows authorial creativity or freedom through the development of a non-coercive knowledge. Articulated very deliberately as 'anti-Foucauldian' this knowledge is produced specifically as a counter to a Foucauldian/ poststructuralist 'decentring' of the author, in which production of knowledge/ discourse is coerced (from conflict). This stance deliberately taken by Said opposes Foucault's functionalist

and deterministic analyses, perhaps ironical as it can then be construed as a form of productive resistance (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2001).

If any one truth is to be revealed then it is this singular, irreducible truth. I thus impart a key Saidean moment to my work, i.e. to make 'discourse go hand-in-hand with an account of conquest, the creation of instruments of domination, and techniques of surveillance that were rooted not in theory but in actual territory', and in the very material privileges and pleasure that come with this conquest (Ashcroft, 2003; p. 269). Being of the colonised, and of the other than the modern subject<sup>1</sup>, my experience of colonialism's immediate aftermath, and of its impression on my parents, says to me that colonialist discourse goes beyond inscribing and layering the body with its truths. Merely revealing what is hidden will not in my estimation unveil this othered. Reading the various psychiatric and lay descriptions, it is almost impossible to not arrive at the conclusion that the Malay is savage, or at best semi-savage; that he and she, more so, is largely bereft of those attributes that purportedly differentiates humans from the other living<sup>2</sup>. My material experience of the Malay tells me very different from the colonialist discourse on the Malay - that if he is a savage then we are all most indubitably savages.

An initial step in resurrecting the body of the Malay is to examine the dissembling colonial and neo-colonial, or even post-colonial, discourse on this colonised 'object' (as I argue he is object rather than subject). That key Foucauldian moment of identifying and articulating that which is contemporaneous and problematic for me is an obvious one with which to initiate this work. I have, as I have already stated, great problems with descent in order to explicate the lowly origins of the grand schemes of man. There is much that is extraordinary about the 'ordinary' lives of ordinary ('lowly') men and women, about their poetic existence. Already in my limited reading of the writing of amok, and of the Malay and his/ her colonising, there seems little that is ordinary about their origins. To me at the very least my descent into their 'lowly' origins promises to reveal the extraordinary lives and events of the Malay and his world.

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<sup>1</sup> Jimmy Carter, for example, will argue that my like are not ready for those ideas of modernity such as democracy.

<sup>2</sup> And we speak for (anthropomorphise) them; another group of othered even more oppressed than the human other, difficult as that is to believe initially.

### Writing in a 'worldly' style

I intend to do as Said did, write in a circumstantial way, a conversational style that is of a particular style of postcolonial critique that is indubitably Said's own, his locating of theory in the society in which his work derives. At the very heart of his postcolonial thesis lies an insistence of the political importance of colonization. Part of this insistence is that of the worldliness or materiality of text, of its production, propagation and reception, i.e. the material location of the text in its social and political contexts. The colonial text/ discourse text is thus not merely a (discursive) fragment of the regulated production, exchange, and circulation of utterances or language (thus opposing Foucault's view of discourse). This specific textual attitude (of the materiality of text) has provided a powerful resource to that fundamental belief of the political importance of colonization. As a textual approach, Said's postcolonial critique locates itself in the material world as opposed to the postcolonialism that has been most strongly influenced by the high theory of poststructuralism, a specific example being Homi Bhaba's critical work (Williams, 2001). The 'hopelessly tiresome', 'excessive' and 'risible' jargon of this type of postcolonial thesis, for Said, constitutes a stumbling block in that it has that most deleterious of effects – 'luring away the intellectual from any sort of meaningful political engagement' (Williams, 2001; p. 317).

Said's postcolonial thesis incorporates that idea of an amateur's return to an accessible language (Ashcroft, 2003; Said, 1983), the language of a secular criticism that deliberately distances itself from the 'precious jargon' of the isolationist, priestly world of high theory (or alternatively, the sophistry of the professional intellectual). The informal, often conversational language of *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* are examples of this style of writing that imputes a non-specialist reader, and thus confirms the worldliness of his own text (Ashcroft, 2003). It is an approach fashioned in an 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). It is also a retreat *into* the 'labyrinth of textuality' constructed out of 'the mystical and disinfected matter of literary theory' (Said, 1983; p. 4). In the labyrinth a 'precious jargon has advanced' and its imposing and largely impenetrable complexities has left it with increasingly little to say to the society from which it emerges (Said, 1983; p. 4). The worldliness of text for Said then allows the relocation of the critical theorist into the society from which he/ she has emerged, and is panacea for the poststructuralist anxiety (of pure textuality) 'which often haunts contemporary critical practice' (Ashcroft, 2003; p. 261).

This secular criticism that is embedded in the notion of text as worldly attempts to produce a criticism that engages the real material ground of political and social life, and between professional and public forums. For Said it is imperative that 'criticism must think itself as life-enhancing and constitutively opposed to every form of tyranny, domination, and abuse; its social goals are non-coercive knowledge produced in the interests of human freedom' (Said, 1983; p. 29). It is an imperative that it seems I have followed since I was but a child, though with indeterminate competence. Criticism or more pertinently secular criticism is then, for Said, the key function of the concerned intellectual (in contrast to the work of the 'petty sciences'<sup>1</sup>, or the *petite bourgeoisie*). Criticism locates the intellectual in the world by his/ her speaking truth to power (Ashcroft, 2003; Said, 1983) as opposed to say merely advancing the complex theologies or theories of the petty sciences (Ashcroft, 2003; May, 1993). This criticism is then a resistance, a writing back to imperialism and to injustice that, for Said, is complicit with the 'so called objective truth' of the White Man's (western) disciplinary tradition, a White Man whose superiority was maintained by the European colonial empires (Said, 1994; p. 67).

I hope then to 'speak' not to the facts, but of these facts with an audience, inclusive of those who identify as Malay and those who maintain the historical status of this Malay as a native. This is the meaning of the experience of my engagement with the Malay, with amok, with the West, with what and how it writes of the Malay, and no doubt ultimately, me. To imbue meaning I must then impart some coherence to this piece of work. I have begun this analysis with some key Foucauldian and Saidean moments, but what follows is essentially a chronology of my encounters with the texts I have and am about to engage with. 'Descent' and 'ascent' through the historical writing of the Malay alternate, as what I perceive to be crucial representations, concepts or ideas are encountered in my initial readings, and traced to some beginning, limited of course to that specific context of a thesis. I hope then that the 'descent and ascent' through the colonialist discourse on Malay and his malaise of amok, occurs with enough rhythm to impart coherence, and more importantly meaning, to those who do me the honour of reading it.

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<sup>1</sup> A term May uses in *Between genealogy and epistemology* (1993) to describe the petty concerns of the sciences, for example those inquiries of psychology on the human condition.

### CHAPTER 3: SOME KEY CONCEPTS

#### Representation and race in colonialist discourse

A concept then that is critical to this analysis is that of representation, the specific truths of the other that scientific discourse is organised around. In the way that the disciplines of chemistry or physics are organised around representations of the atom or molecule, colonialist discourse on the Orient can be said to be a related set of narratives organised around Occidental representations of the Orient and the Oriental. Examples include the treacherous infidel, the half naked Indian and the violent/ sexually predatory African (Said, 1976). A crucial element of literary theory is 'the permanent suspension of representation' where 'to present means to settle, answer, resolve and control the represented' (Lotringer & Cohen, 2001; p. 4). Foucault opposed the idea of western discourse as being representative, truthful, of the modern subject (Lash, 1991; Sarup, 1988; Sheridan, 1982). His contention is that this discourse is instead fictional, deployed in the exercise of controlling and segregating whole populations (Alcoff, 2001). Representations impose their form on and constitute the disenfranchised, 'progressively enslaved' self that is the modern subject (Foucault, 1977; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983). Said is also of the opinion that representations such as those of the Orient and Oriental also provide the observer with a designation, what Foucault calls a 'controlled derivation'. Accordingly these racial types and characters belong to a network of related generalisations, and essential to the 'truth regimes' that are the human sciences (Foucault, 1970; Said, 1978). To 'know what properly appertains to one individual is to have before one the classification - or the possibility of classifying - all others' (p. 138; Foucault, 1970). Based on the visible, the observable signs of the empirical object of colonial/ scientific study (e.g. the Malay), it is this visibility<sup>1</sup> that allows, for Foucault, the (panopticonic) 'automatic functioning of power' (of the colonial/ scientific gaze) (Foucault, 1979; p. 278).

Far from needing Foucault, however, to treat these representations and colonialist discourse as fictions, my actual life experience in Malaysia informs me that they are to be treated as such, as I have been for decades now. I have long encountered and countered these representations or 'controlled derivations' of my, and my fellow 'Orientals', patently fictional existence. This work continues albeit more formally my necessary critique of the representations, the truths, disseminated by an imperialist/

<sup>1</sup> Though he had no interest in race as 'colour'.

colonialist discourse largely organised around the 'races' native to the Malay Archipelago.

The scientific idea of race is also central to the representation of this Malay of the savage/ native races. I subscribe to Toni Morrison's emphatic declaration that 'race is about colour' (Angelo, 1989). In making race a scientific idea Kant and Darwin, and who else could be more notable amongst the Enlightened, determined that colour 'of all the differences between the races of man, the colour of skin is the most conspicuous and one of the best marked' (Darwin 1964; p. 298). Linda Alcoff, more recently, remarked 'what could be more permanently visible than that which is inscribed on the on the body itself' (Alcoff, 2001; p. 278). This visibility of racialised identities allows for that essential task of colonisation, 'the management and segregation of populations, and to catch individuals who trespass beyond their rightful bounds' (Alcoff, 2001; p. 279). Race as science is also explored in this work, and especially in relation to the 'White Man' and the Malay and their historical 'relationship'.

### **The syndrome in contemporary psychiatric discourse**

The scientific classification of mental disorders by psychiatric authorities along the lines of a taxonomy of syndromes is of fundamental significance to this thesis. In the DSM-IV-TR (APA, 2004), each mental disorder

is conceptualized as a clinically significant behavioral or psychological syndrome or pattern that occurs in an individual that is associated with present distress (e.g. a painful symptom) or disability (i.e. impairment in one or more important areas of functioning) or with a significantly increased risk of suffering, death, pain, disability or an important loss of freedom. In addition, this syndrome or pattern must not be merely an expected or culturally sanctioned response to a particular event, for example, the death of a loved one. Whatever its original cause, it must currently be considered a manifestation of a behavioral, psychological, or biological dysfunction in the individual. (p. xxxi)

A taxon groups mental syndromes according to their presumed natural relationships, and examples in the recent DSMs are the anxiety disorders, mood disorders and of course the culture-bound syndromes. In the instance of the CBSs one can then safely assume that their association with what passes for culture in psychiatric discourse, alone 'naturally' groups these very diverse syndromes of as diverse origins. This specific use of culture implies an other than western, and even universal, category of human

grouping, though it does not seem clear to me if by culture the American or western psychiatrist means race, ethnicity, society, nationality, et cetera.

In the view of some, the ‘naturalising’ of the mental disorders is a deliberate strategy aimed at scientising psychiatry, by enabling the development of the natural or scientific study of mental disorders/ syndromes, effectively psychopathology (Crowe, 2000; Kendell & Jablensky, 2003). In doing so psychiatry can be said to have assumed a ‘natural attitude’ to ‘normative’ mental abnormality in which the syndrome, a pivotal concept, is purportedly the effect of or caused by a natural disease entity or the ‘medical model’ of the mental illness. A major objective of psychopathology is then to establish a one-to-one correspondence between the several hundred syndromes with their natural (physical) disease entity (Crowe, 2000; Follette & Houts, 1996; Salzinger, 1986).

Salzinger (1986) has proposed that the DSM system is based on medical assumptions that abnormal behavior ‘represents a sign or a symptom, that it is part of a “mental” disorder, that the signs are objective indicators, and that the symptoms are the subjective complaints by the patient’ (pp. 116-117). The syndrome or pattern of signs of a mental disorder are thus the sensible indicators, or variables, that can be objectively and empirically measured and linked directly to the organic origin of the mental disorder. An interpretation of the syndrome, as representative of a specific mental disorder, is that it is a specific pattern or cluster of signs that is a historical constant or ‘truth/ fact’, as by implication is the CBS and it’s associated ‘culture’. It is of great significance to me then that more than merely classifying syndromes, the DSM is validated as scientific by measuring these signs mathematically or, more accurately, statistically - hence the title *Diagnostic and **statistical** manual* (my emphasis). Where mathematics is necessarily, according to an Aristotlean/ Kantian/ Newtonian (modern) view of science, the ‘mother’ of the pure sciences (because numbers imbue a purity of reason/ logic where mere words only dissemble) statistics can be said to have been very deliberately, and necessarily, incorporated to sanction the human disciplines as sciences.

This conceptualisation of the mental disorder as a syndrome is necessarily embedded in an ‘atheoretical stance’, particularly with respect to aetiology (Follette & Houts, 1996; Lemma, 1995; Widiger & Sankis, 2000). The DSM-IV makes reference to this atheoretical, or theoretically neutral, stance in its introduction, where it states that the

DSM-III introduced a number of important methodological innovations, including explicit diagnostic criteria ... and a descriptive approach that attempted to be neutral with respect to theories of etiology. (APA, 1994; pp. xvii-xviii).

What is implied, apart from the real physical existence of the mental disorder, is that the DSM cannot be associated with any reducing theory that explains its categories via a few fundamental processes - the reductionist principle in science. Signs and symptoms of physical disorders or syndromes are merely those, symptoms, unless an organic cause is confirmed and the disease named (Kendell & Jablensky, 2003). It is significant to me that since Kraepelin himself, and maybe even Hippocrates, a taxonomy comprising well established organically based mental disorders has not substantially increased beyond epilepsy, head injuries, and Alzheimer's. Even with current developments in genetics and others scientific areas it is far from clear that there are or can be unitary organic bases to almost all mental disorders, as attributed by their 'atheoretical' by their taxonomic and diagnostic systems (Cloninger, 1999). Here we can ask the overarching question 'what is the medical model' or 'what is the disease entity' of the mental syndrome? To which of course there can not be the remotest possibility of a cohesive, widely accepted answer given that very few of the several hundred syndromes described by the DSM-IV-TR have yet to, and most likely never will, yield a disease entity. We are instead offered highly fragmented and widely disputed theories on the nature of a handful of these syndromes, examples being depression and schizophrenia. This medical principle, however, seems to have conveniently eluded psychiatry and its acolytes. Even in a very charitable application of the medical model, syndromes seem very largely to be collections of signs that are only clinically significant in the eyes of psychiatrists and 'psychopathologists'.

What then the sanctified status of 'clinical significance' given the highly subjective and disputatious issue that is the diagnosis of mental disorders, best exemplified by the startlingly low prevalence of a great number of them, even as they numbers increase exponentially (Sadock, 2002)? The syndrome of the diagnostic tools of psychiatry, the DSM and ICD, seem doomed to remain precisely that ephemeral entity, never to realise that 'real' status of the physical disorder that is conferred with the identification of its disease entity.

In the view of some, and contrary to this assertion of neutrality and disavowal of the reductionist principle, the overarching theoretical principles of the DSM belong to a nineteenth century generated medical model. Accordingly mental disorders were considered to be discrete disease entities classifiable into categories with natural boundaries between them (Cloninger, 1999; Littlewood, 2002). This still persisting, and undoubtedly useful, medical model provides the reductive natural laws which purportedly will provide explanations for the syndromes and disorders that result from diagnosis by the recent DSMs, i.e. diagnosis effected very largely by a 'syndromal phenomenology' (diagnosis by a cluster of signs). The implicit and unquestioning acceptance of this model, and the explicit disavowal through the atheoretical stance, however acts to exclude or at the very least constraint, investigations of the origins and causes of mental disorder/ syndrome via other approaches, such as social constructionism and even cross-cultural psychiatry. A whole taxon of syndromes labelled the culture-bound syndrome seems to have been invented specifically to confine the activity of the cross-cultural psychiatrist.

A corollary to the adoption of atheoretical stance is a fundamental shift in the constitution of mental abnormality by the APA, involving a transition from classical to prototypical classification. Once viewed almost unequivocally as disorders, 'mental illness' is now diagnosed as syndromes through the DSM, and the World Health Organisation's (WHO) International Classification of Diseases diagnostic tools, which are authorised very largely by the psychiatrist/ psychopathologist (with their ideological affiliations). One can then ask that if they were to step out of the clinic whether these same signs could as 'objectively' be differentiated as significant, and precisely where would they be so – presuming of course that they were 'objectively' diagnosed in the clinic in the first instance.

A disturbing observation about the difference between mental and physical disorders is that the occurrence and prevalence of the latter is far, far greater (Widdiger & Sankis, 2000). This can be looked upon as somewhat surprising given a reasonable expectation of their equivalence in the optimal functioning of our mental and physical health, premised as they are on the same (medical) model. Is then the medicalised model of mental health an aberrant one, or is there a far greater level of psychopathology that is not being detected? It seems more likely and acceptable that that we say the former, and even that 'we are all ill' as surely we can at least one aspect of our physical and

mental state that inconveniences us. In addition in my eyes there are many prominent groups of people whose behaviour could be categorised as psychopathological if they were not immunized or privileged against such diagnosis in the first instance.

### **And some necessary disclaimers**

I also need to, before I formally begin my inquiry into amok, clarify one particular representation I myself use which may be taken to be pejorative. I make many references to the 'White Man'. The 'White Man' is in my view a highly privileged racialisation that negates the great diversities of the 'white race' that are blatantly apparent to me. To claim to be a 'White Man' is to vest self with the great privileges inherent to a racial hierarchy authorised by an amorphous, elitist and entirely fictional identity who, not surprisingly, places himself at its apex as ascendant above all others, including that race of woman. I believe this particular truth or representation to be entirely ideological and fictional, to be as dissembling and as fictional or ideological as his representations of the 'Malay'.

It is also not my intention to compare traditions, 'races', ideologies, *et cetera*, although this ideal is likely one impossible to realise. This work is not a comparative analysis, and instead a critical one. I desire to understand why the Malay purportedly runs amok, why he seemingly without reason erupts into a frenzy of homicidal violence; as opposed to say comparing the great civilisation of the Malay with the savagery of the West. I will keep my comparisons of the West/ white and the East/ coloured, and thus the only too consequent privileging of the latter over the former, to a minimum. This work is meant to be written from a secular-ethical position, and that said I can only hope that I have far distanced myself from that which I abhor at my work's end.

## CHAPTER 4: WRITING/ WRITHING FROM THE BODY

### Blending the literary tradition and literary theory

What has been particularly evocative for me in my reading of Foucault's project is his view of the pivotal role of literature in critiquing 'the often oppressive discourses of the human sciences' (Lash, 1991; P. 259). Modern literature as such uses a non-discursive language or a language stripped of dialectics, a non-constitutive subject-less language (Foucault, 1977). Foucault insists that he has

never written anything other than fictions. For all that I would not want to say that they were outside the truth. It seems to me plausible to me to make fictions work within the truth, to introduce truth effects with a fictional discourse and in some way to make discourse arouse, "fabricate" something which does not yet exist, thus to fiction something. One "fictions" history starting from a political reality that renders it true, one "fictions" a politics that does not yet exist starting from a historical truth (in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982; p. 204)

Writing fiction as resistance against modernity is ground long covered by the literary tradition (of writing fiction). Many examples of modern and nationalist literature written in resistance and opposition to modernity come to rapidly come to mind. Dostoevsky's and Tolstoy's great novels about the modern justice and penal system, and war, Rabindranath Tagore's, Pablo Neruda's and Walt Whitman's nationalist poetry, John Steinbeck's anti-corporatist work, Joyce and Beckett's refusal to be pinned to conventional forms of the novel, and even Charles Darwin's scientific works which rails against the artificial method of man (Darwin, 1901 & 1964).

I believe that the modern literary tradition anticipated the notion of a non-discursive language or critique, and that it has long perceived of the modern as problematic and constructed an overt resistance to modern process. Foucault and even Said, though to a lesser extent perhaps, appropriate the literary tradition while located in literary theory. They do not enter engage literary theory from the literary tradition which has existed very specifically outside of the academy, and Foucault does so disingenuously, when he says he explicitly says that he 'never written anything other than fictions' (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982; p. 204).

By modern I mean, rather arbitrarily it must be admitted, that tradition of literature (of writing fiction) that emerged sometime in the mid to late 1800's. In doing thus I also

resort to Edward Said's temporal location and intersection of certain modern phenomena such as literature's modernism and imperialism (Said, 1990; Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2001). In doing so Said, however, also makes the point that while western thought generally considers imperialism to have formally emerged from this date (approximately), the peoples of an other western tradition have long before experienced its oppressive processes (Said, 1993 & 1996).

Within the limits of this current work I cannot, and certainly lack the wherewithal to do so, embark on a thesis on what more precisely constitutes modern or post-modern literature. There are those works nevertheless that were written in the modern era, between 1850 and the emergence of literary theory itself in the 1960's, which for me explore, resist and oppose modernist contractions such as race, class and gender, and processes such as colonization and imperialism. Amongst these literary works number those by Walt Whitman, Rabindranath Tagore, Yeats, John Steinbeck, Pablo Neruda, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Aime Cesaire, and Frantz Fanon. These works seem to me to have augured, by many decades, the emergence of literary theory, particularly that inspired by Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, and Michel Foucault.

Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman, foremost amongst late 19<sup>th</sup> century American writers, can be said to be the precursors of modern literature (Howe, 1986; Matthiessen, 1941; Mullin, 1998; Van Cromphout, 1990). Emerson's oeuvre in particular is one that heralds Nietzsche's problematicisation of the self in relation to the modern era (Mullin, 1998; Stack, 1990 & 1993; Van Cromphout, 1990). Dostoevsky had also articulated a distrust of the western/ modern method, a vehement anti-modernism, in works such as *Crime and punishment* (1866), *The idiot* (1868), and *The brothers Karamazov* (1880). I however chose to quote Walt Whitman as he is the writer that first gave affirmation to my belief of the poetic existence of even the most commonplace of things (Whitman, 1986; Roche, 1995). A notion crucial to that of poststructuralism and literary/ critical theory is that of an 'anti-nostalgia', an anti-sentimentality that opposes looking back and forth or longing for a more enlightened, superior past or future; of talk that is invested in starting and end-points (i.e. convergent, teleological; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982; Rorty, 1986; Sarup, 1988). Similar ideas are voiced by Whitman in his signature work, *Song of myself: a poem of Walt Whitman, an American* (1855).

I have heard what the talkers were talking, the talk of the  
 Beginning and the end,  
 But I do not talk of the beginning and the end.

There is never any more inception than there is now,  
     Nor any more youth or age than there is now,  
 And will never be any more perfection than there is now,  
     Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.  
 (Whitman, 1986; p. 65)

Whitman's anti-nostalgia and his democratic idealism or celebration of the everyday, ordinary and diverse, were of course in dramatic contrast to the classical and romantic literature that prevailed across the Atlantic (Jordan, 1989). There is a sense here of disruption, of the articulation of a counter-narrative to the meta-narrative that is history, and of a democratic ethos that perhaps for that time was little short of remarkable in that it survived almost universal condemnation, and derision as literary, religious and even scientific heresy (Jordan, 1989). Whitman was influenced by Emerson and in what seems to me to be more than coincidence, Nietzsche's philosophy and his poetics can be linked to both these American pre-moderns, and especially the latter (Mullin, 1998; Stack, 1990). Given Nietzsche's own influence on Foucault (and on poststructuralism in general), it seems to me possible that it is from the works of these new world precursors of literature's modernism that literary theory itself may have emerged. At the very least the anti-modernist poetics of Nietzsche and the French theorists including Foucault are linked with those of Emerson and Whitman.

The labels modern and post-modern are obviously imprecise tags, which nevertheless represent a major change in the conditions of thought and work. For Said, the post-modern does not so much come after the modern as is itself a thorough examination, and rejuvenation, of the modern (Said, 1976). The examination of the modern or something found in the modern then, for me, translates as the examination or analysis of the location of the modern subject (in his progress towards the realisation of those values reserved him by the Enlightenment tradition). The themes of alterity (radical difference), difference and locality that recur in the body of works of those cited above, preceded their incorporation into the academy in the theoretical guise of French literary theory (or poststructuralism), by many decades. In addition, postmodernism was made synonymous with the French theorists (poststructuralists) by Jean-François Lyotard's *Postmodern Condition* (During, 1992). The 'longing for another shore' that is symptomatic of the postmodern movement (Dallmayr 1996), seems to me to be

appropriated from or, at the very least, to have been preceded by, that condition of the anti-colonialist and nationalist writers. Amongst these were Whitman, Tagore, Neruda and Steinbeck, who were literally and figuratively long before 'of another shore' in relation to the Western Canon.

As mentioned previously a criticism levelled by Said at literary theory is that its 'anarchistic linguistic play' lacks a model of meaningful political action (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2001; Said, 1983 & 1986). It is thus not so much how this institution continues to struggle with the Brechtian question of how to move from art to collective action, but how it 'moves' from academy bound theorising to collective action (During, 1992). The music, song and dance of the 'lower classes', and the modern novel of the middle classes, for example, are aesthetic forms that are embedded in collective action (Morrison, 1985). Jurgen Habermas's attack against Lyotard's celebration of postmodernism also seems to me to be pertinent to this positioning of the literary tradition within literary theory. Habermas suggests that a complete immersion in the local gives us no way to judge it and is thus doomed to accommodation with the given (and thus also very open to accusations of relativism; Habermas, 1981 & 1986). The literary tradition with particular reference to the modern novel ('serious' fiction) is largely devoid of this problematic (a relativistic 'Weberian' subjectivity) compared with literary theory. The local appears to me to be far more accessible, and 'contextualised', through the modern novel than through the academic tract - the aims of the latter being largely removed, good intentions notwithstanding, from any meaningful collective action.

Fiction is also not invested with the degree of authority or privilege as 'truth' or 'method' as one can argue that any academic tract inevitably is (often, even in the case of Foucault and Derrida, with their authors' encouragement; Said, 1983). We generally do not ask a Morrison or a Steinbeck what their methods are when finding that their work holds meaning, often profoundly so, for us. When located in the academy, however, we seem obsessed with method, even when the 'often oppressive rationalities of discourse in the human sciences' are evident to us (Lash, 1991; p. 259). The masses are far better acquainted with the literary tradition than with literary theory or the academic tract in general, the latter being elevated, by theory/ method, out of reach of the masses. Literary/ critical theory remains to this day the particular interest of an

academic elite, and one could justifiably say with great deliberation (Ashcroft, 2003; Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2001; Foucault, 2003; Said, 1983 & 1994).

As a science of the hypothetical, Foucault's historiographies (archaeology and genealogy) not only treats accounts of truths as fictions but also incorporate the activity of writing fictions (During, 1992; Lash, 1991; Tamboukou, 1999), which then seems to me to deliberately intersect with the literary tradition (of writing fiction). For Foucault (and literary theory in general) the notion of modernity inscribes a memory that serves to understand the world in terms of ordered fields or structures (ordered by natural laws, e.g. an unconscious, an 'economy', anthropology and biology). In opposition to this memory he has proposed the construction of a counter-memory or a non-discursive language that dispenses with these natural laws bar, perhaps, that of the 'struggle' (During, 1992; Foucault, 1977; Lash, 1991). My interpretation of a non-discursive language is a non-constitutive language, without predetermined origins and destinations (i.e. non-teleological); a language without subjects in the sense that the aim of genealogy is a history without subjects. It is a language described by Foucault as being 'stripped of dialectics' (Foucault, 1977; p. 41) and disruptive to the meta-narrative that is constituted by the 'discourse' as a linear synthesis of opposing propositions ('dialectics').

Foucault's conceptualization of a non-discursive language relates to how 'literature can serve as a non-discursive critique of the often oppressive discourses of the human sciences' (Lash, 1991; p. 259). This seems to me to be an incitement to appropriate the literary tradition into literary theory. There are nevertheless many commonalities to consider. In reading the works of a Whitman, Steinbeck, Neruda, Frantz Fanon, an Edward Said, or Toni Morrison, and Salman Rushdie, their writing seems to me to be deliberate and highly localized acts aimed at countering a unified view of the world (structured mainly through the truths of the disciplines, e.g. history). In some important ways their works intersect with the genealogical approach. There is not so much no meta-narrative but instead *petit recits* consisting of detailed, patient, even loving documentaries of the struggles of ordinary lives, highlighted by a poetic style (e.g. the poems of Whitman and Neruda, or the poetic novels of Morrison and Ondaatje) often aimed at the meta-narrative itself (often history but not excluding the other human sciences). Their narratives on the poetic existence of ordinary lives bring to mind, for me, the often poetic documentaries of Foucault. When presenting his thesis *Madness*

to the Sorbonne in 1961, Foucault remarked that ‘to speak of madness, it is necessary to have the talent of a poet’ (During, 1992; p. 22). Much of Foucault’s work can be viewed perhaps as the poetic existence, as with the work of a Whitman, Steinbeck, Morrison, or Ondaatje, rendered by the poetic resistance.

### **Contemporary literature and the principle of power**

The following quote by Foucault seems to me to be particularly pertinent to the idea of literature as a ‘non-discursive critique of the often oppressive discourses of the human sciences’.

Genealogy is the union of erudite knowledge and local memories which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today. (Cited in Gordon, 1980, p. 83)

It seems difficult to argue that Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* (1866), *The grapes of wrath* (John Steinbeck, 1939), *In the Skin of lion* (Michael Ondaatje, 1987), and *Beloved* (Toni Morrison, 1987), for example and generally for work recognised as ‘serious fiction’, are not unions of erudite knowledge and local memories that are of immense strategic value (for resisting) for many today. Dostoevsky, Steinbeck, Said, Rushdie, Morrison and Ondaatje, and many many others of this particular tradition, leave little doubt that their writing addresses power relations, particularly with reference to issues of race, colonization, imperialism, gender and class, issues indisputably influenced by the modern ‘often oppressive discourses’ of the sciences.

The literary tradition can be said to have allied power with the linguistic model long before Foucault urged us to read *Don Quixote*, et cetera. The following section of this thesis works with the notion that the modern novel (or ‘serious fiction’) addresses power relations, and sometimes can read like a genealogy. I use Morrison’s *Beloved* (Morrison, 1987), her very deliberate contestation of historical narratives of slavery as an example. Where it differs from a genealogy, as can generally be said of the literary tradition, is that its premise for power is not devoid of human agency, not reduced to some nebulous dis-missive about ‘something in us that wants to fight’. My purpose in doing so is to signal my location as being firstly in the literary tradition. In engaging with literary theory I carry decades of accumulated baggage of this dialogue with the ‘novel of manners’ and its authors. My work in the sciences, and in psychology and literary theory, is an expansion of this dialogue. The literary tradition to a great extent

catalyses, and informs, my dissensions with the discursive tradition. As opposed to these sciences I believe, as did Virgil and many of his lineage since, that ‘nothing that is human is alien to me’. Or as V.Y. Mudimbe, an African poet, rephrased the Cartesian aphorism ‘I am think therefore I am’ (Cogito, ergo sum), ‘I am the other therefore I am’.

Some years ago I read somewhere that Michael Ondaatje said of the modern novel that, through its author, it says to the reader ‘here is order or meaning’. The novel certainly served this function for me and moreover instructed me in the myriad ways the world works, and thus in how to behave (Morrison, 1985). One consequence was that I very quickly adapted to an alien New Zealand (and western) society made familiar by my reading. Toni Morrison offers that the novel has always functioned for the class that wrote this art form, the middle class (Morrison, 1985). The ‘lower classes’ had their music, songs and dances, and celebrations, and the aristocracy had their art, their painted pictures in the houses they built which was separated from the rest by their wealth and privilege. The middle class, which was produced by the industrial revolution, produced a new art to instruct them in how to behave in this new world. This art form was the ‘novel of manners’, and it was ‘designed to tell people what they didn’t know . . . how to distinguish between the good guys and the bad guys. How to get married. What a good living was. What would happen if you strayed from the fold’ (Morrison, 1985; 340). In Morrison’s view music was once the main art form that provided this function for Black America, especially as it was codified in the call-and-response aesthetic. The blues, jazz and gospel have long since been appropriated into mainstream culture, and music has lost its healing power for the African-American. A parallel might be that genealogy is losing its critical ethos, its healing power, as it is appropriated into the mainstream. Morrison’s work with the novel is her attempt to manufacture one substitute for this great loss, also the one great authentic American cultural tradition. For Morrison the novel as an African-American art form

should be beautiful, and powerful, but it should also work. It should have something in it that suggests what the conflicts are, what the problems are. But it need not solve those problems because it is not a case study, it is not a recipe. (Morrison, 1985; p. 341)

Morrison provides me with another profound ‘moment’ for my work. I can hardly claim to write beautifully, but at least I can aspire to write something powerful that

works. I can also make stake my claim to wanting to write in a style, with some justification, that resists the eventually banal fate of methodological repetition, even if it is appropriated into the mainstream, however unlikely though this may be. I wish to write in a style that maintains its critical ethos, its healing power, for those, including myself, who are in need of it. If it enters the mainstream, and I believe it should, all the better, for this work excludes no one.

Importantly what is also certainly very evident to me is that the discursive tradition (science) has replaced the literary tradition (the novel) in lending us meaning in our relationships with the self other and the world. The art form of the novel of manners has been replaced by the science form of the discourse on manners. The human sciences, particularly psychology, instruct us in ways of behaving by prescribing solutions, or truths, which are idealised modes of behavior. The novel as an art form in contrast avoids method (it is not a recipe), preferring aesthetics; or prescribing truths (solutions). The following section constitutes a reading of an analysis of Morrison's *Beloved*. I have emphasised those parts that, to me, implicate it as a non-discursive language or a type of genealogy. It must be said, however, that where Morrison's fiction as critical historiography differs from Foucault's genealogy is that the former is about people of colour, people that Foucault seemed to have no knowledge or sentiment about.

### **Toni Morrison's *Beloved* as critical historiography**

According to Morrison herself, *Beloved*, with its emphasis on improvisation and call-and-response patterns (Sale, 1992), *should be read as ways of thinking about history and systems of critical inquiry* by incorporating these principles of the African-American oral traditions. *This reading of its text values multiplicity over codification and polemic, and resists the problematic (relativistic) notion that all positions are equally valid* (Sale, 1992). The call-and-response aesthetic values improvisation and creation of new meaning in its communal expressions (as stories, songs, music; art), *enabling the re-storying of stories that change with every telling*. In African-American culture the call-and-response aesthetic (or antiphony) is a means of communicating that assumed great significance in the fields of the slave-holding Southern states of the USA (the 'antebellum' period). As a form of resistance it was unique in that it largely escaped the sanction of the slaveholder, probably because they were lyrical and enigmatic (as well as pragmatic) rather than overt. Its success as tactic of resistance

could be said to be due to its subtlety, making its practice (like that of power; Said, 1978 & 1993) even more potent. Said (1983) may have deemed antiphony a form of 'countervailing power', as opposed to an act of the specific intellectual ('professional' resistance). This call-and-response aesthetic, which arose out of an analysis of that present in which the slave as a specific category of modern subject/ object was located, involves repetition as an imperative and thus shares a significant commonality with Said's location of his critical work as worldly/ circumstantial. Antiphony also seems to me a particularly successful form of countervailing power in the face of a particularly virulent form of modern oppression. A highly localised and specific strategy that not only worked, the call-and-response aesthetic has persisted, developed and diversified as it is intrinsic to the unique and highly diverse genre of African-American art.

In the call-and response pattern what and how it is said is important as well as, obviously, who says it. In this it differs from Foucault's insistence of the death of the author, exemplified by his appropriation of Beckett's phrase 'what matters who's speaking?', when suggesting that writing is 'a sacrifice of life itself' (in his essay *What is an author*; Foucault, 1977). The principle of improvisation lends authority to the speaker based on how well (different though coherent, and inclusive of others) he or she re-creates the story to fit constantly shifting individual and group needs. *Multiplicity and change are valued over continuity* (though obviously coherence, and making and conveying meaning is still required), in the retelling. In Sale's view *Beloved* is an oral text (its characters are very largely illiterate) *that resists and as importantly contests master versions of history that 'value certainty and exactitude and claim authority through a covert and convenient erasure of the teller's (writer's) perspective'* (Sale, 1992; p. 43).

It is obviously difficult if not impossible to exactly textually 'recreate' oral traditions but Morrison's aim is to

make the story appear oral ..... What is left out is as important as what is there. To describe sexual scenes in such a way that they are not clinical, not even explicit – so that the reader brings his own sexuality to the scene and thereby participates in it in a very personal way. And owns it. To construct the dialogue so that it is heard. So that they are no adverbs attached to them: "loudly", "softly", "he said menacingly." The menace should be in the sentence [feeling the narrator but not identifying, hearing the narrator/ author]. To use, even formally, a chorus. The real presence of a chorus. Meaning the community or the reader at large, commenting on the action as it goes ahead. (Morrison, 1985; p. 341) [My insertion]

It is a technique that I can only hope to aspire to, to convey the menace (hostility) of the western tradition (of imperialism) towards the other in my writing. In this particular literary tradition, with its foundation of the aesthetic of antiphony, and as opposed to the western discursive tradition, we bring our beliefs, values and customs to our dialogue with its products. This non-coercive dialogue, which is underpinned by the active participation (inclusion) of its reader/ audience, expands on the narrative. As opposed to being mere 'ciphers of discourse', the reader owns this expanded dialogue with the narrative (the 'oral' text) and its narrator (writer). We bring our sexuality, for example, to the scene and expand on it via this dialogue as opposed to having it 'enslaved' by the oppressive rationalities of the regimes of truth (the disciplines / sciences, e.g. psychology). The use of antiphony in the African-American literary tradition, of the oral text, parallels Said's thesis of the 'worldliness' (materiality/ circumstantiality) of text, with its imperatives of *iqra* (read/ recite), and *qul* (tell), and *hadd* (the juridical notion meaning both a logico-grammatical definition and a limit; see p. 12).

*Orientalism* (1978) which is deliberately written in a conversational style is perhaps the pre-eminent example of Said's construction of the oral text (based on the literary theory of the Zahirite tradition of inquiry).

Colonialist discourse can be said to be the very antithesis of the African-American literary tradition (a tradition of the other), constructed as it is against the silence/ absence (exclusion) of the colonised from its audience/ community. Also, and again in contrast, the univocal meta-narrative of the discursive tradition inscribes, imposes, its prescriptive limiting oppressive rationalities on the modern subject.

The characters in *Beloved* are, by design, largely illiterate, re-creating the oral tradition by allegory. Within this allegorical construction of an ostensibly oral tradition Morrison uses both improvisation and the call-and-response patterns to incorporate a contemporary sense of these traditions into her representation of both an enslaved and formerly enslaved past in *Beloved*. Sale (1992) details how Morrison incorporates these principles, for example how the call-and-response pattern is translated into print, in *Beloved*. *These principles are forms descended (and thus 'modern') from African and enslaved cultures. Morrison however uses this descendant to form the ancestor, creating a text and a sense of the past that are, in her words, irrevocably, and disputably Black*' (Sale, 1992; p. 43). *This 'Black' sense is however itself a contemporary identity descended from African and enslaved cultures.*

In Sale's view, *the meta-narrative that is western history reduces the multiplicity of voices available at any given historical moment into a synthetic repressive thesis presenting itself as universal, representative, and definitive* (Sale, 1992). This authoritative thesis then scripts the bulk of most traditional (and revisionist) histories of slavery. *Beloved*, (as with much of Morrison's other works, *presents multiple and often contradictory versions, in place of a definitive version of the (hi)story* of its protagonist Margaret Garner, the runaway slave on which the novel is based. *Morrison blends these multiple and contradictory versions so that they exist simultaneously and complement (and not supplement) each other*, and such that each version gains authority from the performance as well as qualities of the teller. Difference is valued contrary to commonplace assumptions about the deindividuating processes of communal societies or cultures. Each version implicates both teller (writer) and listener (reader), *as opposed to it being a 'disinterested' or supposedly disembodied/ independent account of 'free' events* (Said, 1983), and each is as 'true' as the teller can make it (Sale, 1982). *Beloved* can be said to be an eclectic blend of individual (hi)stories that are told, listened to, and believed depending on the alliance formed between teller (writer) and listener (reader).

Sale (1992) presents Morrison's *Beloved* as a historiography derived from call-and-response patterns and the communal nature of art, which foregrounds the factor of perspective, as opposed to the disinterested meta-narrative that is traditional history. *This is a historiography that emphasizes perspective as well as requiring the articulation of multiple perspectives. This perspectivism is one that significantly for me is not merely subjective (a Weberian subjectivity), but very pointedly embedded 'in the relations between forms of discourse' (and contrapuntal to the dominant/ normative American textual ideologies); 'the historical struggles in which they (these discourses) are immersed'; and 'the forms of authority they presuppose' (European Christianity, the human sciences such as anthropology and psychology).* This is then the type of perspectivism that is associated with Foucault's historiographies (Deacon, 2000; Tamboukou, 1999). *Beloved's* text is also performative in that it is written for repeated interaction between the writer and the community he or she writes into (Morrison, 1992; Sale, 1992). Not only is this historiography shaped, its authority is conferred through, this interaction, the contributions of the many tellers (writers) and listeners (readers).

There is thus much that is reminiscent of Foucault's historiographies in this account of *Beloved* that is a combination of interpretations by Sale (1992) and Morrison herself. A crucial difference, however, that must be kept in mind is that Foucault never wrote of or for black people, never acknowledged their chronic and very violent oppressions by the western tradition he is so firmly ensconced in, which is one reason why Said says Foucault in reality writes for power (Said, 1986). Another is that Morrison's critical work focuses on making meaning with her community of readers. It is clear to me that Morrison uses her immediate location (within the African-American oral traditions, and of being 'Black' in contemporary American society), to shape an understanding of the past (based on the circumstances of the present) in *Beloved*. In this version of the past Morrison resists and contests historical validity as a reductive, univocal and representative narrative with particular reference to the history of African-American. The great majority of African-Americans in nineteenth century North America (and the Americas general) were also objects, rather than its producers and consumers, of writing (Sale, 1992); one exception being Frederick Douglas, a contemporary and colleague of Susan B. Anthony. The characters in *Beloved* such as Sethe, Baby Suggs, and Paul D, are thus significant departures from the usual antebellum and postbellum representations of the enslaved and formerly enslaved (Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Toms Cabin*). The event central to *Beloved*, Sethe's act of infanticide (of her daughter Beloved), is also uncannily like the 'perverse' event that Foucault himself asks us to re-examine when writing historiographies.

Beloved's resurrection from her watery grave is, by way of metaphor, Morrison's attempt to resurrect the millions of Africans (almost 60 million; Angelo, 1989), her ancestors, from their watery graves of the rivers of Africa and the oceans of the world in their passage to slavery (Angelo, 1989). The presence or absence of the ancestor is a theme that Morrison takes great pains to address in many of her works, as the ancestor has been problematic to the African-American literary tradition, particularly in the work of its favourite sons, Richard Wright and James Baldwin. 'It was the absence of an ancestor that was frightening, that was threatening, and it caused huge destruction and disarray in the work itself' (Morrison, 1985; p. 343). The absence of an ancestor can then to be said to impede the healing of the community of the African-American author-reader. 'When you kill the ancestor you kill yourself' (Morrison, 1985; p. 344). The appearance of the resurrected Beloved (as ancestor) is initially frightening and problematic. *Beloved* is Morrison's narrative of how Sethe and her family (as the

ancestor's descendents) deal with and survive both the (imposed) absence and the presence of the ancestor.

The existence of the resurrected Beloved is a surreal one, in which Morrison imagines what it is like to for her ancestors to be in the land of the living again. He/ she is, for example, deprived of sensory depth. Beloved can only remember what it is to feel love and pain, to see colour and to taste. In some ways perhaps Morrison's *Beloved* is comparable with Foucault's edit of Pierre Rivere's account of his act of parricide, *Pierre Rivere, having slaughtered my mother, my sister and my brother: a case of parricide in Nineteenth Century* (Foucault, 1975). It (*Beloved*) is an account of the 'barbarous' and 'perverse' act of infanticide perpetrated by a black 'ignoble savage' (the African) in response to the 'natural' fate that is the enslavement of her children.

The multiple perspectives presented in this historiography of Margaret Garner's<sup>1</sup> act of infanticide are stories that 'speak' for themselves and are believed depending on the alliance formed between writer and reader. This alliance formed through believing retrieves the multi-vocal (or localised) narrative from relativism, mere subjectivity. When presented with a narrative such as *Beloved* it seems very likely to me that many that make the community of its readers (and not just those of African-American descent) are far more likely to form an alliance with Morrison and *Beloved's* formerly enslaved protagonists. It also seems to me that the alliance between Foucault and his community of readers (including me) is formed in much the same way, in no small way itself influenced by the aesthetics of his poetic (rather than 'dispassionate and neutral') historiographies, despite its futile determinism.

### **The African-American tradition V modernity**

Morrison considers contemporary American society as highly problematic and that the issue of 'race' is central to this problematic, despite decades of black 'emancipation' (Morrison, 1985; 1992). Acting on this painful discomfort Morrison inserts figures of oppressed and repressed black bodies-in-pain amongst the narratives of American modernism, thus disrupting them (Dobbs, 1998), as evidenced by the wide-spread conflicting reviews of her work. She (Morrison) also proposes the era of enslavement of the African as the genesis of the modern and (thus the postmodern), dismantling conventional notions of the birth of modernity and modernism as an early-twentieth-

century phenomenon (Dobbs, 1998). I would expand on this proposition to include the era of colonisation as that historical period which is the genesis of the modern and post-modern. Conceptualisations of race were fundamental to the modes of thought that emerged with Europe's enlightenment ('race' was for example a crucial principle for Kant's *Critique of reason*) and provided justification for European colonisation of the 'African' and the 'Oriental' (Jahoda, 1999; Bernasconi, 2001; Said, 1978). For Morrison

. . . modern life begins with slavery.... From a woman's point of view, in terms of confronting the problems of where the world is now, black women had to deal with post-modern problems in the nineteenth century and earlier. These things had to be addressed by black people a long time ago: certain kinds of dissolution, the loss of and the need to reconstruct certain kinds of stability. Certain kinds of madness, deliberately going mad .... as one of the characters says in the book, "in order not to lose your mind." These strategies for survival made the truly modern person. They're a response to predatory western phenomena. You can call it an ideology and an economy, what it is is a pathology. Slavery broke the world in half, broke it every way. It broke Europe. It made them into something else, it made them slave masters, it made them crazy. (Gilroy, 1995; p. 178)

Morrison also implies that the slavery of the African is a modern process in that it was informed by, as well as informing, emerging modern thought and especially modern scientific theories of race.

When speaking of the modern subject it seems almost indisputable that we refer to the male western individual whose identity is subject to the 'kinds of dissolution' and reconstructions in the face of the totalising (modern) phenomena of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (the Great Wars, the Cold War, the 'Free Market', the truth regimes of the sciences, and of technology). Said (1983) and Dobbs (1998) both state that T.S Elliot's *The Wasteland* (1922) is commonly used (textually) to frame this dissolution. For Dobbs (1998) *The Wasteland* is an articulation of a 'new moment of psychological and historical dissolution', where 'sense of self and world are irredeemably broken' (p. 563). Like the idea that World War 1 was for Americans the moment that 'broke the world in half' (Dobbs, 1998), *The Wasteland* represents an extremely restricted view of the often oppressive project that purportedly integrates modern phenomena. Their moments of cultural and personal dissolution occurred much earlier for the so-called 'Asians', 'Africans', the indigenes of the Americas, Australia and the Pacific. The 'modernist' strategic response of 'shoring up the ruins' articulated by *The Wasteland* was already

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret Garner is the slave whose act of infanticide is the premise for *Beloved*.

long before in progress as responses to colonisation and slavery. The same can also be said for women, and the expropriated (and exported) peoples, of this colonising and enslaving West. Morrison (Dobbs, 1998) and Said (1983), for example, offer that to view World War I as instigating the dissolution of a pre-modern and largely intact self (as conceptualised in *The Wasteland*) is to attribute an untenable universality to this definitively 'western' historical moment. This historicity has itself negated the 'kinds of dissolution' or dystopias if you will, that the colonising and enslaving West has visited onto the innumerable othered (and continues to do so through contemporary extensions of 'modern' slavery and colonisation).

Morrison extends the above thematic to incorporate the radical new epistemologies of psychology and sociology which were necessitated by the atrocities of slavery, an association that for her is largely ignored. These 'radical new epistemologies' have to do with the underlying assumptions upon which psychology and sociology, as modern sciences, operate. These are the *a priori* assumptions include those of a natural/ divine racial superiority, on which 'racializing' discourses hinge; the very same discourses that complimented those initial ventures of modern capitalism, colonisation and slavery (Bernasconi, 2001; Chomsky, 1993; Jahoda, 1999; Said, 1978). This racial superiority was likely incorporated into modern science by Kant, and verified by his successors, the natural scientists, namely Johann Friedrich Blumenbach and Carolus Linnaeus (Bernasconi 2001; Strack, 1996). Linnaeus incorporated the physiognomy of man into his *Systema naturae sive regina tria naturae*, the first master text of biological classification (Bernasconi, 2001). These natural scientists, including Kant, conferred a moral and intellectual superiority conferred to the European male who was situated at the apex of a racial hierarchy structured by biological features of which skin colour was paramount (Bernasconi, 2001; Jahoda, 1999; Strack, 1996). If we consider Foucault's phrase 'the often oppressive discourses of the sciences, for Jahoda (1982 & 1999), Gilroy (1995), and Foucault (2003a), like Morrison, these sciences include psychiatry and psychology.

One only has to consider those highly contentious issues of intelligence and crime to grasp the gist of Morrison's argument about psychology and sociology. In the former instance from the inception of the Stanford-Binet (SB) Intelligence test to the Bell Curve intelligence testing, that very first psychological instrumentation that is effectively the measure of reason, has been underpinned in the United States by 'black'

inferiority (Anastasi & Urbina, 1997; Kamin, 1974; Richards, 1997; Yee, Fairchild, Weizmann, & Wyatt, 1993). In Morrison's view however the atrocities of slavery gave birth to a radical mistrust of the normative modes of bourgeois realism, in African-American culture, including obviously those deriving from the technologies of psychology and sociology. A corresponding response to this experience of 'Black America' is the subversion of aesthetic forms such as music, dance and literature (Black writing, the Blues, Soul, Jazz, and Rap), which almost without exception were considered counter-culture when they 'formally' entered the public domain, or mainstream culture (Dobbs, 1998).

It seems to me that for Morrison the crisis of thought and of being that is the progressive enslavement of the modern subject (itself the focus of Foucault's historical and philosophical interventions) has long been experienced by the enslaved and the formerly enslaved. The view of modernity, or the modern subject, as problematic is one that has been refracted through, for example, that definitive event for America that is World War 1 (Dobbs, 1998); that definitive text for the Anglo-Saxon world (predominantly) that is *The Wasteland* (Said, 1983); and Literary Theory for the French (and subsequently American) intellectual (Said, 1983; Derrida, 1992). The colonised (post-colonised) and enslaved (and formerly enslaved) self have long before viewed their imposed condition as being problematic. The condition of the modern subject that is conceptualised as problematic by literary theory in general, and by Foucault specifically, can be said to be with some certainty to be the western subject (located in a geopolitical North and West which incorporates Australia and New Zealand of course). This West is also in Morrison's and Said's view an enslaving and colonising West, and as such excludes (silences) those that have long before have had to shore up to the ruins of the devastation brought upon them by these modern ventures. An important point that should be made is that to a substantial extent, apart from those people grouped as indigenes (e.g. American 'Indian' and Maori), silence did not mean erasure, literal (genocide) or metaphorical. Other traditions were largely left intact until the very recent encroachment of modernity through the aegis of transnational agencies such as the IMF, World Bank, the UN, and the State (coloniser, colonised and post-colonised).

### **Critical/ literary theory as institutional (corporate) anorexia**

Said and Morrison make their case for the colonized and enslaved (African) peoples, but what is also very apparent to me is that many groups of people located in the West itself (particularly in Europe), were (and are) subject to the massive and similar forces of modernity that laid waste to their cultural, their group and individual, identities. The Irish, the Jews, the poor and 'the children of the poor', the expropriated (and exported) classes of the British Isles and Europe, women, the mad, are amongst the many that I can recall at once, and these already number in the many millions. What is not immediately clear to me however is what then marks critical/ literary theory and Foucault's historiography as something radically different to, and even substantial or material compared with, the resistances that have been presented against the forces of modernity with its emergence. For the othered such as women, the African enslaved and the colonised, this emergence after all was and continues to be (through its contemporary modulations) an extremely oppressive and eradicating development (Chomsky, 1993; Said, 1978 & 1990; Roy, 2004). By the othered I mean those who were/ are excluded from full and automatic investment with those purportedly universal, but really highly privileged, values and characteristics, such as morality, a soul, rights and reason, of the enlightened human (and thus can never realise them, 'be modern'). No doubt there are many that the acolytes of modernity consider are beyond redemption ('beyond modernity'), the 'development' efforts of the UN, IMF and World Bank notwithstanding, or rather withstanding.

A salient criticism then that refuses to wane for me is that it that the literary theorists are invested with those same automatic privileges, and their resistance is a highly disingenuous appropriation by the intellectual of a problematic that has long been resisted and opposed by what seems to me to be the vast majority of peoples through much of the last five hundred years. I say five hundred years because that was when Columbus landed in the 'West Indies', and some, Noam Chomsky for one (Chomsky, 1993) use that year as a marker for the emergence of a global European/ western hegemony.

Critical (literary) theory appears to me to have emerged from a crisis within academic thought itself and which has led to a subversion of and play with that, perhaps, one aesthetic form of the academy, namely text. The so-called turbulent late fifties and sixties (but when has it not been 'turbulent') spotlighted the campus ground as a focal

point for ferment amongst the young and intelligent (and it must be said privileged) in the ‘free’ West. Mass opposition to colonisation, imperialism, racism and patriarchal society, augured by the masses through public protest was brought to the campus ground and the academy, and itself induced a crisis in academic thought. Critical theory seems to me to aptly named; it is the academy in crisis and in reacting to this crisis has recast (and perhaps in the process masking) its authority through a subversion of the only aesthetic form available to it (particularly through its historical appropriation by the likes of Kant, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, and Foucault<sup>1</sup>). The anarchic linguistic play (Said, 1983) of literary theory is method turning on method, reason turning on reason. It is institutional (corporate) anorexia starved of relevance, turning on itself digesting itself.

### Concerning the ‘modern subject’ of genealogy

An important realisation that I have come to in this present investigation is that I am not that modern subject for whom Foucault’s reserves his interventions and presumably sets out to ‘heal’. When Foucault refers to the modern subject, one gets the impression it is the circumstance of the modern western male (effectively his own) that is his sole concern, and which he exclusively examines in his historiographies, be it terms of his sexuality or psychopathology (madness). This is the discursive subject that Foucault concerns himself with, the subject who originates discourse and to whom this western tradition of discourse belongs to. He himself does not avoid the transcendental narcissism that he asks us to avoid in writing genealogies.

Foucault’s archaeology when isolated from the genealogical endeavour connotes a search for origins, and *a* or *the* truth – an excavation of things concealed (Deacon, 2000). The text (discourse) masks something, but once uncovered what one may subsequently find is then traces of other masks, and not something that is essential in itself (of, for example, miraculous metaphysical origin). Archaeology, when aligned with the genealogical objective of writing a counter-history without subjects, may then be likened to peeling an onion (a Barthes metaphor) as opposed to consuming a fruit like an apricot. After the innumerable layers have been peeled back there is ‘no heart, no kernel, no secret, no irreducible principle, nothing except the infinity of its envelopes, which envelop nothing other than the unity of its own surfaces’ (Merquior, 1986; pp. 171-172). What lies beyond, transcends, text is not a real (transcendental)

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<sup>1</sup> This is a specific lineage that I often come across in my reading of Foucault’s project

subject but the ciphers of a narcissistic dialogue between self, other and the world - the transcendental narcissism that stems from our instinctive chaotic struggle, our fight 'with each other' or 'something else', for domination (Foucault, 1980; p. 207-208; see also Sarup, 1988; p. 81). So blatantly oppositional, nihilistic (and annihilistic) is Foucault's project that it unravels the literary tradition it appropriates, leaving me to wonder then if what lies at the heart of this appropriation is an ideological opposition of literary theory to the literary tradition as a located, contextualised dialogue between the author, reader, and the text of the other and world (of 'each other' and 'something else').

Foucault does not claim to know what is like to live in the skin of a woman, or that of another colour, and to a large extent does not presume to know (especially given his conflict based theories of knowledge/ power/ self). They, women and people of colour, are of the adiscursive ahistorical others that are the (empirical objects) rather than (transcendental) subjects layered or masked by discourse. I share with the Malay that status as one of these empirical objects of colonialist discourse. Genealogy has been described by Foucault as a history without subjects but, for me, very clearly this from of critical history is not one that is suitable for the colonised. If a critical or counter-history is to be written back to colonialist discourse, it is firstly a 'history without objects' rather than 'without subjects'. My writing back to this colonialist discourse, and its author/ origin, reflects my struggle against its oppressive gaze and grasp - the writhing of the object that is, the resistance of, the colonised body, my body, as it seeks, reacts against and eventually resists the historical truths of colonialist discourse. It seems to me that Morrison's highly politicised and vehement resistance against a white mainstream historical representation of the extreme privations of the African-American, her writing/ writhing from the body, has translated into some of the most poetic though powerful offerings that the literary tradition can offer. I can only hope that this, my own writhing, my resistance against its (colonialist discourse) tyranny of reason, becomes a dance, one as graceful in its rebellion as Morrison's.

In Said's view modernity now visits the de-colonised/ post-colonised in ways that supersedes the processes of colonisation, especially in terms of 'cultural' erasure<sup>1</sup>. The struggle in this world is with modernity itself and not with the post-modern (Said, 1976

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<sup>1</sup> This erasure by modernity is perhaps best exemplified, visually at least, by the 'tsunami' that is the modern urban landscape consuming the past, the earth and the air at an incredible rate irrespective of suitability or sustainability of its advance.

& 1990). Where the coloniser at times was content to displace and dispossess, the imperialism of modernity is much more aggressive, erasing pre-existing and parallel narratives, customs and practices which remain intact despite colonisation (Chomsky, 1993; Pilger, 1998 & 2002; Roy, 2004; Said, 1994 & 2001). In the East the current drive towards modernity (national identity, capitalism, individualism, science and technology), mimics the reinvention of self through a similar investment in the discourses of the sciences (via a co-opted State) that 'created' the modern western subject (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2001; Foucault, 1997, 2003a & 2003b; Said, 1976 & 1994; Wang, 2003).

Foucault has been accused of trying to resurrect a pre-modernism that existed before its erasure by the West's drive towards modernity (Hoy, 1986; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982). I share with others of a different tradition, perhaps, the good fortune that there is much left intact with which to resist erasure. Like Said (1976 & 1994), Wang (2003) in his analysis of the fiction of Wang Anyi (a writer of Chinese nationality) proposes that these alternative traditions/ narratives can serve both as a strong resource against the irreversible erasure by, and as a critique of, the processes of modernity. Toni Morrison (1992), Sale (1992), and Dobbs (1998) emphasize the roles that another tradition, the African-American, have played in resisting the 'bourgeois realism' of (American) modernity. Its aesthetic forms have served both as a constructive resistance to, and critique of, modernity, the precise agenda that I hope to realise in my current endeavour.

**PART 2**

**WRITING THE RUNNING AMOK: THE HISTORICAL  
CONSTANT OF THE 'WHITE MAN'**

## CHAPTER 5: PSYCHIATRY, THE CULTURE-BOUND SYNDROME AND THE NATIVE/ SAVAGE

In my 'archaeology' of amok, of its writing, I stumbled upon the following account.

As he read the clipping he heard the clock strike eleven in the market place. He finished the clipping and handed it back. As he turned into the market he heard the cry, "Amok! Amok! Amok!". And there was Ali<sup>1</sup> with his *kris* in front of the drug store. The shutters fell like a guillotine. The old market women were scampering off with the agility of rats or evil spirits<sup>2</sup>.

Three of them were too slow.

Typical as this representation of amok may seem, what is atypical about it is that its author is none other than William S. Burroughs, a leading light of the Beat Generation (Burroughs, 1985; Ali's smile/ Naked scientology). It illustrates for me the pervasiveness of this syndrome in the literature and consciousness of the western tradition. Ali's amok easily fits a typical psychiatric description of amok, of which the following is one:

Amok is characterised by a sudden outburst of indiscriminate homicidal frenzy directed towards bystanders and terminated by the killing, suicide, or capture of the assailant (Prince, 2000; p. 431).

Disseminated by a transcultural practitioner no less, this representation conjures the mythical image of a temporarily unhinged Malay, that otherwise gentlemanly and indolent race of Orientals (Alatas, 1977; Bird, 2000; Clifford, 1898; Marsden, 1783; Swettenham, 1900 & 1984; Yahya, 2003), running through the teeming bazaars of the Malay Archipelago slashing furiously at its blameless inhabitants with a machete, as if hacking his way through its as teeming jungles. The alarm 'amok, amok' heralds his wayward and bloody progress, sending his terrified fellow citizens scampering to safety behind locked doors<sup>3</sup> (Abdullah, 1970; Bird, 2000). This alarm also brings about that which he purportedly desires most, an honourable if violent death by the hand of the

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<sup>1</sup> The name Ali is itself a stereotype, a generic name for the Arab and Muslim male. Think of the American soldier in Iraq in the current confrontation and the many references to Iraqi's as Ali (Babas).

<sup>2</sup> A description of Malay women that is very (Anthony) 'Burgessian'.

<sup>3</sup> For the supranormal beings, the running amok and more famously the nosferatu, the closed seems to be, somewhat inconceivably, an insurmountable barrier.

society of men with whom he had, when he entered into this homicidal-suicide pact, broken his ties (Clifford, 1913; Spores, 1988; Wallace, 1869).

The Malay and his malaise, the unequivocally male syndrome of amok, have long been synonymous in both the lay and scientific discourse of the West (APA, 1994 & 2000; Ellis, 1893; Marsden, 1783; Pires, 1944; Prince, 2000; Spores, 1988; Wallace, 1869). Well before Emil Kraepelin visited the Dutch colony of Java in 1904 and familiarised himself with amok and other supranormal behaviour of the Malay (Prince, 2000), the *pengamok*<sup>1</sup> apprehended alive was often incarcerated in the psychiatric institutions of the Native States of Malaya (Ellis, 1893; Spores, 1988). The Malay is also notably differentiated from many other cultures in that he/ she is associated with at least three CBSs, amok, latah and koro (APA, 1994; 2000). Few cultures, however, have been so tainted for so long with a predilection as chaotic and brutish as amok, first and foremost amongst the culture-bound syndromes (CBSs) (Kon, 1994; Hatta, 1996; Spores, 1988). Its mention immediately and most certainly conveys the greatest notoriety of any of the psychiatric syndromes, culture-bound or universal.

The latest edition of the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, the DSM-IV-TR, describes amok as follows;

**amok** A dissociative episode characterized by a period of brooding followed by an outburst of violent, aggressive, or homicidal behavior directed at people and objects. The episode tends to be precipitated by a perceived slight or insult and seems to be prevalent only amongst males. The episode is often accompanied by persecutory ideas, automatism, amnesia, exhaustion, and a return to premorbid state following the episode. Some instances of amok may occur during a brief psychotic episode or constitute the onset of a chronic psychotic process. The original reports that used this term were from Malaysia. A similar behavior pattern is found in Laos, Philippines, Polynesia (*cafard* or *cathard*), Papua New Guinea, and Puerto Rico (*mal de pelea*), and among the Navajo (*iich'aa*). (APA, 2000; p. 899)

Other 'cultural' equivalents may then also include the *pikblotoq* of the Inuit, and the *musu* of the Samoan (Theroux, 1991). Developed or First World phenomena that resemble amok in their 'indiscriminate' nature of their homicidal frenzy, involving contemporary weapons such as assault rifles, have been given names such as SMASI (sudden mass assault by a single individual; Hempel, Levine, Meloy, & Westermeyer,

<sup>1</sup> Meaning that individual running amok in the Malay language

2000), and the autogenic (self-induced) massacre (Mullen, 2003). Examples include the Hungerford (19/ 08/ 1987; Scotland), and Aramoana (13/11/1990; New Zealand) and Columbine (20/ 04/ 1999; USA) massacres, indicating their widespread occurrence in the modern world. References to a likely European equivalent, the Viking warrior's rampage called *berserkgang*, or modern equivalents such as SMASI, however, are excluded. In their comparison of two studies, those of a 'nonrandom' sample of North American cases of SMASI and a non-random sample of Laotian amoks, Hempel and others (2000) concluded, as the perpetrators in both studies showed evidence of social isolation, loss, depression, anger, pathological narcissism, and paranoia, that SMASI and amok are so similar that neither should be considered a CBS.

### **Culture and race in psychiatric discourse**

Though amok is purportedly a CBS, equivalents occur in many 'cultures'. It is notable to me though that all these cultures can, given some curious exclusions, be considered to be those of the native/ savage races (Alatas, 1977; Darwin, 1901 & 1964; Fanon, 1963 & 1968; Jahoda, 1999; Keebeng, 2003; Kuklick, 1991; Malinowski, 1922; Marsden, 1783; Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988 & 1999; Wallace, 1869 & 1906). Once explicitly identified<sup>1</sup> as such in terms of a long standing and clearly articulated primitivist discourse, these cultures and their peoples are largely viewed as lesser than fully modernised and civilised, developed and of the First World, ironically perhaps often when living in this 'first world' (Alatas, 1977; Bessire, 2003; Darwin, 1901; Deutschlander & Miller, 2003; Fanon, 1963 & 1968; Galton, 1904; Jahoda, 1999; Keebeng, 2003; Kuklick, 1991; Marsden, 1783; Spivak, 1988 & 1999; Wallace, 1869 & 1906; Yahya, 2003). No less a luminary than Darwin, and his now almost forgotten colleague Alfred Wallace<sup>2</sup>, promulgated the notion of the native or savage races of man possessed of a degraded and stagnant humanity, and whose fate was to be determined by those civilised societies of man (Darwin, 1901 & 1964; Wallace, 1869 & 1906). Darwin in particular predicted that at

some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate, and replace, the savage races throughout the world. (Darwin, 1901; pp. 241-242)

<sup>1</sup> Many peoples still are, especially in national legislation to do with their land and other 'native' entitlements. Examples include Malaysia, Canada, United States, and Australia.

<sup>2</sup> Wallace collaborated with Darwin deriving evolutionary mechanics and is responsible for that notion of the 'survival of the fittest', and of natural selection (Darwin, 1964).

Francis Galton, a cousin of Darwin and the inventor of modern mental testing, further entrenched the notion of superior and inferior races of man in that formative work on the 'science' of eugenics, *Eugenics: its definition, scope and aims*, read before the Sociological Society in the London School of Economics and Political Science (London University) on May 1904 (Galton, 1904). Rousseau, Kant, Johann Blumenbach, Carolus Linnaeus, Darwin, Wallace, and Galton, amongst many others, promulgated the view of lesser savage races that were native to Africa, the Americas and Asia, often allied with that of the European being obligated with the task of their civilisation. Some, Wallace and Darwin being very notable examples, were ambivalent of the benefits of their civilisation (Wallace, 1869; Darwin, 1901; Hampson, 2000). Darwin preferred that natural selection, rather than man's 'artificial' selection, manufacture the same inevitable fate, albeit much more slowly but more efficiently in that the

break between man and his nearest allies will then be wider, for it will intervene between man in a more civilized state, as we may hope, even than the Caucasian, and some ape as low as a baboon, instead of as now between the negro or Australian and the gorilla. (Darwin, 1901; p. 242)

More contemporaneously, underdeveloped, developing, Third World and least developed countries are amongst the many common euphemisms employed by this still persisting primitivist discourse, indicating significant deficiencies in modern mental, moral, social and biological norms, when referring to those formerly colonised and enslaved.

Ranging from native to third-world, these terms are coincident with the gamut of imperialist relationships between the West and its subservient societies, beginning with colonisation and continuing through the social, economic, political and military dominance of this West over the East today (Chomsky, 1993; Klein, 2000; Pilger, 1998 & 2002; Roy, 2004; Said, 1978 & 1993;). In particular these terms maintain the historical status of the backward savage or lesser native races in advance of some elusive redemption that appears to be the project of modernity.

The CBSs, which include *ataque de nervois* (of the Latinos of the Caribbean), *billis* and *colera* (Latinos), *boufee delirante* (West African and Haitian), and *dhat* (India) (APA, 2000), then appear synonymous with the anachronistic, one would have hoped, notion of the native/ savage. It would, for me, be far less disingenuous to substitute the term

'native-bound syndrome' in place of the CBS, as this specific catalogue of the DSM comprises entirely of those supranormal behaviours of the natives/ savages of the world. The native-bound syndrome can then be more accurately viewed for what it is, an adjunct to the purported universal (and thus cultureless) basis of the DSM (APA, 1994 & 2000), a minor counterpoint or repository of that which is wholly or residually native, though rapidly diminishing against a clearly identifiable modernising progressive force. So native-bound is the culture-bound syndrome, and so forcibly marginalised<sup>1</sup> is it, that any attempt to include western disorders such as anorexia nervosa or dissociative identity order as CBSs, based on their relative rarity in those cultures of the 'minorities', is summarily dismissed (APA, 2000). It is more likely that it is instead psychiatry, and its collaborator science of psychology, that is the anachronism, in persisting, through the subtext of the CBS, with the 'writing of the native/ savage'.

The psychiatric/ medical model and the cultural model seem similar in that both appear predicated on an irreducible essence, and importantly, inferring a capacity for transmission. In the medical model it is obviously the disease entity that constitutes an irreducible physical essence (a gene or micro-organism), and in the cultural model a cultural fragment (a 'meme'<sup>2</sup>), can be said to constitute an irreducible metaphysical essence. As the disease small pox can be traced to its disease entity, a specific bacterium, then amok, for example, similarly arises from some disease (biological/ physical) or cultural fragment. In the scientific context these essences are considered historical constants, and small pox and amok then are the worldly manifestations of a transhistorical universal entity<sup>3</sup>. The atom, is, for example, one such thing as some natural scientists would have us believe, free of the circular machinations of man, and its nature accessible only to the purest methods of knowledge<sup>4</sup> ('scientific knowledge as a progression in accuracy'). Amok as a CBS is then 'essential' to the Malay culture, and is transmitted through a genealogy based, according to psychiatry, on both the biological and social. That this potentially fractious genealogy seems scientifically viable and even makes 'common' sense is a measure of the significant overlap and

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<sup>1</sup> The CBSs literally lie along the margins of the DSMs, located in their appendices and not in its main text.

<sup>2</sup> A unit of cultural transmission, such as a custom or social behaviour.

<sup>3</sup> Incorporating their 'pure' origins and mutations thereafter, biological and cultural

<sup>4</sup> The notion of the atom only became established in physics after Einstein, in 1905, wrote a paper shedding light on the apparently random dance of particles in a liquid when viewed down a microscope. Up to that point physicists generally did not believe in the atom's existence (Sample, 2005).

even, ultimately, inseparability<sup>1</sup> of the natural and the cultural/ social (nature/nurture; the natural order/the socially constituted). While the natural is often read against the social it is virtually impossible to separate, for example, the cultural from the biological, a detail apparent in making as simple a statement as ‘the culture of the Malay’.

Cermele, Daniels, and Anderson (2001), Kon (1994), Gaw and Bernstein (1992), Lucas and Barret (1995), and Smart and Smart (1997), offer that psychiatry has yet to establish clear criteria for the cultural specificity of a mental syndrome. Of related significance is that the APA has merely chosen to invoke the term culture (or race and ethnicity) and not specified clear criteria for its application in diagnosing disorders. Culture in the specific instance of the CBS appears to be all encompassing, incorporating race (Malay), ethnicity (Latinos, Navajo) and nationality (Laos, Philippines, Papua New Guinea). The distinction made between the culture-bound and the ‘universal’ syndrome thus appears arbitrary, relative to the scientific/ medical model in which psychiatry is purported to be embedded (APA, 1994 & 2000; Foucault, 2003a). One clear criteria, implicit though it may be, appears to be that the CBS must be of those ‘cultures’ who have at one time or another been considered to be natives/ savages, or of the ‘lesser races’ by imperialist discourse, and before that, early Enlightenment discourse (Alatas, 1977; Alneng, 2001; Bernasconi, 2001; Carroll, 2002; Keebeng, 2003; Spivak, 1988; Yahya, 2003). The Malay and Indian, for example, were two groups of greatly diverse peoples determined by the English Colonial administration to be native to the English named Malayan Peninsula and Indian Subcontinent; and governed as the English colonies of the Native States of Malaya and Native States of India respectively (Andaya, 2001; Keebeng, 2003; Reid, 2004). It is only when this criterion is made explicit do the CBSs appear to form meaning rather than exist as an arbitrary natural artefact that simply ‘is’.

Contemporary psychiatric discourse through its pre-eminent master text, the DSM, can be said to maintain that anachronistic status of the native that is intrinsic and complimentary to a formerly European and now western identity (Jahoda, 1999; Keebeng, 2003; Spivak, 1988 & 1999). So persistent, routine and even automatic is this notion of the native and the exotic, is that it is assimilated within that of culture, in that when speaking of culture in the human sciences it is almost inevitable that we refer to

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<sup>1</sup> Given that the natural is socially constituted and that that the reality, but not meaning, of existence is beyond the knowing, of that which ‘exists’.

an other than western peoples. Migrants, minorities, culture and ethnicity are social categories incorporated into diagnoses by the most recent editions of the DSM (APA, 1994 & 2000). These peoples are minorities in assignation only, when compared with that 'minority' that is the 'ethnically neutral', socially dominant class of white North American society, which sets its explicitly articulated 'universal' norms, calibrated through scientific instruments such as the DSM. The amorphous whiteness of this specific 'racial' (and some would say also sexual) category is however itself very blatantly a fiction, given the great and ever-changing biological and social diversity of the entire West.

This psychiatric master text (and its equivalents), this monolithic multi-axial reference point against which all that is considered mental is measured, also assimilates all human difference ('cultural' and biological difference) while embedded in the medical/scientific/ universal model. It is possessed of a natural (real)/ disciplinary authority (Crowe, 2000; Malik & Beutler, 2002), but in reality perhaps that which is real/ natural/ universal could be said to be of a specific tradition that was once European, and now western and modern. They are the 'truths' of a historically-bound cultural system. What is vigorously promulgated even propagandised as real/ universal is then itself culture-bound (Hook & Parker, 2002; Lemma, 1996; Parker, Georgaca, Harper, McLaughlin, & Stowell-Smith, 1995). The DSM-IV and DSM-IV-TR beseech its users to be cognisant of culture, those beliefs, customs, and syndromes of those who are residually native in their practice of its methods (APA, 1994 & 2000). Comforted by this adherence to what constitutes culturally appropriate practice, we as psychiatrists/ psychologists can safely repeat our mantra of do no harm, or perhaps more accurately, do least harm.

To do good however is seemingly beyond us, even discouraged, why else beseech us 'to do no harm' that passive missive of the sciences of inter/ intrapersonal intervention (social sciences). 'To do good' might then necessarily impel us instead to vigorously oppose the often very oppressive rationalities of psychiatry/ psychology, for example, at their inception, and not when society at large announces their death knell. One such instance might have been protesting not only the idea of race but its scientific linking with intelligence (and morals and personality), that first psychological construct on which modern psychological testing is based (Anastasi & Urbina, 1997; Gelb, Allen, Futterman, & Mehler, 1986). Instead it is the psychologist who has, through his

science, helped ingrain the idea of a racial hierarchy in which the man of white skin is ascendant (and not coincidentally who is the first psychologist himself). It is also the psychologist who in adhering slavishly to a purportedly higher discipline/ authority<sup>1</sup>, psychiatric discourse, maintains the many reprehensible representations of specifically targeted groups of humanity, the native-bound syndrome being one such instance - the Malay being one such native and amok his specific syndrome.

It is significant for me that when incorporating culture, psychiatry also confines the word amok and the phenomena it signifies to the Malay world, validating historical truths, really myths, instead of providing material evidence for their assimilation of amok, or the CBSs in general, as 'mental syndromes'. J. E. Carr, a transcultural psychiatrist, asserts that

amok as it is conceptualised by the Malay, will be found prevalent only among people who share Malay conceptualisations and behavioural norms. Behaviour similar to the amok phenomenon will found in other cultures but it will be called a different name and conceptualized and valued in their ways' (Carr, 1978; p. 269-290).

Hatta (1996), Prince (2000), and Yap (1969) also consider amok a Malay word, signifying a phenomenon that can then be differentiated from other intercultural equivalents, as it is nuanced with its particular cultural/ racial/ ethnic variations. It would seem that amok has become further, even irretrievably, bound with the Malay in terms of a contemporary and increasingly 'cross- or transcultural' psychiatric discourse. What is more likely is that psychiatry's insistence of both the phenomena of amok and its cultural specificity is an example of the consolidation of a historical constant or 'truth' (Foucault, 1991). The scientific incorporation of amok as a psychiatric disorder, explicitly authorised by expediently, and rather formalistically, invoking 'culture', contributes to the many previous layers enveloping an elusive essence of a historical 'truth', derived within a specific epistemological tradition, that is purportedly the Malay malaise of amok.

In the absence of any clear criteria for the CBS the fundamental assumptions pertaining to these syndromes, made within that part of this tradition that constitutes psychiatry, and more implicitly that of an enduring and stable link between the two, are those of the

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<sup>1</sup> An instance of what Foucault means by the death of the writer, of discourse having sovereignty over the writer, as inscribing the modern subject

scientific validity of the existence of the syndrome and of its related culture. It seems appropriate at this juncture to begin inquiries into both the ancient 'racial' group that is the Malay, and that of its malaise of amok.

I balk here, however, at the impossibly complex task that lays ahead, effectively that of describing the entire social ontology of the Malay Archipelago and not merely that of one particular instant or period, which I already know to be impossibly diverse. I have to this point very deliberately written of the Malay as a race, a scientific and historical 'fact' probably first invoked by Johann Blumenbach around about 1775 (Bernasconi, 2001). Blumenbach ranked man into the Caucasian, Mongolian, Ethiopian, American, and Malay 'varieties' based on their physiognomy. Blumenbach however only incorporated the term 'race' in the fourth edition (1797) of his *Generis humani varietate native (On the natural varieties of man)*. It is Immanuel Kant, a colleague, whom he instead directly credits responsibility for 'inventing' race as a scientific category (Bernasconi, 2001).

#### **Of the varieties and races of man: primordial man and the native**

In one of the first offerings of that disproportionating discourse on the natural hierarchy of the species of man, *Discourse on the inequalities of man (Discours sur les origines et fondements de l'inégalité parmi les home, 1755)*, Rousseau offered 'scientific' evidence that accounted for the natural inequities between the refined nations and savages. The notion of the noble savage was also of Rousseau's invention but was soon to give way to representations far more useful to the imperial cause. In recent and provocative investigations on the origins of the scientific notion of race, acute attention has focused on the 'seminal' works of one of the 'fathers' of the Enlightenment. Strack (1996) and Bernasconi (2001), in particular, propose that Kant chose the category of race to 'illustrate the advantages of his radically new understanding of scientific inquiry that he developed in his *Critique of pure reason* (P. 285, Strack, 1996). Where others before him and his contemporaries had not differentiated race from species (e.g. Francois Bernier), or used the term varieties (Blumenbach and Carolus Linnaeus), Kant 'invented' race as a classification of the varieties of man (Bernasconi, 2001).

In his essay *Of the different human races (Den verschiedenen racen der menschen, 1775 & 1777; Bernasconi, 2001)* Kant seized on the physical constancy of colour, a

physical human attribute already well documented in the ‘new world of learning’ that emerged through the ‘new world of voyages’ (White, 2002; p. 237). Already observed in great detail in the colonies and the new slave trade, and the subject of early ‘scientific’ speculations<sup>1</sup>, colour became the principal determinant of the first scientific classification of the races of man (Bernasconi, 2001). Both Bernasconi (2001) and Strack (1996) suggest that modern science, and structuralism even, begins with Kant’s inception and elaboration of the scientific idea of race. Those foundations of the scientific transcendental, the synthetic a priori, of the theory, of the deterministic epistemologies of the modern disciplines, in particular, are inherent in this, perhaps, first ‘pre-conceptualisation’ and its elaboration. In deliberately choosing the ‘problem’<sup>2</sup> of race, as the subject for his first formal scientific inquiry, Kant deemed it necessary to go beyond mere perception/ description, beyond the empirical, and to engage in speculation on the history of nature (Kant’s rejection of the Platonic pure essence).

Kant, and Blumenbach and Linnaeus<sup>3</sup> (following his example), set the task of natural history accordingly (based on his ‘new’ metaphysics of the noumenal essence). In addition to pursuing and disseminating the empirical (precise descriptions of specific varieties) it was also as necessary to organise this rapidly growing material to show how particular effects depend upon general causes (Bernasconi, 2001). This involved speculation on matters that ‘transcended’ the limits of empiricism (the transcendental subject), synthesizing *a priori* to objects and phenomena that went well beyond what could be established by mere observation (the relating of the observable empirical object to the transcendental subject by ‘scientific’ judgment/ concepts/ theories manufactured by reason). In doing so Kant also incorporated a prior, Aristotelian, notion of the linear, mechanical order of nature (mechano-causal, mechanical cause and effect). That this order could be deciphered by reasoned ontological inquiry (‘realist ontology’), led to that first discipline of the Enlightenment, structuralism and science, natural history. This then is an account of the events and objects of the world and the universe, as they occur aligned with the arrow of time, as a linear succession mechanically aligned by cause and effect. This mechanical state infers that nature is a

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<sup>1</sup> That black Africans would revert to white Europeans in their physiognomy when re-placed in a northern clime. This speculation obviously had no need for physical experimentation, as the possession of slave soon proved otherwise (Bernasconi, 2001)

<sup>2</sup> Why are we all not one colour, and why then is the White Man seemingly ascendant?

<sup>3</sup> Linnaeus who began his *Systema naturae sive regina tria naturae* in 1735 was the ‘father’ of biology. He divided man into four large categories by physiognomy, *homo Eurapaeus*, *homo Asiaticus*, *homo Americanus*, and *homo Africanus*.

sum of parts, and knowledge of both can be ascertained by rational methods based on empirical observation and positivistic reductionism.

In his essay *Critique of teleological judgement* Kant also clarified the distinction between the description of nature and natural history (Bernasconi, 2001), establishing appropriate limits for the latter (effectively developing the structuralist tradition of thought). In this teleological (ordered and deterministic) natural history, the natural order purposefully structured man via a hierarchy of physiognomy, of which colour was the principal signifier. Nature had a purpose for man that will be eventually realized by its pre-eminent race of the White Man (Bernasconi, 2000). Rousseau, Kant, Blumenbach, and Linnaeus placed this white race, Caucasians<sup>1</sup>, at the apex and black Africans at the bottom of a racial hierarchy that was to gain increasing scientific credence from that point (Bernasconi, 2001; Jahoda, 1999; Said, 1978). In elaborating on this hierarchy they theorised that the lesser races degenerated from that primordial race, the 'white' Caucasian as a result of adaptation to different environmental conditions, promoting Kant's view of a particular mode of monogenesis (Bernasconi, 2000). The belief that the White Man is the primordial race also invested this race with those ideals or universal human(istic) attributes and principles that are, not coincidentally, those of the Enlightenment itself.

The Kantian conceptualisation of the primordial race is one that differs from the classical notion of an existence without beginning or end (i.e. constant or pure; Narayan, 1973). This primordial being is one designed by nature as progressing or evolving with time from lesser origins (Bernasconi, 2001). Those of this primordial tribe that had separated or were cast out (Biblically) from this archetype, deviated and degenerated as they adapted, became native, to the different regions of the world. In Linnaeus's classification of the varieties of man, the degenerate black native of Africa (*homo Africanus*) was reputedly crafty, indolent, negligent and governed by caprice, and *homo Asiaticus* and *homo Americanus* similarly imbued, or 'essentialised', with degenerate traits. In contrast *homo Europaeus* was wholly munificent, a race that was gentle, inventive, very acute and governed by reason, customs and religion; in effect the

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<sup>1</sup> Blumenbach, a natural historian, selected the skull of a woman from Mt. Caucasus, Georgia, as the most beautiful in all his collection. He promulgated the scientific fact that the White variety of man, the Caucasians, originated in the Caucasus region, and were as the exemplar variety were the most beautiful of all the varieties.

normative or 'idealised' constituted self central to the western tradition (Bernasconi, 2001).

The inception of the scientific notion of race thus incorporated a Manichean binary of an archetypal or idealised munificent white man and its degenerate deviant coloured savage/ native races. This particular binary system of the native/ White Man (or 'black skin bad/ white skin good') is one that Frantz Fanon explicitly articulated through his anti-colonial thesis. Insisting that the stability of the category 'white' depends on its negation, 'black', and that this binary system came into being at the moment of imperial conquest, he proposed violent revolution as the only means of fully liberating both coloniser and the colonised from its oppressive mechanics (Fanon, 1963 & 1968). Edward Said expanded on Fanon's articulation of this native/ White Man binary incorporating the Oriental, as native to the Orient, as a (discursive) product of that historically-bound cultural system, the discipline of Orientalism (Said, 1978). The discursive product that is the Malay Oriental native to the Malay Archipelago is a negation of the discursive product that is the White Man. It can be argued that it is at the very inception of history and science, of natural history and the disciplinary tradition, and not at that previous moment of his conquest, that the White Man and native emerged as confirmation and negation (of this natural history). One can go so far as to say that history is predicated on this specific Manichean binary of the White man/ native. Discovery, conquest and colonisation, may have instead served to inform the disciplinary tradition which in turn provided those first justifications so necessary for the spiritual, intellectual and moral high ground occupied by this White Man since.

Carroll (2002) offers that it is 'almost impossible to overestimate the liberating effects' this new world of knowledge had on the Enlightenment scholars, and on those who follow in this tradition<sup>1</sup> (p. 18). Their 'scientific' determinations, however, merely affirmed the long held belief by many Europeans of both the divine and natural pre-eminence of that race of man indigenous to the temperate zone<sup>2</sup> (Bernasconi, 2001; Carroll, 2002). These scientific truths were conceptualised when European imperialism had by then exercised its right and might within and beyond Europe for over two hundred and fifty years. Far from being a disinterested body of men in search of the

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<sup>1</sup> Foucault and Said, for example, would well acknowledge this liberating effect of the new world of knowledge, double-edged though it might be.

<sup>2</sup> A notion that most likely emerged during the crusades and obviously limited to the temperate region of Europe (Gregory & Sanjek, 1994; Bernasconi, 2001).

truth through 'objective' and empirical methods of inquiry, the Enlightenment scholars were 'interested' and complicit with European imperialism, which perceived of the whole world as a stage for domination by its equal nations of White men.

Unequivocally articulated as the aesthetic, intellectual and cultural emergence of the European, the Enlightenment was instead mired in his imperialism, his desire for advancement/ domination virulently expressed in the form of conquest, colonisation, and slavery of an increasing number of the coloured as the other. Both imperialism and the Enlightenment can be argued as being the indissoluble products of his perceived material and spiritual lack, made only too evident by the European's voyages of discovery. Encountering societies such as those prominent and wealthy societies of the Americas, the Malabar Coast (south-west coast of India), the Malay Archipelago, and the Far East, the need to better oneself may only have been made too apparent. Translated into a desire for personal advancement, gratification of this lack came at monumental cost to the othered. Their construction as a discursive product/ historical object was initiated and developed through a 'narcissistic dialogue' between the new world voyager and the Enlightenment scholar.

The imperialistic ventures are commonly, perhaps, thought of as the product of a confluence of political, commercial, militarist, and theological sectors of European societies. It seems very apparent that its intelligentsia, the Enlightenment scholar, were as complicit, a notion that would not surprise the likes of Orwell<sup>1</sup>, Chomsky, Said, Morrison, and Arundhati Roy.

The classification of race has also obviously varied since the early and simple categories of Kant, Linnaeus and Blumenbach (Bernasconi, 2000). Others race scientists such as Voltaire, Buffon and Huxley all devised their individual racial hierarchies to fit their particular scientific methods (Bernasconi, 2001; Gregory & Sanjek, 1994; Jahoda, 1999). As a 'scientific' fact, race is especially plagued by a surfeit of classification systems<sup>2</sup>.

Hardly two [scientists] agree as to the number and composition of the races. Thus one scholar makes an elaborate classification of twenty-nine

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<sup>1</sup> In *Homage to Catalonia*, Orwell noted of this intelligentsia's rapid and only too willing complicity with Nazi ideology.

<sup>2</sup> Much like, perhaps, the classification of mental disorders which has seen the number of syndromes leap from less than 50 to about around 300 in the last 50 years (Malik, & Beutler, 2002)

racess; another tells us there are six; Huxley gives us four; Kroeber three; Goldenweiser, five; and Boas inclines to two, while his colleague, Linton, says there are twelve or fifteen. Even my dullest students sometimes note this apparent contradiction. (Brewton Berry in *A Southerner learns about race*, 1942; cited in Powell, 1998).

The advent of the genetic technologies in particular has also made it increasingly apparent that race is at best of tenuous scientific validity (Bernasconi, 2001; Goodman, 1997; Keita & Kittles, 1997; Tishkoff et al., Marshall, 1998), undermining those sciences based on the supposed physiognomic variation of man, that began with those first modern scientific theorisations of Kant and Blumenbach.

One of the most astonishing features of the contemporary discussion of race is the fact that anthropology, the science that deals with human biological and cultural variation, has managed to be marginalized.

Regardless of reason, it is clear that there is no consensus and great confusion exists in the discipline [biological anthropology] with regards to race. The biological concept of race . . . has no basis in science. (Freeman, 2001)

However, there seems less doubt as to the purposes of 'inventing' race. As a scientific idea that initially emerged from encountering and enslaving people of colour, perhaps naturally enough it should be left to an Englishman, Gilbert Murray, a turn of the century British imperialist to explain the natural purpose of colour.

There is in this world a hierarchy of races... those nations which eat more, claim more and get higher wages, will direct and rule the others, and the lower work of the world will tend in the long run to be done by the lower breeds of man. This much we of the ruling colour will no doubt accept as obvious. (Cited in Banton, 1987; p. vii)

The conceptualisation of a primordial human, the White Man, and his deviant and degenerate derivatives, those native races, lie at the heart of the method of the human sciences, of man's natural history, and perhaps of that of the Enlightenment itself. The scientific notion of the archetypal human, the White Man, and his degenerate variants, the native races, is axiomatic of the self-fulfilling privileging meta-narrative that is history, that record of the natural progress of the White Man (in which he conquers and civilises the natives).

For its part, psychiatry from its inception in the nineteenth century (by the likes of Kraepelin) also institutionalised, ironically for me, the abnormal mentalities and behaviour of the European as archetypal and universal. Those supranormal behavioural phenomena of the native races, such as amok and koro were then initially captured by Kraepelin himself through its auxiliary of comparative psychiatry (Prince, 2000). These phenomena have since resided along the margins of psychiatric discourse, literally and metaphorically assuming that position of the native/ savage relative to the White man. The Malay and his amok, is one such native and his malaise. The English colonial authorities designated the Indian and the Malay, for example, as races native to the (Native States) of India and Malaya (Kuklick, 1991; Reid, 2004). These natives were then one people located in one territory, the Indian in the Subcontinent and the Malay in the Malay Peninsula, giving greater coherence in the mapping and governance of the British Empire (Keebeng, 2003; Reid, 2004). This mapping of much of the East (and West) along the lines of a particular racialised paradigm persists to this day (Keebeng, 2003).

### **The Malay 'race'**

Sir Stamford Raffles, a contemporary of these illuminati, and who is particularly significant in that he was the Governor of Java and of the Malay Peninsula in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, was of similar mind. He thought of the Malays 'as one people speaking one language, though spread over so wide a space, preserving their character and customs, in all the maritime states lying between Sulu Seas and the Southern Oceans' (Raffles, 1816; p. 103). Raffles was also very clearly of the opinion that the Malay was of the degenerate races, capable only of assimilating that which was introduced (Raffles, 1816 & 1988). If a racial class is made up of its constituent sub-races, perhaps Anthony Burgess best alludes to my present quandary in his description of a Malay character in his 'classic', *The Malayan Trilogy*<sup>1</sup>.

. . . the Malay stood by the sick-room, hunched, heavy-jawed, simian, the end-product of God knew what mingling of Achinese pirates, aboriginal bushmen, Bugis bandits, long-hut head-hunters. (Burgess, 2000, p. 406)'.

Disregarding, for the moment, the all too simplistic and brutish invective launched at the Malay, Burgess conveys some idea of the great difficulty in 'accurately' describing

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<sup>1</sup> So says Salman Rushdie, as claimed amongst the credits on the cover of this Vintage edition

the Malay. For as long as a form of historical record has existed in one tradition or the other, 'Occidental' or 'Oriental', this native has identified as Minangkabau (mainly West Sumatra), Javanese (of Java), Bugis (Bugese of Celebes), Achinese (Acehnese of Aceh), Riau Islanders and Melayu (Malay), amongst many, many others within a bewildering diversity of peoples native to the Malay Archipelago. Those named represent perhaps the largest and most well known ethnic groups of the Archipelago, all of whom could be said to be of the Malay 'race' (Andaya, 2001; Marsden, 1783; Moorhead, 1957; Raffles, 1988; Reid, 2004; Sardesai, 2003; Wallace, 1869). However over the colonial and post-colonial era, the 'true Malay' or 'Melayu' (meaning Malay in the Malay languages) has come to refer to that specific population of Malay residing in the Malay Peninsula, as opposed to the Malay Archipelago proper (Andaya, 2001; Keebeng, 2003; Shamsul, 1996; Swettenham, 1900; Wallace, 1869). Much in the same way India, China, and Japan, and France, have become nations of peoples of specific 'races' in the post-colonial national landscape (Andaya, 2001; Keebeng, 2003; Mohamad, 1970; Reid, 2004). The modern biological attribute of race has linked irretrievably, perhaps, with the modern national landscape (Keebeng, 2003; Shamsul, 1996).

Melayu, or Malayo, is also thought to have derived from the Javanese word for 'run', and was often used as an insult to describe those who had cowardly run away. *Tanah Melayu*, Malay for the land of the Melayu, was the land of the refugees, those who migrated from the main islands of what is now Indonesia to the Malay Peninsula (Pires, 1944; Zain, 2004). These peoples ran to escape the famines, pestilence, and the conflicts of ancient kingdoms at war with one another. The Malay of the western, southern and central parts of the West Malaysia may be of Riau Island, Javanese, Achinese, Bugis, or Minangkabau descent, for example, or a mixture of these and other ethnic groups. The Malay of the north and east is more likely to reflect an intermingling with the Thai, who is again of varying ethnicity (Andaya, 2001; Reid, 2004; Sardesai, 2003). This migration to the Peninsula has also continued largely uninterrupted through the centuries. More recently, however, it has very largely taken the form of both the indentured and illegal, but all the same, greatly devalued Indonesian labour imported for the express purpose of modernising or developing Malaysia. Another example, perhaps, of the colonised applying those well learnt practices of the coloniser.

The Malay Peninsula was like the modern new world for this ancient world, and like the Americas and Australasia, was, and still is, inhabited by 'tribal' 'indigenes, the *Orang Asli* (Andaya, 2001). The *Negritos*, Australoid hunter-gatherer populations (of both sea and land) of extreme antiquity<sup>1</sup>, coexisted, and do so to this day, with forest-dwelling speakers of Austrasiatic or Mon-Khmer languages, in the south of Thailand and Malaysia (Reid, 2004). Categorised as proto-Malays (the 'first Malays'), and of the 'mongoloid strain', by mainstream anthropology, the latter are considered to have arrived in the Malay Peninsula from Southern China around about 2000 B.C..

A second wave of southern Chinese called the deutero-Malaya inhabited the coastal regions around 200 B.C. pushing the first Malays into the heavily forested interior of the Peninsula (Sardesai, 2003). These first migrations resulted in the first plurality of the Peninsula. Occupying much of the Malay Archipelago and its dominant population until the seventeenth century, the deuteron-Malays developed entreports at strategic points along the West coast of the Peninsula (Reid, 2004). As they engaged in trade with the peoples of those ancient lands of modern day China, India and Thailand, they also intermingled with them. Seafaring and greatly heterogenous, they occupied the Archipelago and formed ancient civilisations well before the advent of the European. It is these peoples that have come, in the modern era, to be considered the 'true Malay' of the Peninsula (Swettenham, 1900; Wallace, 1869). Further migration of the Melayu to the west coast of the Peninsula also reinforced the urban settlements of the Peninsula, especially as the high rainfall and inaccessible mountainous terrain of the interior resisted the type of agricultural development that had long prevailed in Java and Bali (Reid, 2004). Malacca and Singapore are examples of such urban settlements that came to great prominence as a cosmopolis of the Far East.

The notion of a Malay Peninsula could be said to have been an entirely English one and which has since become indelible. The Arabs and the Siamese themselves had thought of this Peninsula as essentially Siamese. Some early Europeans knew it as the 'Ultra Gangetic Peninsula of India' (*Peninsula Indiae Gangem*; la Loubere, 1693; p. 7; cited in Reid, 2004). William Marsden (1783 & 1966) protested that the idea of a Malayan or Malay Peninsula, already by then come into limited use, falsely conveyed the Peninsula

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<sup>1</sup> Dark skinned and thus 'negroid' like according to the early anthropologists they are also known as the *Semang* and *Pangan* are of lineal descent from *homo erectus*.

as the origin of the Malay. Alexander Hamilton may have first used the term Malaya or Malay coast in the 1720s, and the Malay Peninsula likely made one of its first appearances on a European map accompanying Begbie's book titled *The Malayan Peninsula* (published in 1834; Reid, 2004). The London Treaty of 1824 had earlier restricted British activity in this region to the Peninsula (in exchange for much of what is now called Indonesia), who probably then began to view this territory as single coherent unit, a land inhabited by a particular people, the 'true Malay' (Andaya, 2001; Reid, 2004; Swettenham, 1900 & 1984; Wallace, 1869).

It is difficult to conceive of the Malay, be they 'Negrito', 'proto', 'deutero', or Melayu, as a homogeneous culture or ethnic group, let alone a race of a particular physiognomy, given even a fraction of that evidence that is their only too well documented 'natural history'. The culture of these peoples, as well, reflects the great influences of their long and proximate encounters with those of the Indian, Chinese, Thai, and yes, even the European; a consequence of the great crossroads that this region has long been. And we have yet to consider the great diversity of the culture and biology, for example, of these latter peoples. What can more certainly be said of this essentially modern notion of the 'true Malay' is that these peoples now live in the peninsula of the 'multiracial' nation of Malaysia, follow Malay customs, are largely of Islamic faith and purportedly converse fluently in a specific racialised, and nationalised, Malay language. This Malay language, known as *Bahasa Malaysia*, derives from a language spoken in the Riau Archipelago, and is also the national language of Brunei, one of four national languages of Singapore, is spoken in Southern Thailand, parts of Sumatra, East Timor, and the Philippines, and is very similar, sharing common roots, to the national language of Indonesia, *Bahasa Indonesia* (Andaya, 2001; Maier, 1997; Reid, 1988 & 2004; Shamsul, 1996).

One form or another of this Malay language has then long been the *lingua franca* of the Archipelago. Malay, Chinese, Indian, Arab, and European have all used this language in perusing the great cultural and commercial crossroads of this region (Reid, 2004). In 1972 the Malaysian and Indonesian governments agreed upon a unified spelling system, based on the Malay language of the Riau Archipelago (Andaya, 2001). This latest standard of the Malay Language, which has removed most of the differences between

the Malay languages of Indonesia and Malaysia, continues that tradition of the Malay as the *lingua franca* of the Malay Archipelago.

There are other numerous theorisations on the origins of the Malay. A Malaysian Malay account of the Sultans of Malacca, the *Sejarah Melayu*, traces the ancestry of the Malay to a union between King Iskandar Zulkarnain (Alexander the Great), and an Indian Princess (Andaya, 2001). Their descendants made their way to Malacca, most likely from the Subcontinent, during the great and sustained intermingling between the Indian and the Malay cultures. The ancient Malay empires of Palembang, Singapura (Singapore), and Malacca, were founded by this Macedonian-Indian-Malay lineage descended from Iskander the Great (Andaya, 2001).

I-Tsing the Seventh Century Chinese traveller noted that the Kingdom of Melayu, located on the eastern coast of southern Sumatra, was part of the Sri Vijaya Empire (an ancient Indian empire; Pires, 1944; Andaya, 2001). Melayu was the name given to a river that ran through that part of Sumatra and it is thought possible that the Malay of the Peninsular derived from this part of Sumatra. 'Indian' references to Melayu date back to the Ramayana, which makes mention of Malayavidpa, a province of the mythical Islands in the East laden with gold (Pires, 1944; Zain, 2004). It is not certain though if Malayavidpa corresponded with Ptolemy's Golden Chersonese (Lat. *Aurea Khersonese*; Grk. *Khryse Khersonesos*), the name he gave the Malay Peninsular in his map of the ancient world (Reid, 2004). What is certainly evident however is that knowledge of the wealthy, mainly urban societies of the Malay world was widespread from antiquity. The European was perhaps the last to have encountered these long-established urban societies, these cosmopolis of the south-east. As he emerged from his dark age however he may have been unhinged by the golden lustre of their once unimaginably wealthy empires. His imagination then 'run amok' perhaps, his conquest of the East (and West) swiftly followed and was as violent and frenzied as that, purportedly, of the amok.

Dr. Noriah Mohamad, a scholar of the Malay world, offered that the Portuguese came for the three Gs, gold, gospel and glory (personal communication, October 6, 2004). It is around about this time of his emergence from his dark age, in the early sixteenth century, that the European conquered those great 'American' civilisations of the Aztecs

and the Incas; began their slave trade, and their colonisation of the natives of the world (Bernasconi, 2001; Chomsky, 1993; Gregory & Sanjek, 1994; Said, 1993;).

The great and amazing plurality of the Malay world, hardly conveyed in these cursory descriptions, encompassed peoples and their languages, customs, religions, ethnicities, trade, and politics. There is currently a concerted attempt to resurrect the status of the Peninsula as one of the world great crossroads (Reid, 2004). 'The interactions of the Malay, Thai, Burmese, Chinese, and Indian in the Peninsula were not some kind of messy accident of history, but part of the necessary role the Peninsula played in the Asian economy' (Reid, 2004; p. 5). This necessary and significant role was likely due to the strategic location of the Malay Archipelago and Peninsula as a major gateway between West and Far East. This plurality on further examination can be said to be of a sustained lineage continuing to this day, though substantially altered in spirit by English colonial policy, rule and legacy (Reid, 2004; Shamsul, 1996). While it is largely commerce that brings a multitude of peoples to its urban centres, the result is a pervasive and varied influence of the greatly diverse Malaysian society (Reid, 2004).

### **The Malay of contemporary Malaysian society**

That which perhaps constitutes the greatest contraindication to the biological construct of the Malay race has very recently emerged within contemporary Malaysian society. In accordance with that part of the national constitution applying to West Malaysia, one may identify as Malay providing that he/ she becomes a Muslim (the most critical criteria), if not already one, and follows the traditions and customs of the Malay including speaking his language (Andaya, 2001; Dentan, 2002; Shamsul, 1996). This Malay is then almost entirely a pure ideological product that discards the need for the biological transmission of his/ her 'race'. The Malay as politically constituted or an ideological product cannot, strictly speaking, be 'scientifically' classified as a race.

The Malay Peninsula has long been a place of great plurality, and its contemporary social ontology is no different. Keebeng (2003) has remarked that the class paradigm of socialist thought did not take root within the British colonies in Southeast Asia, and its place instead the dominant paradigm structuring the region's national and social topography was that of race. These 'races' made up a coherent Malayan society under British rule doing what 'naturally' suited them best, and these racial social roles persist to this day (Andaya, 2001; Keebeng, 2003; Shamsul, 1996; Yahya, 2003). The Malay

majority as *Bumiputeras*, Malaysia's 'sons of the soil', retain governance and are literally the 'custodians' of its lands. The minoritised but significant populations of Chinese and Indians, until recently, retained their historical stake in commerce and the professions. All those comprising contemporary Malaysian society, however, can assume Malay identity - be they of Chinese, Indian, Asian, Arab, African, or even European descent. Ironically many of those 'original' tribal indigenes who are of other faiths, usually Christian, are then forcibly excluded from identifying as Malay (Dentan, 2002). Despite constitutional guarantees of religious freedom these 'true' biological Malays, the first peoples of the Archipelago, face persistent and coercive attempts to convert them by the Malay (and Muslim) dominant ruling coalition (Dentan, 2002).

Amok is viewed as being intrinsically 'Malay' in psychiatric discourse (APA, 2000; Carr, 1978; Hatta, 1996; Prince, 2000; Spores, 1988; Yap, 1969). Equivalents that occur in other 'cultures' are then signified, and nuanced, as to significantly differentiate from amok (APA, 2000; Carr, 1978; Yap, 1969). Having investigated, albeit briefly, that assumption made by psychiatry, of the Malay as a homogenous culture or race, it seems only fitting that amok itself be subject to the same scrutiny.

## CHAPTER 6: THE 'INDIAN' AMOK

I have to date referred to amok as if it were a homogeneous means or even method of taking life, much as it has been written into the DSM (APA, 1994 & 2000). Long before the English began their colonisation of the Orient, and long before the word 'amok' concurrently entered into the various 'English' lexicons signifying native-ness, chaos and mentality, they were preceded by a previously as dominant European, the Portuguese. In about 1430, and well before Captain Cook brought notice of amok to the English speaking world, Nicolo Conti wrote of the Malay that the

. . . inhabitants of Java and Sumatra exceed every other people in cruelty. They regard killing a man a mere jest; nor is any punishment allotted for such a deed. If any one purchase a new sword, and wish to try it, he will thrust it into the breast of the first person he meets. The passer-bys examine the wound, and praise the skill of the person who inflicted it, if he thrust in the weapon direct. (Cited in Wallace, 1869b; p. 297).

Conti did not make reference to the Malay word or act of amok as such. Similar customs however were noted by his countrymen amongst the peoples of the Malabar Coast, the south-west coast of what is now called India. These early references to amok-like behaviours derive entirely from European encounters, particularly Portuguese, Dutch and Spanish, accounts of this region, now the Indian state of Kerala and land of the Malyalee (Kon, 1994; Spores, 1988).

### **Amok as a culture-bound syndrome of the Indian of the Malabar Coast**

Gaspar Correa wrote an account in the sixteenth century, of a 'caste' of personal guards, who in pledging their lives to the royal households of the day were called 'amoucos'.

In war between the Kings of Calicut and Cochin (1503) two princes of Cochin were killed. A number of these desperadoes who had been spoken of . . . were not killed, and these went in shame, not to have died avenging their lords . . . In this case they are as madmen—known as amoucos—and count themselves already among the dead. These men dispersed, seeking wherever they might find men of Calicut, and amongst these they rushed fearless, killing and slaying till they were slain. And some of them, about twenty, reckoning more highly of their honour, desired to turn their death to better account; and these separated, and found their way secretly to Calicut, determined to slay the King. But as it became known that they were amoucos, the city gave the alarm, and the King sent his servants to slay them as they slew others. But they like desperate men played the devil . . . before they were slain, and killed many people, with women and children. (Yule & Burnell, 1903; p. 20)

It is plausible to imagine the alarm '*amouco, amouco*' substituting for the Malay 'amok, amok' heralding these homicidal strikes. William Logan, in writing about the origins of these assassins in 1881, however, noted that it was the Portuguese themselves that named them '*amoucos*' (Logan, 1951; p. 138). Caesar Frederike, in 1556, and Sasseti, in 1584, both wrote that the people of Cochin instead called them *amocchi* (Frederike, 1708; cited in Yule & Burnell, 1903; p. 20). The term *amouco* appears to be preferred by the Portuguese, and they applied it to other cultures when describing their exotic homicidal methods. Around about the year 1614 Diogo di Couto used it to describe the homicidal actions of both the Javanese and the citizens of Malabar. Di Couto noted the

Javanese to be chivalrous men and of such determination that for whatever offence may be offered them they make themselves *amoucos* in order to get satisfaction thereof. And were a spear run into the stomach of such a one he would still press forward without fear till he got at his foe. (Yule & Burnell, 1903; p. 21)

And that on the death of their King in a confrontation with the Portuguese, the Malabar *amoucos* of

nearly 4, 000 *Nairs* made themselves *amoucos* with the usual ceremonies, shaving their heads on one side, and swearing by their pagoda to avenge their King's death. (Yule & Burnell, 1903; p. 21)

Here then is one of the possible innumerable beginnings, or 'the 'dissension of other things' (Foucault, 1977; p. 142), the 'disparity' of the purportedly inviolable identity' of the origin of the CBS that is the Malay amok - the collective martial strategy of the *amouco* used by the *Nair* clan of the Malayalee ethnic group in the seventeenth century. And very unexpectedly I myself ensnared in this very immediate and accidental collision between the Malay and Malayalee worlds. Descended directly of the *Nair* clan, normally 'civil and meek' in conversation but infamous it seems for a haughty demeanour, combative instincts and martial codes of honour (Nieuhoff, 1704), I might myself have found the roots of my raging against the many and gross injustices of our societies.

These initial European accounts of the *amouco/ amocchi* detail several ritualised practices that were associated with the institutions of sovereign rule, for example martial organisations, of the societies of the Malabar Coast, and their internecine conflicts (Kon, 1994; Spores, 1988). While it perhaps can never be unambiguously

known as to how these cultural terms came about, they and the practices they represent share some similarities with amok. The ritualistic act of the *amouco* or *amocchi* was said to follow the loss of honour (redress), was furiously homicidal but ultimately suicidal in intent (in pursuit of an honourable death), and at the very least, partially indiscriminate – all supposedly elemental to the Malay amok (Carr, 1978; Hatta, 1996; Kon, 1994; Prince, 2000; Spores, 1988; Swettenham, 1900; Wallace, 1869).

It is also these accounts of ancient Indian cultural equivalents of amok that recent scholars have incorporated in differentiating the supposedly homogeneous act of amok (Hatta, 1996; Kon, 1994; Spores, 1988). The dominant feature that supposedly distinguishes the *amoucco/ amocchi* from the amok is the latter's individual agency, amok as solitary rather than collective. Where the *amocchi/ amouco* was part of a martial contingent participating in a ritualised practice to restore honour, amok is carried out by an individual, purportedly for the same reason, redress (Hatta, 1996; Spores, 1988; Swettenham, 1900 & 1984). There are many more and often varying accounts of the practice of the *amouco/ ammocchi*, a great many of them documented by Spores (1988). This evidence of its diverse origins and practices, this 'dissension of other things' counters that scientifically promulgated fact of the specifically Malay malaise of amok, a word that bears striking resemblance to amouc-co and amoc-chi; as does the term Malay-alee to Malay and Melayu.

What seems as evident is that the practice of the *amocchi* is no longer detectable in those forms initially and so spectacularly scripted into history by its Portuguese authors. Its 'end' is credited largely to European conquest and rule of Malabar and the rest of the Subcontinent, a fate similar perhaps to that of the amok in Malaya under British rule (Hatta, 1996; Spores, 1988). Spores (1988) proposed however that that this was not a simple, abrupt death, and that this collective practice instead evolved with this dramatic change in Indian society, fragmenting (as did Indian society under Imperial rule) to yield its diminished 'residuals'. The collective, martial homicide-suicide of the *amocchi*, fragmented into those solitary acts of the individual seeking the same end, the restoration of honour and respect (Hatta, 1996; Spores, 1988). It does not seem to me coincidental that these acts of a collective gave way to those of the individual in these societies during their colonisation by the European who, since his 'enlightenment', has prized individual agency over that of the communal.

What then seems of great significance to the notion of amok as an indigenous, culturally specific word/ signifier, however, is that this practice of the solitary individual that possibly and even likely derived from the collective homicide-suicide of the *amocchi* was called amok, a supposedly Malay word and phenomena. Towards the late seventeenth century Reverend Phillip Baldeus, the Dutch chaplain of Ceylon, describes the following practice among an elite of the Nair clan;

. . . among the Nairos (Nairs) those who call themselves amok are the worst, being a company of desperadoes, who engage themselves and their families by oaths to revenge such injuries as are done them. (Baldaeus, 1704; p. 644; cited in Spores, 1988).

Baldeus notes that these amoks 'are often seen at Batavia', now Jakarta but then a Dutch colony on Java (Baldaeus, 1704; p. 644), again linking the Malay and the Malayalee, with the supposedly Malay word, amok. As significantly, though it may be entirely coincidental, Baldeus applies it in almost precisely the same way Diego di Couto did with the term amouco only a few decades earlier. This particular evidence would seem to give lie to the claim that 'the original reports that used this term were from Malaysia' (APA, 2000; p. 899). In as much as Malaysia did not exist until August 31<sup>st</sup> 1957, this statement is already some sort of lie, or at least a 'lazy' error of history. Psychiatry in this instance seems merely content to transmit a fragment of a myth, instead of adhering to a fundamental requirement of 'scientific' evidence.

It seems uncertain, given this evidence, whether the origin of the word and practice of amok can be determined unambiguously, though I argue if it is at all necessary to this particular inquiry. What seems to me of greater relevance is that, in keeping with its historical violent dramatisation, the mention of amok induces the notion of an as dramatically violent confrontation amongst humans. This violent confrontation is then not only limited to the prevailing 'syndrome' disseminated by psychiatric discourse, of the solitary Malay's senseless slaughter - it incorporates that of organised collectives pursuing the martial strategies of the day. Those 'historical' facts of the Malayalee amouco/ amocchi / amok, gives lie to the idea of amok as some form of historical, cultural, and psychiatric/ medical phenomena that is clearly recognisable in its evolving cluster of signs. As a syndrome, that diagnostic tool of the contemporary nosology of mental disorders, amok would be required to manifest repeatedly with subtle gradual variation in the signs that are 'naturally/ scientifically' associated with its progress

(Crowe, 2000; Follette & Houts, 1996; Salzinger, 1986). The likelihood of this seems entirely remote when even its individualist agency appears highly questionable. To paraphrase Foucault, at its 'historical beginnings' and far from being a historical constant with an 'inviolable identity' to its origin, what seems more apparent with amok is 'the dissension of other things' (Foucault, 1977; p. 142).

It is also salient to me that some form of transmission of the word and practice of amok between geographically distinct 'races' or societies could have and very likely occurred. It is well known that this Far East, though perhaps only largely in this Far East itself, far from having consisted of barren, stagnant and regressive cultures was instead a region of great cultural and economic exchange (Andaya, 2001; Reid, 2004). Marco Polo, Nicolo Conti, Vasco da Gama, Thomas Cook, amongst many others, encountered and brought word of its wealth to a Europe that was, by comparison, impoverished (Menziess, 2003; Prince, 2000). The Portuguese ruler Dom Joao (for one), who ascended the throne in 1481, was unprepared for the commercial sophistication of these Eastern empires (Andaya, 2001). In one episode of this great exchange, the Indian empires of Sri Vijaya and Malabar extended vast social and economic influence in the Malay Archipelago and Indochina for several hundred years up to the early sixteenth century<sup>1</sup>. Cultural fragments or 'residuals' of their great influence remain in the religions and customs practiced by their peoples, in their dance, dress, architecture, food and language (Andaya, 2001; Reid, 2004). If the practice of the amocchi and the amok are indeed of 'Indian' origin it seems feasible than that it may have been a cultural fragment that was transmitted to the societies of the Malay Archipelago sometime during this episode. Arguments for the cultural transmission of amok are made in greater detail by Kon (1994) and, more especially, Spores (1988).

Another mode of transmission of the term 'amok' and the phenomena seems possible. The Portuguese may possibly have been familiar with the Scandinavian martial strategy of *berserkgang*, or other cultural equivalents, encountered in their great voyages into the world beyond Europe. The Portuguese term 'amouco', and amok its possible derivative, may then have been used to describe such behaviour in the Malabar Coast and the Malay Archipelago. A more recent analogue of this possible cultural transmission may be that of schizophrenia. Unknown before the advent of psychiatry,

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<sup>1</sup> Not coincidentally until the Portuguese fleets of Vasco da Gama turned up in first the Malabar coast and then the Malay Archipelago.

schizophrenia is now the major form of psychoses diagnosed in 'developing' nations like Malaysia (Cruetz, 2004). Those cluster of signs that the European/ western psychiatrist has determined to be constant for schizophrenia in his societies, are now as applicable to Malaysian society where once only one word, *gila* (mad), existed for describing much significantly untoward behaviour. I asked Professor Dr. Shaharom Mohd Hatta, head of Psychiatry of the University Kebangsaan Malaysia Hospital in Bangi, Selangor, if amok was historically considered a form of madness in Malay society. In his opinion madness was considered a chronic deranged state and amok was more momentary and occurred much more quickly, within one or two days and hence the Malays would have made a demarcation between *gila* and amok, and treated them differently (Professor S.M. Hatta, personal communication; March 25, 2004). The English colonial authorities differed in their 'treatment' of the running amok, who were instead incarcerated in psychiatric institutions of the day (Ellis, 1893; Spores, 1988).

It seems highly ironic, disturbingly so, that in a society so intimately associated with amok, its citizens are warned by its psychiatrists of 'walking time bombs' who purportedly number amongst the tens and thousands and remain largely undiagnosed (Cruetz, 2004). Of the major 'races', the Malay is by far the most affected, and thus the myth of the unpredictably violent Malay, the undiagnosed 'walking time bomb', persists. And psychiatry, little matter where it is practiced, seems as lacking in insight (a criteria itself for the diagnosis of schizophrenia) as well and unconscionable in its predilection, for 'inciting' chaos, so evident in the spectacularly alarmist headline *The walking time bombs* (Cruetz, 2004). The gross insensitivity and even irony of this atrocious headline appears lost to the psychiatrist located in a specific period and place where the walking bomb is a terrifyingly violent reality<sup>1</sup>. It seems far more likely that the 'walking time bombs', those who commit deliberate/ rational acts of terrorism and even crime, are those citizens unaffected by schizophrenia (Gove, 1980; Link, Cullen, Frank & Wozniak, 1987; Teplin, Abram, & McClelland, 1994). As Foucault has emphatically suggested it is often psychiatry, when invoking its scientific authority, which seems abnormal or monstrous as it instead disseminates pseudoscience (Foucault, 2003a). In this instance it commits that atrocity of terrorizing both the public, and those it declares abnormal.

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<sup>1</sup> I refer of course to the bombings in Bali and other parts of Indonesia largely organised, very tragically and ironically, by a group of intellectual Malays of Malaysia, of fundamentalist Muslim faith.

If the present gives any indicator of the past, the term amok may have similarly come into general use in the period of Portuguese rule in the Malay Archipelago. Amok may have very simply been used to describe the violent acts particularly those involving homicides, of the Malay natives of this colonized territory. Murphy (1973) probably comes closest in insinuating as such when suggesting that amok is a 'normalised' means of attaining redress in Malay society that eventually became pathologised by psychiatry. It is notable to me that even in this exceptional view amok is not dismissed as a colonial fiction and considered a cultural or social norm of the Malay; amok is still a homicidal irrational act that is culturally bound to the Malay. Already perceived as treacherous it would have taken very little, and to great benefit, to depict the Malay's varied homicidal acts as those of irrational crazed semi-savages.

### **The historical constant of the "White Man" and his amok**

While the possibility of various cultural transmissions of amok cannot be entirely dismissed, what very certainly is evident is that common to the amok of the Nair and that of the Malay, is their writing by ironically enough, the historical constant. I refer to of course the European, or the self proclaimed 'White Man', to whom this history belongs (Fanon, 1963; Said, 1978 & 1993). If there existed forms of cultural transmission of amok, then none were as patently obvious as that involving this European. What can be clearly established is that it is almost exclusively in his dominant discourses on these cultures, that the customs of amouco/ amocchi/ amok commonly and constantly manifest. It is a cultural transmission that began almost from the inception of history itself, and persists to this day be it through psychiatric discourse.

This writing marks these natives as innately chaotic and violent, and naturally derelict of that Enlightenment (humanistic) principle of the sanctity of human life<sup>1</sup>. During this period of the incorporation amok into history there are no accounts that originate from these 'natives', and it would be foolish to insist that there might or should be. The meta-narrative that is history is written into, in part at least, a historical silence, a clean slate of incoherent spontaneous beings of stagnant and regressive civilisations, which are incapable of producing discourse - ordered, reasoned and scientific thought and speech, and their writing. What is implied is more than just simply the historical vacuum or silence of the native, but the incoherence and even inevitable natural or

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<sup>1</sup> And any principle for that matter as this would require reason.

methodical (man-made) extinction of the a-discursive a-historical native/ savage; an extinction very explicitly predicted and prescribed by Darwin for the good of mankind (Darwin, 1901). History, this polemic of the colonizing organism that is the Enlightened amorphous White Man, then exists through the negation, the silencing and extinction of its many constituted a-discursive a-historical lesser subjects; those most closely allied to man but not man himself, the savage races. It might seem then that the 'death of the author' was preceded by the death of those first historical subjects, the savage races, making it like amok, a homicide-suicide. Progressing as swiftly, the ranks of its subject-victims have swelled to include the poor, the female sex and feminine gender, those races and genetic deviants deemed mentally deficient<sup>1</sup>, the abnormal, and inevitably, as Foucault suggests, the White Man himself (his progressive enslavement by discourse, literally his own hand).

History forcibly excludes, because it cannot survive or even have come into being, the dissensions of those it dispossess (the polemic of the dispossessed). Discourse involves the forcible inscription on those bodies of the dispossessed, and inevitably that of the writer, and it is this that makes its progress comparable with the autogenic (self-induced) massacre, SMASI, and amok.

Colonisation obviously involved dramatic changes in the societies of the colonised (and those of the coloniser as obviously). What seems as obvious is that those initial colonising manoeuvres involved extremely violent confrontations between the coloniser and the coloniser. Some would say that the White man came into being by a similar process, that extremely violent suppression of women that was the inquisition (Dworkin, 1987). It is difficult to imagine that any peoples anywhere would willingly cede their sovereignty without a struggle (witness the conquest and continuing conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq today). The conquest of Malabar and Malacca by the Portuguese and of Bengal by the English were notable instances of this swift and brutal violence (Andaya, 2001; Kulke & Rothermund, 2004; Pearson, 1987). Having previously declared the islands of the Far East their possession under the Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494, a Portuguese fleet led by the viceroy of India, Alfons d' Albuquerque arrived in Malacca in 1511, to demand its surrender. When the Malacca sultanate rejected this demand d' Albuquerque took the city after a series of fierce

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<sup>1</sup> Psychological testing, very notably, began with the design of instruments (e.g. Stanford-Binet) to detect these specific 'modern subjects'.

battles. All who resisted were slain and the city sacked, occupied and bled dry until its conquest by the Dutch in 1641 (Andaya, 2001; Moorhead, 1957). Isabella Bird's account of this conquest makes particular note of the wealth of Malacca.

The region may be said to have been rediscovered in 1513 by the Portuguese, . . . Albuquerque, after surprising conquests in India, had sailed to the *Aurea Chersonesus*, called by its inhabitants Malacca. He had captured the city of Malacca, sacked it, slaughtered the Moors (Mohammedans) who defended it, destroyed its twenty-five thousand houses abounding in gold, pearls, precious stones, and spices . . . Further, on hearing of the victory, the King of Siam, from whom Malacca had been "usurped by the Moors," sent to the conqueror a cup of gold, a carbuncle, and a sword inlaid with gold. This conquest was vaunted of as a great triumph of the Cross over the Crescent . . . (Bird, 2000; p. 21-22)

Even given the belief, and those associated justifications, that this unpredictable extreme violence of the European was rational and for the ultimate good of man everywhere, it is arguable then as to who, the European or the native, had run amok. It seems more plausible that it is the behaviour of the European that was unpredicated, and unpredictable in its violence against largely unwary hosts. These hosts, most notably the Chinese, Indian, Malay and the Siamese had largely cooperated peaceably in this region to great mutual benefit (Andaya, 2001; Reid, 2004). The most that had been demanded of Malacca as a fledgling empire was an annual tribute of gold (Andaya, 2001; Reid, 2004; Sardesai, 2003). The cosmopolis that was Malacca developed primarily because of a largely peaceful coexistence between a great number of trading 'partners', both powerful and benign and all long wealthy and 'refined' societies (Andaya, 2001; Menzies, 2003; Sardesai, 2003). The Europeans were however of an altogether different ilk, intent of divvying up this 'new world of voyages' into theatres of conquest and plunder, effectively a 'new world of conquests'. The dramatic impact of the rapid subjugation of Malacca in the region is indicated by the powerful Empire of Siam immediately sending tribute, 'a cup of gold, a carbuncle, and a sword inlaid with gold' to the Portuguese (Andaya, 2001; Bird, 2000).

Following these encounters, and the rapid conquest and colonisation of these natives, their societies were as suddenly and violently dislodged from their previous trajectories. These societies, along with those of their numerous regional trading partners, though scripted by William Marsden and Sir Stamford Raffles in particular as having declined, could be said to have been on highly ordered trajectories along with their trading

partners. Their sudden violent collisions with the Europeans, and the subsequent 'disordered' trajectories of these worlds, perhaps make a history that is essentially that of the enlightened rational White man and the 'spontaneous' and 'stagnant' native plausible.

The writing of amok is perhaps a metaphor for the colonisation of the native by the European. Amok then is as much a representation of the violence initially perpetrated by the coloniser on the colonised, as it is the authoritative and insistent representation of the violent and innate disordered nature of those natives relative to a specific period and arena, of this confrontation. It is the European after all that is unambiguously the author of both amok and colonisation. Consistent with this metaphor are those historical 'facts' of the civilising of the native and his lands by the coloniser; the rapid extinction of those initial violent confrontations and their transformation into a purportedly benevolent governance of the colonies; and the rapid extinction of amok itself during this civilising process (Chomsky, 1993; Keebeng, 2003; Said, 1977 & 1993; Spores, 1988). Needless to say this history of civilising the violent native, ironically, is written as if in denial of a Europe itself in great turmoil; its supposedly civilised societies plagued by famine, poverty, disease, and great and incessant internecine conflicts, which persist to this day.

## CHAPTER 7: THE HISTORICAL TRUTH OF THE MALAY AND HIS MALAISE

### The martial amok of the Malay

The initial accounts of this region that mention amok indicate it to be a commonly employed battle tactic. Tome Pires in the *Suma Oriental of Tome Pires* (1512-1515), includes one such mention in his description of the Portuguese conquest of Malacca.

The King never wanted peace, against the advice of his *Lasamne* and the *Berndara* and his *Cerina de Raja* that he should make peace; but following his own counsel and that of his son, whom he afterwards killed, and of ... other young nobles who offered to run completely amok for the King, he would hear nothing off peace . . . (Pires, 1944; cited in Spores, 1988).

In his version of this conquest and subsequent Malay reprisals Sir Stamford Raffles also made mention of the martial amok.

. . .the Rajah would say, "My eyes are upon them, and they are few in number: if they do any wrong, whatever it may be, I shall see it, and will give orders for their being massacred, (literally, "I will order my men to amok, or as it is vulgarly termed, run a muck among them.>"). (Raffles, 1835; cited in Spores, 1988).

Following the Portuguese conquest a combined force of Malays from Johore (a Malay province south of Malacca) and the Dutch, attacked the Portuguese. On suffering heavy losses,

The Malays then held a consultation, and began to think, that if they fought against the White Man according to this fashion, Malacca would not fall for ten years. It was therefore agreed upon by all the Malays, that fifty men should enter the fort of Malacca, and run amuck or meng-amok.

The Malays then selected a lucky day, and on the twenty-first day of the month, at 5 o' clock in the morning, the fifty Malays entered the fort, and commenced amok, and every Portuguese was either put to death, or forced to fly into the interior of the country, without order or regularity. (Raffles, 1835; p.36)

Raffles described this amok in greater detail in his *History of Java*,

The phrenzy generally known by the term muck or amok, is only another form of that fit of desperation which bears the same name among the

military, and under the influence of which they rush upon the enemy, or attack a battery in the manner of a forlorn hope. The accounts of the wars of the Javans, as well as of the Malayus, abound with instances of warriors running amok; of combatants, giving up all idea of preserving their own lives, rushing on the enemy, committing indiscriminate slaughter, and never surrendering themselves alive. (Raffles, 1965; p. 298)

Schrieke also wrote of similar strategies practiced by the Javanese.

The most feared of all Javanese military tactics was the surprise attack. The Dutch repeatedly fell victim to it, especially when they overboldly ventured too far in battle. On such occasion the cavalry attacked the enemy . . . “quite unexpectedly, like madmen, with streaming hair, shaking their heads, with lances in their in their hands.” In such attacks, which were sometimes made at night, preference was given to falling upon the porters, in order to create confusion. Running amuck was a usual element in this kind of attack. (Schrieke, 1952; p. 132)

Raffles (1817) and Schrieke (1956) include numerous mention of ‘running amuck’ in their accounts of the battle tactics of the Malays of the Peninsula and Archipelago.

Reid (1988) also asserts that running amok was a structured battle tactic,

a key element of attack in the Malay world. . . . Even in the systematic formations of Balinese armies, the attack would usually be commenced by amok specialists dressed in white as a symbol of their sacrifice (p. 125).

As with the *berserkgang* of the Vikings, this amok of the Malay was purported to be drug-fuelled, opium and cannabis being commonly used to inspire these ‘shock troops’ to defy death (Pires, 1944; Raffles, 1965; Spores, 1988).

It is at this point difficult to avoid comparisons, of this martial practice with that of the *amoucco/ amocchi*, with the *berserkgang* of the Vikings, the Japanese *Kamikaze*, and even with the Maori *Haka* and its Polynesian ‘equivalents’. All highly structured, planned and organised, often heavily ritualised practices, they were made in response to a variety of circumstances over a significant period of time, and widespread through both East and West.

These early accounts also diametrically contradict the contemporary psychiatric view of amok as solitary, unpredictable, largely un-predicated, and indiscriminate. Far from its commonly depicted chaotic progress, these practices were deliberately choreographed to create chaos in specific situations, usually connected with warfare. It seems notable

however that later accounts cease referring altogether to these organised collective practices, and give way instead way to almost exclusively English accounts of the amok of the individual, during the late eighteenth and in the nineteenth century. It is then as if organised Indian and Malay collective gave way to the chaotic individual behaviour of these 'cultures'. Perhaps not coincidentally this transformation occurred during the as comprehensive transformation of his societies through European conquest and colonisation. The extinction of the amoucco/ amocchi/ amok as a martial strategy overlaps with coincide with the piecemeal conquest of the societies of the Sub-Continent and the Malay Archipelago. As would be expected with any conquered and colonised society their martial components, the *amocchi* of Cochin and the shock troops of the Balinese being examples, and their strategies, martial amok being an example, vanished on being replaced by those of the coloniser.

Amok, however, persisted as its solitary form in the Malay Archipelago almost entirely through a colonialist discourse, which comprehensively inscribed the Malay world in an organised 'scientific' fashion, mimicking the colonial organisation of his societies. The 'classical' (Tan, 1965), 'true' (Carr & Tan, 1976), and 'solitary' amok (Spores, 1988) of the individual male Malay is most likely that form that the DSM and psychiatry in general declares to be a CBS (Hatta, 1996; Kon, 1994). There is an insistence to this contemporary psychiatric writing of amok, a declaration as to an authentic, a constant nature of amok associated with a cluster of ubiquitous transhistorical signs (the atheoretical stance). As with any mental disorder, the progress of this 'true amok' has thus, even more ironically in this case, an order. In keeping with this insistence, the origins of amok, and their inevitable dissensions, are discarded as if tainted by their collective ethos. In this writing of amok, the communal cedes ground to the individual completely, as if mimicking history as an ontology of the progress of the individual. In the section following a small sample of historical accounts of the solitary amok is examined with a focus on the homogeneity of the phenomena.

### **The solitary amok of the Malay**

One of the few non-European sources of the narratives on amok is the *Hikayat Abdullah* (1849), an autobiography (Hikayat) by the nineteenth century scribe, Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir, a Malacca Malay. Known as Munshi Abdullah he was much favoured by and greatly influenced in his methods by Raffles (Abdullah, 1970; Aljunied, 2004).

Excerpts from Abdullah's account of a specific case of amok that occurred on the 11<sup>th</sup> March 1823, follow.

I will now tell the story of how Colonel Farquhar came to be stabbed. There was certain Sayid, a native of Pahang, named Sayid Yasin, who journeyed doing trade between Singapore and Pahang. He had obtained goods from Pengeran Sharif Omar, a native of Palembang, who was in partnership with Sayid Mohammed Junid. Said Yasin still owed the balance of a debt amounting to \$400. On his arrival Pengeran Sharif had asked for its payment and this request had caused bad feeling amongst them. Pengeran Sharif then took a summons against him, and the case went before Colonel Farquhar. . . . Colonel Farquhar said to Syed Yasin "If you can find someone who will act as surety I can release you. If not you will be locked up." Pengeran Sharif declared "Lock him up, sir, if he does not pay the money or find a surety, or I know he has money and that he is deliberately refusing to pay." . . . Sayid Yasin was taken by Mr. Bernard, the magistrate, and put in goal at about two o'clock in the afternoon. Now when he was admitted to the goal he was not examined to see whether or not he was carrying arms. He was in fact carrying a *keris*<sup>1</sup> which he had secreted under his coat.

After he was admitted to prison, at about 5 o'clock the same afternoon he went to find Mr. Bernard and said "Sir, I wish to go and arrange a postponement with Pengeran Sharif," to which Mr. Bernard replied "All right then. I will tell a policeman to follow you" and he called a constable, a Hindu, and told him to accompany Syed Yasin. Evening was drawing on when Sayid Yasin reached the premises of Pengeran Sharif whom he intended to kill. . . . Syed Yasin went in alone. When Pengeran Sharif saw Sayid Yasin's determined approach he ran into his room, locked the door<sup>2</sup> and descended from the back of the house to the shore. . . .

Meanwhile Syed Yasin stood waiting for the Pengeran Sharif who did not appear. So then he left the house. On his approach the constable said "Come on, quickly for it is already dark." Hearing this Syed Yasin stabbed him and with one blow knocked him sprawling by the gate dead. . . .

At seven o'clock I was walking along my way to give a Malay lesson to Mr. John Morgan. When I was halfway there I met Colonel Farquhar with his son Andrew and his son-in-law Captain Davies, accompanied by four soldiers armed with muskets. . . . When Colonel Farquhar saw me hurrying along he said, "Where are you going?" I replied "I am making for Mr. Morgan's house." He said "Don't go there. Come along with us for there is a man who has run *amok* in Pengeran Sharif's house. . . .

<sup>1</sup> A short dagger with a wavy blade carried by the Malay on the left side of the waist, amongst the folds of his clothing. Sir Stamford Raffles had by this time invoked legislation forbidding the carrying of such weapons in the Peninsula. Abdullah thus alludes to the premeditation of the events that followed Syed Yasin's incarceration

<sup>2</sup> Again the mention of the insurmountable locked door.

Now Syed Yasin seeing several people approaching went and concealed himself underneath an outhouse, which stood in the centre of the yard underneath a wild mangosteen tree. . . . When we reached the centre of the yard Colonel Farquhar prodded with stick under the floor of the outhouse. I was standing close by. Then suddenly a hand emerged from beneath the outhouse as Colonel Farquhar leant on his knee, and a glancing blow struck him in the breast. . . . (Abdullah, 1970; pp. 169-171)

Abdullah goes on to describe the soldiers' struggle to subdue the amok of Syed Yasin, and his inevitable death at their hands. In this account which is obviously part reconstruction and part eyewitness account, Abdullah also goes on to describe the pandemonium (amok?) that breaks out around him, of Captain Davies's cowardly flight and 'people running hither and thither' and 'three or four hundred soldiers' in varying states of dress arriving rather belatedly on the scene (p. 172). After the death of Syed Yasin, people gather in his house and 'the white men came and stabbed and hacked at the corpse of Syed Yasin until it was so disfigured as to be unrecognisable' (p. 172). Confusion reigned through the night, and the crowd of Malays drawn to this fracas were driven away while Raffles and Captain Davies deliberated on whether to 'fire the guns', as Raffles thought that the stabbing of Farquhar was an act of insurrection (p. 173). It is only when Mr. Bernard arrived that the dead constable is recognised, the evening's events pieced together, and a senseless massacre (of Malays) avoided.

The White Man however exacts a full measure of revenge for Syed Yassin's 'act of treason against his ruler'. His corpse is placed on a buffalo and exhibited through the streets of Malacca, and eventually hung for ten days or a fortnight, 'until only the bones were left'. Only when the Sultan asks for the corpse is the body buried in a civilised fashion, 'with lustration and prayers' (p. 174).

Another mention of amok in this autobiography concerns the attack of the society (gang) of Thian Tai Huey Chinese<sup>1</sup>, on a Siamese sailing ship. Once aboard the vessel they 'ran amok' killing 'many of the crew' for the purpose of piracy, the looting of its cargo (p. 216; Abdullah, 1970). In reading Abdullah's accounts of amok one cannot but help surmise that they describe what western society would term deliberate criminal acts involving homicide, or attempted homicide, by violent means. Syed Yasin's amok resembles that of an attempted premeditated violent homicide predicated on clearly

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<sup>1</sup> A Chinese secret society based in Singapore

discernible and significant precursors as is the Thian Tai Huey's act of piracy. These conditions far exceed those of a perceived slight or insult. Amok may be said, in view of these accounts, to be a Malay word describing any violent homicidal act.

Again these accounts indicate distinct and significant precursors and the deliberate nature of the amok described, contraindicating its purported un-predicated, senseless and indiscriminate nature. The notion of homicide itself and even the criminal impulse, both of which would require possession of a rational mind, are largely absent in the European writing of the Malay of the Peninsula. This Malay is instead portrayed as gentle and peaceable until suddenly and unpredictably seized by the bloodlust of amok (Bird, 2000; Clifford, 1898; Marsden, 1783; Swettenham, 1984; Wallace, 1869). Far from being a deliberate reasoned act perpetrated in violation of his society's norms<sup>1</sup>, amok is instead written as the consequence of a rupture of the Malay's facile humanity and the massive psychic and physical upheaval that naturally follows. Typical perhaps of those accounts made of the solitary amok of the Malay of the Peninsula, is that of J. R. Logan.

These amoks result from an idiosyncrasy or peculiar temperament common amongst Malays, a temperament which all who have had much intercourse with them must have observed . . . . It consists of a proneness to chronic disease of feeling, resulting from a want of moral elasticity, which leaves the mind a prey to the pain of grief too (??), until it is filled with a malignant gloom and despair, and the whole horizon of existence overcome with blackness. (Logan, 1849; p. 463).

This is the myth of the *sakit hati*, meaning sickness of the heart; of the deeply melancholic nature of the Malay pervasive to those myths of the amok and the Malay (Clifford, 1922; Ellis, 1893). What seems particularly salient in the unified myths of the Malay, his melancholy, and amok, is his patent inability to cope with even the slightest loss, and the consequent grief that ensues. Amongst the many tenuous precursors for the *sakit hati*, attributed by the European observer, have been gambling losses<sup>2</sup>, perceived slights or insults, and others means of losing honour (Clifford, 1898 & 1922; Ellis, 1893; Logan, 1849; Swettenham, 1900). Logan attributed this incapacity, this 'proneness to chronic disease of feeling', to the Malays' 'want of moral elasticity' (Logan, 1849; p. 463).

<sup>1</sup> Often enough by those who describe the amok as largely un-predicated e.g. Raffles, Swettenham, and Clifford.

<sup>2</sup> The Malay purportedly loved gambling and often suffered heavy losses (Swettenham, Clifford )

The result of this innate incapacity is a particular mental condition in which

it is clear that such a condition is inconsistent with a regard for consequences. The pleasures of life have no attractions, and its pains no dread, for a man reduced to the gloomy despair and inward rage of the *pengamo*<sup>2</sup>? (Logan, 1849; p. 464)

Hugh Clifford, Malayan high court judge and highly esteemed observer of the Malay, and Ellis, medical superintendent of the Government asylum in Singapore, also attributed *sakit hati* as a major cause of amok.

By far the greater number of Malayan amok are the result of *sakit hati* . . . . The states of feeling which are denoted by this phrase are numerous, complex, and differ widely in degree, but they all imply some measure of grievance, anger, excitement, and mental irritation. In acute cases, they attain to something very like despair. (Clifford, 1922, p. 320).

‘There is a peculiar condition of mind the Malay is liable to . . . in which he sits down and broods over his wrongs, or supposed wrongs, with revengeful feelings, to which the name of “*sakit-hati*” is given. Persons suffering from “*sakit-hati*” have been sent to this asylum. They do really appear to be insane, and as a rule quickly recover. . . . All Malays are subject to these attacks. Many have told me that the man who has run amok always suffers from “*sakit-hati*” prior to his Amok. (Ellis, 1893; p. 336).

These accounts of amok by Clifford and Ellis appear comparable with its description DSM-IV-TR as a ‘dissociative episode characterized by a period of brooding followed by an outburst of violent, aggressive, or homicidal behavior’ (APA, 2000; p. 899). Ellis in his account of a specific case of solitary amok contradicts his attribution of *sakit hati* as a cause of amok emphasizing instead the unpredictable aspect of the episode. Other descriptions of amok (Swettenham, 1900; Wallace, 1869) are similar to Ellis’s account in that they appear to be more like ‘a sudden outburst of indiscriminate homicidal frenzy’ (Prince, 2000; p. 431; see also beginning of chapter). The period of brooding characteristic to amok was absent, contradicting those attributions of the precursor of amok by Clifford, Ellis and the APA (1994 & 2000).

It is likely impossible, within the scope of this thesis, to carry out an investigation comparable with that of Spores (1988), who examined approximately fifty separate cases of amok reported in the Federated States of Malaya (Peninsular Malaysia)

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<sup>2</sup> Or ‘*pengamok*’, which is Malay for someone who runs amok.

between 1825 and 1925. What seems relevant however to this thesis is that Spores concludes 'that these accounts reveal such a multiplicity of variations that it becomes impossible to select several particular cases and present them as representative of the universe' (Spores, 1988; p. 41). It is highly significant for me that this most comprehensive of studies on amok, would offer this very explicit contention against a scientific verification of the phenomena of amok. This verification being that based on that fundamental premise, common to both psychiatry and scientific psychology, of a 'representative sample of behaviour'.

John Spores also concludes that, despite all the attributions of its cause, *including sakit hati*, psychoses, diseases such as malaria, and the use of opium, 'there is no recorded instance of a correct prediction of solitary amok behaviour by any given individual' (Spores, 1988; p. 66). One may then as well try and predict homicide conducted by any other means, premeditated or otherwise. Much as there has been written about amok, as little is written about murder in the Malay world (Bird, 2000; Clifford, 1898; Raffles, 1817 & 1965; Spores, 1988; Swettenham, 1984; Wallace, 1869). The murderous acts of pirates and of assassins, notably the example of the assassination of the tyrannical James Birch (Bird, 1883) are construed as chaotic acts of the amok of the natives of colonial Malaya. It would seem then that murder and amok are dipolar characterisations of the means by which humans take the life of another. It is only with hindsight, and with what little assistance that can be gleaned by the rare surviving but amnesiac *pengamok*, that an aetiology incorporating *sakit hati*, amongst other conditions, was supposed (APA, 1994 & 2000; Ellis, 1893; Clifford, 1922; Hatta, 1996; Spores; 1988).

Other notable contradictions also immediately arise on examining these accounts of the solitary amok. Most often, as with the instance of the amok of Hadji Ibrahim described by Ellis (1893) the victims were well (even intimately) known to the perpetrator. Almost invariably wives, children, siblings, parents, friends, neighbours, and those who have wronged the *pengamok*, constitute the initial targets. In almost every incident that has been reported as amok, the first victims, at the very least, are known to the *pengamok* and were very often influential to the act. Far from being indiscriminate the frenzy of the amok appears highly discriminatory, at least in the initial stages of its progress (Abdullah, 1970; Hatta, 1996; Spores, 1988). So delinquent is the European

writer of amok in representing its facts, it may seem that it is he and not the Malay who is the amnesiac.

Despite the almost exclusively European accounts of amok, it is not certain that any European ever witnessed, or was victim of, the 'true' or 'solitary' amok (Bird, 2000; Prince, 2000; Spores, 1988; Swettenham, 1984; Wallace, 1869). What is more certain, however, is that he has written copiously and almost exclusively of this 'method' of homicide-suicide of the Malay. So pervasive are these accounts it must seem that every act of homicide by the Malay has been written as amok, lending the act its often disparate descriptions and nature with regard to its precursors (or rather lack of), the identity, number and fate of both perpetrators and victims (Abdullah, 1970; Ellis, 1893; Spores, 1988; Hatta, 1996).

With regard to the suicidal intent of the *pengamok* it can be said that murder in the West is often also a suicidal act. Those who commit particular crime know well, as does the *pengamok* since he not only resists but also often makes his escape (Spores, 1988), that when caught they risk death, historically and to this day, in many countries. Martial amok, like the *Kamikaze* of the Japanese or today's 'suicide warriors' of Allah, has commonly enough been depicted as inchoate desperate acts of madmen bent on terrorising the innocent. War on which Europe and the West seem so hell bent, through its entire history, is indubitably the single greatest act of murder-suicide known to man. Men and women enlist, or are conscripted, well knowing that they stand to kill or be killed. Its adherents prefer for obvious reasons, to me at least, to cast war as necessary and beneficial, as a struggle between equals (Carroll, 2002) or in pursuit of some noble cause. The murder-suicide of the martial and individual, amok, and of the *Kamikaze* pilot and suicide-bomber, however, only displays the dishonourable disregard of the Oriental for the sanctity for life.

While it is clearly accepted that amok is rare and almost extinct phenomena in contemporary Malaysia (Hatta, 1996; Spores, 1988), the prevalence of amok in Malay society prior to the late nineteenth century is a highly contentious issue (Spores, 1988). Isabella Bird (2000), Frank Swettenham (1984) and Alfred Wallace (1869), were amongst those who expressed surprise at the absence of amok during their stay in the Malay Peninsula towards the end of the nineteenth century. Time and time again, however, we are informed that running amok was a common occurrence in Malay

society (Bird, 2000; Clifford, 1898; Spores, 1988; Swettenham, 1984). The Malay of the Peninsula with his short Kris worn prominently by his side or front, or the Javanese with his longer version secured behind him (out of sight and making him even more treacherous), draws his *crooked* blade<sup>1</sup> at the slightest perceived insult or even less. Those before him scatter and the fearful cry of amok! amok! fills the air. Often the running amok was likely mere rumour.

Stories of *amok* running, "piracies," treachery, revenge, poisoned *kris*es, and assassinations, have been made very much of, and any crime or slight disturbance in the native States throws the Settlements into a panic (Bird, 2000; p. 335)

Running "amuck" (*amok*) is supposed by some to be the result of "possession;" but now, at least, it is comparatively uncommon in these States. (Bird, 2000; p. 340).

That scientist *par excellence*, Alfred Wallace makes no mention of amok occurring in the Peninsula on his expedition to the Malay Archipelago, while noting that it is instead

Macassar which is the most celebrated place in the East for "running a muck." There are said to be one or two a month on the average, and five, ten, or twenty persons are sometimes killed or wounded at one of them. It is the national, and therefore the honourable, mode of committing suicide among the natives of Celebes, and is the fashionable way of escaping from their difficulties. A Roman fell upon his sword, a Japanese rips up his stomach, and an Englishman blows out his brains with a pistol. The Bugis mode has many advantages to one suicidically inclined. (Wallace, 1869a, p. 189)

His evidence for the Malay of Macassar 'running a muck' and its regress is entirely circumstantial. These and other historical accounts often remark that amok was commonplace behaviour, and would still be if not for the intervention of European civilisation and justice (Abdullah, 1970; Bird, 2000; Clifford, 1898; Spores, 1988). The frequency of solitary amok was said to have reduced dramatically when English justice outlawed wearing of the *kris*, and imposed the death sentence for amok<sup>2</sup> in the middle of the nineteenth century (Abdullah, 1970; Bird, 2000; Spores, 1988). In considering those numerous accounts of amok, be they of Indian, European or Malay origins, it would seem likely also that, given the assumption of some sort of biological or cultural

<sup>1</sup> Even his weapons are, it seems, of treacherous design

<sup>2</sup> While ensuring that the pengamok was apprehended alive using an implement called the amok catcher.

essence, that many would concern the original or 'proto-Malay', and thus perhaps the Chinese peoples from whom they descend.

One would expect given this predilection that there would be some recorded instances of repeat amoks, even given that many *pengamok* when apprehended were hung or incarcerated in insane asylums and the penal system would likely to influence this issue of their recidivism (Abdullah, 1970; Carr & Tan, 1976; Ellis, 1893; Spores, 1988; Hatta, 1996). That there are none only makes those diverse acts of the solitary amok of the Malay seem even more likely the very diverse acts that constitute homicide in any society.

The evidence for the frequency of the true or solitary amok appears to be largely anecdotal and circumstantial, and lacks the comfort only numbers can give to scientific 'truth'. Even in the most comprehensive of investigations, particularly that conducted by Spores (1988), amok is shown to be of such heterogeneous nature as to defy a definitive diagnosis of a reproducible pattern of observable signs (Spores, 1988). There is a name for this type of evidence - myth. Rather than the signs of the chaotic savage, the 'cluster of signs that is the 'written amok' of the Malay are the symptoms of a colonial master justifying his conquest of the Malay. Europeans were often surprised to find the Malay generally living peaceably, and were far more inclined to attribute a criminal nature to the Chinese (Clifford, 1898; Bird, 2000). This Malay nevertheless was attributed, despite ample evidence to the contrary, with a chaotic savage nature that seethed beneath a courteous, but facilely so, exterior.

## CHAPTER 8: EPISTEMIC SHIFTS IN MODERN IMPERIALIST DISCOURSE

### The ‘new world of voyages’ and ‘new world of learning’

On reflection, the initial reports of the Malabar Coast and the Malay Archipelago appear casual and largely uniformed (by science), as might be expected of the ‘unscholarly’ tribe of European sailors, adventurers and merchants who wrote them. Unscholarly though they may have been, it is they who initially informed the intelligentsia, opening the door on the ‘new world of learning’ for the likes of Kant, Blumenbach, and Bacon through their ‘new world of voyages’ (White, 2002; p. 237). The Enlightenment scholars were generally desk-bound seldom, if ever, travelled beyond the boundaries of their countries let alone the shores of Europe (Bernasconi, 2001; Carroll, 2002). It is instead the likes of a Columbus, Magellan, Conti, and Pires, who related of the ‘human varieties’ and their societies encountered in their voyages of discovery. Significantly perhaps, the first travellers to the East were European (continental) as opposed to English. The Portuguese were the first to the region but they were swiftly followed by the Spanish, Dutch, French, and eventually the English, and each colonised its territories in their own fashion. Where the Portuguese Conti and Pires had written about the amoucco/ amocchi around about the end of the fifteenth century, Captain Cook first brought word of the amok to the English world more than 250 years later (Prince, 2000; Spores, 1988). Cook’s own voyage of discovery may have signalled the entry of the English into this particular theatre of a rapidly escalating global struggle between the European imperial states.

In this long, intricate and certainly bewildering history of the struggle for control of the Malay Archipelago (and the rest of the Orient) enacted by these empire states, a highly cultivated breed of civil servant emerged towards the end of the 18th century. Perhaps the first of the Orientalists, many began their trade as apprentices in the East India companies of the Dutch and English, the harbingers of today’s transnationals. This unique group of amateur scholars, a pragmatic mix of merchant/ administrator and acute observer and bookkeeper of both the social and natural, began the first systematic studies of the Malay Archipelago. From its onset, British colonial policy developed to establish<sup>1</sup> a form of indirect rule of its territories enabled by negotiating alliances with

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<sup>1</sup> Eventually formalised in its master text, *The dual mandate in British Tropical Africa* (1922) written by Lord Lugard (1858-1945)

strategically chosen indigenous local leaders. While in reality authoritarian rule was often exercised by colonial administrators in spite of official policy, the intent was on preserving the appearance of these leaders' sovereignty (Andaya, 2001; Kuklick, 1991). Shamsul (1996) argues that English colonialist discourse articulated a Malay identity around the three pillars of Malayness, namely those of *bahasa, agama, dan raja* (language, religion/ Islam, and royalty) that prevail to this day. The totalitarian rule of the Malay sultans, as with Malay identity, is thus no more than an ideological construct that has its roots in English colonial ambition. The principal assumption behind English colonial policy was that 'the best guarantee of assent to colonial rule was the preservation of subject peoples' traditional institutions', excepting those instances, of course, where these institutions and their practices contravened 'natural justice and morality'<sup>1</sup> (Kuklick, 1991; p. 194). Being last on the scene probably also meant that direct confrontations with the 'natives' would drag the other previously established colonial powers into otherwise avoidable and very costly, logistically impracticable, conflicts.

Anthropological data, at a time when anthropology had yet to crystallise and diversify as a discipline, was thus not surprisingly of critical importance to the management of British colonies everywhere in adherence to this policy. Colonial bureaucrats were instructed to carry out fieldwork so as to be cognisant of the social and physical natures of the territories they administered (Kuklick, 1991). This might have been one condition of possibility that allowed for the emergence of a specific type of 'pragmatic scholar', the colonial administrator/ natural scientist, which may then have been the predecessor of the anthropologist. This class of pragmatic scholars include William Marsden, Stamford Raffles, Frank Swettenham and Hugh Clifford, all highly ranked colonial administrators of the Malay world in the time of the English. It was, however, not until about 1876 that the first formal requests were made by members of the Indian Civil Service for the formal anthropological training of colonial officers (Kuklick, 1991).

### **The pragmatic scholar and his science**

What is of especial significance to the dual enterprise of the pragmatic scholar is that the scientific method, however informally it may have been exercised, had very quickly insinuated into the formative policies concerning the management of colonies. Jean-

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<sup>1</sup> Amok was then one such instance and the English outlawed the wearing of weapons and invoked the death sentence for those pengamok captured alive.

Jacques Rousseau, commonly associated with the emergence of the notion of the 'noble savage', was perhaps amongst the first to insist that explorers go about the mapping of the peoples of new lands scientifically (Carroll, 2002). Knowledge of the colonised territories was sought and organised in accordance with those methods of the disciplines of that period (Carroll, 2002; Kuklick, 1991). These disciplines, such as the natural history of Linnaeus or biological anthropology of Blumenbach, premised as they were on a doctrine of 'white supremacy', moulded the colonial enterprise.

Amongst the first and perhaps most significant of the pragmatic scholars, who consequently established the template for future studies of the natives colonised by the English, were William Marsden (1754 – 1836) and Sir Stamford Raffles (1781-1826). Marsden, employed as a civil servant in the East India Company in Sumatra when seventeen, fashioned two highly influential works on the Malay world, *The history of Sumatra* (1783), and *Grammar and Dictionary of the Malay Language* (1812). *The history of Sumatra* became a template for the study and understanding of the Malay, and the burgeoning ranks of the colonised, for his successors, including Raffles. It is perhaps credible to think of Marsden and Raffles as amongst the first anthropologists, as amateur but highly competent scholars of the orient<sup>1</sup> whose particular scholarship concerned the world of the Malay. Of this first generation of colonial administrators very likely none surpassed the influence that Sir Stamford Raffles wrought over the emergence of the British Empire in the Far East (Andaya, 2001; Barr, 1977). A clerk in the East India Company when only 14, he was to become the Lieutenant Governor of Java and Governor of Bencoolen (Sumatra), ending the slave-trade in the region while serving these offices.

In a world with much left to 'discover' and acquire, Raffles founded and established Singapore as the then largest port in the world, and on his return to London, also founded the Zoological Society of London<sup>2</sup> (Andaya, 2001). There were many others that followed the esteemed example of Marsden and Raffles, men who not only 'made' British Malaya but lived intimately amongst its peoples and studied their nature as well as that of the land (Barr, 1977; Andaya, 2001). Included amongst them are Sir Frank Swettenham, Hugh Clifford, and Anthony Burgess, all whose writing of the Malay, and Malaya, provide valuable resources for this current work.

<sup>1</sup> The title of Scholar of the Orient was in fact bestowed on Raffles on his return to London.

<sup>2</sup> Incredibly he was refused a pension by the same Empire he served without peer, and lost his life at age 45 after being diagnosed with a brain tumour (*Refs*).

What a Conti or Magellan accidentally began, that pre-eminent scientist Alfred Wallace (1823-1913) brought to a pinnacle of the Enlightenment project<sup>1</sup>, in his comprehensive mapping of flora, fauna, and inhabitants of the Archipelago (Hampson, 2000). Alfred Wallace and Charles Darwin collaborated extensively, most notably on a series of reports on the *Origin of Species* to the Linnean Society of London from 1858. Darwin and the now almost forgotten Wallace, perhaps the most notable of Linneans, continued that particular work of Carol Linnaeus, the comprehensive biological classification of all that is natural (including man). In contrast to Darwin's voyage on the Beagle, Wallace travelled eastwards for the same purpose of obtaining specimens of natural history. While obviously not able to collect human specimens, this being outlawed, Wallace made detailed observations of these inhabitants of the Malay Archipelago as if they were simply another of the estimated 125 000 specimens he collected on behalf of his science (Wallace, 1869). He concludes *The Malay Archipelago* with his views 'as to the races of the of man which inhabit the various parts of the Archipelago, their chief physical and mental characteristics, their affinities with each other and with surrounding tribes, their migrations, and their possible origin' (Wallace, 1869b; p. 294).

The rules of formation of the different processes, procedures, and apparatuses by which the Malay was objectified by the scientism of colonialist discourse emerged, transforming from the unscholarly reports of the new world of voyages, during his prolonged engagement with the European. This transformation in the rules of formation of discourse, in fact the formation of a discourse (as in scientifically ordered) represented a massive epistemic shift; one transforming with the 'accidental' discovery of the native/ savage races to the modern imperial venture, including the slavery and colonisation of these races. Those casual random jottings of exotic peoples and their strange customs, having initially informed them, transformed into those more complex and organised accounts inflected to varying degrees with the scientific methods of a Francis Bacon or a Carolus Linnaeus. Eventually this discourse on the Malay native/ savage, for example, became a science, hardening into scientific truth, when verified by a scientist as pre-eminent as Alfred Wallace. Hampson (2000) argues that this network of narratives heavily inflected with the scientific project, were expressions of Enlightenment views which produced a knowledge that empowered and authorized British imperialism, at least since Francis Bacon's *The Advancement of Learning*

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<sup>1</sup> The Enlightenment can be viewed as that 'new world of learning' enabled by the 'new world of voyages'

(1605). His successors in Marsden, Raffles, James Brooke, Alfred Wallace, Hugh Clifford, and Frank Swettenham, who purported to objectively describe and scientifically codify all they gazed upon, were in effect justifying their panoptical, totalizing view of the territories and their peoples they helped colonise, on scientific grounds (Hampson, 2000). Their narratives were expressions of Enlightenment views. Anthropology, psychiatry, sociology, and the other human disciplines, all eventually arrive in the Malay Archipelago and Peninsular to continue the work of the Enlightenment into the modern era, to continue the inscription of the body of the Malay as an object of study, and eventually as a modern subject (Kuklick, 1991). As with any modern state these disciplines form the core of the faculties of humanities at any major academic centre of learning in Malaysia.

### **Shifts in the writing of amok**

Initially, almost unequivocally written by the European as a deliberate collective martial strategy (as suicide missions) common to peoples of the Malayalee and Malay cultures, amok has almost as unequivocally come to mean that act of the disordered and homicidal Malay inhabiting the Malaysian Peninsula. This gradual shift appears to coincide with that period of hegemony of the English, and the end of that of the continental Portuguese and Dutch, in these regions. *Amoucco/ammocchi/ amok* ceased to be written about in the Subcontinent, and now is rarely, and colloquially, at least, not associated with the 'Indian'. Accounts of the solitary amok began to proliferate instead in the Malay Archipelago, particularly in Malaya. An exception may have been those accounts of Raffles and it may be more than coincidental that Raffles is the perhaps the last significant figure to write of the Malay as one of the museal peoples (failed, belonging in museums; Keebeng, 2003). It seems more than coincidence that the deliberate collective martial strategy gives way to the spontaneously violent act of a barely civilised native.

The memory, the narratives, irrespective their origin, of the civilised Malay and his many empires, appear to have dissipated through the nineteenth century. At the time that Bird (2000), Clifford (1898 & 1922), Swettenham (1984), and Wallace (1869), and long before Burgess (2000) embarked on his own project, the Malay was written as if having regressed to a natural barbarous state; become of spontaneous nature. He and his narratives are of the disordered, the unpredictable

savage/ native state, as if having been conquered they had retreated from their failed civilizations in shame.

It is apparent to me that those disseminations of 'amok' as a CBS are difficult if not impossible to sustain given the 'history' of amok itself. It is noted that those assumptions, such as the homogeneity of amok and Malay and their unity, made in incorporating amok (and the CBSs) into psychiatric/ scientific discourse, are implicit. What, however, is then completely suppressed is the transmittance of a fragment of a meta-narrative that dichotomises a specific relationship. This fragment can be said to be elemental or fundamental to the history of the Malay, when refracted through the discursive rather than natural. And unlike the elusive noumenal essence this is one essential element that can be traced, has a one-to-one correspondence, to its specific, discursive, origins.

In ending this chapter it seems appropriate to return to the psychiatric discourse on amok. Psychiatry, and its often only too willing collaborator-science of psychology, is after all that science that has persisted with inscribing amok on the body of the Malay.

## **CHAPTER 9: PSYCHIATRIC DISCOURSE ON AMOK: THE INNATELY DISORDERED MALAY**

The amok slashes his way with little reason nor rhyme as if mad, intoxicated or possessed by demons or an animal, the last an attribution to a superstitious nature that contrastingly is also depicted as to be so deeply religious as to be bigoted (Bird, 2000; Marsden, 1783; Spores, 1988; Swettenham, 1984). Driven rabid by his malaise he emerges from his customary indolence into the heat and dust to kill, which he avoids unlike the imperviously rational and industrious Englishman - the last in a long list of his colonisers. Only mad dogs - and here perhaps is another metaphor for the native/savage - otherwise go into the midday sun.

### **The innately disordered Malay**

We are to believe that the homicidal act of the running amok is one that is altogether chaotic. Located in the teeming streets the indiscriminate homicidal frenzy of the amok, uncontrollable and without cause, as well leaves chaos in its wake, that of the meaningless deaths of innocents. At best a perceived slight or insult serves as a precipitating factor for the amok, and purportedly, as viewed by Conti and Marsden (1783), even a fate as heinous as slavery matters little to this entirely natural (barbarous, wild, savage) progress or rather regress, into a primeval state seething under a facile and deficient humanity. This un-predicated and hence unpredictable violent eruption, the frenzied primitive<sup>1</sup> killing and maiming of many innocents, points to the innate severe irrationality of an unstable and savage essence that is the nature of the Malay. An essence of which a fragment is amok, biological or cultural, physical or metaphysical, as disseminated by history and currently disseminated by psychiatry.

It is apparent to me, if no one else, that the contemporary psychiatric disseminations of amok differ little from those of a long succession of European/ western observers of the Malay, dating from the merchant adventurer Nicolo Conti in 1430 to the early twenty first century psychiatrist. In general, psychiatry depicts amok as a homogenous act of a homogeneous culture, or to be more accurate, 'race' of humanity. This homogeneous act is then the spontaneous and gross overreaction to a 'perceived slight or insult' or less (APA, 2000; p. 899), and a syndrome of the Malay as a natural or 'spontaneous native', or savage (Keebeng, 2003; p. 162). In the view of Conti, for whom it is likely

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<sup>1</sup> Unlike its modern equivalents like SMASI amok involves 'primitive' weapons like the kris

that the state of the native as slave is a natural one<sup>1</sup>, for the Malay to react violently to the prospect of his enslavement may have been unnatural and thus extraordinary.

From the time of its initial writing, unequivocally that act of the first Europeans, the Malay's solitary amok is depicted as a chaotic act, as if spontaneous in its occurrence (APA, 2000; Ellis, 1893; Prince, 2000; Swettenham, 1984; Wallace, 1869). The threat of as heinous a condition as slavery as having preceded it, was viewed by the European observer of the Malay world as having little if any significance to running amok. One can argue that this is still the case. The spurious attempt at incorporating amok into the dissociative disorders and as a form of brief psychosis (APA, 2000) is, for me, consistent with the view of the Malay as inherently incoherent, beneath his 'thin coating of humanity' (Clifford, 1898; p. 55). This is, of course, that normative humanity constituted by the enlightened civilised European.

Keebeng (2003) has suggested that an 'unspoken three-tiered ethnography' developed, informed partly by Social Darwinism, amongst the learned elite in nineteenth century Europe, in response to the diverse humanity enveloped by Empire. 'This humanity was viewed as comprising spontaneous natives, museal<sup>2</sup> peoples of failed and frozen civilizations and modern Europeans burdened by their recent enlightened state' (Keebeng, 2003; p.162). In a similar vein Said (1978) considers that these Europeans, in taking (a hostile) 'textual attitude' when constructing the other, considered their existence, past and present, as comprising backward, failed and disordered narratives. In the nineteenth century, in particular, these disordered and failed narratives of the spontaneous and museal natives became associated with the biological bases of racial inequality (Keebeng, 2003; Said, 1978).

### **Amok as metaphor for the nature of the native/ savage**

In examining the 'natural history' of the Malay what emerges, instead of the nature of his origins and essence, is a sense of his discursive or textual construction, or rather his textual death and resurrection as a race inscribed, re-inscribed and prescribed as an historical fact/ error/ fiction from the very beginnings of this natural history. Part of

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<sup>1</sup> In 1402 Juan de Bethencourt, on settling in the Canary Islands made slaves of several of its peoples beginning a new 'modern' era of black slave trade, condoned and supported by the Holy roman Church, which would last four centuries (Fernado-Armesto, 1982). It seems likely that Conti would consider slavery a natural/ Christian state of the native.

<sup>2</sup> As in extinct and belonging in a museum

this fiction narrates the European as ‘discovering’ and observing the Malay, and other natives of the world, as unknown and then progressively ‘essentialising’ or ‘anthropologising’ him<sup>1</sup> as a human whose nature is almost impervious to civilisation (being capable only of mimicry/ assimilation). Ironically many who wrote this particular fiction, Wallace, Darwin and Clifford particularly so, also articulate a longing for this fictitious human condition (of the noble savage) uncomplicated by the pervasive forces of as pervasive modernising forces (Clifford, 1898; Darwin, 1964; Wallace, 1869).

Consistently written as an incoherent and deficient sum, the Malay with a predilection for amok/ chaos approximates that of a ‘spontaneous native’ who having shed his thin coat of refinement regresses to savagery. The solitary amok can be read as a metaphor for the Malay’s spontaneous descent into chaos, which eventually is that permanent condition of his extinction predicted by the likes of Darwin (1901& 1964). Amok, as un-predicated and unpredictable dissociative state, requires little more stimulus than a perceived insult, even nothing at all to disrupt what little consciousness or humanity the museal Malay retains. What then ensues is the release of the homicidal frenzy that knows only the automatic/ natural instincts of the brute-animal (as conceived by man of course). The Malay is a mere butterfly wing’s flap away from the tempest, from the chaotic and instinctive male-violence of a facile humanity. Amok is more than mere cliché it is a necessary metaphor for the regress of the spontaneous native from his assimilated refinement, the Malay’s descent into chaos.

Almost any account, both lay and scientific, of amok incorporates that which is inconceivable to and incompatible with modern positivist science - blatantly contradictory ‘truths’. Slavery, conquest, the tyranny of colonial masters, political motivations, monumental loss and grief, honour and redress, and more spuriously a melancholic nature and debt, are all ‘conditions’ and ‘states’ that precede most if not all accounts of amok, but are expediently discarded (Abdullah, 1970; Bird, 2000; Ellis, 1893; Hatta, 1996; Spores, 1988). In keeping with its chaotic nature, amok seems then an act without cause and only spontaneous effect, implying also that there is no coherent memory, or narrative. Kraepelin, and who better an authority than one of the ‘fathers’ of psychiatry, describes the amok as having lost consciousness (Spores, 1988). There is no memory before as there can be no attribution of cause in a spontaneous act

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<sup>1</sup> Malay women are barely perceptible in the shadow of this scientific light cast upon the male

of indiscriminate nature. There is no memory during, as the amok is in a dissociated state and his act is frenzied as opposed to deliberate (APA, 2000; Hatta, 1996). And as the amok becomes amnesiac there is no memory after. Amok seems apt metaphor for the wild barbarous nature of the native that is the Malay. The absence of memory, and thus a coherent narrative, maintains the act as chaotic, devoid of the cohesive paste of reason, and indicative of deficiencies in the 'mentality' and 'moral elasticity' of an altogether deficient variety of human being.

### **The absence of catharsis in Amok**

Of some note to me is the absence of an attribution of catharsis in the psychiatric and psychological literature on amok. Amok presents an opportunity for a highly dramatic Freudian interpretation of great psychological forces at play in the psyche of the Malay - of great psychical forces cumulating and venting in a single and singularly violent act. An ascription of catharsis however would also require one of consciousness (and thus capacity for memory and narrative) and the unconscious, and it seems evident that the former is barely formed in the Malay. Amok thus has only signs and no symptoms - those afflicted purportedly have no memory of their spontaneous frenzy. He is virtually all instinct, all id, and at best perhaps semi-conscious, part ego, and devoid of, in the absence of a real religion, civilisation or his colonisers, a super-ego. Amok as catharsis runs counter to the Malay as a spontaneous native; and as that empirical object that should be observed (under the scientific gaze) and not heard (his silence against objectification).

In investigating its lowly origins, even that most universal of things, the atom, that once 'irreducible' fragment of matter, is possessed of the 'dissension of other things' (Foucault, 1977; p. 142). A 'syndrome' such as amok, so elusive as to never have been encountered in its purported pure form, the spontaneous un-predicated homicidal frenzy of the as-elusive true Malay, seem unlikely to survive even the slightest scrutiny. That amok continues to be written in the archives of psychiatry is perhaps testimony to the 'irrationality of the rationality' of its methods, the 'scientism or pseudo-science of its purported science'.

In contrast perhaps to this science, there is that sense of the Malay being inscribed and reinscribed from the very beginnings of history itself, and of psychiatry persisting with the resulting fictions of the Malay and amok as a race and its malaise. If it were not for

the great privileges that accompany this historical insistence of the nature of the 'savage races', including that of the Malay, it could be said that the moral and the mental became the repository of the failures of the imagination of supposedly enlightened men. It is only too evident however from history's standpoint, and of the imperialist/ colonialist discourse, that the only failure or death is that natural inevitable one of the savage races, while those of his colonisers flourish in their stead. Part of this specious fiction of the dead and museal civilisations of the native races is the narrative of the European 'discovering' the stagnant Malay and other natives of the world, and saving them from their naturally fated extinction (Darwin, 1901).

### **The Malay as a 'spontaneous native'.**

The Malay race has been written as especially susceptible to the vagaries of his deficient mentality. Those malaise of amok, melancholy (*sakit hati*), indolence and gambling are amongst the elements of the essence of this deficient race (Clifford, 1898; Logan, 1849; Marsden, 1783; Swettenham, 1984; Wallace, 1869). In examining the European/ western writing of the Malay, other 'essential elements' of this mythical Malay are repeatedly encountered. If anything, these are the constant cluster of signs that are indicative of that specific and eminently verifiable syndrome of the writing of the Malay by the historical constant that is the 'White Man'. They signify the Malay as a spontaneous or natural native/ savage, a being of irredeemably inferior/ impure reason. Ironically this specific cluster of signs of the writing of the Malay by the White Man then display far more constancy or reproducibility, and persistence, than those declared 'syndromatic' of the Malay's amok, his treachery and of the 'culture' in which it manifests. That the delusional (dissociative?) content of this writing, and extreme harm associated with it, is consistent through its history and persists to this day, is clearly demonstrated by any number of writers, scholars, analysts and commentators. Their ranks, for me, include Dostoevsky, Tagore, Whitman, Steinbeck, Fanon, Said, Chomsky, Toni Morrison, John Pilger, Arundhati Roy, and Naomi Klein to name but a few. They form a counter-Canon whose counter-narratives oppose the narratives of the non-secular-non-ethical tradition of those whose will to truth deprives us of our freedom - the name Salman Rushdie gives that space which allows our contradictions to exist (Rushdie, 2003). It is a space those discursive empires (or empirical discourses), such as psychiatry and psychology, through the explosively exponential increase in their manufacture of their constructs (their synthetic *a priori* judgements), have as exponentially, systematically reduced.

**PART 3**

**THE MALAY AS POLYMYTH<sup>1</sup>: CONCERNING HIS  
TREACHERY, INDOLENCE, BIGOTRY, MORAL  
TURPITUDE.....**

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<sup>1</sup> As opposed to the 'White Man' as polymath.

## CHAPTER 10: THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE MYTH OF THE TREACHEROUS MALAY

The historical writing of the Malay appears to have begun with a simple unitary representation. Encountered in those first journeys eastwards by European adventurers, the 'piratical' inhabitants of the Malay Archipelago were almost immediately cast as the treacherous Malay/ Mohammedan, the most treacherous of all the human race (Marsden, 1783; Swettenham, 1900; Wallace, 1869). This mythical being appeared, however, to have faded and then re-emerged far more complex, though not evolved, during his occupation by the English. The one 'truth' of the 'treacherous Malay' appears to have fragmented into the many truths of his amok and indolence, spiritual, moral and mental deficiencies, during this period of his colonization.

To be treacherous is to be capricious, dangerously unstable and unpredictable, likely to betray trust, marked by hidden perils and illuminatingly, perfidious. Such is the similitude between the Malay malaise and his treachery that it must seem it is by design that this proclivity for chaos is twice marked thus. Unexpectedly one is seldom, if ever, used to account for the other in the colonialist, or any for that matter, writing of the Malay. The supposed treachery of the Mal-ay is not explicitly linked to his mal-aise, that predilection for unpredictable, homicidal frenzy called amok. It must seem inevitable though that there would be exceptions.

Frank Swettenham (1850-1946) instigated the foundation of the Federated States of Malaya (formerly the Native States of), became their Resident General in 1895, and their High Commissioner between 1901 and 1904 (Andaya, 2001; Barr, 1977). He very explicitly identified the task of civilising the Malay as part of the imperial project.

I can speak with more authority than anyone else on that subject and it would appeal to the imperial spirit which is now awake both in England and America. I should call it 'The White Man's Burden' (or the Englishman's Burden) in Malaya. (Barlow, 1995; p. 698)

It is Swettenham who most closely links the treachery of the Malay with the Malay malaise. In his highly cultivated opinion, the

Malay is intolerant of insult or slight; it is something that to him should be wiped out in blood. He will brood over a real or fancied stain on his

honour until he is possessed by the desire for revenge. If he cannot wreak it on the offender, he will strike out at the first human being that comes in his way, male or female, old or young. It is this state of blind fury, this vision of blood, that produces the amok. The Malay has often been called treacherous. I question whether he deserves the reproach more than other men. He is courteous and expects courtesy in return, and he understands only one method of avenging personal insults (Swettenham, 1984; pp. 3-4).

Even in this by now familiar, even clichéd, description of amok an association of the treachery of the Malay with his one 'method of avenging personal insults' is only alluded to. As ever a mere insult or a 'real or fancied stain' is enough to trigger the blood lust that is amok. Of significance to this inexplicably absent link, perhaps, is that the supposed treachery of the Malay had by then come under question. Many of Swettenham's contemporaries express similar sentiments, and they may have been instrumental in eradicating that first and unitary representation of the 'treacherous Malay'. Amongst these were Isabella Bird, the enchantingly named author of the as enchanting travelogue *The Golden Chersonese* (1883), and Alfred Wallace, the 'Darwin of the East' and author of highly influential scientific treatise *The Malay Archipelago* (1869).

### **Isabella Bird and *The Golden Chersonese***

Isabella Bird can perhaps be thought of as a Victorian and female Paul Theroux, one as keen-eyed though given to sententious as opposed to merely acerbic pronouncements of her fleeting encounters with the Orient. An inveterate traveller, she is unique in that she was a woman travelling alone through the Far and South East in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, most usually in little need of her countrymen as chaperones. On finally 'settling down' she was elected as the first woman fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in 1892 (Bird, 2000). Her chance visit to the Malayan Peninsular was more accident than by design. Leaving Japan for home via Singapore she impetuously breaks her journey, and spends six weeks lured by a friend's tales of the still mysterious 'Native States' (now Peninsula Malaysia). *The Golden Chersonese* is an engaging read, and indispensable for priceless 'period' representations of both coloniser and the native. Her descriptions are as detailed and vivid as those of a Marsden or Swettenham, and she is never one to say no to a trek, on an elephant usually, or boat-ride into the forbidding interior of the Malayan jungle. Her brief sojourn coincides with that period when the English colonial grip was gradually tightening around the Malay Peninsula. Bird offers a valuable, and very importantly, 'lay' perspective of early colonial Malaya, especially as she also

cultivates the acquaintance of many of the Native States' colonial administrators, including Frank Swettenham, William Maxwell and Hugh Low.

Canton and Saigon, and whatever else is comprised in the second half of my title, are on one of the best beaten tracks of travellers, and need no introductory remarks. But the Golden Chersonese is still somewhat of a *terra incognita*; there is no point on its mainland at which European steamers call, and the usual conception of it is as a vast and malarious equatorial jungle, sparsely peopled by a race of semi-civilized and treacherous Mohammedans. (Bird, 2000; p. 21)

She leaves us in little doubt that this variant of the perfidious infidel, the treacherous Mohammedans/ Malay is a notion with which she is well acquainted. More than two hundred years prior, Duarte Barbosa on visiting Malacca in 1660 observed of the Malay that

they are a people of great ingenuity, very subtle in all their dealings; very malicious, great deceivers, seldom speaking the truth; prepared to do all manner of wickedness, and ready to sacrifice their lives. (Cited in Wallace, 1869b; pp. 297-298)

In her subsequent correspondence, Bird opines much about these and other natives of the Native States. To her they are a rabble of Malay, Chinese and Indian races only unified by the civilised and benevolent governance of the English. Brief though her visit was, it was immediately apparent that the

stories of amok running, 'piracies', treachery, revenge, poisoned crises, and assassinations, have been made very much of, and any crime or slight disturbance in the native states throws the settlements into a panic. It must have been under the influence of one of these that such a large sea and land force was sent to Perak three years ago<sup>1</sup>. Crime in the Malay districts of these states is so rare, that if it were not for the Chinese, a few policemen would be all the force that would be needed. (Bird, 200, p. 335)

Hugh Clifford echoes these sentiments some two decades later. The Chinese cooly, indentured labour brought in from southern China to work the mines of the Native States, is intellectually as debased a type of man as any in existence', 'whose pleasures are unspeakable things' and whose 'animal part' is covered with 'a very thin coating of humanity' (p. 55, Clifford, 1898).

<sup>1</sup> This is in reference to the assassination, often cited as a case of amok, of James Birch the tyrannical British administrator of the state at the time.

Filtering for herself those well-established European representations of the Malay's propensity to run amok and for treachery, Isabella Bird's views of the Malay native, however, appear to alter.

The people lead strange and uneventful lives. The men are not inclined to much effort except in fishing or hunting, and, where they possess rice land, in ploughing for rice. They are said to be quiet, temperate, jealous, suspicious, some say treacherous, and most bigoted Mussulmen. (Bird, 2000; p. 140)

In her firm opinion, however, there is really nothing to fear from these 'treacherous Malays' (Bird, 2000; p. 184), and her views on their savage state became somewhat tempered, noting that they 'are not savages in the ordinary sense, for they have a complete civilization of their own' (Bird, 2000; p. 140). Commenting further, however, on this 'complete civilisation' it is curious to her to 'see the appurtenances of civilization in the heart of a Malay jungle, and all the more so because our long night journey up the Linggi makes it seem more remote than it is' (Bird, 2000; p. 184). It can be argued that in Bird's view this civilisation was in decline. The Malay was 'no ordinary savage' but one who had experienced refinement. The jungle, as obvious metaphor for the savage, evidenced that he was regressing to a savage natural state (as it had reclaimed all but the last vestiges of his failed civilisation).

Though moderated, her view of the Malays as semi-civilised savages at best, remained steadfast. Significantly also, 'new' Malay traits such as indolence and bigotry emerged, perhaps in place of that singular attribution which diminishes in turn, their treachery. Bird's 'Malay' is nevertheless maintained as no more than a semi-savage, a state further substantiated with a damning appraisal of their physical attributes, or rather lack of.

They are dark brown, with rather low foreheads, dark and somewhat expressionless eyes, high cheek-bones, flattish noses with broad nostrils, and wide mouths with thick lips. Their hair is black, straight and shining, and the women dress it in a plain knot at the back of the head. To my thinking, both sexes are decidedly ugly...

No doubt the degenerate physical attributes of the Malay are measured against that of his exemplar, the White Man (of English origins). Less amusingly perhaps, and decidedly as chilling as the supposed nature of the Malay, she continues to describe her subject:

... and there is a coldness and aloofness of manner about them which chills one even where they are on friendly terms with Europeans. . . (Bird, 2000; pp. 140-141)

Ultimately, disappointingly, her characterisation of the Malay is to type, so unwavering is it from the already well-established notion of the inscrutable, callous and still treacherous Oriental (Said, 1978). This last defect of the Malay is now only alluded to, dissembled by a seemingly contradictory, but very arguably complimentary or Manichean, binary. The Malay is courteous and friendly but cold, the latter chillingly so hinting of his potentially (treacherous) savage or violent nature.

Plagued by mosquitoes and surprisingly little else in this treacherous land, the six weeks she spends in the Golden Chersonese seem idyllic, and yes even indolent. Her days are filled with boat trips, and horse or elephant treks through its jungles, the patronage of paternalistic colonial administrators and the servitude of their subjects, all of which she dutifully documents in a series of personable though authoritative correspondences. Comparing the state of civilisation of her Victorian England with that of the Native States, she updates the Victorian reader on the Malay race, of whom little beyond their treacherous ways is known to her or them. She derives a far more detailed racialisation of the Malay than the unitary 'treacherous Malay'. This ugly Malay is also highly conservative and bigoted (resistant to English civilisation and Christianity), pays blind obeisance to his faith and his rajahs, is fatalistic, indolent, and vain despite his/ her patent lack of physical attributes. These new traits replace that of their treacherous nature, which is discarded as it is in her opinion, ill-founded. Her detailed characterisations, for all the moderation that her more intimate encounters were bound to bring to bear, however, are unwaveringly pejorative. The Golden Chersonese, the land of my birth and upbringing, and its inhabitants, remain in her view, savage or semi-civilised at best. It seems hardly surprising that, curiosity sated and the Native States mystery no more, Bird takes flight back to England and civilisation, leaving that 'burden' of civilising the natives to the likes of Swettenham.

If highly detailed and borne out of intimate experience, these representations of the Malay change only in as much as they are more detailed and of varying composition in the attributes imparted their subject. They are controlled derivations, the product of a 'will to truth', and pejorative in their sum. As much as these pejorative characterisations are controlled derivations, so are those of the benevolent colonialists

she encounters. They are entirely possessed of qualities that make them munificent, civilised and entirely virtuous<sup>1</sup> they are much loved by the natives especially for their firm but fair sense of highly cultivated English justice (Bird, 2000).

These complimentary controlled derivations of the semi-savage native and the virtuous civilised Coloniser can be viewed as another Manichean binary, one that anchors the British colonial enterprise in Malaya. The native/ coloniser (settler) are contrapuntal representations that presage the necessarily oppositional bond between Black/ White or native/ settler in Frantz Fanon's anti-colonial thesis (Fanon, 1963 & 1968). While Bird makes no claims to be scholarly or scientific in her account of the Far East, *The Golden Chersonese* could also be said to comfortably fit within that discursive tradition of Orientalism, especially as Bird's subtle transformations in the writing of the Malay utilise a key strategy of Orientalist, and imperialist, discourse. Her control of those derivations of the coloniser and native, 'maintain a flexible positional superiority, which puts the westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him [her] the relative upper hand' (Said, 1985; p. 7; [my insertion]). She knew little of the Peninsula and its inhabitants before she arrived, but it is as apparent that she was much influenced through her acquaintance with the colonial administrators of the day. The similarity between her views and those of Marsden, Raffles, Wallace, Swettenham, Clifford, and Burgess emphasises for me the remarkable constancy and continuity of English colonial discourse on the Malayan native, and not any capacity for great insight into these peoples and their lands. That she explicitly wrote of the Malay as precisely that mythical/ fictional being that has no material existence outside of this imagining (some would say delusion) and its discourse now seems hardly surprising. She spent but a brief six weeks travelling the length of the Peninsula by boat and carriage, and this is poor antidote to a prejudicial and oppressive 'will to truth'.

#### **Wallace's science in service of the colonial project on the Malay Archipelago**

In contrast to Isabella Bird's inveterate and leisurely traveller or Raffles's amateur/ pragmatic scientist, Alfred Wallace was pure scientist, the Darwin of the East, and discoverer of the mechanics of natural selection (independently of Darwin). I find now that *The Malay Archipelago* is dedicated to Charles Darwin, 'Not only as a token of personal esteem and friendship' 'But also To express my deep admiration For His genius and his works' (Wallace, 1869a; p. 7). In Wallace's view the 'true Malay' was

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<sup>1</sup> Much like the munificent White race as characterised by Blumenbach and Linnaeus.

the most important of the races of the Malay Archipelago, in which were also located the significant though 'lesser' race of Papuans, and a myriad of tribes of indeterminate characteristics.

The Malay is undoubtedly the most important of these two races, as it is the one which is the most civilized, which has come most into contact with Europeans, and which alone has any place in history. What may be called the true Malay races, as distinguished from others who have merely a Malay element in their language, present a considerable uniformity of physical and mental characteristics, while there are very great differences of civilization and of language. They consist of four great, and a few minor semi-civilized tribes, and a number of others who may be termed savages. The Malays proper inhabit the Malay Peninsula. (Wallace, 1869b; p. 294)

Many of the Malay World today would concur, with qualification, with Wallace's general geographical and cultural 'location' of the true Malay (Alatas, 1977; Hatta, 1996; Mohamad, 1970; Shamsul, 1996; Yahya, 2003). Wallace observed the Malay to be reserved, diffident and undemonstrative, and like Raffles, Bird and Swettenham, he asserts that the 'ferocious and bloodthirsty character imputed to the race must be grossly exaggerated' (Wallace, 1869b; p. 296). Commenting on the impassiveness and courteousness of the Malay, who has 'the quiet ease and dignity of the best-bred Europeans', Wallace however thought it compatible with the 'reckless cruelty' and 'contempt of human life' of the Malay (Wallace, 1869b; p. 297). He also noted the latter traits as having been observed by Nicholas Conti, who wrote in 1430,

The inhabitants of Java and Sumatra exceed every other people in cruelty. They regard killing a man a mere jest; nor is any punishment allotted for such a deed. If any one purchase a new sword, and wish to try it, he will thrust it into the breast of the first person he meets. The passer-bys examine the wound, and praise the skill of the person who inflicted it, if he thrust in the weapon direct. (Wallace, 1869b; p. 297)

Wallace pre-eminent naturalist and evolutionist of his times bar possibly one (Darwin), and originator of that momentous notion of 'the survival of the fittest'<sup>1</sup>, thus appears little different from Marsden, Raffles, Bird and Swettenham or even Conti and Barbosa

<sup>1</sup> While suffering a fever, one long-standing observation in particular exercised his mind. In both human and animal worlds, some die and some live. Wallace had noted in studies that the healthy generally evaded disease, that 'the strongest, swiftest and most cunning escaped from their enemies and that the best hunters avoided famine. In a flash of inspiration he concluded that this self-acting mechanism would necessarily improve the 'race'. The inferior of the species would be killed of and the superior remain; the fittest would survive or dominate. Wallace penned these thoughts immediately in a letter to Darwin (Smith, 1991).

His scientific determinations portray a still savage Malay, much as did those pragmatic or lay representations of a Bird or Swettenham. Modulating that unitary representation of the treacherous Malay using a 'scientific' system of geographical, biological, and social/ cultural coordinates, Wallace manufactures a controlled derivation whose sum is a deficient still savage race of humanity. Under his scientific gaze that unitary representation of the piratical inhabitants of the Malay Archipelago, the most treacherous of all races, fragments into the constituent parts through the method of positivistic reductionism (Wallace, 1869b). The result can only be the objectification of a being whose natural existence is chaotic, or inherently disordered. And drawing from the lexicon of chaos, an existence a predicated upon amok - that natural/ spontaneous and extremely violent manifestation of a facile humanity.

It is singularly pertinent to me that Wallace finds these Manichean attributes of the Malay to be compatible in a race that he describes as being 'rather deficient' in intellect and 'incapable of anything beyond the simplest combinations of ideas, and have little taste or energy for the acquirement of knowledge' (Wallace, 1869b; p. 298). If knowledge, learning or ideas maketh a man<sup>1</sup>, then the Malay is a lesser race of man. Those explicit attributions of a deficient intellect and the 'want of moral elasticity' (Logan, 1849; p. 463) predicate the still savage existence of a 'race' incapable of rationalising the virtuous and the brutish within him.

The Malay lacks reason, perhaps that first synthetic *a priori* and critical impulse of the Enlightenment, and thus the wherewithal to better self (advancement/ progress) - the central humanistic principle of the Enlightenment and of history itself (as progressive). This Malay then adds to the already vast human lacunae, the other than enlightened 'White Man', who lacks this specific catalyst necessary for personal and collective advancement. Thus his spontaneous or museal status, that of naked savage and beneficiary of the refinement of others more developed. In the absence of their intervention the Malay can only regress to barbarous nature, a tendency manifested primarily by his amok, which we are repeatedly informed, was once a common occurrence.

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<sup>1</sup> A reference to Sir Thomas Elyot in *Of the Knowledge whiche maketh a Wise Man* (1533)

The Malay native written by the likes of Marsden, Raffles, Wallace, Bird, and Swettenham, emerges through this writing as a greatly disjointed collection of parts, so forcible is their writing. So ill fitting are his parts and chaotic his psyche, housed within as ill-fitting a physique, that it is little wonder that he is at the mercy of a wild/ savage/ capricious nature seething beneath a facile humanity. It should not surprise any that the 'discursive' Malay spontaneously, without need for provocation, runs amok. He remains the most treacherous of humans (Wallace, 1869), as liable to run his *keris* through you with great violence as greet you with the greatest courtesy.

It is Occam's razor that William Marsden and his successors purportedly wield, and as (im)precisely and as brutally as the surgeons of their day, when they surgically dismember the empirical object that is the 'treacherous Malay' into his many parts. The writing of the Malay is so brutish that his body is not layered by the successive 'unities' of its innumerable inscriptions, but fragmented by its sheer weight of force into the many parts of a still treacherous sum. This is no progressive enslavement of the Malay by colonialist discourse; his dismemberment from its inception by Marsden is, like his conquest, swift and brutal. Where colonialism can be said to continuously repeats, entrenches, his conquest, colonialist discourse reiterates the (textual) fragmentation of the Malay body. In his work *Orientalism*, Said stated the unitary representations of the perfidious Egyptian and half-naked Indian to be the imaginary products of the textual attitude of the West towards the East (Said, 1978). It is clear to me, however, that this Orientalist (and colonialist) discourse did not persist with the unitary representation. It was instead dissected, under the scientific gaze of its authors, into its many and complimentary fragments.

Confronted by those immutabilities of the 'permanent visibilities', of his colour indelibly inscribed on his indisputable humanity, of a once unimaginably refined but all too swiftly subjugated human, it is perhaps reason itself, however, that fragments. The writing of the Malay, his representation by colonialist discourse, is a 'means to settle, answer, resolve and control' not just the represented, but also the integrity of an emerging, privileging, narrative concerning the Enlightened man's sole monopoly of its most precious commodity, pure reason. This textual attitude did not match the very visibly real existence of the Malay. The clumsy and hostile desecration of the plundered and lifeless corpse of the Malay, the anatomizing of the corpse of the dead (museal) Malay, appears to as chaotic, as deranged, as its product, those ill-fitting

fragments of the treacherous Malay. This writing is the brutal hack-ing of a butchers cleaver, or pirate's cutlass; the latter analogy perhaps more resonant as the European conquests were literally acts of piracy, the skull and bones replaced by (imperial) flags of convenience when 'on Imperial duty' (Chomsky, 1993).

It is not sufficient, however, that these disjointed parts are uniformly savage, he would then not be unpredictable and thus treacherous, previously the unitary attribute of the Malay. His naturalness or unpredictably, this treacherous irrationality of the Malay, paradoxically perhaps, negates the contradiction of his ill-fitting parts. As an irrational near savage his parts can only be but ill-fitting. The Malay lacks that only which can catalyse the spontaneous fusion of a natural whole that exceeds its sum – pure reason (Burgess, 2000; Wallace, 1869). What little reason he possesses is in a permanently impure state, likely more animal than what passes for the Enlightenment White Man as human. Incapable of reasoned thinking, of making that fundamental ontological inquiry (what is the nature of myself or anything else for that matter?), the Malay perilously (treacherously) straddles that breach between the darkness of chaos/ barbarity and the light of reason/ civilisation. The Malay as natural savage fluctuates between his amok and his koma-tose<sup>1</sup> phase, at the mercy of an irreconcilable tension between absolute order (courteous indolence) and disorder (frenzied amok). Amok/ komA are mirror images reflected in the observation of the Malay by his colonial masters.

What seems to me to privilege humanity as an idea of the Enlightenment is pure reason, and not the disavowal of this human's many conflicting attributes. Pure reason is that which allows these conflicts to be resolved, or irregularities to bond, and humanity to emerge as if spontaneously, Cartesian like. The Malay has little desire or will, 'little taste or energy', as he lacks the means, being deficient in mentality and morality, to better himself (Wallace, 1869b; p 298). Of greatest significance, to my mind, in this brutish hack-ing of the Malay, is that what is fragmented and dispersed is also that which gives him his whole, his humanity. This writing achieves what the sword or gun cannot, the dismembering and eradication of that which is indelibly inscribed on his body, his human form, his ineradicable humanity. In the matter of dehumanising the Malay the colonizer's literary tradition, its 'pen', proved to be mightier than its military

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<sup>1</sup> Another terrible coincidence of language; Koma is German for coma; Ma-laise French for Mal-aise

prowess, its 'sword'. Colonization was more than just the physical occupation of a people declared 'native' to a territory, it could not have existed

without the help of ideological and linguistic structures. A country must do more than steal another country: a series of explanations, representations, and rationalizations, must intervene to justify political action. Even when the inhabitants of the targeted colony must, for a successful colonization accept the domination of the language and the symbols of this takeover. To win hearts and minds one must occupy hearts and minds – in the dominant as well as the occupied countries. (Davis, 1987; p. 63)

In reconstituting the Malay as a semi-savage, at best, the English author of this colonialist discourse discards virtually all memory of the Malay ancestor, consigning him to a status as a museal object, i.e. of a dead history, memory or narrative. This colonialist discourse in effect murders the Malay ancestor (rather than its author). To paraphrase Morrison 'when they kill the ancestor they kill his/ her descendents' (see p. 47-48). The glue that holds together the reanimated corpse of this project of colonialism, the 'discovered', conquered and colonised native that is the Malay, is no more than the remnants of his fragmented and dispersed humanity, no more than a 'thin coating of humanity' painted on by the last of his colonial (but not necessarily his last imperial) masters. It seems to me that an important issue that pertains to contemporary Malay identity is the Malay ancestor, which remains an ideological product of the colonial project, as well as an emerging modernist discourse on the Malay.

Frank Swettenham and Hugh Clifford clearly articulated this notion of the innate irregularity of the Malay. For Swettenham the Malay is above all things

. . . conservative to a degree, is proud and fond of his country and his people, *venerates his ancient customs and traditions*, and fears his Rajas, and has a proper respect for constituted authority – while he looks askance on all innovations, and will resist their sudden introduction. . . . . At the same time *he is a good imitative learner*, and, when he has energy and ambition enough for the task, makes a good mechanic. He is, however, lazy to a degree, is *without method or order* of any kind, knows no *regularity* even in the hours of his meals and considers time as of no importance. . . . (Swettenham, 1984; p. 3) (My emphases)

In comparing the nature of the Malay with that of the Sikh, another of the innumerable natives of the Native States, Clifford determines that the former to be

utterly incapable of being disciplined into a *machine*. He has, and always, retains, his own ideas – usually wrong ones, be it said – of how any thing given ought to be done, and no amount of training will teach him to jump to the word of command, while wholly abandoning his own opinion as to its wisdom. This makes altogether hopeless as a *regular* (Clifford, 1898; p. 129) (My emphases).

There appears to me little contradiction to these ‘natural’ dispositions attributed to the Malay. These attributes are written to suit a human that lacks, very specifically, of that salient one of reason which marks the spontaneous and one could very definitely say, immaculate male conception of the European’s Enlightenment. It is the existence of pure reason that is the (natural metaphysical) essence of this age, and which signalled the emergence of the dominant European.

For the most part it is the Malay male that is referred to, and Malay women are little more than the diminished shadows of the light of observation cast on the male object of this species. It is invariably ‘the men of the Malayan race’ that are ‘gifted with volatile natures, easily cast down and easily lifted again’ (Clifford, 1898; p. 77). This largely male object is written by the emerging modern Orientalist and colonialist discourses, which very substantially overlap, regulated by already well entrenched scientific ideas supplying the period’s imperialist demands for ‘managing’ its human resources (Alatas, 1977; Carroll, 2002; Chomsky, 1993; Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988; Yahya, 2003). This discourse and this fragmented textual body of the Malay are unified in their emergence as each informs the other. As no doubt the writing of the other or the modern subject, be they Occidental/ Oriental or male/ female, can generally be said to be so (Alatas, 1977; Dworkin, 1974 & 1987; Foucault, 1991; Said, 1978; Yahya, 2003).

Said, for example, refers to the Westerner’s ‘textual attitude’ towards an (fictional) Orient as informing the cultural practices of the West towards its inhabitants (Said, 1978 & 1985). Included amongst these cultural practices are those that shape the gamut of overwhelmingly imperialist relationships between the West and its subservient societies over the last five hundred years (Chomsky, 1993; Keebeng, 2003; Said, 1978 & 1993; Yahya, 2003). Astonishingly perhaps, given the manifest pride with which this great lineage prides itself in the precision of its ‘science’, it casually and expediently much evidence to the contrary. Those eminent scientists Marsden and Wallace, and their disciples, almost entirely discount the great societies of the Archipelago. The last of these the Malaccan empire of the Peninsula, is described by Tome Pires the

apothecary of Prince Alfonso of Portugal (1475-1491), in his *Suma oriental* (1512-1515) as being 'of such importance and profit that it seems to me that it has no equal in the world' (cited in Andaya, 2001; p. 39).

Malacca not surprisingly is of great significance to the Malay, and surely to the world at large, as an example of a true cosmopolis constructed not from the great western tradition of self-aggrandisement, but from the extraordinary foresight and fortitude of a community that started as a small fishing village.

Melaka's great success and its honoured place in Malay society were not only due, however, to its prosperity and renown as a trading centre. Building upon an illustrious past, it established a pattern of government and lifestyle which was emulated by subsequent Malay kingdoms and became the basis of what was later termed 'traditional' Malay culture and statecraft. Local pride in these accomplishments was still evident in the late sixteenth century, when Malays told Europeans that their forebears had built a world-famous city from 'seven or eight fishing huts' and there had developed 'a language named Malay' that was regarded 'as the most courteous and refined in all India'. (Andaya, 2001; p. 39)

Thinking back to my history lessons while at school in Malaysia, the great accomplishments of the Malacca Empire then seemed to be tainted by its swift conquest, and eradication, by the Portuguese. If anything Malacca for all its great civilisational advances, its incredibly cosmopolitan outlook, was looked upon as a failed civilisation, one of only too many amongst the colonised, and thus even more reason for shame and a grievous feeling of inferiority.

Wallace, Bird and Swettenham observed that amok had already become an increasingly rare occurrence over a hundred years ago. It is generally supposed that the civilising influence of the European had the almost immediate effect of diminishing the occurrence of amok (Spores, 1988). It seems no coincidence then that in today's rapidly modernising Malaysia, the home of the true Malay, amok is said to be a very rare occurrence (Hatta, 1996; Spores, 1988). One then has to consider if both the Malay and his malaise were ever 'true' in the first place.

### **Wallace's contradictions and the modernist tradition of anti-modernism**

Wallace, as it turns out is himself not without his contradictions. His parting remarks to *The Malay Archipelago* constitute a lament on the 'superior' civilisation and on modernity itself, almost one hundred years before Foucault considered both problematic.

I have lived with communities of savages in South America and in the East, who have no laws or law courts but the public opinion of the village freely expressed. Each man scrupulously respects the rights of his fellow, and any infraction of those rights rarely or never takes place. . . . There is none of the wide distinctions, of education and ignorance, wealth and poverty, master and servant which are the product of our civilisations. . .

Now, although we have progressed vastly beyond the savage state in intellectual achievements we have not advanced equally in morals . . . Our vast manufacturing system, our gigantic commerce, our crowded towns and cities, support and continually renew a mass of human misery and crime absolutely greater than has ever existed before. . . This is not a result to boast of, or be satisfied with; and until there is a more general recognition of this failure of our civilisation . . . (Wallace, 1869b; pp. 308-310)

There is more than a hint of romanticising the 'noble savage' in Wallace's poignant conclusion. Little wonder then that Joseph Conrad's Malay is all 'brooding mystery' viewed through a 'romantic mist' set by Wallace's weighty influence (Yahya, 2003; p. 162). Clifford was similarly infected with this particular melancholy, born out a questioning of the notion of 'progress' that to which Victorian England heavily subscribed (Yahya, 2003). Thus even its architects had long questioned 'that Enlightenment project of mapping and describing', subverting it with their 'uncertainties and self-questioning' of the 'ideas of civilization and progress, Self and Other . . .' (Hampson, 2000; p. 28). Darwin echoed these sentiments and railed against man's 'artificial' method, which he considered to be far inferior, swifter though it may be, than nature's method of yielding the superior races (of all organisms; Darwin, 1901 & 1964). Long before Nietzsche and his French disciples conceived of modernity as problematic, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, Darwin and Wallace, had vigorously opposed the method of man. They all seem then of a western anti-modernist tradition that conceived of this same tradition as problematic.

### **Malay civilisation as stagnant**

Wallace asserted that what little civilisation the Malay possessed was assimilated entirely from the non-indigenous 'Mohametan' or 'Brahmminical' religions through their prolonged and intimate contact with the Arab and Indian. He was of the opinion that the lack of an observable indigenous civilising force was a consequence of the deficient intellect of the Malay. Capable only of spontaneously assimilating the refinement of those that accidentally came his way, whatever Malay civilisation existed then existed as by error, and thus was fated to die as spontaneously, or naturally (Wallace, 1869b).

Wallace's pronouncements, so unswerving from that tradition of the English colonialist discourse on the Malay, seem staggering in their unconditional disregard for an other than European narrative of the Archipelago and its peoples. The existence of the numerous Malay empires and their highly developed trade in numerous commodities, including spice, and of hitherto unimaginably prosperous societies well in advance of the fledgling imperial powers, was what had catalysed their European conquest in the first place (Andaya, 2001; Reid, 2004; Sardesai, 2003). It would seem that the building of an empire and the extensive and intricate mapping of trade routes extending far beyond either side of the South China Sea, and the highly complex and efficient management of some of the greatest of all sea ports were far beyond an intellect incapable of 'anything beyond the simplest combination of ideas', or which had 'little taste or energy for the acquirement of knowledge' (Wallace, 1869b; p. 298). The civilisation of the 'Mohametan Malay' instead appeared to Wallace (and Marsden, Raffles, Bird and Swettenham) to have assimilated a refined façade and stagnated, and even regressed as was the wont of an incorrigibly savage nature. The Malay was at best capable only of a particularly facile humanity that barely concealed a capricious nature, which frequently and spontaneously erupted with the instinctive, cataclysmic violence that is commonly attributed to (Mother) nature to this day. Needless to say, Wallace, as was then (and still is) the convention, neglected the treacherous and savage nature of the imperialist ventures of a succession of European powers, behaviour that mirror those very descriptions offered of the Malay. If one were psychoanalytically bent it would be natural enough to accuse this European of repression, projection and denial.

Stamford Raffles's particular narrative on the Malay attempted to account for an inherited, from Marsden, perception of the stagnant and even degraded state of their

civilisation. Raffles placed blame squarely for this status on the almost wholesale conversion of the Malay to Islam from a conflated Hindu-Buddhist faith<sup>1</sup> (Aljuneid, 2004; Raffles, 1817 & 1988). The superior, equitable and peaceful societies adorned with classical texts, artistic and scientific expressions and monuments fashioned by this former, 'first and real religion of the Malay' (Woodward, 1996; p.17), were supplanted by the abstemious and barren dogma of Islam during the four centuries of rule by the obtuse 'Sword of Mahomet' (Raffles, 1988; Vol. 1, p. 372). Raffles considered that the 'Malay nations had in general made considerable progress in civilisation before the introduction of the religion of Islam among them' (Raffles, 1819; p. 5). In particular it was the absence of science, essential to progress, in the Islamic faith that he attributed as the cause of this decline. The progressive civilising influence of Hindu-Buddhist Java on the Malay Archipelago, for example, was curtailed by the arrival of the 'religion of Mahomet' (Raffles, 1988; Vol. 1, p. 239). Raffles, elaborating on Marsden's prior representations of the Malay, patently privileged his conflated Hinduism-Buddhism theism over Islam, while drawing similarities between the still deficient former and Christianity (Aljuneid, 2004; Raffles, 1988). Marsden and Raffles equated Christianity with a progressive, modernising civilising force of which the stagnant, regressive and deficient Malay was in dire need (Aljuneid, 2004; Marsden 1783 & 1966; Raffles, 1817 & 1988). These views were later to be echoed by Swettenham, Bird and Wallace, and Burgess; all finding great fault with the bigotry and indolence of the Malay.

What appears to distinguish the determinations of these two groups of observers is that the former wrote of the Malay more as a museal people of failed/ stagnant civilisations, albeit regressing to a natural spontaneous state, and the latter almost expressly as a spontaneous native. Marsden and Raffles acknowledged the once substantial civilisations and advanced knowledge of the Malay, but qualified his refinement as having been spontaneously acquired from the superior civilisations that happened on them in their voyages of 'advancement' (discovery, trade and empire building as was wont of the superior races). For the likes of Wallace, Bird, Swettenham, and Clifford, however, the Malay had noticeably regressed into semi-savagery essentially living simple lives amongst nature. The Malay having been dismembered under the scientific gaze of Marsden, Raffles and Wallace, in particular, and was reconstituted as a deficient

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<sup>1</sup> Raffles was unsure of the difference between the beliefs and practices of the two faiths and regarded them as a synthesis, unlike the Hinduism and Buddhism practiced in the subcontinent .

race of humanity, the archetypal colonial 'subject'. This deficient sum, one of the savage races most closely allied to man (Darwin, 1901 & 1964), was then the 'real' project, the burden, of colonisation and its purportedly altruistic motive of civilising the inferior races of humanity, liberating them from their natural inevitable fate of extinction. It was/ is of no consequence to the Marsden, Raffles and Wallace that the colonial project would have been meaningless of no benefit to the coloniser without the colonised. The conquest and plunder of their already highly developed societies and the long-standing and mass exploitation of their labour and bountiful lands were seemingly of little consequence to that munificent mission of the White Man of rescuing the native/ savage.

***The Malayan Trilogy: Anthony Burgess's ideological project on Malaya***

The sententious pronouncements of Raffles, Swettenham's, Bird's, Clifford, and Burgess even Wallace, on the Malay world easily fit alongside those of their illuminati, intellectuals like Renan, Jules Romain, Mannoni, all of whom speak of primitive, irrational, violent, uncultured non-whites (Alatas, 1977; Cesaire, 1972; Keebeng, 2003; Said, 1978 & 1993; Spivak, 1988 & 1999; Yahya, 2003). These controlled derivations of the treacherous, indolent, fatalistic, conservative and bigoted Malay are persistent themes in the discourse of the coloniser through to its contemporary forms. It is worth reprising Anthony Burgess's representation of the Malay. In perhaps the last of the major Western narratives concerning the Malay, *The Malayan Trilogy* (1956), the Malay is vehemently depicted as the morally and mentally deficient product of miscegenation:

The Malay stood by the sick-room, hunched, heavy-jawed, simian, the end-product of God knew what mingling of Achinese pirates, aboriginal bushmen, Bugis bandits, long-hut head-hunters. (Burgess, 2000; p. 406)

This disjointed Malay is the less than human sum of many and indeterminate parts, plastered over with little more perhaps than a 'very thin coating of humanity'. For Burgess as with Wallace and Clifford, it is reason that is most likely the critical faculty that the Malay, and the Oriental in general, lacks. His principal character, Victor Crabbe, gives up hopelessly when arguing the case for civilisation with a group of adolescent boys he teaches at the colony's premier high school.

...he realised they had never been on the point, again he felt hopeless. This was the East. Logic was a western importation which unlike films and refrigerators, had a small market. (Burgess, 2000; p. 49)

The Malay was possessed of a 'core of shiftlessness' (p. 408), and the women all instinct and sexually rapacious, 'all earth and spirit' (Burgess, 2000; p. 196). The native men lust after the exiled white women, who are themselves portrayed as capricious (sexual) mercenaries bestowing their favours on the next best thing that comes along, be it white or brown. Another native of these Native States, a Jaffna (Sri Lankan) Tamil, is the 'photographic negative of any suburban Englishman' (p. 407; Burgess; 2000). Perhaps this is Burgess's implication<sup>1</sup> – that the native can only be the negation of the White Man, no matter how much he apes, and this Burgess implies is something he enviously aspires to, the latter. The attribution of the native as the negation of the settler (coloniser) is one that Frantz Fanon explicated in *The wretched of the earth* (1963), and more explicitly, as implied by its title, in *Black skin white masks* (1968). It is noteworthy for me that writing almost a century after Bird, Swettenham and Wallace, Burgess surpasses all who precede him in his unrelenting and brute contempt for the Malayan natives.

Arriving in Malaya in the early 1950's to work as an education officer, Burgess was only too aware of the 'crying need for a total and "realistic" representation of Malaya' especially as he was well versed with Wallace's and Conrad's romantic versions (Yahya, 2003; p. 163). Burgess started his ideological project 'with the conviction that *Trilogy* was going to be decidedly different from the works of his predecessors, a departure from the tradition that romanticizes the East by glossing over its brute reality' (Yahya, 2003; p. 161). Dr. Yahya contends however that while Somerset Maugham's and Conrad's representations of the Malay tended towards the romantic or noble savage, Burgess's 'brute reality' of the Malay is one primarily scripted on his indolence and bigotry, as with many of his colonial predecessors.

Raffles, Bird, Swettenham, Clifford, and Wallace, though, could be said to have been somewhat sympathetic in their writing. Burgess's caricatures, in stark contrast, are buried in a hail of invective that portrays them as are bereft of a single redeeming, humanising attribute. Professing to acquire, through insinuating himself intimately in

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<sup>1</sup> Iterating that Manichean binary of the White Man- native exposed by Fanon in his anti-colonial thesis

the lives of these 'natives', a 'point of view from inside of Malay, Tamil, Chinese and Eurasian minds', Burgess leaves no doubt as to the Malayan natives' innate and incorrigible moral and mental deficiencies (Yahya, 2003; p. 164). Contriving to not 'see the Malayan landscape and people through Conrad's or Maugham's 'romantic mist', Burgess's 'brute reality' view from 'inside these minds' instead sketches 'images of chaos, racial conflicts, communist insurgents', anti-English outbursts and many other things bad and ugly' (Yahya, 2003, p. 162). 'The essential Malaya' remains 'all jungle' (Burgess, 2000; p. 272). In spite of several hundreds years of being the White Man's burden, the Malayan natives remain his particular and unfulfilled project for enlightenment.

## CHAPTER 11: THE EMERGENCE OF THE MYTH OF THE INDOLENT MALAY

Yahya (2003) has commented on the permanence of this colonial writing. Despite the intentions of various writers, including Burgess, of the marked transformations in the nature and status of literary production during this writing, there is a 'remarkable continuity of the central features' of the English colonialist discourse on the Malay native (Yahya, 2003; p. 160). These observations of the Malay's deficient humanity, written with such striking continuity from those first reports of the new world of voyages through to the entirety of a colonialist discourse comprising both scientific and lay representations of this native, were probably first given scientific credence by William Marsden and Sir Stamford Raffles at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This was a period when a Malayan territory under British colonial rule began to coalesce, meaning not only the subjugation of the peoples of the Peninsula to British rule but the conversion of its piece-meal mercantilism into the highly organised enterprise that would eventually help establish, extend and maintain the British Empire (Andaya, 2001; Sardesai, 2003). Of much significance to this increasingly systematised mercantilism, in which lie the beginnings of a modern national economy, was the role that tin and rubber were to play in the growing importance of the Malay Peninsula to the British Empire. Who then though were to work the mines and rubber plantations, to form the labouring classes of these first primary industries of the Malay Archipelago?

In direct response perhaps to the perception of the Malay's imperviousness to the ideas and ways of progress, his colonial masters turned to the system of indentured labour to operate the organised economy of the Native States. Syed Alatas, noted Malay scholar and author of *The myth of the lazy native* (1977)<sup>1</sup>, asserts that the English representation of the indolent Malay emerged through purely economic exigencies during this formative period of the English colonisation of the Malay Peninsula. The myth of the lazy Javanese had previously been used by the Dutch colonial managers as moral justification for the use of forced labour in Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia; Alatas, 1977). The English followed suit, especially in the use of forced labour in the form of the indentured. Single men of the dispossessed classes of the colonised or occupied territories of India and China, were brought in their tens of thousands to the Peninsula

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<sup>1</sup> Yahya (2003) argues that this work precedes Said's *Orientalism* (1978) as a critique of Orientalism

to work its fledgling commerce (Andaya, 2001; Sardesai, 2003). This dispossessed indentured, but ostensibly more advanced, Oriental substituted for his indolent savage subordinate. Some one hundred and fifty years on later the product of this specific piece of social engineering appears at first glance to be an incredibly diverse multi-ethnic and -cultural society.

This contemporary Malaysian society is often portrayed by parochial Malaysian intellectuals and politicians, 'Malaysianists' as Professor Shamsul calls them, as the 'plural society *par excellence*' (Shamsul, 1996; p.16). In this 'harmonious' mix the three major ethnic groups of the Malay, Chinese, and Indian purportedly perform naturally suited social and economic roles while maintaining their unique cultural traditions. Shamsul (1996), however, points out that this contemporary framing of a plural Malaysian society promotes, unwittingly or otherwise, those very problematic notions of race and ethnicity as naturally ordained. The great diversities inherent to these racially configured groups are instead suppressed, and what constitutes the Malay-ness or Indian-ness, for example, of these racial groups remains shaped by an ideology derived and utilised to good effect by English imperialistic interests in their colonial 'management' of Malaya (Alatas, 1977; Shamsul, 1996; Yahya, 2003).

Former Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohammed, could be said to be foremost amongst these 'Malaysianists'. Possessed of views almost entirely refracted through this race paradigm of English colonial origin, Mahathir has envisioned a *Bangsa Malaysia*, a Malaysian meta- or über-race<sup>1</sup>, to create a unified Malaysian nation in pursuit of the all important 'developed nation' status by 2020 (Shamsul, 1996). It is significant to me that in pursuit of this status it is the industrious, and thus progressive, nature of the Chinese (another 'industrious' northern 'race') that is being held up as an example for the indolent Malay (Alatas, 1977; Mohamad, 1970 & 2002). This very contemporary ideological construction of a national race appears to develop, and alarmingly so, on a strain of Orientalist discourse, of English manufacture, particular to the 'Malayan'.

As with Said and his notion of the Oriental, Shamsul who is himself of Malay ethnicity, regards Malaysia's attempt as constitutionally constructing a Malay race or ethnicity as

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<sup>1</sup> I have deliberately chosen to use this term to indicate my obvious discomfort with this vision, but then again was this not the aim of the Nazis, to unify the 'Aryan race' in pursuit of advancement?

having no material existence outside of the fictions of history and ideology (Said, 1977; Shamsul, 1996). Those highly pejorative attributes of his natural indolence and backwardness are thus as much a fiction of this ideology and history. Mahathir Mohamad, architect of Malaysia's drive to modernity, is ironically however most prominent amongst a Malaysian elite in reviving the myth of the lazy Malay. It could even be argued that this myth has superseded that of his amok, the attribute exactly contrapuntal to his indolence in the Malay's capricious state of existence. The myth of his indolence has become the modern Ma-lay mal-aise, already disseminated globally as witnessed by an article in the Sydney Morning Herald issue of June 22, 2002, titled *Mahathir blunt about tackling Malay Malaise*.

One can hardly berate the Malay for his only too evidently non-existent malaise of amok. So forcibly is this fiction inscribed on the body of the Malay that it seems worthwhile at this juncture, to begin a trace of his particular attribute of indolence.

**The Enlightenment discourse of the infantile and indolent naked brown savage**  
 Carroll (2002) in elaborating extensively on this attribute in her genealogy of the 'naked savage' specifically credits William Marsden with attributing the Malay with his trait of indolence. Greatly influenced by the works of Enlightenment scholars including Abbe Raynal (1713-1769), Francis Bacon, William Robertson (1721-1793), and John Richardson (1741-1811), Marsden began his scientific study of the Malay with the express intention of contributing to research on the origin and history of mankind (Hampson, 2000; Carroll, 2002). He explicitly located *The History of Sumatra* (1783) within the formative Enlightenment discourse on the origins of mankind, 'the study of their own species' being the 'most interesting and important that can claim the attention of mankind' (Marsden, 1966; p. vii). Marsden's studies on the Malay very likely provided one of the first and more vigorous instances in which the scientific endeavour learning precisely overlapped with the Colonial cause.

It is salient to me that science and the first transnationals, the East India companies, are intimately linked practically at the moment of emergence of the modern scientific project. I can then only remark that this has remained the case since. The disciplines, and especially those of the 'hard' sciences such as chemistry, physics and engineering, lie at the heart of the modern transnationals, which the likes of John Pilger, John Ralston Saul, Noam Chomsky, Naomi Klein and Arundhati Roy will offer are the

successors to the same imperialist lineage (Chomsky, 1993; Klein, 2000; Pilger, 1998 & 2002; Roy, 2003; Saul, 1995). Saul (1995), very illuminatingly for me, goes as far as very explicitly calling the machinations of the enlightened/ imperialist/ corporatist lineage of thought, as 'the dictatorship of reason in the West'<sup>1</sup> (and, practically, of the entire world) (Saul, 1995).

Marsden's pioneering study was shaped by a revival in interest, in England, in the savage races. Initially conceived of and portrayed as noble savage, a brown intermediate between the ignoble black savage and munificent White Man, this image faded with inflammatory reports of his 'barbaric' practices of infanticide, cannibalism and human sacrifice<sup>2</sup>. The noble savage was also an attribution specifically made of tribal peoples that were a lost tribe of White Man who had reverted to nature. In response to the scientific problem of the ignoble 'noble savage' Robertson through his work *History of America* framed a third variant of the savage, the naked savage<sup>3</sup>, developed from the classical theory proposed for the distribution of skin colour with the climatic zones of the world (Carroll, 2002). It became abundantly clear, however, during the explorations of the Americas and the East that the classical theory of torrid (tropical) or temperate zones exclusively populated by black and white peoples respectively could not be sustained. Those greatly privileging but as nominal notions of the characters of these inhabitants, not surprisingly, were however retained. Supporting a theory that Montesquieu proposed in his *De l'Esprit des lois* (The spirit of laws, 1748), Robertson wrote,

in every part of the earth where man exists, the power of the climate operates, with decisive influence . . . he has attained the greatest perfection, of which his nature is capable, in the temperate zone (Robertson, 1777; Vol. 1, p. 414; cited in Carroll, 2002)

In this view the ancient 'law of climate', then widely accepted as a universal law, also shaped mind and morality. Living in the temperate zone made one determined and industrious as the effect of cold on the body, would 'brace the nerves and, raise a spirit of resolution and activity' (Raynal, 1777; Vol. 1, p. 56; cited in Carroll, 2002). The less

<sup>1</sup> The title of his work being *Voltaire's bastards: the dictatorship of reason ...*(1995).

<sup>2</sup> On his second journey Captain Cook brought back to England, scientific 'evidence' of the noble savage in the form of the young Tahitian man, Omai, who was to provide the main inspiration for English representations of the noble savage (Carroll, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> As opposed to the ignoble half-naked Indian (Said, 1978)

fertile soil further served to cultivate the virtuous, masculinised, attributes of the White Man.

Availing themselves of the ample 'scientific' evidence delivered by via the 'new world of voyages' Enlightenment scholars, including Raynal and Robertson, developed an elaborate, and obviously circular (based on this 'universal law'), discourse on human behaviour, mentality and morality, effectively psychology, which privileged the temperate zone and its inhabitants, and thus a physiognomy. It can be argued that this Enlightenment psychology formed around the ancient's law of the climes prevails to this day. Its constructs, or virtues and vices, are the synthetic *a priori* of normative attributes that entirely privileged the White Man, and are now the norms and 'abnorms' of the human sciences (e.g. psychiatry/ psychology) that are the prerogative of the refined societies of the West. Contemporary psychology's many constructs, which measure both individual and group functioning, include intelligence (reason), self-esteem, honesty, empathy. These constructs can then be said to derive from these lowly tainted origins, the human virtues and vices of Enlightenment thought that overwhelmingly privilege the ideal White Man, who today is of the first or 'developed' world.

It seems important to reiterate here that the Ancient's 'law of the climes'<sup>1</sup> became that universal law (of nature) used to organise the Enlightenment scholars' theorising of the 'observed' distribution of human physiognomy. Ironically, that attribute of colour used to hierarchically structure the scientific category of race, was generally accepted as not being directly caused by climate (heat or lack of) due to the great diversity in skin tone observed even amongst the many peoples of colour belonging to the same societies (Bernasconi, 2001; Carroll, 2002; Darwin, 1964; Jahoda; 1999). The climate of the temperate zones crucially, however, is that condition that has specifically allowed for the possibility of the emergence of the superior white race of man. Eons of resolute 'struggle for existence'<sup>2</sup> in this hostile clime has justly rewarded him with a resilient coat of humanity comprised entirely of those virtuous attributes articulated by Rousseau, Montesquieu, Raynal, Robertson, Kant, Blumenbach, and Linnaeus in particular. The riches of the world, and especially of the bountiful torrid zones, were

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<sup>1</sup> It was also later explicitly invoked by Darwin as that natural law for 'the struggle for existence' from which the 'favoured races' of nature, including the White Man amongst human, emerged (Darwin, 1964).

<sup>2</sup> A phrase and doctrine that was to resonate vigorously in *The origin of species* (Darwin, 1964)

then very justifiably awaited his seizure, again through the inherent natural justice of the universal struggle for existence.

The inhabitants of these torrid zones by contrast were able to make ‘more lavish use of the means conducive to population, more indulgences in effeminate pleasures, and a *sedentary course of life*, while they increase the number of births<sup>1</sup>. . . (Raynal, 1777; Vol. 1, p. 56; cited in Carroll, 2002; *my emphases*). These natural inclinations of the savage peoples were to blame for their enslavement by the far more resolute European, the first example of this enslavement likely being that of the first native peoples encountered by Columbus. These ‘West Indians’ of that land now known as Guyana, were peaceful and easily and swiftly subjugated in a preposterous and risible demonstration of this belief (Chomsky, 1993).

The Indostan (Indian) ignoble savage, for example, was averse to fighting for his liberty, in Raynal’s view that foremost obligation of citizenship in a civilised society. ‘Noble’ war amongst civilised equals was, predictably enough, theorised by the period’s scholars to be the greatest of struggles for liberty, as it elicited of man the maximum of his talents and greatest of his achievements (Carroll, 2002). Far from being naturally attuned to struggling for his liberty, the ignoble savage was incapable of unifying in the great cause of war and much more suited to slavery. The climate of the Indostan, for example, was to blame, as the *indolence* it inspires is an invincible obstacle to great revolutions and vigorous oppositions. The body and the mind have only the virtues of slavery. (Raynal, 1777; Vol. II, pp. 297-298; *my emphasis*). That other ignoble savage the black African was similarly inclined, their black skin being ‘hotter, their pulse quicker, and their ‘passions therefore, of fear and love’ were ‘carried to excess causing him to be more effeminate, more *indolent*, more weak, and again, more fit for slavery’ (Raynal, 1777; Vol. III, pp. 373-374; *my emphasis*). Raynal consigned the African and the Indian, those darkest peoples whose practices included cannibalism and self-immolation, to the lowest rung of humanity, a rank ordained by nature or natural history (Bernasconi, 2001; Carroll, 2002).

The beginnings of the truth of the indolence, cause of his backwardness, of the savage seem to me to be evident in these scientific characterisations of the savage races by

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<sup>1</sup> A reference to the already widely held views concerning the fecundity of coloured peoples, based on Montesquieu’s representations of the East Indian (Carroll, 2002)

Enlightenment scholars. Of great significance also is that of their explicit 'feminising' by these first 'race scholars'. Imbued with lesser and subservient 'effeminate' mental and moral traits, these savages can then be said to be attributed with mentalities that were ruled, like women, by whim (spontaneity), or emotion, rather than reason (Dworkin, 1974 & 1987; Green, 1995; Rousseau, 1992).

### **William Robertson and the natural or 'naked' brown savage**

Robertson like Raynal thought that those 'native' to the temperate zone were the only men suited to liberty, in viewing this condition as a privilege that had to be fought for (Carroll, 2002). Moreover this civilised man was far more capable of adaptation to different climes, being possessed of reason whereas the savage could only react with whim in adapting to adverse climates, by, for example, fabricating appropriate shelter and clothing. Thus the naked savage's nakedness, and that he was or remained hairless only emphasised his natural ineptitude for the struggle. This naked savage can be viewed a failed experiment of nature's method, the 'seeding' of man in the various climes for the purpose of producing the naturally superior race of man. Where the 'talents of civilised men' were 'continually exerted in rendering their condition more comfortable' this particular race of savages was capable of little more than covering his nakedness with nature's paints (Robertson, 1777; Vol. 1, p. 415).

In his analysis of the American Indian, Robertson conceived of this native as a Brown 'naked savage' that was the predecessor of all the refined societies of Europe and Asia of his (Robertson's) time. The naked savage appears to bear great similarity with that 'natural human' described by Rousseau in his *Discourse on the origins of inequality among Men* (1755). Even more primitive than the savage in that he was isolated from the societies of others and of autonomous spirit, this natural human likely found one prototype in the apocryphal tales of children discovered after having spent prolonged periods in the wild. The only 'goods' the savage 'knows in the universe are food, a female, and rest' (Rousseau, 1755; cited in Yousef, 2001; p. 245). The lost wild child shunned the society of men, and knew of the 'good' of 'independence' instead of 'woman' (Yousef, 2001; p. 245). This natural human being infant-like was similarly motivated and knew of the good of 'independence' in addition to those of 'food' and 'rest' (indolence).

The naked savage was thus like a 'wild child', infant-like in his arrested development that was the consequence of being left to nature, of his isolation from both civilised and savage society. The sexual behaviour that he exhibited was natural, animal like, free of desire even that of the desire to procreate<sup>1</sup> (Burgess, 2000; Darwin, 1901; Marsden, 1966). Possessed of an infant's innocence of desire and original sin he was also devoid of will, of any desire for advancement<sup>2</sup>. At best he was fated to stagnate and decline, to extinction as predicted by Darwin (1901 & 1964). Robertson's nation-less and tribal-less misanthrope found its prototype in the adult American native, who very ironically, had previously served as Rousseau's prototype for the noble savage. He also reworked that particular view of the human species as a continuum aligned with their 'observed' developmental stage while incorporating a ranking system based on colour. Insinuating well established characterisations of the 'varieties of man', theorised by himself as well as the likes of Montesquieu, Raynal, Linnaeus and Blumenbach, Robertson arrived at a slightly different classification of the human varieties.

The naked savage of the torrid zones displaced the ignoble black savages, who were viewed as slightly more advanced, as that most backward, though not necessarily base, of humans (Carroll, 2002). The naked savage 'acquired' some of the characteristics of the ignoble savage, such as indolence, lack of determined will, his inability to unify as a collective (and go to war) due to his autonomous spirit. Unlike the latter who was uncontrollably (irrationally) motivated by sexual desire, articulated expressly in terms of their purported fecundity (and still is), the naked savage was also infant-like in this aspect. Devoid of even this first primordial instinct (of original sin), little if anything could thus arouse him from his 'languid indolence', in advance of meaningful struggle (Robertson, 1777). Resembling 'birds of prey, rather than animals formed for labour' (Robertson, 1777; Vol. 1, p.290), this savage was not only naturally averse to toil but was also,

incapable of it; and when roused by force from their native indolence, and compelled to work, they sunk under tasks which people of other continents would have performed with ease. This feebleness of constitution was universal among the inhabitants of those regions [excepting Mexico and Peru] in America . . . (Robertson, 1777; Vol. 1 p.290)

<sup>1</sup> Desire was then entirely skewed in the female naked savage, portrayed as sexually rapacious by colonialist discourse, e.g. Burgess (2000).

<sup>2</sup> The desire of woman (original sin), would seem to have been viewed as the origins (as in original sin) of a desire for advancement

Robertson emphasised the infantile feebleness, of physical, moral and of mental origin, of this latest caricature of the lesser races, the naked savage (Carroll, 2002). He claimed that their intellectual powers were extremely limited, 'their ignorance and imbecility of the infant state' (Robertson, 1777; Vol. 1, p. 308), and that his emotions and efforts were 'few and languid' (Robertson, 1777; Vol. 1, p.308-309). Importantly also, this savage was labelled 'improvident' as

the desires of simple nature are few where a favourable climate yields almost *spontaneously* what suffices them, they scarcely stir the soul or excite violent emotion. (Robertson, 1777, Vol. 1, p. 314) (my emphasis)

The naked savage was imprudent and impulsive, of spontaneous nature and thus derelict of obligation and incognisant of precedence and consequence. By the early nineteenth century spontaneity, largely through Robertson's considerable reputation and influence, came to embody 'the rudest and most unimproved of the naked savages in the torrid zones' (Robertson, 1777; Vol. 1, p. 292). This savage in particular was languid, unlike the hedonistic ignoble black African and Indostan, being deprived by his climate of stimuli, such as the cold of the temperate zone, which would 'stir the soul'.

Determining that the brown naked savage displayed great homogeneity in colour and civilisation almost entirely through the American continent, Robertson generalised these conditions to the brown varieties of man everywhere. This particular determination then allowed for a fundamental and significant separation between the problematic<sup>1</sup> brown savage and the black savages of the torrid zones.

The narrative of the childlike, indolent and spontaneous brown native who had no need or desire for, and even incapable of, meaningful toil was allied with that of the agricultural foundations of civilised man. In the eighteenth century agricultural cultivation was widely promulgated as a measure of man's progress (Carroll, 2002). Robertson proposed that that it was primarily through the cultivation of land that man improves his mind. Lack of cultivation was thus a sure sign of the naked savage's innate indolence and mental backwardness (Robertson, 1777). Uncultivated land was wastefully neglected and ostensibly unoccupied land. The all-pervading jungles of the Malay Archipelago, vast barren interiors of *Terra Nullus* and the Americas were indication of the innate indolence of the naked savage. It is a notion of especial significance in Malaysia today as Malay are being increasingly pressured to sell or

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<sup>1</sup> The brown savage being no longer noble, given his barbarous practices.

commercially develop their lands, especially in Kuala Lumpur. The 'indolent Malay' however is proving resistant to this demand to develop his 'idle lands'. It was the meaningful toil of the refined European settlers of the new world then that improved these once wasteful lands (Carroll, 2002). The infantile naked savage was thus not only incapable of meaningful thought and speech, he was, as incapable of meaningful toil.

### **A ranked modern ethnography**

Initially a basic three-tiered ethnography appears to have emerged out of Robertson's theorising on the origins of humans, one somewhat dissimilar to that described by Keebeng (2003). Humanity was ranked within a scale into those progressive (developing) categories of the stagnant races of the infantile barbarous naked brown savage (formerly noble) and the fecund ignoble black savage, and the progressive race of the munificent White Man. This scale seems to me to be exactly that used in describing our contemporary societies in terms of their stage of development, as, for example, developed, developing, underdeveloped, and least developed nations (the 'Fourth World').

I also argue here that in aligning race entirely along a developmental scale Robertson effects a subtle but telling sleight of hand. He compresses<sup>1</sup> (flattens) and realigns this hitherto scientifically tenuous (with little theoretical grounding) and hence problematic hierarchical structure, giving it a linear progressive continuity in keeping with a linear progressive history of the natural order of things. As a viable and generally acceptable theory of human development underpins race, the latter is then disinfected of its problematic staggered and vertical distribution of privileging attributes, and also of status and power. The hierarchical opposition of pure and impure, the exalted and the lowly, derived from their swift unequal struggle (the swift conquest of savage men by the refined), critically gave way to a scientific scale, likely of classical Aristotelian origin (linear mechanical progressive/ ranked) in which this impure and the pure (ideal White Man) were compared within a whole and not simply, and unscientifically (what then was the theoretical basis for this comparison), with each other.

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<sup>1</sup> Here then is perhaps the origins of the often multilayered horizontal scale which gives the illusion of a flat distribution devoid of status and power, a scientific tool for the comparison of its element within the whole and not the obviously very subjective normative.

This scale of race, essentially an ethnography, aligned with human development allowed for a Kantian/ Enlightenment departure from the (Platonic) pure origin, as its linear mechano-causal progress (from birth to maturity to death) is from lowly origins; the blank slate of a natural origin (birth) instead of that of an immutable pure (or divine) origin. Robertson's sleight of hand was thus of incalculable influence to natural science, as no less than Darwin developed on this same linear progressive scale, and its founding doctrine of the (universal) struggle for existence, to yield an evolution of the favoured races, the origins of species (Darwin, 1964). Here then possibly, and very disturbingly for me, lies perhaps the origins of the often multilayered horizontal psychological scale which gives the illusion of a flat distribution devoid of status and power, a scientific tool for the comparison of its ranked but natural elements within the whole and not the obviously subjective self-serving normative.

Race in Robertson's ranked scale of human development is then a natural alignment in which the innumerable elements of its whole, the various races of the human race, are ranked in relation to the whole; which I offer is the underlying principle of the (continuous) modern psychological scale. A case in point being that prototype of psychological measures, the intelligence scales with their ranked elements of intelligence, quotients and percentiles. Race, and intelligence or any other psychological construct, as science, should then tell us nothing about the place of power in society, a Weberian thesis of the 'disjunction of status and power' best exemplified by his (Weberian) subjectivity (Visweswaran, 2001; p. 208). This natural scale of race is then analytically structured through comparison with a normative ideal of the whole that is the human race, and in this instance the ideal of race is then indubitably the 'White Man'; as opposed to say the white child or white adolescent. The 'White Man' is then a representation of his own normative ideal, the telos of this progression, the mature White Man of pure reason.

Like the intelligence quotient or percentile, the elements of race impose a 'permanent suspension of representation' where 'to present means to settle, answer, resolve and control the represented' (Lotringer & Cohen, 2001; p. 4). There is thus little if any possibility for those residing within an IQ span or a racial class of progressing beyond the bounds of its (the psychological scale or racial scale's) control. As Robertson, Kant and later Darwin meticulously theorised and 'scientifically proved' through their and others observations, colour is virtually inviolable, independent of that omnipotent law

of climes, unless transgressions occur<sup>1</sup> (miscegenation) (Bernasconi, 2001; Darwin, 1964; Robertson, 1777). And what else, apart from his humanity (human form) could be more permanent than this most visible of inscriptions, in the opinion of many, on the body (Alcoff, 2001). The relative stage of development of the racial classes, are invisible, underlying colour, and tertiary justifying a compressed racial hierarchy through the infinity or circularity (like the circularity of that envelope that is the universe, no end no beginning) theoretical (*a priori*) mechanisms of control. Where however the infantile naked brown and adolescent ignoble black savages are permanently suspended and cannot 'naturally' progress along this scale, the scale is itself that of the White Man's natural progress. It is he who is 'free' to progress along this scale, he has only to wait patiently and he will naturally progress, come of age<sup>2</sup>, as the ideal man (man of ideas/ reason); it is this natural progression that is the normative against which the savage and *other* races of man (including wo-man) are measured (compared) and naturally enough found deficient. Woman as much are permanently enclosed (the glass ceiling immediately comes to mind), as capable of coming into fertility and little beyond (puberty and adolescence) and little beyond certainly not reason as she can never be the mature male ideal.

This 'ethno-developmental' scale is enveloped within that unity that modern scientific theorising imparts. Accordingly all contradictions can eventually be explained. It is simply a matter of getting the synthetic *a priori* judgment/ theory/ structure right by testing it against that which is purest in measurement of the pure universal, the pure science of mathematics (and for us less than pure sciences statistics). Theorising approximates the empirical object to what transcends it, the fixed coordinates of the real universe (as proposed by Kant for example) ; a realist or rather universal ontology because it then applies in every context, or what we say 'is' everywhere, every time.

In explicating and negating contradictions, a fundamental requirement of positivistic thought and method, the oppressive rationalities of the dictatorship of reason negates freedom -that space which Rushdie offers allows for contradiction to exist, ours and the universe at large (inside and outside the whale in Orwellian terms) (Rushdie, 2003). The unifying of our, empirically very observable, contradictions imparted through positivistic theorising also imparts not so much an illusion of 'the infinity of its

<sup>1</sup> For Darwin in particular the sterility or low fertility of hybrids, e.g. mules and 'mulattos', was proof of the transgression of natural laws when the various races/ species 'crossed' (Darwin, 1964).

<sup>2</sup> There are of course boundaries to transgress for those who cannot wait, or those deviant.

envelopes, which envelop nothing other than the unity of its own surfaces' (Foucault, 1977; p. 200), but also the illusion of universality (which appropriately enough embraces the concept of infinity). When these contradictions manifest, when the observable/ sensible of the empirical object trapped in our gaze shifts as if struggling to break free<sup>1</sup>, the surface particularity of the theoretical envelope shifts accordingly maintaining its flexible positional (moral) superiority. The text and textual attitude that is praxis of our desire/ will to truth/ power, shifts to remorselessly track, predator like, these contradictions, testing and matching them to shifts in theorising, until both are captured and correspond in the sight of the (panopticonic) observer scientist. That there is no freedom, no space for contradiction for movement for escape from these oppressive rationalities is perhaps the true meaning of determinism, the determinism of the oppressive rationalities of the will to truth/ power and its positivistic sciences. That there is no freedom to naturally shift or to constitute matching self-serving theoretical shifts for the lesser varieties of man is only too apparent.

The liberty to shift like his freedom to progress, to come of age as ideal man of ideas (reason), along with the freedom to conquer the human lacunae, is very apparently the sole prerogative of the self-constituted amorphous 'White Man'. With regard to the ranking of the varieties of man, theorising has continually shifted to match the many opportunistic and thus incoherent shifts in ranking of the human varieties, while always rearing in favour of its agents. The (East) Indian (and Chinese) was once ranked amongst the first of the human races as his only too indisputable 'refinement' demanded. On his conquest he was then ranked last as one of the ignoble black savages. Following the discovery of the Americas and the South Seas, the brown noble savage was ranked intermediate to the munificent White Man and these ignoble savages, but then relegated to last of the ranks as naked savage, on his swift capitulation to the White Man (Bernasconi, 2001; Carroll, 2002).

It is positivistic theorising, it's perpetually shifting surface/ textual particularity (of ever shifting theories), that imparts that illusion of the infinity of the theoretical envelope which verifies science. In circling this envelope and departing from any point and

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<sup>1</sup> And here I immediately think how this happens all the time with scientific 'specimens' including, humans. I think animal testing; chemical, biological and nuclear warfare and their testing; Nazi concentration camps, and Nanjing, psychiatric institutions and the sordid history of psychological testing; pharmaceutical and women and agriculturals and the poor again; a seemingly endless litany of the inhumanity of man to his other

returning to that point one finds themselves elsewhere because its 'grounds' (of theory) have changed, a condition that is ostensibly called progress (in the tracking of our contradictions).

What then underpins the ethno-developmental scale are those very verifiable (and useful), and 'universal' laws of the struggle for existence, law of the climes and of natural development of living organisms. Together they consecrate the ideal man with munificence, and allow for the ranking of humanity along a linear progressive continuum that maps the progress of this ideal man from his birth to his maturity. Comparison, struggle, competition, heavily skewed in favour this *a priorised* ideal, is indubitably the means to that end of ranking humanity, from munificent to its least. The psychological scale, and thus its instruments, is likely based on this comparison within the whole. Considering that this ranked ethnography was soon to be put use to incalculable effect by Marsden, Darwin and Galton, it can be said that psychological measurement is premised on a psychology or more precisely, a physiognomy, of this normative of the ideal 'White Man' who invented race and psychology.

One cannot help but imagine, a little amusedly, the archetypal psychologist, the disinterested objective neutral, the 'disembodied', scientist looking down this scale ranking his subjects, very often with extreme prejudice in ranking colour with intelligence, along this then only too apparently flat (he is looking down on it after all) linear progressive scale. And what he sees, as it turns out, is himself. This then is as precise a manifestation of the 'syndrome' of transcendental narcissism as any. What is also apparent is that far from peeling the infinity of envelopes of an onion, to reveal 'no heart, . . . no irreducible principle beyond what is revealed is that heart that kernel that secret of the White Man, of his will to truth/ power of his transcendental narcissism. Mere reflection though it might be, it has exacted a monumental toll on humanity. .

The ethno-developmental scale also underpins those pervasive and highly pejorative 'truths' of a world, and humanity, segregated into the developed, developing and underdeveloped. To tell the truth I have long abhorred them as risible and privileging, recognising that it is no coincidence that it is the natives/ savages/ 'coloured' peoples of the world that comprise the deficient and subordinate categories of humanity.

### **Marsden's naked brown savage: the native of the Malay Archipelago**

Carroll (2002) offers that Marsden adopted Robertson's system for ranking the human races. Illuminatingly his work on the Malay is titled *History of Sumatra*, like Robertson's similarly titled *History of America* (1777), of that lineage of the 'scientific/natural' histories of the various territories of the natives of the world. In extending the scientific project of the Enlightenment in his studies on the Malay world, Marsden modified Robertson's scheme to incorporate both past and present civilisations. He also proposed that a civilisation at the zenith of its refinement was most likely to decline, a notion put to good use in explaining the rank he assigned the Malay, a degenerate offshoot of the *Menangkabow*<sup>1</sup>, within this now greatly fractured (with its numerous ranks) scale. Deliberately ignoring and even suppressing ample evidence for an advanced Malay empire that had reigned over Sumatra, and of its still considerable local and regional influence, Marsden determined that this empire had reached its zenith and was thus in decline. Accordingly, the Malay of Sumatra far from possessing a status as citizens of some of the world's greatest cosmopolis, had instead

an appearance of degeneracy, and this renders their character totally different from that which we conceive of a savage, however justly their spirit of plunder on the eastern coast may have drawn upon them that name<sup>2</sup>. They seem rather to be sinking into obscurity . . . (Marsden, 1966, p. 207)

Marsden ranked this degenerate naked brown savage with his like, the class<sup>3</sup> brown naked savage (Carroll, 2002).

Perhaps if we distinguish man summarily into five classes; but of which each we would admit of numberless divisions . . . . In the first class, I should of course include some of the republics of ancient Greeks<sup>4</sup>, . . . France, England . . . . In the third class, along with the Sumatrans, and a few other states of the Eastern Archipelago . . . . The fourth class, with the less civilised Sumatrans<sup>5</sup>, will take in the peoples of the new discovered islands in the South Sea; perhaps the celebrated Mexican and Peruvian empires. . . (Marsden, 1966; p. 204)

Marsden, and Raffles, also offered that whatever civilisation the Malay possessed was accidentally, spontaneously, acquired when advanced societies happened, in their

<sup>1</sup> Minangkabau, an ethnic group of both Indonesia and Malaysia.

<sup>2</sup> Making reference of course to that long-standing representation of the piratical treacherous Malay.

<sup>3</sup> As a Linnean biological term

<sup>4</sup> Speaking of exalted origins . . .

<sup>5</sup> Marsden graded the Sumatran/ (Malay according to their perceivable degree of civilisation

voyages of discovery, on the otherwise stagnant/ regressive Malay (Marsden, 1966). The spontaneity of the Malay, his naturalness, was that key element of his essence that served to explain away whatever civilisation he possessed, in advance of inscribing and justifying a narrative of necessary intervention. In the absence of these interventions, the Malay would be no more than naked savage, capable of little more than covering himself with paint to protect himself from his clime. Despite formerly having risen above the ranks of the savages, the Malay had naturally 'fallen' into 'inaction and barbarism' (Raynal, 1777; Vol. 3, p. 74) and regressed into that natural state initially theorised by Rousseau, Raynal and Robertson. He was in danger of spontaneously losing his former (as spontaneously acquired) refinement. Colonisation can then be viewed as a kind of domestication of a species, like the dog or cat, found wild (savage) in nature. Darwin attests to the prevailing naturalist view of his times when he comments that these domestic varieties, 'when run wild, gradually but certainly revert in character to their aboriginal stocks' (1964; p. 14). The savage Malay was thus fated to revert if not civilised/ domesticated/ colonised a burden taken upon, as so explicitly articulated by Frank Swettenham (Barlow, 1995), by the White Man.

Imbuing him with the perceived attributes of his animals' attributes, Marsden reported that the Malay

may be compared to the buffalo and tiger. In his domestic state, he is *indolent*, stubborn, and voluptuous as the former, and in his adventurous life, he is *insidious, blood-thirsty and rapacious* as the latter. Thus also the Arab is said to resemble his camel, and the placid Hindu his cow. (Marsden, 1966; p. 208)

Very illuminatingly for me, Marsden also states that the Malay 'are careless and improvident of the future' (Marsden, 1966; p. 209), exactly amongst those attributes I state to be necessary for a narrative of a naturally disordered Malay.

It is very arguable that these scientific determinations were the precursors of a primitivist discourse on the Malay, which is both colonialist and modern in its making, and re-inscribed many times over. One could as easily make the argument that it still is. This discourse on the Malay has in particular emphasised his spontaneous violent predilection for amok (tiger), and his innate and incorrigible indolence (buffalo). The metaphors of buffalo and tiger at first sight may seem to indicate an incoherent (disordered) duality in the Malay. A reconciliation of sorts is required between these

two disparate behaviours, those of indolence and amok, in the one intact subject with regard to the 'internal consistency' of the colonialist discourse. Amok continues to be written as the virtually spontaneous violent consequence of a rupture in his facile humanity that exposes his innately chaotic or barbaric nature. The indolence of the Malay can then be seen as his 'resting state', and by analogy as nature lying idle, and as complimentary of his amok in his inherently disordered and unpredictable existence. Ostensibly contradictory attributes they can however be viewed as complimentary, and necessarily so in representing a human that is 'natural', spontaneous and unpredictable of nature. Land/ nature unless toiled meaningfully lies idle or is reclaimed by nature, and nature itself is often seen as capricious, lying idle before the unpredictable violence of earthquakes, tornadoes, floods, blizzards, and volcanic eruptions.

Amok is as necessarily written as its solitary manifestation, the collective and highly organised martial form being discarded, for the specific purpose of representing the capricious natural state (of disorder) of the Malay. It now becomes very apparent to me why the regressing Malay can 'only' run amok instead of committing murder. Incapable of the reasoned acts that constitute murder, the Malay can only instead erupt with the spontaneous homicidal frenzy of amok. It seems very evident that if the Malay was capable of murder, of predicated discriminate deliberated homicide, then he is incapable of the unpredicated spontaneous indiscriminate homicidal frenzy that is his amok. Being mentally deficient, of deficient reason, and of languid indolence his is a largely inert existence impervious to its own vagaries, including violent conquest and slavery it seems - until unpredictably and without and discernible cause he spontaneously combusts in absolute incoherent violence. So spontaneous and incoherent is this violence, that he has no memory of its entire progress/ regress; its causes, his innocent uncomprehending victims and its aftermath. Thus even the assassination of the tyrannical James Birch, the cruellest of all colonial administrators of the Native States of Malaya is depicted as an act of amok (Andaya, 2001; Bird, 2000).

When constantly expressed amok, paradoxically, can only be the normal state of the Malay, while concurrently losing great potency as a compliment for his prescribed indolence. The Malay in a perpetual or even frequent state of amok would also not only likely be already extinct, as opposed to slowly regressing to extinction, but could hardly be attributed with indolence. His propensity for amok and indolence have been written

as being essential to the Malay. It seems far more likely however that the myths of his amok and indolence are essential to the colonialist discourse on the Malay, which is of that lineage of the Enlightenment discourse on the naked savage.

Marsden is likely responsible for the induction of the Malay within the ranks of the naked savages (Marsden, 1966), and it is clear to me that amok and indolence demarcate his necessarily spontaneous nature. Marsden's metaphorical use of the tiger<sup>1</sup> and buffalo now seem remarkably apt and entirely complimentary to each other and the writing of his spontaneous natural nature. The Malay is both the predatory and autonomous tiger, and the altogether passive more social buffalo inclined to languid idleness. What little buffalo like social behaviour he possesses is also easily reneged, as tiger like he cuts his ties with his fellows by running amok as if on mere 'whim'. In doing so he temporarily expresses that totally autonomous state that he will eventually attain as he regresses completely to an infantile state of barbarism - a state that needs only the easy succour of mother-nature, to whom he is irretrievably bound or cannot progress beyond without the paternalistic intervention of the refined (mature) man. Here then is another (oedipal) connection between the savage and woman in the 'discourse on the inequality among men'. The layers of humanity he once acquired peel off as he regresses, yielding an infant like state of arrested development that is neither savage nor animal, but a wild infant doomed to extinction because he is deprived of original sin, and thus of desire beyond that of the easy succour of his mother, nature (Robertson, 1777; Rousseau, 1755). It is now that those descriptions of Wallace, Bird and Swettenham of the physical appearance of the Malay become especially relevant.

Notably, and perhaps incongruously, all found the Malay beautiful as children and ugly at maturity, ageing rapidly and prematurely but naturally so. Swettenham thought that 'in his youth, the Malay boy is often beautiful . . . a thing of wonderful eyes, eyelashes, and eyebrows . . .' (Swettenham, 1984; pp. 3-4). Isabella Bird similarly commented of the Malay child, likely influenced by Swettenham (Bird, 2000). The Malay it seems can only attain the beauty of ideal man, and other attributes, in the infantile stage of this ideal; a stage devoid of mature or pure reason. At best he may reach the adolescence of the ideal man, particularly while still retaining vestiges of his former assimilated civilisation. Thereafter he/ she ages rapidly as if progeria (Hutchinson-Gilford

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<sup>1</sup> Marsden used this metaphor to frame the Malay's seafaring and 'piratical' nature

Syndrome) were his natural inclination. Rousseau offers a possible explanation for this premature ageing of the savage races.

With regard to children, there are many reasons to believe that their strength and organs develop later among us [civilised man] than they did in the primitive state of which I speak. . . so that if instead of first overburdening and tiring their minds in a thousand ways, their bodies were left to be exercised by the continual movements that nature seems to demand of them, it is to be presumed that they would much sooner be capable of walking, acting, and providing for their needs themselves. (Rousseau, 1992; p. 89) [My insertion]

As Darwin has implied it is the method of mother nature, his nature, that ensures his premature ageing. Where the White Man thrives in the struggle, the Malay naturally incapacitated as he is, can only wither. These representations also reflect for me the premature death of the Malay at the hands of his conquerors and occupiers. That the Malay still exists and has a society, and nation no less, is in part because he has learned by spontaneous imitation, we are led to believe, to manage for the meantime that which predicates his inherently barbarism - an infantile nature that he is perpetually in danger of reverting to, if not for the paternalism of refined man. That the Malay ascends once again he can give thanks entirely to the Englishman for resurrecting his humanity, for anointing him with a new coat of refinement through the latter's benevolent and munificent guardianship (purportedly the 'real' task of colonisation).

That he is entirely dependent in perpetuity on the White Man for this onerous burden of his civilising is however only too evident; given the manifestly western ideological grip, of the globalised market place (really western monopolistic piracy), in which the formerly savage races are inexorably strangled (Chomsky, 1993; Klein, 2000; Pilger, 1998 & 2002; Roy, 2004; Saul, 1995). He remains a native consigned for extinction, along with the remnants of his stagnant deficient civilisations and traditions, in the torrid zones. Capable only of childlike imitation of whatever adventitious civilisation that happened by him, and having lost almost all vestiges of this impressed refinement, he is fated to be the burden of that dominant civilisation of today, the White Man that is himself the project of the Enlightenment.

It is patent that that it is not only the sensible/ observable, colour, that is was/ is being ranked. What are also ranked concurrently deliberately or unavoidably is everything that constitutes, and is constituted by humanity – societies, cultures, civilisations,

narratives, all of the existing and potential 'sensibles' pertaining to the 'deregulated' ever-expanding vested interests of the disciplinary tradition. The silenced (adiscursive) spontaneous naked savage/ native is the 'child that should not be heard' but seen (observed), his actions and babble devoid of reason, incoherent as that of the infant (or the woman). He runs amok like an infant throwing violent unprovoked tantrums, and is clearly in need of cultivation, of discipline and order, the noble work/ struggle taken upon by, that is the permanent burden of, the munificent White Man. This same man who will not let nature do that barbarous impure work of the savages (and the natural world) - their slow necessary extinction hence preserving that most munificent race, the White Man (Darwin, 1901 & 1964).

Bird (2000), Marsden (1783), and Swettenham (1984) puzzlingly for me initially, wrote of the hairlessness of the Malay and his penchant for gaudy colours and ornaments. At best these traits seemed banal, but now take on profound significance. Born naked, as are infants, the Malay would but for the last vestiges of an assimilated civilisation, run naked and occasionally 'paint' themselves, as is the supposed tendency of children, in the gaudy colours of that which they are most familiar with - the dirt, animals and flora of the nature amongst which they live. The Malay paints himself, as both infant and woman<sup>1</sup> do in gaudy colours, to hide or alternatively to indicate nakedness (as per the flexible positional superiority of the inscriber), or to ape nature to which he is naturally more proximate (and not the ideal man). The savage paints himself in colours that are of the inflamed passions of the torrid zones and has not learnt to clothe himself in the austere (reasoned) masculine colours of civilisation (witness the 'masculine' corporate monotonous colours of reason, dull black, blue, white, grey). And so it continues, and what seems banal and even contradictory is instead deliberated, as appropriate to its science, to fit within this natural linear progressive account of our natural trajectories with its telos of the ideal man of ideas (reason).

### **The White Man's chimera**

So capricious in his psychic composition that the Malay must seem to have two heads, one inhumanly courteous and the other acutely hostile. Marsden constructed an image of the Malay that was part tiger part buffalo. The chimera is, appropriately enough, part lion part goat, and as metaphor for the Europeans conquest of the savage/ native, what

<sup>1</sup> My thanks to Mandy Morgan my supervisor for this connection between the natural naked savage and the natural naked woman. Painting, make-up, and hair-removal maintains, symbolically if nothing else, her nakedness, her status as natural spontaneous being.

could be more resonant than that particular myth of his first civilizations. The Malay's animal like docility and homicidal ferocity towards his own and others reprise the treacherous vacillating of the two-headed chimera. This monstrous humanity invited his subjugation by the heroic White Man, arrived on his sailing ships as if he were was Bellepheron himself astride Pegasus come to conquer the Chimera.

### **Running amok as a contradiction of the ideal man of reason**

Noam Chomsky, who has documented as much as any man the accounts of oppressions of the modern era, tellingly for me cites the following as counter to its very contemporary modulations:

It is hardly surprising that the “new evangelists” of neo-liberal theology have won an overwhelming victory within the *doctrinal system*. The evidence about successful development and the actual consequences of neo-liberal doctrine is dismissed with the contempt that irrelevant nuisance so richly deserves. “*The carrying out of [God's plan] . . . is the history of the world,*” Hegel explained: “That which does not accord with it, is negative, worthless existence.” (cited in Chomsky, 1993; pp. 108-109)

The doctrinal man of ideas, confronted by the very explicit oppositions and resistances of those he oppresses (the enslaved and the colonised) negates these contradictions to the theories and determinations, and methods of this oppression. The opposition and resistance of the reaction of the enslaved are transformed from deliberate acts resistance and opposition against their oppressions to those barbarous practices such as running away (from their beneficial civilisation by the White Man), running amok, and infanticide. These actions far from being counters to extreme and even psychotic oppressions are conceived of and written as chaotic manifestations of patently irrational savages. His amok is a contraindication to the oppressive rationality that sees slavery as the Malay's natural state. Under this coercion of an oppressive rationality that asserts he is well suited to slavery, and in facing this fate, he cannot, as any being cannot, but be agitated, and desperately and violently rebel. This rebellion, this redress against a vile and violently inhuman inequity is written instead as acting against the natural order, a disorder without reason (authorised by the privileging presumption that reason is the natural prerogative of the White Man).

In all likelihood, however, the individual amok is mere myth and may instead be homicide, an act which most (if not all) of all the ‘races’ commit, bearing in mind that

many reports of amok are mere rumour, or at best circumstantial, and as well do not concern homicide, and instead rage expressed against inanimate objects (APA, 2000; Hatta, 1996; Spores, 1988). One can also argue, of course, that murder is not an act of reason and is instead an inhuman and barbarous act of the irrational man – which would make all homicide acts of amok. Faced by the opposition of the Malay against his purportedly natural state of rule by the White Man, the latter's textual attitude shifts to accommodate this contradiction. Once a collective martial strategy of last resort, amok is displaced from the organised collective to that of the chaotic individual (representing another fragmentation). Amok becomes inscribed on the body of the Malay as that manifestation of his treacherous spontaneous nature, the unpredictable, and unprejudicated indiscriminate homicidal frenzy of this race of naked brown savage. The naked brown savage is conceptualised as a misanthrope, limited in his capacity as he naturally lacks the necessary incentive and thus mental and moral impulse, to collectivise and form a society which would advance his kind in the struggle for existence. Amok then seems to me to be the ultimate manifestation of the inherently misanthropic nature of the Robertson's theorised 'brown naked savage'. English colonialist discourse shifts and obscures the already well-established and material origins of the collective organised martial amok, so much so that its mythical misanthropic manifestation dominates the truth to this day.

I had not construed till now, and how could I have, the similarity of the individual amok that is almost exclusively of the colonised Malay and the infanticide of the African slave. In Morrison's *Beloved*, Sethe kills her children, drowns her Beloved when their re-capture is imminent. As Carroll has noted infanticide is one of the many barbarous practices of the ignoble savages (Carroll, 2002). Far from Beloved's death being a barbarous act, it is her fate that is instead barbarously inhuman. Sethe reclaims that which is sovereign to them, their lives, claiming her sovereignty and her right to not only give life but to 'take life or let live' (Foucault, 2003b; p. 241). Woman is as essential to slavery as the female of stock, producer of that which is permanently infantile, calves, lambs, and slaves. Woman is the source of children, far more easily quelled, and their infantile status maintained for the length of their life. Sethe's act of infanticide is the ultimate, most painful and sorrowful rebellion against slavery, the killing of our children fated to the most utterly inhumane existence of man yet constituted by man, of the greatest inhumanity of man to man and woman. Written by

Frederick Douglass<sup>1</sup> (1818-1895), former slave and the first of the lineage of modern African-American writers that include Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison, this eyewitness account of a child slave, is as excoriating as any.

I have had two masters. My first master's name was Anthony. . . . His farms and slaves were under the care of an overseer. . . Master, however, was not a humane slave-holder. . . . He was a cruel man, hardened by a long life of slaveholding . . . I have often been wakened at the dawn of day by the most heart-rending shrieks of an own aunt<sup>2</sup> of mine, whom he used to tie up to a joist, and whip upon her naked back till she was literally covered with blood. No words, no tears, no prayers, from his gory victim, seemed to move his iron heart from its bloody purpose. The louder she screamed, the harder he whipped; and where the blood ran fastest, there he would whip longest. He would whip her top make her scream, and whip her to make her hush; and not till overcome by fatigue would he cease . . . It was the first of a long series of outrages of which I was doomed to be a witness and participant. . . . It was the blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery through which I was about to pass . . . (Douglass, 1995)

Writing/ writhing from the body now takes on new and even greater significance for me. I write of the fragmentation of the textual body of the Malay, but Douglass's account speaks of, and against, the material indisputably 'real' exercise of power that is inextricable from the Enlightenment project premised on a discourse on the inequalities of the human race. Beyond even the fragmentation of our societies, of our cultures and civilizations in the spurious deterministic automatic agency of 'the play of dominations' or forces (Foucault, 1977; p. 148), this is the fundamental and very real material fragmentation of the woman, the child, the naked and ignoble savages. The real physical dismembering of her body that is the realization of the textual attitude, and that is a highly organised attack of great chronicity, on those perceived as impure by the 'will to truth'. Morrison (Angelo, 1989), and other black historians (and who else would acknowledge this?), estimate that over sixty million Africans died during the African slave trade; a 'condition' for the virtual extinction of a 'race' that continues to this day.

<sup>1</sup> He was part of the American Anti-Slavery Society and colleague of Susan B. Anthony the 'mother' of the suffragette movement in the United States. He was unceremoniously discarded by Anthony who considered that having a Black man abroad platform only prejudiced that cause. More than a bit like saying having a woman on board the women's movement prejudiced that particular cause.

<sup>2</sup> The presence of this aunt who was of 'noble form' 'having few equals' 'among the coloured or white woman of our neighborhood', had been 'desired' by Douglas's master. Finding her absent and instead in the company of a male slave, he exacted his full inhuman measure of vengeance

Douglas's account of the atrocity of slavery also contrasts dramatically with Foucault's notion of the 'progressive enslavement' of the modern subject to the instinctive violence of the oppressive rationalities of the disciplinary tradition<sup>1</sup>. It is little wonder that his many critics accuse him, and his predecessors Nietzsche and Heidegger, of 'radical chic' or a bourgeois liberalism. Although I have rejected Foucault's project this work, however, is littered with many Foucauldian moments, for which I am grateful. Here again is another. The naked savage's amok and the ignoble savage's infanticide are comparable with that 'perverse' event that Foucault asks us to examine when writing our historiographies, an example being his edit of Pierre Rivere's account of his act of parricide (*Pierre Rivere, having slaughtered my mother, my sister and my brother: a case of parricide in Nineteenth Century*; Foucault, 1975).

### **The racialised nature of modernity**

Far from proposing an untenable notion that prejudice, oppression, and even slavery were unknown before the 'new world of discovery and conquests', I instead suggest that the modern tradition is racially paradigmed. Many 'race scholars' offer that prior to the 16th century humanity appeared to have not been as race/ colour conscious. Even the Crusades failed to make the Europeans race conscious (Bernal, 1987; Sanjek, 1994). Race as colour only attained social significance with the discovery of the Orient and the 'New World'. Representations of the other till then appeared to be relatively free of pejorative notions of superiority and inferiority, and the widespread application of race as a scientific construction is relatively recent (Bernasconi, 2001; Jahoda, 1999; Sanjek, 1994). While ethnocentrism and hierarchical rankings of groups have existed far longer than racialisation, colour of skin specifically and physical appearance in general appeared to play little part in these practices. The ethnocentric ancient Greeks who considered themselves supreme amongst peoples of the Mediterranean, had long thought of others to the North and South and light and dark skinned, as barbarians (Sanjek, 1994). The Greeks accorded 'civilised' status to the Nile Valley Nubians who were amongst the darkest of peoples they knew (Sanjek, 1994). It is when the Enlightenment scholar privileged colour that his project of modernity, to which slavery and colonisation were integral, proceeded along racialised trajectories (Bernasconi, 2001; Strack, 1996).

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<sup>1</sup> I have included this account of the plantation slave as an example of the physical brutalising of the body. Plantations were the cornerstone of the colonial economies in Africa and South Asia, and the privations of their labouring force were often no less extreme. Even to this day we learn of white South African farmers whipping and beating their workers to death.

## CHAPTER 12: REPRISING THE MYTH OF THE LAZY MALAY IN POST-INDEPENDENCE MALAYSIA

The textual accounts of the Malay began with the likes of Nicolo Conti almost from the inception of history itself, and progressed through to the modern age via with the ‘enlightened’ works of Rousseau, Blumenbach, Marsden and Raffles, and that *bona fide* scientific account of the Malay Archipelago by Wallace. Their interweaving inseparable narratives, one informing the other and heavily inflected with the scientific project, empowered and authorized British imperialism (Hampson, 2000; Yahya, 2003). In the more modern era the likes of Maugham, Conrad, and Burgess continued to perpetuate these ‘truths’ of the Malay though purportedly working to expose the brute reality of his existence (Hampson, 2000; Yahya, 2003). While these participants in ‘writing Malaya’ purported to objectively describe and scientifically codify all they saw<sup>1</sup>, what they recorded was perhaps the product of their own desires (Hampson, 2000; Said, 1977 & 1993; Yahya, 2003). The product, the ‘objective’ totalising textual representations of the Malay and his Archipelago<sup>2</sup>, is instead written against his/ her absolute silence, or more accurately perhaps, incoherent babble<sup>3</sup>. From its inception by Marsden the English colonialist discourse of the Malay native, this naked brown savage that is the native of the Malay Archipelago, is distinguished by its totalising nature. It seems that every attribute is deliberately, purportedly scientifically, written to fit a deficient sum that is the Malay of spontaneous nature fated for extinction where he not the White Man’s burden. The Malay is the maleficent sum to the White man’s munificent whole. Frantz Fanon was well accustomed with the totalising nature of the colonialist discourse, and the Manichean juxtaposition of the native/ savage, as negation, against the White Man’s civilised world:

The colonial world is a Manichean world. It is not enough for the settler [the coloniser] to delimit physically, that is to say with the help of army and the police force, the place of the native. As if to show the totalitarian character of colonial exploitation the settler paints the native as a sort of quintessence of evil. Native society is not simply described as a society lacking values. It is not enough for the colonist to affirm that those values have disappeared from, or better still never existed in, the colonial world. The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is, let us dare admit,

<sup>1</sup> By the methods of positivistic reductionism

<sup>2</sup> A “Malay Archipelago” only in name of course

<sup>3</sup> Darwin explains this incoherent child-like babble of the savages in terms of the developmental scale of human ethnography developed by Robertson (Darwin, 1901; 1964).

the enemy of values, and in this sense he is the absolute evil. He is the corrosive element, destroying all that comes near him; he is the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality; he is the depository of maleficent powers, the unconscious and irretrievable instrument of blind forces. (Fanon, 1990; p. 32)

It is interesting to me, and of great irony, to contrast the enlightenment conceptualised by Buddhism, an artefact of an other than Western tradition, with the historical Enlightenment, the 'font' of modern western civilisation and its 'universalised' values. This 'eastern' enlightenment frees one from desire, that attribute which causes his greatest suffering (Gard, 1961). European Enlightenment seems very much to me then to be or have become a product of desire. Perhaps when Descartes liberated man from his nature (through the disembodied self) by giving him reason, he also gave him the freedom to liberate himself from his sins (the death of God yet again) and avail himself of his desires<sup>1</sup>. Thus reason replaced the soul, science replaced con-science and natural justice, divine justice. That desire most germane to the Enlightenment could be said to be that of individual or personal ascendancy/ advancement, which in Buddhism's view, is an egoistic obsession with self (Gard, 1961). This cult of personal advancement then seems very much like that of the cult of the individual that is inherent to modernity (Gaylin & Jennings, 1996; Tole, 1993; Watt, 1997). It is those, however, who are dispossessed in the wilful realisation of this desire that suffer most as a consequence. The ranks of those dispossessed by this undiminished desire for the advancement of the individuated self include of course the 'White Man' himself; or more precisely those that desire and seek this fictitious identity and only the good and the privileges, devoid of the wickedness and thus the disincentives, of his inheritance (a dichotomy not particular to this tradition of course). Colonialist discourse can be said to be 'gnostic'. What it dissembles or obscures are the vested interests of the coloniser, not a re-constituted 'body of the Malay'. His body, like his societies and his narratives (history), is instead that which its author dismembers, in pursuing an egoistic obsession with self and the great privileges that are associated with the pursuit of this obsession.

### **Mahathir, modernity and the indolent Malay**

What perhaps is particularly poignant, and tragically so, to the myth of the lazy Malay is its commandeering by a number of notable intellectual and political leaders of the Malay world of today. This, as if to affirm the inevitability of the formerly colonised

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<sup>1</sup> Not surprising considering that the Enlightenment could be said to have emerged from an age ruled by religious tyranny

appropriating those same oppressive institutions and mechanisms of their coloniser, and thus perpetuating the latter's historically bound cultural systems (Fanon, 1963 & 1968). Alatas (1977) cites as an example of this unconscious, and unconscionable, appropriation, the work *Revolusi mental* ('mental revolution'; 1971) which was published by the dominant Malay ruling party of Malaysia, UMNO (United Malays National Organisation) to promote a culture of progress amongst the Malay. The product of the combined labour of fourteen Malay scholars, this book surpasses exceeds even Burgess, or Marsden, in characterising the Malay 'in negative terms unexcelled in the history of colonialism' (Alatas, 1977; p. 150).

Perhaps the most notable instance of the contemporary reprisal of the myth of the lazy Malay, however, is the persistent and very public castigation of the Malay's nature by Malaysia's recently retired Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. In his opening address of the general assembly of UMNO (June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2001), the architect of Malaysia's 'drive to modernity', criticized Malay for being ungrateful, lazy, greedy, and unworthy beneficiaries of the affirmative action policies of the NEP (Ranawana, 2001). Indicating his intention to soon retire, the then Premier commented that his failure to change the culture of his 'lazy' brethren was the greatest setback of his 20-year rule (STAR, July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2001). Dr. Mahathir had previously, in *The Malay dilemma*<sup>1</sup> (1970) attributed the idyllic (read indolent) existence of the Malay to the fecundity of the Malaysia's natural environment (torrid zones), reprising exactly the theories of Robertson, Marsden and Darwin on the inclinations of the savage races. The Malay unlike the White Man and the Chinese in particular (of the temperate zones), was unaccustomed to struggling for existence and for a living. He reiterated these sentiments at the same forum in the following year.

The Malays do not lack anything. They have the brains, the energy and skills, the capacity, the manual ability, strength just like everyone else. If they have not succeeded after being given the opportunities many times, after they have been helped with all kinds of facilities and even money the reason is that (and here I must beg the pardon of the Malays) they are not hard working, i.e. they are lazy and like to find the easy way and the quick way, no matter what the end results. . .

They cannot be patient, cannot wait a little. They want to be rich this very moment. Because of that when licenses are given, they sell the licenses, when approved permits for imports are given, they sell the permits, when

<sup>1</sup> Mahathir was expelled from UMNO and government following its publication

they are given contracts they sell the contracts for cash. No work is done other than to be close to people with influence and authority in order to get something because they are Malays, Bumiputeras.

Adding that

..actually the Malays and the other Bumiputeras can succeed if they put in a little more effort. For success they must be honest with themselves. Manage properly and avoid doing what is improper . . . . But we find that even though the Malays had embraced Islam for a long time, lately many of them have sidelined the Islamic culture. Whatever is wrong and sinful a good number of them do. Drug abuse, AIDS and HIV, rape, indulging in unnatural sex, incest, murder including killing their own parents and siblings and other members of the family, stealing and robbing and other crimes – all these the Malays commit more than the other communities who are not Muslims. There are many excuses given for the moral weakness of the Malays. . . . But the fact is that many Malays are immoral, willingly committing crimes and major sins. (“Full text”, 2002).

In addition to perpetuating the myth of the lazy Malay, Dr. Mahathir also reprised that now largely overlooked one of his moral turpitude, his treachery (Burgess, 1956; Clifford, 1898; Logan, 1849; Marsden, 1783; Swettenham, 1984). These comments are reminiscent of those determinations made on the moral qualities of the Malay by Marsden, Raffles, Swettenham, and Logan, the last having offered that the Malay suffered from a ‘want of moral elasticity’ (Logan, 1849; p. 463). The ‘Malays do not lack anything. They have the brains, the energy and skills, the capacity, the manual ability, strength just like everyone else’ (Mahathir, 2002). Perhaps in Mahathir’s esteem they lack the moral elasticity to resolve the good and the bad within them, brought upon in this day not by a deficient mentality (and thus reason) but purportedly a departure from the value system shaped by the great age of Islam. In his speech Dr. Mahathir, a physician by training, also places blame for the degraded morality of today’s Malay on those scientific ‘facts’<sup>1</sup> of the breakdown of the family and education system.

The very public castigation of the Malay for his indolence and backwardness by an elite of Malay scholars, venture capitalists, and politicians<sup>2</sup>, has continued unabated to this very day, and even exacerbated. Mahathir’s successor as Prime Minister, the very popular and much esteemed Abdullah Badawi has reiterated these accusations against

<sup>1</sup> But in reality the pseudo-scientific myths common to the modern polity across the spectrum, and everywhere, it seems.

<sup>2</sup> An elite that seems similar in its constitution to that of the western imperialist tradition.

the ‘common’ Malay, supplemented with a sniping commentary from the now sidelined Dr. Mahathir. Inevitably, ironically, and tragically these myths were promulgated through the same forum, the annual UMNO General Assembly (2004).

These myths of the Malay, far from facing extinction when discredited as western and imperialist in the immediate post-independence rhetoric, have resurfaced and even gained in authority in their current reprise. This elite, inclusive of those pre-eminent politicians of today’s Malaysia today, Mahathir Mohammed and Abdullah Badawi, and their cohorts in the dominant political body UMNO (with its thesis of mental revolution), have through much of its short existence insisted on the need for the Malay to progress and modernize (less they become extinct in the highly competitive modern world). These myths are also being propagated with a view of the Malay as backward, and hence the call for Malay to progress, clearly resonating with that determination of colonialist discourse of the Malay’s backwardness and innate imperviousness to (Christian) progress. One can argue that these myths serve this exact and long-standing purpose of blaming the Malay for this backwardness, and can only exist as part of this Manichean binary (backward native/ progressive West), a negation of modern man.

Local progressive Chinese, modernist Japan and South Korea, especially with regards to their work ethic, instead of the White Man have been proffered as the appropriate models in a look eastwards/ ‘Asian’ values (though still unconsciously northwards), and racially charged paradigm for progress (Mohammad, 2002; “Mahathir leaves”, 2003). Economic development of contemporary Malaysia in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century has followed this direction set by Mahathir, in his stated aim of Malaysia attaining developed nation, or First World Status by the year 2020. Japanese financial might and technological knowledge, and collaboration between a Malay corporate and political elite, and local Chinese of the entrepreneur class, have fueled a massive transformation of the commercial, physical, and inevitably, the social landscapes of Malaysia.

It is then no surprise to me that it is this Malay or more precisely Malaysian elite that in legislating a Malay race has reprised Marsden’s initial constitution of the Malay. In *The history of Sumatra*, Marsden explicitly identifies the Malay as one of the lesser of the races inhabiting this island of the Malay Archipelago, one synonymous with that lesser religion of the East, Islam (compared with the Bhrmanical ones; Marsden, 1966). Of great significance for me is his identification of that custom, as opposed to biological

descent, of becoming Malay. Sumatrans irrespective of their antecedents when they became Muslim automatically became Malay according to this custom.

. . . when the natives of other parts learn to read the Arabic character, submit to circumcision, and practise the ceremonies of religion, they are often said *men-jadi Malayo*. . . (Marsden, 1966; p. 42).

*Men-jadi Malayo*, which translates into the English as ‘become Malay’, was the vernacular in these parts for entering the Islamic faith. It was Marsden’s view that the Sumatran native in becoming Malay and Muslim, in their ‘their consequent change of manner have lost in a greater degree than some neighbouring tribes, the genuine Sumatran character’ for much the worse (Marsden, 1966; p. 41). This Malay differs from the other Sumatran races

more in the features of the mind than in those of their person. . . have an appearance of degeneracy’ and ‘seem rather to be sinking into obscurity. . . They possess much low cunning and plausible duplicity, and know how to dissemble the strongest passions and most inveterate antipathy, beneath the utmost composure of features, till the opportunity of gratifying their resentment offers. Veracity, gratitude, and integrity are not to be found in the list of their virtues, and their minds are almost strangers to the sentiments of honour and infamy... (Marsden, 1966; p. 207)

It must seem that it is Islam that invests this pre-colonial ideological product and not his natural attributes, as it is implied he is not a biological race, with his altogether degenerate character. Apart from the obvious dissembling of the unitary representation of the ‘treacherous Malay/ Mohammedans’ with the façade of a detailed scientific characterisation, what is immediately striking is the entirely pejorative tone of the latter. The unitary and the fragmented representations remain the same, a treacherous sum that is the telos of the colonialist discourse on the Malay, the end to justify the means of his discovery, conquest and colonisation.

William Marsden and Burgess are of like mind and spirit. So devoid are their invectives of virtually a single redeeming feature that it must seem the wheel has turned fully, a precise reprise of some two hundred years in the making. And to lend that illusion that ‘the more things change the more things remain the same’, the same some two hundred years later the inviolable principle of the contemporary constitutional construction of the Malay in Malaysian society, is that of the Muslim Malay; of the synonymity of the Malay with his inalienable faith. All who are not Muslim are

excluded from entering the dominant political 'race' and religion of Malaysia, including the 'true Malays', those original peoples of the Peninsula, the *Orang Asli*.

It does not seem merely coincidental to me that this very specific constitution of the Malay, and his first scientific characterisation by colonialist discourse, again intersect so forcefully after a two hundred year lapse, and at approximately, even precisely, that moment of 'a drive to modernity'. One could say, with a growing sense of horror, that in this very contemporary 'modernist' discourse disseminated by his ruling class, the Malay is declared to be largely a contemptible people by their own leaders, as contemptible as they were to Marsden, Raffles and Burgess. To paraphrase Fanon (1990), he is a 'race' that despite his decolonisation remains 'insensible to ethics', he 'represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values' (p. 32). In contemporary Malaysian society the ordinary Malay is the 'corrosive element', 'the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality' that impedes not only his own progress but that of his society, and his nation's drive to modernity (Fanon, 1990; p. 32).

A key strategy that Edward Said uses in his critical inquiries, which was remarked on earlier in this work, is that of repetition. Repetition 'imposes certain constraints upon the interpretation of text, it historicizes the text as something which originates in the world, which insists upon its own being (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2001; p. 6). Ironically however it is the very act of its repetition, beginning with Marsden and continuing to this day through Mahathir, that imparts materiality to this totalising colonialist discourse on the Malay. The constant repetition of the many myths of the Malay has given an authentic and authoritative materiality to what now passes as scientific truths of the modern Malay subject. Up until recently, however, this colonialist discourse was one that excluded that possibility of the Malay oriental as both author and audience. It is now however reiterated, in the public arena at least, almost exclusively by Malay and can be said to be almost as exclusively produced for Malay consumption. It seems little coincidence that this contemporary pseudoscientific political discourse of the indolent Malay performs the same function as its previous iterations, that of dissembling the very material, contemporary imperial, privileges of a ruling elite.

Where the Malay, be they ideological product, a culture, biological race or an ethnic group, may be considered as the adiscursive, ahistorical object of an imperialist/

colonialist 'scientised' discourse or history, it seems possible now to think of him/ her as an emerging modern subject. Having usurped the sovereignty of his European coloniser, he is now perhaps in danger of being 'progressively enslaved by the oppressive rationalities' of the discourse of a pseudoscience of which he is the very specific subject. This is a subject made possible by the 'drive to modernity', which includes a largely unquestioning subscription to its disciplinary tradition that passes, ubiquitously it must be said, for modern education. Against this backdrop it seems feasible to imagine that the current inscription of a modern 'scientific' discourse inscribed by the Malay himself, though in the form of his largely male modern ruling elite, will be less forcible than that of its colonialist predecessor. Disseminated by those who construct the Malay not as the other, but as a brother, its contemporary 'nationalist' reprise can thus be viewed, in this particular regard, as the reverse of the colonialist discourse on the Malay as the other. No matter that his science is as tenuous as that of his English predecessor, it is very largely the Malay that is reiterating its oppressive rationalities, likely making it more acceptable thus diminishing potential criticism of and resistance to its highly pejorative and dubious assertions.

It is also very significant for me that this drive to modernity, ostensibly a postcolonial or nationalist movement to improve, or rather progress, the condition of the colonised, is promulgated using the look East policy. Apart from the fact that the Malay is in reality asked again to look northwards, or to the great bygone era of (an Arab) Islamic civilisation (an again northwards), it is apparent to me that the presence of this ancestral Malay may be highly problematic to the authors of this ideological offensive. The great contradiction that is the ancestor of the Malay, most notably perhaps the Malaccan, is largely absent in this contemporary Malay discourse on the Malay. It (this discourse) consigns the ancestor to his historical status as a museal (dead) peoples, maintains his/ her absence (death/ silence), substituting the more progressive ideological products that are the refined Arab, of a bygone era, and the industrious 'Asian' of the north, in his place. 'When you kill the ancestor, you kill yourself' (Morrison, 1985). This death, a modernist erasure perhaps, of the ancestor seems to be engineered so as to reinvent the Malay, not in the image of as one of his former and superior colonisers, but as one their eastern but really Northern counterparts, the purportedly advanced 'progressive' Chinese, Korean or Japanese. What is especially poignant for me is that this ancestral Malay is of the lineage of *homo erectus* which makes him/ her our ancestor as well.

### **Malay resistance to colonial occupation and modernity**

It is credible in my view, however, to view this 'bigotry, conservatism and indolence' as a form of resistance; his perceived indolence as the major countervailing power against an imperialism that was capitalistic mercantilism and Christian progressive in its specific iteration of the English colonial project. Marsden, Raffles, Bird, Swettenham, Wallace, Clifford, and Bird, amongst so many, overwhelmingly viewed this imperialism as benevolent, civilising and progressive. Swettenham and Bird in particular observed that well after a century of British presence in the Peninsular that as 'wholesale' as the conversion of the Malay to Islam was so was his resistance to Christianity. They attributed this almost absolute rejection of English religion and progress to the bigotry, conservatism, and fatalism of the Malay. To this day the Malay of Peninsula Malaysia, with few exceptions, remains of the Islamic faith.

The Malay was in possession of both a substantial religion, Islam, and of a great civilisation at a time when the Europeans 'discovered' and swiftly conquered the East (Andaya, 2001; Sardesai, 2003; Reid, 2004). Marsden and Raffles attributed the rapid advance of the European in the Malay Archipelago to the stagnant (idle and indolent) and degraded state of the Oriental civilisation brought about by the deficient Eastern religions, particularly Islam and the so-called Brahmminical faiths. Little mention is made in colonialist discourse of the avarice, the unexpected and massive violence (amok) and the will to power/ knowledge that drove the great Imperialistic ventures, in this and other, theatres of conquest. The overt thesis of its ideological project, initiated by Marsden and Raffles, and continued by the likes of Swettenham and Burgess, is tendered as that enlightened selfless and necessary civilising mission, conducted for the redemption of the doomed savage races of deficient mentalities, faiths and beliefs.

The Malay who belonged to one such inert or defective system of beliefs, Islam, was confronted by a hegemonic force that was Christian, progressive and civilising, and which historically conceived of Islam as alien and threatening (Said, 1978; Obeidat & Mumayiz, 2001; Aljunied, 2004). The encounters between the West and the Orient, beginning with that of the Greeks and Persians in the fifth century B.C. were also written 'historically' as hostile and conflict-ridden (Said, 1978 & 1993). Alexander (Iskander) the Great's bloody encounters with the Persians also immediately come to mind, as do the innumerable Crusades, and the confrontations with the Ottoman Turks.

Today Turkey remains excluded from the EU, and the 'War on Terrorism' in the view of some serves as proxy for securing the region's oil reserves (Carkoglu & Rubin, 2003; Lichterman & Burroughs, 2004; Roy, 2004; Williams, 2004). The East has long been represented by history as a hostile alien force; the Moslem in particular as the enemy of the cross, the treacherous infidel (Obeidat & Mumayiz, 2001; Said, 1978). One of the stated aims of colonial expansion in this region was the 'crusading desire to outflank Islam at a global level' (Christie, 2000; p. 130). The launch of the swift and particularly brutal<sup>1</sup> Portuguese conquests of the Malayalee (Cochin and the Malabar coast) and the Malay (Malacca) was fuelled not only by the discovery of these territories and of pirating their unimaginable riches, but by that political ambition/ desire, made explicit by King Dom Joao (1481–1495), to dispossess the Arabs of their monopoly of the spice trade (Andaya, 2001). It is of significance then that Isabella Bird commented on the Portuguese conquest of Malacca that it 'was vaunted of as a great triumph of the Cross over the Crescent', indicating a desire for both religious as well as commercial advance in the European imperialistic ventures (Bird, 2000; p. 22).

Where perhaps Islam instilled a sense of communal interdependence and social equity through its principle of *umma*, of a universal Islamic community (Puteh, 1997), the Malay was expected by this aggressive civilising force to take to Christianity and a subordinate form of the capitalist mode of production. He was to uproot himself from the soil and labour subserviently as indentured labour and not the purportedly enfranchised labour of the industrialised nations; to slavishly produce profit for the corporate entity, the English merchant and his civilisation. It is duplicitous that Raffles, Clifford and Swettenham railed against the 'indigenous' Malay slave industry while developing an international commercial network premised on the labour of the forcibly indentured, the dispossessed natives and savages of the torrid zones (Alatas, 1977; Bird, 2000; Yahya, 2003). In contemporary Malaysia the Malay is given the designation *Bumiputera*, 'son of the soil'. These sons of the soil, who were to be dispossessed of the very soil they were born of, resisted and it was instead the dispossessed of India and China who largely formed the labouring classes of the Native States (Andaya, 2001; Shamsul, 1996). The 'indolence' and 'bigotry' of the Malay seems to me no less than their longstanding collective resistance and opposition to the great oppression that is the

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<sup>1</sup> When is conquest not swift and brutal? It is meant to be, as a product of war against the lesser savage races, the product of the struggle for the preservation of the favoured races (Darwin, 1901; 1964).

modern Christian colonisation of their societies. There is a common saying in the former colonies, likely of indigenous North American origin, which approximates to the following - 'when the White Man came, we had the land and they had the bible. Now they have the land and we the bible'. It seems no coincidence that the Malay of the Peninsula in retaining his religion has also retained his land. It also seems no coincidence that in declaring Malaysia an Islamic state, the political elite (really Mahathir) appear to me to be demanding Malay land, ostensibly for the development of a 'modern' Islamic state, in exchange for the Koran. Another colonialist strategy unerringly reprised by those continuing its legacy.

That this son of the soil still resists the projects of the Enlightenment is only too evident to me. During my stay in Malaysia, between February and November of 2004, I noted the persistent and public efforts of the political elite in trying to persuade, even shame, his fellow Malay into selling or developing their inherited and priceless land. Much of this land is situated in the heart of the modern cosmopolis of Kuala Lumpur.

Denigrated and dismissed as practically worthless undeveloped - and here the notion of unworked land of the savage peoples as wasted land resonates yet again - its Malay owners are being subjected to persistent efforts aimed at shaming them into divesting themselves of their inheritance. I had the good fortune to assist the Selangor State Government in their efforts to establish a State Park aimed at the sustainable use of the natural resources that serve Kuala Lumpur so well. During one of the many seminars I attended I was reminded of the value of the traditional Malay orchard, or *dusun*. What at first sight may seem like an accidental gradation of a village settlement into the teeming tropical jungle was in reality one of the finest examples of a longstanding real, as opposed to mythical and romanticised, harmonious existence with nature - an ecological wonder that was the focus of much interest in 1960's and 1970's from the West (Professor K. M. Wong, personal communication; March 10, 2004).

The science of the *Dusun* may not qualify as belonging to a modern discipline but it is still a science, and a wondrously conceptualised or evolved one at that. The Malay garden/ market-garden/ orchard grades ever so subtly into and with the forests, and are highly resistant to disease and pests. They provide space for both man and nature to coexist in a holistic, highly sustainable use of natural resources. Trees shelter all living under their canopies, and houses standing on stilts do without air-conditioning, that now ubiquitous convenience of Malaysia's increasingly barren urban centres. The

intelligence behind this quintessentially Malay cultivation not only mocks that of the banal landscape of the modern orchard and its ecologically disastrous monoculture, but that very notion of worked or cultivated/ developed land as the basis of civilisation society (now replaced by the urban skyline). Modern cultivated land exists only through incredibly excessive use of polluting chemicals (agriceuticals) and on the oft-cynical contrivances of the 'global market', the pre-eminent dominant contrivance of the modern world. The typical *dusun* contains a variety of crops (flowering plants, herbs, vegetables and fruit trees) which grade into the jungle and is especially disease and pest resistant. That the *dusun* still exist in great numbers in Malaysia primarily because the *Bumiputera* stubbornly clings to that inheritance of the soil, his/ her land. The irony of this very material fact is only amplified when one considers that the English developed the idea of the plantation in Malaya, the result being a wealthy agrarian economy based on the rubber tree and Oil Palm. This economy reaped the Empire decades of inestimable revenue – an economic strategy that the current government is intent on reprising. That the ordinary Malay resists those risible efforts to sell his inheritance speaks, for me if no one else, volumes for the fortitude and world-view of the 'son of the soil'.

## EPILOGUE

This is my thesis of the text, of colonialist discourse, as antagonistic. For the adiscursive ahistorical object/ subject that are the colonised native/ savage 'races' the text is not merely gnostic. The Malay who is the object of an English colonialist discourse heavily inflected by the scientific project, is no whole or intact subject that is masked or constituted by text. The brown naked Malay savage or the black ignoble African (and Indian) savage is not 'progressively enslaved by the instinctive violence' of the 'oppressive rationalities of discourse'. Their enslavement is instead swift, brutal and ruthless, purportedly the fate of the human lacunae prescribed by the Enlightenment doctrine of the 'universal struggle for existence'.

This hostile writing of the native/ savage by the West deforms fractures and eventually fragments the body, and civilisation, of this Malay via a combination of its sheer weight of force and uncompromising repetition that persists to this day. What is finally shattered, and dispersed, is his/ her humanity - a textual death that mimics or fulfils the predicted fate of his inevitable extinction through the method of nature or, more rapidly, the imperfect artificial method of civilised man. In this textual death, in this destruction of his humanity, that which purportedly constitutes his inhumanity is dissipated, as if escaping through the deforming and fracturing surface particularity of its writing. Amongst his inhuman attributes are amok, itself fragmented from a collective organised act to the chaotic act of the individual Malay, and indolence. One cannot exist without the other and they signify the Malay's capricious nature, his ahistorical status as spontaneous naked savage, and confirm his original assignation as the most treacherous of all the human races.

The amok and indolence of this reconstituted Malay signify his malfeasance, his moral, mental and physical incapacity, in the struggle for existence when confronted inevitably by the munificent White Man in his voyages of advance (which are metaphor for his naturally preordained trajectory of progress). His solitary amok and languid indolence are metaphor for the Malay's descent into chaos, his regress as a museal peoples of a dead (stagnant) and fragmenting civilisation to that state that is natural capricious savage of a feminised nature. Flitting erratically between his amok and koma-tose states, it is little wonder then that this chaotic/ disordered native capitulated so swiftly, as did all natives, to the advance of the rational White Man. It is also this White Man

then who, not coincidentally, exercises his self-vested munificence in resurrecting the Malay and his civilisation.

In incorporating precisely the historical characterisation of amok in its classification of mental disorders, psychiatry and its collaborator science of psychology are amongst those institutions today which have sustained, or even revived, a particularly English colonialist discourse on the Malay as a spontaneous naked brown savage. Psychiatry, and psychology, not only disseminates this colonialist discourse, but compounds it by marginalising the 'native races' through a spurious interpretation of culture that overlaps almost precisely with the historical 'truths' of the native/ savage and the colonised. In doing so those who disseminate this psychiatric discourse have merely and lazily repeated the seemingly unalterable errors of history having, like Marsden and Wallace before them, expediently and even 'unscientifically' ignored ample empirical evidence to the contrary. That they do so in service of privilege, as does the ruling elite of Malaysia today in inscribing a modern Malay subject, is only too apparent to me.

#### **Postscript**

There are those connections to be made with colonial and contemporary New Zealand society with regard to the status of woman and Maori, the latter specifically as a 'naked brown savage of the South Seas' who is naturally backward and indolent. It is not my intention nor do I regard it my place to appropriate what rightfully is the work of woman and Maori. If this current work is of use any are welcome to 'sample' it, though of course I prefer that this be done in the secular-ethical spirit of its writing.

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\* The Massey University copy of Wallace's *The Malay Archipelago* was being repaired during the period this thesis was written, and internet copies were instead sourced for reference.