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FANTASIES OF RACE: THE SYMBOLIC ECONOMY OF SUBJECTIVITY IN BRITISH COLONIAL LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

FANTASIES OF RACE: THE SYMBOLIC ECONOMY OF SUBJECTIVITY IN BRITISH COLONIAL LITERATURE

By

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This dissertation addresses the intimately connected problems of community and racial difference in early modernist British texts. It offers an examination of the various ways that the constitutive excess of the modern subject marks certain bodies, which are, as a result of this process, racialized. Beginning with a comparison between Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Karl Marx's *Capital, Volume One*, I argue that because the commodity materializes the foundational disjunction between the incommensurable logics of consumption and production, it seems to contain the seeds of a boundless desire, unconstrained by natural limitations. I then examine the particular strategies of containment of this potentially disruptive desire within Conrad's text, arguing that the touch of the commodity metonymically constructs African bodies under the European gaze as a series of bodily stigmata that are coextensive with the semiotics of racial science. I extend this analysis through an examination of three of Conrad's stories of the sea, *The Nigger of the "Narcissus,"* "Youth," and "The Secret Sharer." Aligning the logic of capital with the Lacanian logic of subjectivity, I demonstrate that in each of these stories the formation of an ideal community of sailors depends upon the abjection of a single black body, which is racialized through the reiterated performance of its violent exclusion. I continue with an inquiry into concept of "the Law" in H. G. Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, in which I contend that "race" acts as a form of imaginary containment for the disavowal of the performative foundation of subjectivity. I extend

this analysis through a comparison of Wells's use of certain key terms of racial discourse with their use by Edward Tylor in *Anthropology* and Francis Galton in *Hereditary Genius*. I conclude with a discussion of Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*. I focus my analysis on Kipling's imaginative construction of a white identity that embraces the performativity inherent within the modern problematic of subjectivity. Kipling envisions a performative identity that thrives on the production of a rigid racial hierarchy, exposing the potentially oppressive aspects of such an identity.

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Introduction: Culture and Race

Why should we continue to study "race" in British literature? Hasn't race become a reified category, rigidly contained within the mantra of race, gender, and class? If race has been largely displaced in contemporary discourses, both popular and academic, by the supposedly more fluid concept of "culture," wouldn't the study of culture, as opposed to race, provide a more dynamic and nuanced field of inquiry – one not limited to the repetitive criticism of an outdated social Darwinism? After all, for at least twenty years there have been constant and influential investigations into the significance of "cultural studies" for the study of literature. In a recent issue of *Modernism / Modernity*, for instance, Rita Felski argues that "cultural studies" must be understood as one of three main intellectual orientations within the study of literary modernism, alongside "the sociology of literature and culture" and "political formalism" (504). The term "culture" within the rubric "cultural studies" obviously means many things, and the very polysemia of the term seems to promise a rich field of inquiry to anyone who is willing to take the time and effort to carefully study the complexity of the political, economic, and social articulations that the term contains. While there have been a number of substantive inquiries into the role of race in the formation of "national" literatures over the same period of time, and while the boundary between the concepts of race and culture is frequently blurry, it is significant, I think, that nothing going under the name of "race studies" or any similar designation can claim the influence of cultural studies. Why?

The purpose of raising this question is not simply to suggest that a particular concept of culture should be replaced by that of race within literary studies, nor is it to engage in a general criticism of the field of cultural studies, which is beyond the scope of

this project. Rather, it is my belief that in order to explain how the concept of race can be productively applied to the study of British literature, we must define the often unspoken connection between race and culture. In a recent article in *PMLA*, Shu-mei Shih examines a variety of contemporary uses of the term "culture" employed in various attempts to define "world literature." Shih argues that the concept of culture has been effectively commodified within a system of global exchange so that it effectively conceals relations of domination within multinational capitalism by transferring "politics to the realm of the apolitical so that the economic ends of global capitalism are achieved" (23). Shih contends that within the global exchange economy,

> Culturalization now substitutes for racialization, so that the trauma of race and racism can be sidestepped and the political potential of rupture based on a clear delineation of racial oppression is disenabled. Race becomes culturalized to such an extent that it all but disappears, even though it continues to structure hierarchies of power. (23)

In this passage, Shih argues that within the current global economy "culture" effectively denotes a strategy of disavowing "hierarchies of power" that are more directly expressed in the term "race": "culturalization substitutes for racialization" in such a way that the "political potential of rupture" that characterizes race is effectively obscured in favor of a reified and static entity that loses the potential to disrupt the smooth flow of commodity exchange. The implied relationship of race to global capitalism, in this equation, is one of both generation and suppression: within Shih's argument the success of multinational capitalism depends not only upon the production of racial difference, but additionally upon the concealment of this technology of power under the term "culture." The

relationship between race and culture suggested by Shih, according to which race names a methodology of power and culture names its ideologically predominant form of disavowal and containment, is a productive starting point for articulating the link between the concepts of culture and race.

In order to begin to complicate and expand this connection between culture and race, and to begin to place it historically in terms of British modernism, I will turn to an episode from E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*. In this novel, the plot of which centers around the alleged attempted rape of an Englishwoman, Adela Quested, by an Indian man, Aziz, Forster offers an anatomy of how the construction of racial difference sustains (and ultimately disrupts) colonial power in British India. The debacle between Adela and Aziz begins when she accompanies him to view the Marabar Caves outside of Chandrapore, which she believes will allow her fulfill the wish "to see the real India" (24). Adela's search for authenticity is immediately problematized, however, for we learn that Aziz has never been to the Caves although he has spent his life in Chandrapore. In this way, the Caves are shown to be a destination for English tourists rather than an integral part of the lives of Indians, a revelation that seems to qualify the viewpoints not only of the characters, but even that of the third person omniscient narrator, who introduces the Caves as the only "extraordinary" feature of Chandrapore (7). The very mention of the Marabar Caves therefore exposes a fundamental dissonance within inter-cultural communication. The fact that the illusion of omniscience in the narrative viewpoint is disrupted with the mention of the Caves points to the fact that this is not a superficial dissonance that can be overcome with the discovery of a transparent means of communication. Rather, a fundamental opacity within language, which is experienced by

the characters as an impenetrable silence within intercultural communication, is shown to be the definitive feature of cultural identity within *A Passage to India.*

The Marabar Caves function as a central spring for the action of the novel, for it is from the enigma of the Caves that the alleged rape and consequent trial that structure the plot emerge. If the Caves act as a center for the action of the plot, however, they are clearly an absent center, or a feature that does not represent or refer to anything outside of itself, but rather resists signification altogether. This characteristic is manifest from the first mention of the Caves in the story; when Professor Godbole and Aziz are asked to explain the attraction of the Caves to Adela, they confront a strange silence, an inability to describe the Caves at all. Significantly, Aziz experiences this silence, this resistance within language to meaning when he attempts to articulate the significance of the Caves, specifically as an inability to communicate with the English. Aziz, realizing that both he and Godbole are struck silent when they attempt to explain the mystery of the Marabar Caves to their English visitor, can equate this silence only to the resistance to transparency that he encounters when trying to communicate with his English superior, Major Callendar: "The Major accused him of disingenuousness, and was roughly right, but only roughly. It was rather that *a power he couldn't control capriciously silenced his mind*" [italics mine] (76).

Callendar, we discover, similarly experiences an impermeable resistance within language in his interactions with Aziz that defines all of his attempts to communicate with Indians. Callendar, we are told, "only knew that no one ever told him the truth, although he had been in the country for twenty years" (54). The "truth" is inaccessible to Callendar in all of his interactions with his Indian subordinates, a fact that he attributes to

some inexplicable dishonesty in all Indians in every situation. Indians, for Callendar, are always concealing a secret; "there's always something behind every remark [an Indian] makes" (33). Furthermore, the cultural Other who always seems to be concealing an essential truth for some unfathomable reason returns to us a displaced image of ourselves. In *A Passage to India*, the recognition of oneself in the field of the cultural Other is always shown to be a misrecognition, in which some essential feature, the very thing that defines the truth of one's being, is withheld or concealed. As the narrator explains of one of Callendar's descriptions of Aziz, "it was all true, but how false a summary of the man; the essential life of him had been slain" (34). In such instances, a certain displacement that takes place within intercultural communication is ultimately shown to be constitutive of cultural identity for both Callendar and Aziz; the symbolic economy of cultural identity is set in motion with the misrecognition of both the Englishman Callendar and the Indian Aziz within the field of the (cultural) Other. The primordial split of subjectivity that is reflected back to each man due to an opaque quality of language is shown to be a moment of cultural differentiation in the setting of colonial India; the Englishman and the Indian each encounter a hard core of persistent and stubborn resistance to transparency within language, and it is from within this space of resistance that each receives his image from the Other.

Both Aziz and Callendar experience this resistance within language as a strange power outside of their control, or as a silence that imposes itself upon them. And while both of them encounter this strange silence during attempts to communicate with the cultural Other, this feature of intercultural communication is later given both a more universal and a more specific significance. It is given a more universal significance when

the Caves are finally described by the omniscient narrator, prior to Aziz and Adela's day-trip. The hills that contain the Caves are themselves "primal," for "they bear no relation to anything dreamt or seen" (123; 124). They even resist the label "uncanny," because this term "suggests ghosts, and they are older than all spirit" (124). The Caves are an absolutely primordial presence, excluded even from the possibility of haunting, or the return of something dead, excluded, or repressed, because they are both chronologically and logically prior to the existence of history and meaning. Thus,

> the visitor returns to Chandrapore uncertain whether he has had an interesting experience or a dull one or any experience at all. He finds it difficult to discuss the caves, or to keep them apart in his mind, for the pattern never varies, and no carving, not even a bees' nest or a bat distinguishes one from another. *Nothing, nothing attaches to them*, and their reputation – for they have one – does not depend upon human speech. [italics mine] (124)

The Caves precede history and language, for they contain "no carving," no sign of human existence or even life of any sort. They cannot be distinguished from one another, for the very process of self-differentiation would suggest the possibility of meaning – one of the Caves might be set in relation to another – and as is frequently reiterated, the Caves cannot be made to signify. Furthermore, "if mankind grew curious and excavated, *nothing, nothing* would be added to the sum of good or evil" and the Caves have "*nothing* inside them" [italics mine] (125). As the very repetition of the word "nothing" indicates – first we are told that "nothing attaches to them," then that they can add "nothing" to the sum total of meaning, then that there is "nothing inside them" – they are pure absence, and therefore cannot be differentiated and set in relation to themselves or anything else.

They are described only in terms of negation – what they lack, what is absent. Even the description of their physical shape is described in these terms, for they have "neither ceiling nor floor" (125). The Caves are "empty," "hollow"; a Marabar Cave "mirrors its own darkness in every direction infinitely," and can do nothing else (125). The Marabar Caves designate a space of absence that refers to no prior presence; because there was nothing there before them, they resist even the possibility of being haunted.

In the form of the Marabar Caves, the stubborn opacity that Aziz encounters in his attempts to communicate with the English is given a more universal significance. The Caves, which are the occasion for the failure of language that Aziz experiences when speaking with Adela, are elaborately described as an absolutely primordial void – prior to culture, prior to history, prior to meaning, prior to human life or to life of any sort. The Caves themselves, to the extent that they materialize this void, both within the geography and the language of the novel, might be understood as a narrative *objet petit a*. Lacan explains the *objet a* as "a privileged object, which has emerged from some primal separation, from some self-mutilation induced by the very approach of the real" (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 83). The Marabar Caves, within *A Passage to India*, manifest the primal lack from which both signification and the subject emerge, but which is in itself absolutely resistant to meaning.

The central failure within language that defines Aziz's relationships with all of his English acquaintances (even the sympathetic Fielding), and which is manifested by the Marabar Caves, is also given a more specific meaning, however, for within the early twentieth-century colonial India of the story, this disruption within meaning is met with a very particular ideological construct: racism. Upon entering the Caves, Adela is

disconcerted by their effect of reducing all sound to an identical, indistinguishable "boum." As her guide explains to her, "to shout is useless" when inside one of the Caves, for "a Marabar cave can hear no sound but its own" (154). Encountering this noise, which is described as "before time" and "before space also," this void upon which meaning shatters and within which all sound including her own voice literally becomes nothing but an infinitely undifferentiated echo, Adela flees from the Cave (208). Her panic upon encountering this primal "boum," this manifestation of nonsense, is very easily explained by her English compatriots: they determine that Aziz attempted to rape her. Adela, within the cultural imaginary of English racism, is transformed into "an English girl fresh from England," while Aziz becomes the manifestation of the obscenely appetitive racial Other, to whom Adela's fiancé, Ronny Heaslop, sacrifices all of his enjoyment – including, in this case, the sexual enjoyment that he claims as his own from Adela (165). Ronny, having once sacrificed his pleasure, or rather having given up his claim to it and claimed it in the same gesture, refuses to accept it in any other form: when Adela tells him that Aziz never tried to rape her, he tells her that she is hysterical. When Adela insists that Aziz is innocent, Ronny responds that "the machinery has started... it will work to its end" (206). Ronny has no real desire to claim Adela's virginity. It is rather the sacrifice of her virginity to Aziz to which he is committed. Furthermore, he realizes that this sacrifice sustains the "machinery" of British imperial justice. If Ronny is said be intelligent because of his intuitive understanding with the machinery of colonial rule earlier in the novel, in this passage Ronny's commitment to an economy of sacrifice to the racial Other is shown to fuel this machinery.

Ronnie is, perhaps, the character most representative of the enthusiastic imperialist within *A Passage to India* because of the youthful zest with which he participates in the game of cultural identity formation. Like Callendar, Ronny believes that Indians are for some inexplicable reason resistant to the notion of truth. "Every day," we are told, Ronny "worked hard in the court trying to decide which of two untrue accounts was the less untrue, trying to dispense justice fearlessly, to protect the weak against the less weak, the incoherent against the plausible, surrounded by lies and flattery" (50). But Ronny, unlike Callendar, draws a sustaining pleasure from the continual confrontations with this impenetrable Other that are required of a colonial magistrate. It is, finally, the self-satisfaction that Ronny reveals when discussing his unappreciated sacrifices on behalf of native Indians that his mother finds so repellant. As he explains, the strange demands of dealing with a group of people that one cannot possibly understand requires that he continually respond to these demands out of an embittered sense of "duty," since he no longer expects "sympathy" from those he serves. Mrs. Moore, his mother, cannot help but observe:

> How Ronny reveled in the drawbacks of his situation! How he did rub it in that he was not in India to behave pleasantly, and derived positive satisfaction therefrom... His words without his voice might have impressed her, but... she heard the self-satisfied lilt of them... she saw the mouth moving so complacently and competently... One touch of regret from the heart... would have made him a different man, and the British Empire a different institution. (51)

Ronny enjoys his perpetual confrontations with unfathomable Indians, and it is this feature which makes him a competent colonial magistrate. He takes pleasure from an

economy of renunciation, in which he repeats a sacrifice – expressed here as his surrendered right to sympathy – to a colonial Other – or the Indian plaintiffs and defendants who plead their cases before Ronny – each time he performs his "duty." This pleasure is expressed, in this passage, as an "intelligent and embittered" self-gratification that he receives from the performance of his duty as magistrate, and which is, furthermore, thought by his mother to be characteristic of "the British Empire" as a whole (51). Ronny experiences the Indian Other to whom he sacrifices his pleasure as what Slavoj Žižek has termed "the subject presumed to enjoy," as an Other that claims all pleasure for itself (*Sublime Object* 186).

This aspect of Ronny's character, according to which he extracts pleasure from the constant sacrifice of his enjoyment to an Indian Other who is therefore supposed to contain a limitless, horrifying *jouissance*, is underscored following the alleged rape attempt. It is, finally, Ronny, rather than Adela, who places himself firmly in the space of enjoyment created by the psychic economy of sacrifice that seems to characterize the efficient operation of the British colonial machinery. "Miss Quested," we are told, "was only a victim, but young Heaslop was a martyr; he was the recipient of all the evil intended against them by the country they had tried to serve; he was bearing the sahib's cross" (185). Ronny claims for himself the status of "martyr" that is out of reach for Adela, who is merely a "victim," and the difference between the two positions seems to be entirely contained within Ronny's attachment to sacrifice which is, here and elsewhere, equated more or less directly with his Englishness. When Ronny bears "the sahib's cross," he is, within this formulation, assuming the position representative of all "sahibs," or whites, in colonial India; he is forgoing his own rightful claims to enjoyment

in the name of the greater good, bearing the white man's burden as his attempt to "serve" is met not only with ingratitude, but with something more inexplicable and absolute, "evil." This sacrifice elevates him to the position of a "martyr" for whiteness. Whiteness, within *A Passage to India*, is constituted through this economy of sacrifice. It exists as a form of identity only to the extent that it specifies a particular relationship to the traumatic kernel in language that resists signification: that of sacrificing one's pleasure to the Other.

Within Forster's novel, we therefore witness the development of a specific, if implicit, idea of race, and its relationship to a national, or cultural, identity. Culture designates the symbolic level of existence of the English in colonial India, the level of signification on which the English might converse about their national characteristics as they sit in the whites-only club that is the hub of English social life in the novel. It is on this level that we witness the creation of a national symbol in the form of a "young mother – a brainless but beautiful girl," whom the Anglo-Indians consign to permanent residence in the club in case "the 'niggers attacked'" (180-81). They do so, although there is no reason to believe that she will be singled out for an attack, because "she symbolized all that is worth fighting and dying for" (181). In other words, the young mother *represents* those aspects of the national character that define Englishness. Race, on the other hand, specifies the imaginary relationship of the English to the traumatic kernel of the real. If the real designates that "space" within language that gives birth to the process of symbolization while itself resisting all signification, race is the sacrificial psychic economy through which this absence – represented throughout *A Passage to India* as a failure of intercultural communication – is both disguised and effectively

utilized. Race therefore names the presence of the traumatic kernel of the real within the (cultural) realm of the symbolic. Ronny becomes emblematic of this imaginary relationship of sacrifice to an Other obscenely satiated with *jouissance* when he becomes a "martyr," thereby assuming the pleasure of the white man's burden and becoming the exemplary sahib, or white man, in the process.

Race, in *A Passage to India*, names an imaginary construct through which the British colonial culture constitutes and sustains itself. The Marabar Caves, representing the primal absence around which identity is formed, become the spring of action in the novel not as a symbol, but as a central absence to which "nothing attaches," which contain "nothing inside them," or which have no meaning and to which no meaning can be attached. Yet it is from this primal abyss, and specifically in reaction to the terrifying "boum" that reduces all meaning to the level of an equivalent, asignifying sound, that the charges of rape appear. Race sutures this originary absence with a set of stereotypes that allow colonialists to maintain their attachment to an imaginary Other, whose infinite sexual appetitiveness both conceals and reveals the abyss at the center of their identity, and who allows this central lack to be utilized for the purpose of colonial oppression: in Ronny's formulation, it fuels the "machinery" of the colonial order. Žižek's definition of race seems appropriate here. The "real" he states,

> is the unfathomable remainder of the ethnic substance whose predicates are different cultural features that constitute our identity. In this precise sense, race relates to culture as the real does to the symbolic. "Real" is the unfathomable X that is at stake in the cultural struggles... [T]here must be some X that is

"expressed" in the cultural set of values, attitudes, rituals, etc., that materialize our way of life. ("Love Thy Neighbor" 169)

Race, in Žižek's formulation, is the equivalent of the real of culture, the excess or "remainder" of the symbolic representation of ourselves that cannot be symbolically digested. It is the traumatic core of cultural being, both the product and the origin of any given culture, that cannot be assimilated into the symbolic order.

The particular symbolic order portrayed in *A Passage to India* operates according to an economy of renunciation, not unlike the economy of "civilization" described by Freud in *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Freud, writing on the eve of Hitler's rise to power, perhaps could not help dwelling on a cultural economy of renunciation very similar to the British colonial psychic economy dissected by Forster. Freud begins his seventh chapter with the question "What means does civilization employ in order to inhibit the aggressiveness which opposes it, to make it harmless, to get rid of it?" (83) In answer to this question, Freud discovers not a system of rendering an instinctive aggression innocuous, but a cultural apparatus that produces aggression as a necessary condition of its self-production. Like Forster's colonial India, Freud's civilization operates through renunciation:

> Conscience (or more correctly, the anxiety which later becomes conscience) is indeed the cause of instinctual renunciation to begin with, but that later relationship is reversed. Every renunciation of instinct now becomes a dynamic source of conscience and fresh renunciation increases the latter's severity and intolerance... [W]e should be tempted to defend the paradoxical statement that conscience is the result of instinctual renunciation, or that instinctual

> renunciation... creates conscience, which then demands further instinctual renunciation. (90-91)

Within this formulation, renunciation, originally the minimal condition for the co-existence of people within the structure of society, transforms itself from a means to an end (much like Marx's exchange value detaches itself from use value to form its own, incommensurable system of valuation). If conscience generates renunciation, renunciation paradoxically seems equally to generate and sustain conscience, the elemental unit of the symbolic order. Renunciation is therefore both the source of conscience and its end, in the sense that it "becomes the aim and vehicle of satisfaction" (Butler, *Psychic Life of Power* 143). Renunciation finally names a system of recycling an aporia at the logical origin of "civilization" in such a way that civilization can continue to re-create itself. If race, as Žižek states, names the remainder of the symbolic production of a culture, in *A Passage to India* it specifically names the remainder of a symbolic economy of renunciation. Aziz plays the role of the racial Other saturated with obscene enjoyment, to whom Ronny demands to sacrifice his own claims to pleasure. When the prosecuting attorney, Mr. McBryde, "sadly" remarks "that the darker races are physically attracted by the fairer, but not *vice versa*," he states the essential case against Aziz (218-19). The fact that this statement causes "the first interruption" within the court announces the approach of the real, or the uncomfortable proximity of the remainder of the sacrificial economy, the residue of a system of oppression (219). The jeering and native laughter that accompanies the statement of this "fact which any scientific observer will confirm" amounts to an irruption of the real within the very sanctuary of symbolic production and control, the imperial courtroom (219). Racial difference has announced

its presence, and it is both the locus of control (McBryde's scientific proof of the infinitely appetitive racial Other, which he seeks to convert into law) and the potential site of a destruction of the very symbolic order that it sustains (represented by the jeering and laughter of Indians, which disrupts the legal proceedings and ultimately announces the failure of the case against Aziz).

It is this dual valence of race, as both a sustaining feature of oppression and a site of disruption for this same oppression, that Shu-mei Shih believes is obscured by the term "culture" within the logic of multiculturalism in such a way "that the trauma of race and racism can be sidestepped and the political potential of rupture based on a clear delineation of racial oppression is disenabled" (23). Race in both of these senses serves as the focal point of my examination of early modernist British colonial literature in this dissertation. More specifically, I will examine the ways that the cultural logic of imperialism creates and re-creates race as a condition of its own operation. In this dissertation, I focus on the works of Joseph Conrad, H. G. Wells, and Rudyard Kipling, three authors who persistently confront "race" as the traumatic kernel of the real within colonial culture, and develop an incredibly diverse set of attitudes, narrative postures, and fantasies in order to provide various types and degrees of suture for these irruptions of the real. In doing so, I hope to emphasize both the multiplicity of forms that race takes in the era of the global expansion of industrial capitalism and its flexibility and adaptability to varied ideological and disciplinary constructs. Such a project is necessary both to explain the persistence of race as a system of oppression up until the present day, and to obtain even an elemental grasp of the dynamics of identity formation in the era of the global expansion of industrial capitalism.

In chapter one, I compare two novels by Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* and *The Nigger of the "Narcissus,"* with Karl Marx's *Capital, Volume One*. Through a reading of *Capital*, I argue that capitalism sets in motion a systemic logic according to which the commodity comes to embody the incommensurability of the logics of production and consumption. Because the commodity materializes the foundational disjunction that is the condition of existence of capitalism, it seems to contain the seeds of a boundless desire, unconstrained by any natural limitations. Establishing parallel concerns over the destructive logic of capital in Marx and the two novels by Conrad, I examine the particular strategies of containment of this potentially disruptive desire within Conrad's texts. I consider the way the touch of the commodity metonymically constructs African bodies under the European gaze as a series of bodily stigmata that are coextensive with the semiotics of racial science. In this section, I focus specifically on the way that the touch of the commodity constructs two female bodies in *Heart of Darkness*: Kurtz's "savage and superb" African mistress and his white fiancé, "the Intended" (56). I argue that the African woman is given a deeply corporeal physical presence through intimate contact with the fetish objects of colonial trade, while the European woman attains a disembodied aesthetic transcendence through an impossible detachment from these same objects, as when she is described as "floating" through a room heavily encumbered with the knick-knacks of imperial plunder (68). In this analysis of the relation of black and white female bodies to the commodity, I discuss how the differential interpellation of these bodies creates a space of disembodied whiteness that is the condition of both aesthetic transcendence (in relation to the "barbarous"

African arts, which are defined by the fetishistic qualities of the commodity) and the creation of the domestic sphere as the stronghold of "civilization."

I extend this analysis in chapter two through an examination of three of Conrad's stories of the sea, *The Nigger of the "Narcissus,"* "Youth," and "The Secret Sharer." Aligning the logic of capital with the Lacanian logic of subjectivity, I demonstrate how in each of these stories the formation of an exemplary community of sailors depends upon the abjection of a single black body, which is racialized through the reiterated performance of violent exclusion. Focusing on the characters of James Wait in *The Nigger of the Narcissus* and Abraham in "Youth," I examine how this reiterative embodiment of the single black sailor on each ship is performed through torture: Wait undergoes the ceaseless torture of disease, while Abraham is battered by a storm, "the sole purpose" of which, it seems to the narrator, "had been to make a lunatic of that poor devil of a mulatto" (125). I conclude this chapter with an analysis of "The Secret Sharer." In this story, Leggatt, who appears mysteriously on board the ship of the unnamed protagonist, turns out to be fleeing prosecution for murdering a sailor on his own ship. Drawing on Conrad's personal correspondence, I show that Conrad based this story on an actual incident that involved the murder of a black sailor by a white officer. By excising this fact from "The Secret Sharer," I argue that Conrad produces a narrative in which his quest for an imaginary communal unity eliminates the black body of the earlier stories at the price of producing an uncanny doubling within the main character. I read this excision as an attempt to theorize ideal community in the absence of the racialized body that exposes the limitations of the historical horizon of possibilities within which Conrad wrote.

I continue this deconstruction of the concept of race in chapter three through an inquiry into concept of "the Law" in H. G. Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, which allegorizes the origins of human society. I contend that the quasi-religious social law in this novel is reiteratively produced through the surgical torture of Moreau's humanized animal subjects, who are marked with the physical stigmata of this torture. These physical stigmata mark the "beast folk" as somehow incomplete and imperfect, and come to represent "something that I cannot touch" for Moreau. Moreau is struck with the obsessive desire to "burn out all of the animal" from the beast folk in order to create "rational creature[s] of my own" (89). Moreau's obsessive desire to create subjects who are completely accessible to his rationality takes the form of a scopic drive, or a wish to isolate the constitutive excess of his subjects in an object within the field of vision, and then eliminate it, to literally cut it out of their bodies. In doing so he hopes to create purely rational, self-identical creatures. Moreau's inevitable failure in this pursuit results in the endless surgical torture of his subjects which, in turn, gives rise to and sustains "the Law." Moreau employs the vocabulary of racial science to describe the physical stigmata that mark the beast folk as incomplete, or not fully accessible to his scientific rationality. I argue that race, in *Moreau*, therefore acts as a form of imaginary containment for the disavowal of the performative foundation of subjectivity. I conclude the chapter with a comparison of Wells's use of certain key terms of racial discourse with their use by Edward Tylor in *Anthropology* and Francis Galton in *Hereditary Genius*. I argue that Tylor and Galton's texts employ these terms in the same fashion as *Moreau*, as these terms provide all three texts with a form of imaginary suture for the constitutive rupture that creates subjects under "the Law." In other words, race provides an imaginary

structure for envisioning the mythological beginnings of society in the emergent social sciences, as well as in Wells's science fiction.

I conclude my dissertation with a discussion of Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*. In this chapter I focus my analysis on Edward Said's claim that the "conflict between Kim's colonial service and loyalty to his Indian companions is unresolved not because Kipling could not face it, but because for Kipling *there was no conflict*" (146). Said's contention has been the subject of many poststructuralist critiques. Such critiques frequently claim that Said's formulation of a seamless fit between Kim's work as a spy in the service of the British empire and Kim's sympathetic understanding of the Indian people whom he works to subjugate ignores the fundamental ambivalence of Kipling's representation of white colonial identity in *Kim*. Against these critiques, I argue that Said is essentially correct because the ambivalent structure of white racial identity does not necessarily reveal a secret weakness in Kipling's vision of whiteness; the ambivalence of white identity is, in fact, the engine that drives the production of racial difference in *Kim*, and, in doing so, fortifies the wall of empire. Because Kim embraces the performative element of racial identity, Kipling's text produces a type of whiteness that is not threatened by its own performative excess. I argue that Kipling understands something that many contemporary critics do not: that an identity such as Kim's, which embraces its own foundational excess is not, in and of itself, invariably disruptive of rigid social hierarchy. Kipling instead recognizes that a being such as Kim is an integral and even necessary part of even the most oppressive society. I argue that the critic therefore must recognize the dialectical process of identification that is at work in *Kim*. By acknowledging the dialectic of identity, rather than reductively isolating one aspect of it

as poststructuralists often do, we are able to understand not only the liberatory possibilities of performativity, but its potentially oppressive aspects as well.

Fantasies of Race, Part I: Marx, Conrad, and the Commodity

A number of contemporary critical evaluations of Joseph Conrad's writing focus on theories of language evident throughout his large body of work. Critics as disparate as Ian Watt and Fredric Jameson have asserted that the preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus* is, in some substantial way, the inaugural document of literary modernism due to the ideas regarding language and representation that it sets forth.[1] In a particularly astute recent reading of *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, Michael North provides an interesting variation on this argument. North contends that the tension created between the preface and the novel itself is what marks this novel as uniquely "modern." In the preface, Conrad makes the claim that his goal in writing the novel is "to make you hear, to make you feel – it is, before all, to make you *see*!" (*N. N.* xlix) Yet, North feels that this wish for writing that would convey such a degree of sensual immediacy is at odds with the content of the novel, which he believes underscores the "structural impossibility" of conveying "a full sensory experience" through the medium of "sensually unrewarding marks on a paper" (North 38). In other words, the wish conveyed in the preface for a kind of writing that could duplicate "a full sensory experience" and therefore ground meaning in the senses is set in fundamental opposition to the content of the novel itself, which repeatedly conveys the "structural impossibility" of such a goal and reaffirms a radical indeterminacy of meaning. For North, it is precisely this tension that defines literary modernism. North's analysis of Conrad's continual effort to exorcise the indeterminacy of meaning from language by firmly grounding language in a sensually immediate experience will, moreover, form a starting

point for my own argument. In this chapter, I will focus on the relationship between Conrad's concern with the promiscuous multiplication of meanings, expressed in exemplary form throughout his writing, and the construction of "race" in the modern sense as a semiotics of the body.

There exists a tension in *The Nigger of the Narcissus* between the wish for a language capable of conveying important sensual truths and a fear of the impossibility of attaining this goal. This tension is expressed through a focus on "the asignifying aspects of language" that hold forth the possibility of "phatic communion" (North 51; 54). The promise of an experience of solidarity that bypasses the mediation of the construction of meaning and in doing so achieves an immediacy of experience that can be expressed only in terms of its sensual impact is repeatedly disrupted, however, by the existence of linguistic and cultural barriers, for "nothing is more particular, less easily translatable," than the asignifying aspects of language (47). According to North, this disruption is consistently figured as racial difference within *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, expressed as both the auditory disturbances of the rhythms of the ship provided by Wait's death groans, and in the visual register as the inscrutable black mask that is Wait's face: "a nigger does not show" (*N. N.* 32). Within this reading, both the black voice and the black body become symbols that absorb the central contradictions of a modernist theory of language, and this fact substantially explains the uncanny impenetrability of the black voice and the black body within Conrad's writing.

Starting from the critical commonplace that the *Nigger of the Narcissus* articulates a very modern concern with a certain structural impossibility within language, North adds a crucial emphasis on the role of the black voice and the black body in

Conrad's construction of this concern. What interests me most in this analysis is that we might redirect it in such a way that it would allow us to interpret the role of the black body as that of a suture for the foundational structural lack of signification. In other words, the black body comes to occupy the place of the immanent impossibility of the very project of "perfect communion," or the achievement of a perfectly self-identical and unified community. The black body becomes a fetish, simultaneously denying and embodying the central structural impossibility of Conrad's desire for a language that enables perfect, unmediated communion. I would argue that if Conrad is a "modern" writer, it is not only because he expresses a modern set of concerns about language and identity; additionally, it is because he articulates this concern in a characteristically modern way, through the medium of the black body, which becomes the "racialized" body to the extent that it serves as a placeholder for the constitutive structural lack of the subject.

As such, we might understand the black body and the black voice within *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* not only as disruptive presences; more particularly, we might interpret the black voice and body within this work through the paradigm of the veil provided by Lacan in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, which is explained through the classical myth of Zeuxis and Parrhasios. During a competition between the two artists to find out who could paint the truest representation of nature, Zeuxis painted grapes so lifelike that birds tried to eat them. Parrhasios, in turn, painted a curtain so realistic that Zeuxis asked him to remove it so that he could see the fantastic painting that he supposed was hidden underneath. In painting the veil, Lacan writes, "Parrhasios makes it clear that if one wishes to deceive a man, what one presents to him

is the painting of a veil, that is to say, something that incites him to ask what is behind it" (112).

Wait's face, in *The Nigger of the "Narcissus,"* seems to play a role parallel to that of Lacan's veil. Described as "inscrutable" and as "a repulsive mask" when he first appears aboard the *Narcissus*, it seems to hide some important truth (12-13). Wait becomes an object of fascination aboard the ship as crewmembers constantly try to discover his "secret," but are never satisfied with any information that they bring away from an interview. This apparently insatiable desire to discover something supposed to be concealed behind Wait's impenetrable features eventually causes an insurrection on the *Narcissus*, which is set off when Wait demands to return to work, only to have his demand refused by the captain. The fact that the men rebel, however, is not simply a result of the belief that Wait has been faking his sickness and should have been working all along or that he has been sick but has recovered from his illness and therefore deserves to return to his duties; rather, the rebellion seems to result from the refusal to accept any final determination regarding Wait's condition. It is therefore only when the captain finally officially pronounces Wait to be ill that the crew engages in rebellion. The crew's cries of outrage indicate a continued irresolution regarding Wait's illness, varying from "'We have been hymposed upon this whole voyage," implying that Wait was never actually ill, to "'a sick chap ain't allowed to get well in this 'ere hooker?" implying that Wait actually was ill and should therefore now be allowed to return to work (89). As the confusion increases, the men deteriorate into "gesticulating shadows that growled, hissed, [and] laughed excitedly" (89). In this scene we therefore see Wait not only as a disruption, but also as a sort of necessary disruption, which enables the

formation of the same ideal society that it menaces. Conrad's community of shipmates is alternately described as "the brotherhood of the sea," indicating the ship's utopian possibilities, and as "a fragment detached from the earth," indicating that it is an entire society in microcosm (21). This society deteriorates into an anarchic mob when it is threatened with the loss of its central fetish, Wait, who is therefore shown to be not only a disruption of Conrad's ideal society, but a condition of it as well.

The veil of Wait's face, of course, conceals no secrets. The symptoms of illness, which on Wait's body take on an uncanny quality, turn out to be nothing other than symptoms of illness. Here we have a case of a veil, an uncanny mask that hides nothing other than the illusion that it hides something. When Wait's death seems immanent and obvious is when the crew displays the greatest confusion regarding his illness.

Moreover, at such times, Wait comes to figuratively embody the sea, as when the narrator tells us that "the nigger's cough, metallic and explosive," echoed through the forecastle. Immediately afterwards, we're informed that the "unceasing whisper of the sea filled the forecastle. Was James Wait frightened, touched, or repentant?" (28). The sea, we might once again note, is the backdrop of Conrad's ideal "brotherhood" (21). As such, Wait comes to serve, at the very instances in which his physicality becomes most uncanny (and, characteristically, mechanical), as a particular embodiment of the abstract condition of community; at such moments Wait's body or voice comes to occupy the same space as the figure of the sea. In *Fetishism and Imagination*, David Simpson notes that in Conrad's work "there yet remains one image that is outside the control of the fetishized imagination and beyond complete conflation with the idols of trade." This image is "the sea, the image of completion, the repository and synthesizing medium of all

created forms" (120). To complete Simpson's explanation of Conrad's image of the sea, we would need to add that this ideal image absorbs all the contradictions inherent in capital into itself. It provides a perfect synthesis, "the resumption of totality and the abolition of difference," the achievement of a self-identical "prelapsarian consciousness," which is a figurative construction giving imaginary form to the kernal of the real that allows symbolization to take place (120). This collapse of the sea, one of Conrad's most enduring figures, into Wait's voice, is a further indicator that in this instance his voice becomes the placeholder of the real: it becomes the equivalent, within Conrad's fictional universe, of the Lacanian *objet a*, the material object that embodies and conceals the central structural lack that is the condition of communication (and therefore community).

The black body and black voice as presences that disrupt (and in doing so enable) communication are found throughout Conrad's work. We might note, for instance, the role of asignifying noise in *Heart of Darkness*. It is almost omnipresent throughout Marlow's journey up the Congo River. Marlow explains that as he and his crew "penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness... the roll of drums behind the curtain of trees would run up the river and remain, sustained faintly, as if hovering in the air high over our heads" (31). This strange sound, brooding over the boat throughout the journey, impossible to locate in a particular time or place, seems to embody Marlow's enigmatic description of the African landscape as "an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention," and it culminates only at the end of the journey in the "strings of amazing words that resembled no sounds of human language" spoken by the Africans standing guard over Kurtz's camp (30; 62). It is from this backdrop of primal, asignifying noise that meaning arises when Kurtz's voice emerges from the "satanic

litany" of the African crowd; it represents the perpetual deferral of the revelation of perfect communion and sensual immediacy somehow promised by the entity of Africa.

This noise that both promises perfect meaning and deconstructs the possibility of achieving meaning at all is matched by an overabundance of visual signs that are able to denote only their lack of historical reference. His attempt to visually unlock meaning is as inconclusive as his effort to decipher African language because Conrad's Africa is a land devoid of intelligibility, representing "the night of first ages, of those ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign" (32). We thus discover something fundamentally contradictory in Marlow's very attempt to tease meaning out of the African landscape, for we must accept at once that it somehow gives Marlow the impression of an incredible surfeit of meaning, yet accomplishes this creation of excessive meaning without recourse to intelligible signs of any sort, for it is a remnant of the pre-historic ages that have left no signs. In other words, Africa promises revelation without conveying meaning because meaning is made possible only by the history that has yet to touch Africa, leaving its marks of intelligibility. Thus, Africa confronts Marlow with "truth," but "truth stripped of the cloak of time" (32).

This radical indecipherability characterizes not only the landscape and language of Africa, but the bodies of Africans as well. More particularly, we might note that with a few exceptions in the story, Marlow encounters black bodies only as indeterminate masses of limbs and body parts, as in the famous "grove of death" scene that marks his arrival in Africa. Similarly, as Marlow travels up the river, he encounters black bodies primarily as indistinguishable masses of limbs and body parts. Thus, he witnesses an African village as "a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of

feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling" (32). What is particularly revealing in this scene is that when Marlow turns his attention from this mass of humanity to an African working on his boat we witness an individual body taking shape from this mass of limbs, being assembled around the engine of the boat. The genesis of "the savage who was fireman" begins with the observation that

> He was an improved specimen; he could fire up a vertical boiler. He was there below me, and, upon my word, to look at him was as edifying as seeing a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat, walking on his hind legs. A few months of training had done for that really fine chap. He squinted at the steam gauge and at the water gauge with an evident effort of intrepidity – and he had filed teeth, too, the poor devil, and the wool of his pate shaved into queer patterns, and three ornamental scars on each of his cheeks. He ought to have been clapping his hands and stamping his feet on the bank, instead of which he was hard at work, a thrall to a strange witchcraft, full of improving knowledge. He was useful because he had been instructed, and what he knew was this – that should the water in that transparent thing disappear, the evil spirit inside the boiler would get angry through the greatness of his thirst, and take a terrible vengeance. (33)

As the man tends to the boiler and squints at a gauge, we get the first indication that he has individual features. The physical particularity that emerges from this operation as an individual body is intelligible only as a series of signifiers of the nameless crewman's Africanness, or, more specifically, his cannibalism. Thus, it is first his "filed teeth" that materialize, followed by "the wool of his pate shaved into queer patterns, and three ornamental scars on his cheeks" (33). In noting that the person who emerges in a

concrete particularity from this proximity to the machine is only a series of signifiers of cannibalism (or a seemingly absolute otherness), we might recall Chinua Achebe's insight that the only message that Conrad's Africans are able to convey is that they are cannibals; all else is either silence or unintelligible sound (Achebe 9). Thus, even in taking individual shape, the only message that the African can convey to Marlow is a reiteration of absolute difference, or unintelligibility.

This nameless man's appearance fails to resolve the violent ambivalence that is inspired in Marlow by the "ugly" and "passionate uproar" of the African village, that he seems able to describe only in purely negative terms ("that was the worst of it – this suspicion of their *not being inhuman*") [italics mine] (32). The strange and awful demand for revelation unmediated by signification merely seems to be transferred from the "veil" of the African landscape to the "mask" of the African face (42). The features of the face, like the landscape, seem to convey only absolute, unassimilable difference (recall that "a nigger does not show"). The fact that the coalescence of the face in connection with the boat fails to resolve this ambivalence, fails even to resolve the issue of the African's humanity that is raised in the scene, makes Marlow immediately wish him back onto the riverbank, where he might again become merely a gathering of limbs among a sea of identical limbs, where he would fade into the assemblage of "clapping... hands" and "stamping... feet" (33). The man seems to maintain a stubborn presence within Marlow's consciousness, however, as long as he is "hard at work, a thrall to strange witchcraft" (33). Thus, as soon as he appears in conjunction with the "vertical boiler," his facial features materialize. As soon as these features materialize, however, Marlow wishes his dismemberment and replacement on the bank. This wish is met

immediately, however, with an image of the man working at the boiler, which once again causes the features that mark him as a cannibal to reappear (this time in the form of "a piece of polished bone, as big as a watch, stuck flatways through his lower lip") (33). The violent figurative ambivalence that characterizes this scene indicates that the African body in this scene, as in the case of Wait's black "mask" in *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, serves as a sort of placeholder of the real, as an *objet petit a*. The features that cannot be stabilized on the body and that materialize in different configurations only to dematerialize, appear in the text as tokens of absolute unassimilability, as signifiers which cannot be assigned a stable place within the text. His features can only be scrutinized or approached at the expense of further violent mutations, yet cannot be wished away or eliminated. The African commands Marlow's attention despite the fact that he does nothing but engage in the most mundane chores.

In order to unpack the implications of the racialized body in Conrad's work, however, it is not sufficient to show the central necessity of such bodies to Conrad's formulations of complementary concepts of community and alienation. In order to expand this reading, I would like to call attention to two specific aspects of this scene: the first is the fact that the rapid vacillation between a figurative dismemberment and re-memberment of the black body takes place in conjunction with *its relation to the steamboat*. The second is the dominant focus on the fetishism of the African, through which Marlow attempts to make two apparently unassimilable elements, an African and modern European machinery, correspond. These two features both indicate the conspicuous connection between (1) the creation of the black African body as a standardized series of signifiers of absolute difference and (2) the movement of capital

within Conrad's work, represented in the previous scene by one of the fetish objects of capitalism, the machine.

The machine, in this case, is the material embodiment of capital, functioning as a sort of medium through which fears and anxieties regarding the question of agency in a capitalist society are inscribed on certain bodies as racial characteristics. These racial characteristics, then, are the marks of uncertain agency under capitalism, physically inscribed on these bodies through a process resembling Frazer's "magic of contact."[2] Through physical contact with the fetish objects of capitalism such as machines (in this case, the steam engine of Marlow's boat), black bodies are assembled as agglomerations of signifiers of absolute difference. As such, they both materialize and conceal the process by which bodies are interpellated under industrial capitalism, embodying the constitutive / impossible limit of this system.

The process through which bodies are inscribed with a semiotics of race has nothing to do, then, with an empirical realization that clusters of "natural" differences are accurately signified through characteristically "racial" features. Rather, racial bodies are both the result and the condition of a particular set of social relations set in place under industrial capitalism. The creation of racial bodies, then, both conceals and enables the production and reproduction of such social relations by providing a site at which anxieties that are endemic to such a society are controlled. Mark Seltzer provides a succinct explanation of this basic process when he argues that questions of individual agency arising from the cultural contradictions internal to the "machine culture" of late nineteenth-century America require "deeply embodied bodies" as "figures through which these tensions can be at once recognized and displaced or disavowed" (64). Within the

work of Conrad, as well as a great many other turn of the century British writers, the deeply embodied bodies produced by industrial capitalism are fundamentally racialized bodies.

Our focus, then, on the formal centrality of race to Conrad's imaginings of ideal community within the space of the ship leads us to an examination of the question of individual agency within a society structured by the exchange of commodities. Therefore we must examine the connections between Conrad's representations of the movement of commodities over bodies and landscapes and his textual construction of racialized bodies. If we pursue this course of argument, we invariably discover that the racialized body consistently owes its textual formation to an attempt to resolve anxieties concerning the economic rule of capital. In order to make this argument, I will focus on how bodies identified by the taint of the boundless desire of the market are almost without exception racialized either implicitly or explicitly, and on how such racialized bodies are often interpellated through direct physical contact with machines and other fetish objects of capitalism, as though the taint that defines racialized bodies followed the logic of the magic of contact.

To begin this line of argument, we should take note of the striking formal similarity between the creation of racialized bodies through contact with the fetish objects of capitalism in Conrad and the interpellation of the bodies of the proletariat in Marx's definitive nineteenth-century explanation of capitalism, *Capital, Volume One*. Throughout this work, Marx devotes considerable attention to the careful articulation of how the creation of a "surplus value" divorced from a finite economy based strictly on human need creates a situation in which desire is artificially inflamed to limitless

proportions. Thus, in the section of *Capital* in which Marx attempts to define "the general formula for capital," one finds a reversal of the formula according to which the product of labor takes precedence over the medium of exchange. An economy based on the desire to exchange one commodity for another, in which once the exchange takes place the need is satisfied, is perverted into an economy in which the commodity becomes the middle term in the exchange of different quantities of money. Such a system takes as its purpose not the satisfaction of finite needs, but the accumulation of money, which knows no natural boundary. Therefore, the

> repetition or renewal of the act of selling in order to buy, is kept within bounds by the very object it aims at, namely, consumption or the satisfaction of definite wants, an aim that lies altogether outside the sphere of circulation. But when we buy in order to sell, we, on the contrary, begin and end with the same thing, money; exchange value; and thereby the movement becomes interminable. (151)

The system of exchange that takes the commodity as the middle term, rather than as the beginning and end of the exchange, therefore creates the "vocation to approach... as near as possible to absolute wealth" (151). The creation of "surplus value" within a system that defines the capture of surplus value as its purpose thus creates a systemic logic of limitless desire. No matter how much surplus value one is able to capture, there is always an excess of surplus value that escapes capture, that persists beyond the grasp of the capitalist. Thus the "restless never-ending process of profit making," the "passionate chase after exchange value," or the "never-ending augmentation of exchange value" becomes the "sole motive" of the capitalist (152-53). Because the desire for surplus value is by definition limitless, or freed from an economy of "definite wants," capitalism

creates an economic process that follows a logic similar to that utilized earlier by Hegel in defining the historical process and later by Lacan in defining the status of the divided subject. One might equate the "surplus" within Marx's account of capitalism to the excess that is ceaselessly produced by the dialectical process in Hegel, according to which a core of irreducible otherness, the "burden" of "something alien," perpetually escapes incorporation into the consciousness and therefore drives the dialectic of history as a perpetual repetition of a failure to achieve full self-realization. (Alternately, this failure is a failure to make oneself self-identical, or to become identical with one's "essence") (Hegel 56-57). Additionally, one might note the structural similarity between Marx's concept of surplus and the Lacanian notion of the real as the impossible / constitutive limit of symbolic order, as an "excess" produced by the process of signification that always escapes incorporation into the symbolic order. According to Marx's system, the notion of surplus becomes materialized under capitalism in the form of the commodity, which therefore becomes a "fetish," or a material embodiment of the constitutive disruption (surplus value) that gives birth to capitalism. Similarly, the Lacanian real takes the physical form of the *objet petit a*, the material embodiment of the impossible / constitutive limit of the symbolic order. Like the commodity, the *objet petit a* gives material form to an excess that forever escapes capture by the subject in the sense that it cannot be decisively integrated into the very symbolic network to which it gives rise. Like the desire for surplus value, the desire set in motion by the stubborn persistence of the Lacanian real beyond the grasp of the subject is by definition limitless. Along these lines, Slavoj Žižek has argued that "Marxian surplus value announces effectively the logic of the Lacanian *objet petit a*" (*Sublime Object* 50).

Significant to my analysis is the fact that in addition to the commodity, the figure of the factory machine serves to embody the seemingly immaterial process of capitalist exchange. In his exposition of the machine as an embodiment of capital, Marx gives us an early and superb expression of what Mark Seltzer describes as "the double logic of technology as prosthesis," according to which the machine can serve either as a prosthetic extension of human agency, or as a thing which robs people of agency, an external object onto which human agency is uneasily displaced (Seltzer 10). Marx distinguishes between the "tool" and the "machine" along these lines. According to Marx's analysis, a tool represents an extension of human agency and forms the basis of an "organic" engagement between human will and nature, while the machine, as "the material embodiment of capital," reverses this relationship, subjugating the human agent to the laws of an assumed natural order, as codified in the dogma of free market economics (Marx 427). Within this formulation of the machine as "the material embodiment of capital," Marx sees a manifestation of the perverse and unquenchable desire created by the divorce of exchange value from use value, in which the supremacy of exchange value puts an end to the finite economy of desire presumed to exist in pre-capitalist societies. In "the form of machinery, the implements of labor become automatic, things moving and working independent of the workman," and the workman himself becomes a piece in an industrial perpetual motion machine (403). This displacement of agency onto the machines of production occurs in "every kind of capitalist production, in so far as it is... a process of creating surplus value." Every such system of production "has this in common, that it is not the workman that employs the instruments of labor, but the instruments of labor that employ the workman" (423). The factory worker is therefore literally subjugated to the

movement of the machine, which is itself an expression of the ravenous desire created by the market economy.

The machine therefore becomes the figure of the disturbance of what is posited as a pre-capitalist relationship between a laborer and the implements of his labor. This displacement of agency is registered through the intermingling of the competing metaphors of the organism and the machine. Thus, "machinery organized into a system" becomes "a body," while the worker who must learn to adapt his own motions to the movement of the machine becomes "an automaton" (Marx 418, 421). We thus witness, in Marx's text, "the unlinking of motion and volition," that, according Seltzer, creates "an erotics of uncertain agency" (Seltzer 17-18).

Marx registers the uncertainty of human agency in this formulation by a re-drawing of the boundary between the organic body of the worker and the machinic body of the factory. At this point, it becomes more apparent how the abstract body produced in the text of *Capital* is implicitly a racial body in the sense that Robert Young, adopting the terminology of Deleuze and Guattari, describes the body produced by the Victorian "desiring machine" as a racial body (Young 181). The worker's body that is produced in the factory is dismembered and remade by the impersonal flows of desire created by the capitalist economy and registered by the machines of production. It is around these machines that the worker's body is constantly taken apart and put back together again according to the perverse and ever-fluctuating flows of desire created by (or unleashed by) the market. Deleuze and Guattari describe this process succinctly:

> The decoding of flows in capitalism has freed, deterritorialized, and decoded the flows of code... to such a degree that the automatic machine has always

increasingly internalized them in its body or its structure as a field of forces. (*Anti-Oedipus* 233)

That the process of dismemberment and re-memberment (or "deterritorialization" and "reterritorialization" in Deleuze and Guattari's terms) embodied in the "machine" produces a racialized body within Marx's text becomes apparent in a couple of ways. First, Marx describes this crisis in the relationship between laborers and their implements in the vocabulary of racial degeneration. Another way to put this is that the trope of progress is called into question at least in part through Marx's rhetorical strategy of describing it in overtly racial terms. In other words, the narrative of progress is shown to be dependent on the vocabulary of race, and Marx's emphasis on this racial terminology taints the narrative with a menace that corresponds to the threat of "anomie," or "bondage to one's unfocused, unbounded appetites" (Herbert 72). We might note, for instance, the racial menace implicit in the term "fetishism," which is used to describe "the mystical character of commodities" within the capitalist system, according to which the inanimate products of labor seem to be motivated by a systemic will beyond human control. The development of capitalism is thus described as a sort of racial regression, according to which the state of mind promoted in those who live under capitalism is equated to fetishism, which is commonly believed, by the mid-nineteenth century, to be the most degenerate and primitive form of animism practiced by West Africans.[3] Capitalism therefore menaces us with a regression into the atavistic past. This idea of regression is made more explicit through a comparison of capitalist society to "the European middle ages," when "the social relations between individuals in the performance of their labor appear, at all events, as their own mutual personal relations, and are not disguised under

the shape of social relations between the products of labor." Such a pre-capitalist consciousness, which is set back with the development of capitalism, is known to mark "the threshold of the history of all civilized races" (Marx 77). Marx's rhetoric in this passage directly indicates that capitalism, to the extent that it produces a state of consciousness known as fetishism, has the effect of erasing the distinction between the advanced and primitive "races."

While Marx describes the proletariat in what are apparently deliberately racial terms, it is abundantly clear that it would not make sense to equate the infinite desire of capitalism, which attaches itself to the bodies of laborers through their incorporation into the factory system, with a boundless Malthusian sexual drive. Desire within Marx's system does not originate in individual bodies; we cannot add together each individual's desire and get a sum that is equal to the sum total of the desire of the system of capitalism. With the complete severance of exchange value from use value there is also an absolute separation of the infinite, systemic desire of capitalism from the "natural," finite desire of individual biological drives. Marx underscores this absolute incommensurability early in *Capital, Volume One* when he argues that

> the exchange of commodities [in capitalism] is evidently an act characterized by a total abstraction from use value.... As use values commodities are above all of different qualities, but as exchange values they are merely different quantities and consequently do not contain an atom of use value. (37-38)

Capitalism as a system is therefore constituted through a necessary and originary disruption: exchange value and use value are absolutely incommensurable systems of valuation. As Deleuze and Guattari explain, the complete disconnection that Marx

articulates between use value and an economy of finite needs and exchange value and its corresponding economy of infinite desire takes place when, through the M-C-M relationship, money, "instead of simply representing the relations of commodities,... enters... into relations with itself" by differentiating "itself as original value from itself as surplus-value" (227). As absolutely incommensurable systems of valuation, use value and exchange value are set in relation to each other only when this incommensurability is put into circulation around a material object that comes to manifest the central impossibility of this relation. Thus, the commodity becomes a "fetish" because within the capitalist system it embodies the fundamental incommensurability between two systems of valuation. By giving a physical body to this irresolvable tension, the commodity enables capitalism to exist as a dialectical alignment of absolutely incommensurable logics. In materializing this constitutive disruption, however, the commodity also conceals it, for within the commodity the products of labor "assume a fantastic form different from their reality" (Marx 325). Again, we might draw attention to the parallel logic between the commodity, which materializes the constitutive disruption of capitalism, and Lacan's *objet petit a*, which gives material form to the real, or the constitutive / impossible limit of the subject.

In order to further this comparison, we might note that within *Capital*, the logic of subject formation is repeatedly shown to be parallel to the logic of commodity formation. Thus,

> The reproduction of a mass of labor power, which must incessantly reincorporate itself with capital for that capital's self-expansion; which cannot get free from capital, and whose enslavement to capital is... concealed,... this reproduction of

labor power forms, in fact, an essential of the reproduction of capital itself.

Accumulation of capital is, therefore, increase of the proletariat. (613-14)

The production of a certain kind of laborer, then, is a condition of the production of surplus value that defines capital. We therefore witness how the interpolation of the worker is intimately linked to the production and reproduction of the system itself: one cannot exist without the other. Thus, the illimitable production of "surplus value" inevitably results in the parallel production of a "surplus population" of laborers that is distinguished by the same perverse generativity that characterizes the system, the expression of which requires the vocabulary of race (even though "vagabonds, criminals, and prostitutes" are excluded at the beginning of the discussion) (Marx 643). This "army" of laborers is constantly increasing in size "according to the laws of capitalist production" (644). The section on surplus population that dwells on the threatening generativity of those created by the system of production, contains, interestingly, one of Marx's most explicit uses of the image of dismemberment, in which the "means for the development of production...mutilate the laborer into a fragment of a man, degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine" (644). In this way, Marx returns us, at the end of a tale of racial regression, to the vision of the machine, expressive of an impersonal and uncontrollable desire, dismembering and remaking the body of the laborer, and therefore marking his fragmented body with the anomie of capitalism. The "law" which necessitates both the production of commodities and the creation of surplus bodies thus "rivets the laborer to capital more firmly than the wedges of Vulcan did Prometheus to the rock" (645).

I would like to return to *Heart of Darkness* in order to further trace the movement of capital through the story, and to continue the examination of the relationship between this movement and the creation of boundaries of gender and race. Thus, we might turn our attention to the one other point in the story at which a black body attains individual coherence: the point at which Marlow is captivated by Kurtz's African mistress, the "wild and gorgeous apparition of a woman" whose body becomes the focus of a lengthy soliloquy (55). Her body takes shape not around a machine, but around the knick-knacks, the various spoils of empire, the savage manifestations of the wealth that she has received from Kurtz. Every body part that appears in the lengthy description does so in relation to the "barbarous ornaments" that adorn her body (55-56). Thus,

> She walked with measured steps, draped in striped and fringed cloths, treading the earth proudly, with a slight jingle and flash of barbarous ornaments. She carried her head high; her hair was done in the shape of a helmet; she had brass leggings to the knee, brass wire gauntlets to the elbow, a crimson spot on her tawny cheek, innumerable necklaces of glass beads on her neck; bizarre things, charms, gifts of witch men, that hung about her, glittered and trembled at every step. She must have had the value of several elephant tusks upon her... . [The] immense wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life seemed to look at her, pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul. (55-56)

Much as the various body parts hovering indiscriminately on the bank of the river congeal around the steam engine of the boat to form the savage fireman as a collection of signifiers of absolute difference, the body of this "savage and superb" woman coalesces

around the knick-knacks that are the spoils of empire, the fetishized manifestations of capital, emerging from the "[d]ark human shapes [that] could be made out in the distance, flitting indistinctly against the gloomy border of the forest" (56). Conrad seems to build her black female body out of trinkets quite deliberately. Also like the savage fireman, this uncanny coalescence of features that defines the black body seems to vacillate between attaining an independent and unified being and being reabsorbed by the wilderness from which it took form. Thus the narrator first metaphorically equates her body to the jungle as "the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul," and then as the boat moves downriver she is literally reabsorbed by the "thickets," being once again disassembled, becoming merely a pair of "eyes [that] gleamed back at us in the dusk" before she disappears altogether (56). The significance of this scene is not that the indistinguishable sea of body parts precedes the coalescence of the woman's body and therefore indicates Marlow's inability to distinguish one African from another; rather the importance of this violent ambivalence toward her body, figured as vacillation between its dismemberment and re-memberment that takes place under Marlow's desirous gaze, is that this ambivalence announces the approach to the real, which is manifested by the woman's body. She becomes an object that simultaneously attracts and repels Marlow's gaze, effectively dividing his desire. Yet, if her body serves as an intrusion of the real, it also helps us connect such intrusions in Conrad's work explicitly to the movement of capital: her body parts are brought into being, one after the other, by the magic touch of the fetishized objects, or commodities, of colonial trade. These objects take on their power, we are told, because they embody the value of "elephant tusks," the commodity that is so fundamental to trade in the Belgian Congo that its name "rings in the air" (in

fact announcing the omnipresent, asignifying "roll of drums" that also hangs in the air throughout the journey, discussed earlier), and it becomes a form of currency, the medium of exchange, within the novel (31). This description, then, allows us not only to state that the woman's body becomes an *objet petit a*, embodying and concealing the constitutive contradictions of a given symbolic order; additionally, we see that this compelling and horrifying object, her body, is a by-product of capital. Her elbows, her knees, her hair, her face, and her neck each come into being as they are touched by the trinkets that are explicitly shown to carry the symbolic charge of the commodity.

Also similar to the case of the savage fireman, there is a distancing of the movement of the commodity that gives birth to the woman's body through the paradigm of fetishism, an attitude that is once again displaced onto the African. Just as the savage fireman is in "a thrall to strange witchcraft," worshipping the steam engine as a deity, imbuing an inanimate object with life, so the compelling African woman's ornaments become "barbarous" and foreign, " bizarre things, charms, gifts of witch men" (56). The overt equation of the strange power of the charms with the "fetishistic" religion of the African "witch men" leads us to the conclusion that Conrad is quite deliberately making a comparison between the strangely animate and willful qualities of the commodity and fetishistic religion, generally accepted to be the most degraded and the most authentically African form of religion in existence. We witness, in this instance, a racialization of the Enlightenment ideal of progress, according to which the attitudes acquired by white men under the rule of capital are equated with the degenerate religion of the Africans, and the ideal of historical progress is therefore, as in *Capital, Volume One,* colored with racial menace. This technique of juxtaposing what was assumed to be the nadir of human

culture with the progress supposed to be powered by the free market was a technique that Conrad shared not only with Marx but a wide variety of writers during the second half of the nineteenth century, ranging from Matthew Arnold to H. G. Wells. W. J. T. Mitchell has summarized this practice, exemplified in a phrase such as "commodity fetishism," as "a kind of catachresis, a violent yoking of the most primitive, exotic, irrational, degraded objects of human value with the most modern, ordinary, rational, and civilized" (191). As does Marx, Conrad juxtaposes capitalism with primitive religion, and "in calling commodities fetishes, is telling the nineteenth-century reader that the material basis of modern, civilized, rational political economy is structurally equivalent to that which is most inimical to modern consciousness" (Mitchell 191). In the scene in which the African woman's body is constructed through the touch of the commodity in *Heart of Darkness*, we witness a similar catachresis according to which the fetish objects of capitalism which bring the woman's body into being through their magic touch are simultaneously described as the fetish objects of primitive religion. Thus, they get their power not only from the "value of... elephant tusks" that they contain (the fetish of European imperialism), but also from the "witch men," for whom they are "charms" (Conrad 56).

In addition to collapsing modern and primitive values, however, this technique puts distance between the modern and primitive values that it temporarily equates. Such distance is apparent to the degree that the intimate physical relationship of the primitive African woman with the fetish objects that interpellate her body separates her absolutely from the cultured European woman who is her counterpart. As we finish tracing the movement of the commodity through *Heart of Darkness* by examining Marlow's

encounter with "the intended," Kurtz's bereft fiancé in Belgium, the significance of the ultimate difference provided by this temporary collapse of the modern commodity and the primitive religious fetish will become apparent.

Analogous to the equation of commodity and fetish in the scene describing the body of the African woman is the parallel drawn by Conrad immediately upon our introduction to "the intended." While the ornaments worn by Kurtz's African mistress are said to contain the "value of several elephant tusks," "the intended" is located in a sumptuously attired room (56). In this room of marble and mahogany, Marlow's attention falls on a grand piano that resembles "a somber and polished sarcophagus" (68). The ivory of the piano keys goes unmentioned, but the correspondence between the ornamental piano as the centerpiece of the "lofty drawing room" and the "barbarous ornaments" adorning the body of the black woman is nevertheless explicit (68; 55-56). The comparison between the two encounters, marked at the beginning by the piano with its reference to ivory, is underscored at the end of the meeting with "the intended" by an explicit comparison between the gesture of sorrow made by each of them upon losing Kurtz.

The similarity between the "barbarous ornaments" and the "grand piano" decisively marks racial and gender boundaries according to a set of relationships established by the commodity. The piano represents the aesthetic realm with its assumed transcendence of the crass materiality of actual economic relations, yet the veiled relationship of the two supposedly separate spheres of experience is emphasized by the unspoken connection of the ivory keys with the monstruous exploitation of Belgian's African colony, the main activity of the quasi-governmental "company" and its

star agent, Kurtz, being the collection of ivory. If we recall that Marlow tells us the "word 'ivory' rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed" upon his arrival in Africa (an observation that he frequently repeats), his failure to speak the word in this scene, despite his focus on the piano, foreshadows his inability to speak Kurtz's actual last words to "the intended" despite his apparent desire to do so (20). In this scene Marlow has encountered the absent line between a civilization defined by covert relationships between high culture and economic exploitation and a primitive society where this relationship is supposed to appear more direct or obvious. Marlow, of course, continually undermines this distinction through his constant activity of comparison and demystification, although this activity apparently tortures him; it is as though he cannot resist picking at a wound. This difference that constantly gives impetus to the ever-renewed revelation of uncanny similarity remains unspeakable throughout the novel, except in terms of negation. We might recall, for instance, Marlow's inability to name Africans as human, having to settle instead for the horrifying "suspicion of their *not being inhuman*" (32). We might say, then, that his confrontation with this unspeakable thing culminates in his encounter with "the intended." This title, we might note, becomes a sort of "rigid designator" in the course of the text, indicating an essence that cannot be equated to any quality or set of qualities, or a name that refers "rigidly and regardless of its descriptive features" (Butler, *Bodies That Matter* 212). As such, "the intended" comes to stand for the essence of "civilization" not due to a set of qualities or characteristics that can be named; rather, she comes to stand for an essence because she marks a set of relationships that cannot be avowed; she stands for an essence because she locates the site of a failure of enunciation.

At this point, I would like to clarify Marlow's inability to speak in the final scene of *Heart of Darkness*. In order to do so, we must first observe the emphasis throughout the story on a particular type of asignification that is presented through a series of aural and visual cues, cues that disrupt meaning yet promise a more sensually immediate experience than meaning can offer. This inscrutability that is simultaneously a promise of a more direct or unmediated encounter with reality than language can ordinarily provide seems to be a property attached to African landscapes, bodies, and language. Marlow's inability to speak certain words in his encounter with "the intended" indicates a desire to prolong the ambivalent attractions of this perpetually missed encounter with Africa. The words that cannot be spoken in this scene are the words that connect the production of commodities to the construction of race. It seems that to utter these words would bring the constitutive split of the white, civilized subject too close to awareness, and as a result Marlow recoils from them. Kurtz's final pronouncement, "The horror! The horror!" cannot be spoken to "the intended" not only because it would defile a pure mind, antiseptically quarantined from the cruel realities of colonialism in the Belgian Congo. More fundamentally, Marlow's performative failure is induced because to speak these words in her presence would be to bring a series of connections, the disavowal of which form the core of the white subject, too close to consciousness. The evidence of this process abounds in *Heart of Darkness*, be it in the form of reiterated encounters with inscrutable, mask-like African faces or in Marlow's final performative failure. We might note, for instance, Marlow's explanation of Kurtz's final words: they "had the appalling face of a glimpsed truth – the strange commingling of desire and hate" (65). This explanation, in which the approach toward the "face" of the "truth" is made to seem like

a final encounter with the inscrutable African faces that confront Marlow throughout the story, might be read as announcing the approach of the real. The strange, Poe-like quality of horror attached to ordinary objects in the final scene, as when the piano becomes "a somber and polished sarcophagus," supports this reading (68). The fact that Marlow views the piano, the site of his first failure of enunciation in the concluding scene, as a coffin, underscores the fact that his performative failure not only enacts the formation of his own civilized subjectivity, but also forms the unavowable limit of such a subjectivity. The piano lingers in the scene as the materialization of this limit, this constitutive failure, which Marlow experiences as the threat of death for his civilized subjectivity.

Within the text, we consistently encounter a certain way of perceiving human differences. Within this mode of perception, there seems to be both the threat that fundamental distinctions will collapse (for instance, between the African fetishist and the European commodity fetishist), and a certain fascination with this seemingly immanent collapse. It is no coincidence that *Heart of Darkness* is a book riven with uncanny resemblances across a racial divide. "Civilization" itself, and the colonial civilizing process that is central to it, seems to be at risk with this perpetually impending collapse of racial and cultural boundaries. We might therefore understand Marlow's failure of enunciation in terms of what Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks has referred to as "performative failure... fraught with racial anxiety," indicative of "the constitutive split within whiteness" (366). Within this reading, "whiteness" would be understood as the constitutive lack within the subject that resists signification and therefore gives rise to the repetitive attempt to directly encounter that which by definition eludes such an encounter. Marlow's perpetually failing attempt to achieve perfect communion through a sensual

immediacy that bypasses the mediation of meaning might be seen as a symptom of such a missed encounter, as this quest for perfect communion is both provoked and disrupted by a racial presence (or, more accurately, an absence that is named "race" and manifested as the inscrutable, racialized body). In other words, racial difference is the condition of this quest, but it is a condition that simultaneously guarantees its failure. Alternately, we might state that racial difference exists within the text of *Heart of Darkness* as a constitutive trauma through which Marlow is created as a subject. The structural center of trauma, or the lack that forms the subject, might, in this case, be given the name of "race." Race then becomes the unspeakable something that cannot be assimilated into the symbolic narrative of civilization and that simultaneously marks its "apparently accidental origin" (Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts* 55).

In the final scene of *Heart of Darkness*, the *objet petit a*, the object that manifests the central contradictions of the constitution of the subject through a structural lack, would seem to be the ivory piano keys. For my argument, it is crucial that *ivory simultaneously denotes both the difference of race and the movement of capital throughout the novel.* The encounter with ivory is unspeakable for Marlow because it is an encounter with the real and can therefore never be spoken or symbolically digested. More specifically, in the final scene ivory comes to represent "the racial thing" upon which the entire distinction between civilization and primitive society finally depends. Thus, Marlow's performative failure in the final scene of the story is indicative of an encounter with the real that is manifested as a racial *objet a*: ivory is the substance that both creates the distinction between civilized and primitive society (in the form of the fiancé / mistress) and collapses this difference (in the form of the commodity / fetish).

Slavoj Žižek writes that the

> Real is *the unfathomable remainder* of the ethnic substance whose predicates are different cultural features that constitute our identity. In this precise sense, *race relates to culture as the Real does to the symbolic. "Real" is the unfathomable X that is at stake in our cultural struggles*.... [T]here must be some X that is "expressed" in the cultural set of values, attitudes, rituals, etc., that materialize our way of life. [This X]... is always the *objet petit a*, the little piece of the Real. [italics mine] ("Love Thy Neighbor" 169)

We might understand the problem posed by ivory and a number of otherwise innocuous objects in the course of *Heart of Darkness* in terms of the relationship between "culture" and "race" that is suggested by Žižek in this passage. In the final passage of *Heart of Darkness*, the entire realm of European culture, so uneasily synonymous with "civilization" throughout the story, seems to be salvaged by Marlow's refusal either to name "ivory" as the substance definitive of the sumptuous drawing room or to speak Kurtz's last words. We see, in this instance, race as the traumatic kernel of the real that gives rise to the realm of culture or civilization through its very absence or unreality.

Significant for this argument is the manner in which ivory delineates race and gender boundaries in the novel. We might note, for instance, the way that ivory, the carrier of the impetus of capital, creates the body of the African woman through contact, imbuing the parts of her body with life as it touches them. Thus the movement of her body, her head, her hair, her neck, are singled out and come alive as they are touched by the "jingle and flash of barbarous ornaments," which are given significance through the realization that they have become vessels carrying "the value of several elephant tusks"

(56). Ivory, by the means of the metonymic magic of contact, creates the black female body as a fearful object, as the emanation of the "colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life" of the African wilderness (56). In contrast to the deep embodiment of the African woman through intimate contact with ornaments that are the manifestations of capital, we have the impossible detached transcendence of the European woman. Through the room that is thickly invested with the magic of capital, she approaches Marlow without touching the physical world that might infect her with the type of physicality that makes the African woman so disturbing and compelling. Thus, Marlow relates how "she came *floating* towards me in the dusk.... This fair hair, this pale visage, this pure brow, seemed *surrounded by an ashy halo* from which the dark eyes looked out at me" [italics mine] (68-69). Marlow is unable to speak the final words of Kurtz for the same reason that he is unable to speak the word "ivory" in her presence. To do so would be to touch her with the taint of capital, and to bring her down to earth from "that great and saving illusion that shone with an unearthly glow in the darkness" (70). It is through Marlow's lie that he preserves her transcendence, and yet to tell the lie is also to endorse the order of exploitation that both takes its inspiration from and supports the lie. Another way to explain Marlow's conundrum: if he did not tell the lie, he would put an end to the process of displacement and disavowal through which the black body is interpellated through its intimate connection with the commodity. In this case, not to tell the lie would be to embody the pale goddess, to defile her of "the unextinguishable light of belief and love" and to consign her to "the triumphant darkness from which I could not have defended her" (69-70). Although he feels the "dusk... repeating them in a persistent whisper all around us," Marlow is unable to utter Kurtz's last words, replacing these

words, significantly, with the white woman's name (although this name is also omitted from the text, replaced with the rigid designator "the intended") (71). This woman, whose features and gestures make her an "eloquent phantom," and whose eloquence might be contrasted to the African woman, "a tragic and familiar shade, *bedecked with powerless charms*," is preserved from the same fate as the African woman through Marlow's performative failure [italics mine] (71). The difference between eloquence and powerlessness is thus conserved through Marlow's failure to speak, as is the privileged relation between the white woman and the European aesthetic sphere, and capital. In both cases, the transcendent, civilized qualities that distinguish them from their primitive counterparts threaten to collapse if the wrong word is spoken. In the end, Marlow's silence preserves the absolute difference between the barbarity of the African ornaments (the representatives of something like a primitive aesthetic sphere) and the transcendence of the European aesthetic sphere, represented by the piano, the presence of which not only serves to draw a direct comparison between the two encounters, but which also enforces Marlow's silence, his inability to speak the word that would articulate its connection with the African ornaments. We might conclude that the silence that preserves the difference between the civilized and the primitive arts (a difference that would seem parallel to the distinction between civilized and justifiable "sublimation" and primitive or hysteric "repression" that Freud would draw thirteen years later in *Totem and Taboo*) is intimately connected within the text to the silence that separates the white woman from her African "Shade," as the two are explicitly drawn in parallel to one another in the final scene of the story. Based on this reading, the connection between the

two women might be given the name of capital, and the psychic process that simultaneously preserves and veils this connection might be given the name of race.

Race, in this case, is the name of the "signifier [that] is the first mark of the subject"; the asignifying signifier that stands for a constitutive absence; the signifier that takes the place of an unsignifiable, primary difference that is both concealed and revealed, displaced and disavowed through signification (Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts* 62). As such, race might take the auditory form of a strange, unfathomable noise hanging indeterminately over the landscape, an asignifying origin of language. Thus, the omnipresent African "roll of drums" that accompanies Marlow on his journey into the "heart of darkness" is an auditory manifestation of race to the extent that it both conceals and reveals, simultaneously disrupts and enables, the achievement of perfect belonging to a (racial) community (31). Alternately, race might take the visual form of a face that has the psychic impact of a mask, a collection of features unable to convey anything other than an absolute impenetrability. Wait's "inscrutable" and "repulsive mask," which stands in for a primary and ultimately unsymbolizable difference (recall, once again, that "a nigger does not show"), is a visible manifestation of race (12-13).

Ivory, in this story, has a particularly important role in constructing the black and the white subject in relation to one another, because it serves as the guardian of the host of fragile distinctions on which the colonial project depends, and, as such, the role of ivory must be understood to overlap with that of the fetishized machine. The "word 'ivory' rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed," and yet becomes unnamable when Marlow is confronted with explaining Kurtz's fate (20). Again, we are confronted by a

pattern of fascination and horror marked by a disruptive asignification, indicative of a confrontation with the *objet a*. Lacan writes that

> the interest the subject takes in his own split is bound up with that which determines it – namely, a privileged object, which has emerged from some primal separation, from some self-mutilation induced by the very approach of the Real, whose name, in our algebra, is the *objet a*. (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 83)

The *objet a*, the physical manifestation of the traumatic kernel of jouissance that constitutes the subject around an originary division from itself, emerges in Conrad's novel in various forms, perhaps the most important of which, from a narrative standpoint, turns out to be ivory. Ivory comes both to conceal and reveal the movement of commodities through the African "wilderness," just as it traces Marlow's perpetually failed encounter with Africa that can never be spoken. Ivory ultimately might be understood to represent "whiteness" metaphorically (due to its color, equivalent in the final scene to the "pale visage" of the intended) as well as metonymically (according to which it traces the deterritorializing movement of capital), and it is perhaps this correspondence that allows it to achieve its symbolic charge in the novel.

In the course of *Heart of Darkness*, then, we witness the movement of the commodity inscribing the signs of difference on black bodies, and in the same movement delineating the intimately co-dependent boundaries of race and gender. The proper (white) differentiation between the sexes is maintained by protecting women from the magic touch of the fetishized commodity. This protective distance allows women to maintain a seemingly unearthly transcendence so that the unfortunate reality of cruel economic exploitation might be transformed into an inspiring substance, "the

unextinguishable light of belief and love" (69). I think that this transformation might be appropriately termed "sublimation" due to the apparently deliberate parallelism in the story between the domestic and aesthetic spheres. This sublime separation of the domestic sphere, delineating the proper area of action for women, can only be maintained by a religious silence regarding the economic relations established by capital. To utter a word revealing this connection would be to bring the white woman into direct contact with the piano that adorns her drawing room, to reduce the piano to the level of the "powerless charms" worn by the African woman, and finally to reduce the intended to the level of her African counterpart, making her an intensely physical presence in intimate contact with the material reality of the society that supports her existence. It would be, in essence, to obliterate the very being of the woman and the aesthetic sphere, both of which are internally dependent on the constitutive split within the subject of capitalism, a split that is displaced onto racialized bodies and disavowed as racial difference. Neither the feminine nor aesthetic sphere could exist apart from their abject African counterparts, for both exist only as sublimations that insure that this constitutive racial difference will be recycled.

Fantasies of Race, Part II: The Limits of Conrad's Fantasy of Racial Community

In *A Singular Modernity*, Fredric Jameson argues that the dialectic "can be defined as a conceptual coordination of incommensurabilities" (64). Within "the dialectic the universal is a conceptual construction that can never know any empirical embodiment or realization" because "the function of the universal in analysis is not to reduce... all [particulars] to identity but rather to allow each to be perceived in its historical difference" (182-83). Jameson therefore presents the failure of identity between diverse elements to be the pre-condition or the inaugural point of the dialectic, rather than the point at which it breaks down. The dialectic itself might be understood as a methodology through which incommensurable realities or logics are aligned without being reduced to sameness or identity. In contrast to this presentation of dialectics we might set any number of poststructuralist "interventions" into the dialectical method. We find one such intercession in *Modernity at Sea*, in which Caesar Casarino characteristically presents dialectics as "function[ing] according to an either / or" binarism and a simple evolutionary logic, according to which "each successive element... retroactively obliterate[s] the preceding one" (35). Thus, Casarino argues that while Marx employs a dialectical model in order to engage "the logic of exchange," his true interest is to conceptualize a "nonrepresentational, asignifying, asubjective, incommensurable something" that will defy the violence of dialectical incorporation into the obliterating stream of history, and thus open the door "to as yet unimaginable historical possibilities" (95).

This debate within contemporary literary theory seems to take place on at least two levels at once. We witness one level of the debate in Casarino's reduction of

dialectical logic to the "logic of exchange." Dialectics is thus equated with the oppressive systemic logic of capital. In defense of the dialectical method, Jameson levels similar charges against his poststructuralist adversaries, as when he argues that the postmodernist and poststructuralist trope of a "perpetual present," or the moment outside historical time that eludes incorporation into it, cannot fail to "replicate one of the most fundamental rhythms of capitalism, namely its reduction to the present, rather than constituting a critique of it" (*Singular Modernity* 194). Thus, the debate seems to derive much of its heat from the question of whether liberation from the oppressive and totalizing logic of exchange is available through a dialectical methodology or a poststructuralist repudiation of such a methodology. On another level, the debate seems to hinge on the question of whether the elusive point of asignification or the alignment of "incommensurabilities" should properly be understood as the inaugural point of the dialectic or the point of its failure, the point at which the "incommensurable something" exceeds its power of accommodation. Particularly because this debate consistently revolves around questions of "modernity" or "modernism" (note the presence of the term "modernity" in both Jameson's and Casarino's title), it seems to present an interesting and important problem to literary scholars of modernism.

In this chapter, I will attempt to utilize some of the different possibilities that are suggested within this discussion in order to explore concerns presented in the work of Joseph Conrad, a pivotal figure in both Jameson's and Casarino's analyses of modernism. In contrast to the oversimplified view that the dialectical method operates according to a simple binarism and prescribes an evolutionary development, I will adopt an interpretation of dialectical thought that posits its own failure as its fundamental

condition of operation, and that asserts that dialectical logic is not fundamentally evolutionary. My goal is to utilize a non-teleological dialectical method in order to incorporate insights from both dialectical and poststructural criticism for an examination of Conrad's anxiety regarding the conditions of both community and communication. I will therefore apply the rhizomic logic of schizophrenic addition employed by Casarino and others in recent scholarship on Conrad as well as appeal to psychoanalytic insights regarding the constitutive split of the subject that I employed in the previous chapter. I believe that both are required in order to fully explore Conrad's interest in the asignifying aspects of language that mark him as a proto-modernist, and to explain the importance of the black body and voice as sites where an asignifying and irreducible *jouissance* finds a locus of control that is necessary for his construction of the "modern," white subject.

By framing my examination of Conrad's writing in these terms, I believe that I am able to effectively intercede in the recurring critical inquiry into Conrad's racism, and to perform a necessary redefinition of the form that such an inquiry should take. By examining the role that the black body takes as the constitutive exclusion that establishes the condition of possibility of Conrad's ideal communities of sailors, this investigation will free itself from the critical dead end of merely asking whether or not Conrad was racist in the sense that he believed in the racist stereotypes of his contemporaries and utilized them in his writing. While the answer to this question is obviously "yes," (I think that Chinua Achebe's "An Image of Africa" made this case convincingly in a way that has never been refuted[4]) the way the question is framed seems to suggest that racism within the context of colonialism is merely a matter of personal choice, rather than a fundamental mechanism according to which the colonial order is both conceptualized and

made operative.[5] I will argue that within Conrad's writing, "race" must be understood as a cause / effect of the colonial symbolic order rather than a matter of either cultural or biological difference. By redefining the meaning of race in symbolic terms, we are able to free the question of Conrad's racism from a behaviorist context that trivializes the matter and limits the significance of race from the beginning.[6] In a broader context, I hope that this essay suggests a more productive way of conceptualizing race generally, by liberating it from the aporia that is the logical dead end of the question of whether race or designates a cultural or biological entity (one can presumably assert that "culture" is a product of human biology just as easily as one can point out that all conceptions of "biology" are, from the beginning, cultural). Either option, of course, in a contemporary American context, as well as in the British colonial context of Conrad, implies *inferiority* – that is, our options are limited from the beginning to finding blacks either culturally, and thus redeemably, or biologically, and thus irredeemably, inferior. We therefore have an obligation to radically redefine our thinking about race in a way that frees it from the fundamentally racist premises of the culture / biology debate. The answer to the question of whether racial difference is a matter of culture or biology therefore must be that it is neither, for the question itself is horribly misguided. Racial difference cannot be understood from the standpoint of assuming either preconstituted and self-contained cultures or biological groups. Rather, "race," as an empty placeholder of the real within a European colonial symbolic order, designates a purely symbolic form of difference.

In order to find a beginning for the project of examining the specific meaning of race within Conrad's writing, we will return to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*. In the last chapter I argued that the voice and body of "the nigger," the only black crewmember on

the ship, becomes the placeholder of the real within Conrad's ideal community of sailors, or "brotherhood of the sea": Wait's body becomes the material object that embodies and conceals the central structural lack that is the condition of both communication and community (*N. N.* 21). The view that Wait's fetishized body represents both the condition and the impossibility of an immaculate communion around which Conrad constructs the ideal totality of an imaginary community is underscored by the author himself in the preface to the American edition of the novel. Regarding Wait, Conrad writes that "in the book he is nothing; he is merely the center of the ship's collective psychology and the pivot of the action... the book [is] written round him" (xiv). In this passage, Conrad seems to assert that Wait's role is both contradictory and necessary. As the strangely absent inaugural point of the "ship's collective psychology," Wait is "nothing," but he is simultaneously the center of the action and the absent center of the ideal community of sailors. Conrad's emotionally ambivalent description of Wait further reinforces his role as a central fetish around which the ship's community revolves. Within the preface, Wait is first described as "an imposter of some character... scornful of our sentimentalism, triumphing over our suspicions" (xiv). Yet despite Wait's triumphant scorn, which inspires both fear and disdain, "in the family circle and amongst my friends" Wait, who "is familiarly referred to as The Nigger, remains very precious to me" (xiv). This "very precious" object that inspires both fear and affection emerges as the constitutive exclusion around which Conrad's community forms, even in these very short passages. He is first opposed to the "us" in the construction "mastering *our* compassion, scornful of *our* sentimentalism, triumphing over *our* suspicions" [italics mine]; his function, within this sentence, is that of the abject, excluded object, inspiring

fear and ambivalence, around which the group of "chums" coheres (xiv). Moreover, the repetition of the word "our" in this passage would seem to represent an attempt to shore up this community against the outsider through sheer repetition. Instead, this repetition emphasizes the fact that the community attains its imaginary consistency only as a reaction to the traumatic, antagonistic kernel that is Wait's body. In other words, the repeated failure of the community of the ship to seal itself off hermetically against Wait, its constitutive exclusion, demonstrates his necessity to its social fabric. A few lines later, when Conrad refers to the "circle" of his "family" and "friends," Wait is similarly a "very precious" but obviously excluded and absent object. He is, in Conrad's own words, the "nothing" around which both of these communities adhere. We might say that Wait is the "exiled, foreclosed uncertainty which haunts the system and generates the illusion" of its unity and coherence (Baudrillard 6).

Wait's voice represents the presence of an elusive *jouissance* that evades incorporation into the ideal community and preserves all of its disruptive power amidst the system that desperately wishes itself closed off against any possibility of disruption. Wait's booming, metallic cough, echoing through the ship as a reminder of the illusory nature of the perfect communion that always seems just out of reach when one is in the presence of blacks, is an episode that finds many analogues within Conrad's writing. Conrad's fascination with the asignifying aspects of language is, almost without exception, accompanied by the proximity of racialized bodies: there is, for instance, the omnipresent drumming that hangs in the air over Marlow's journey to the center of the "dark continent" in *Heart of Darkness*. This drumming provides a backdrop of suggestive asignifying noise similar to the disruptive presence of Wait's cough ringing

through the *Narcissus*; it hovers over the landscape, simultaneously promising and withholding perfect communion, and culminates only when it becomes localized in particular African voices as the "strings of amazing words that resembled no sounds of human language" (62). We might note that such drumming accompanies Africa elsewhere in Conrad's writing, that it seems even to be the mysterious element that defines Africa. Thus, in "An Outpost of Progress," the white protagonists Kayerts and Carlier seem unable to escape this strangely suggestive sound:

> All night they were disturbed by a lot of drumming in the villages... [It] would spread out over the forest, roll through the night, unbroken and ceaseless, near and far, as if the whole land had been one immense drum booming out steadily an appeal to heaven. And through the deep and tremendous noise sudden yells that resembled snatches of songs from a madhouse darted shrill and high in discordant jets of sound. (471)

In this scene, sound piles on top of sound until it becomes all-pervasive, intensifying until it saturates the landscape. Following a logic of sheer accumulation, this layering of sound upon sound inundates the entire body of the land. The "deep, rapid roll near by would be followed by another far off," then "short appeals would rattle out here and there," until all would "mingle together, increase, become vigorous and sustained" (471). This vast and pervasive sound of drumming and shouting, as it is perceived by Kayerts and Carlier, accumulates according to a rhizomic logic of "fits and starts." "[D]iscordant jets of sound" made up of "sudden yells" cannot be reduced to a logical pattern; instead, they dart through the air "shrill and high" as in a "madhouse," absolutely resisting relegation to a pattern that can be integrated into the logic of primitivism (in other words

civilization) by Kayerts or Carlier (471). In this context, we might note that this progressive accretion of noise traces what Deleuze and Guattari would describe as a "line of escape" from meaning, because the noise both begins and ends outside of the realm of signification, traveling, as it does, from the "madhouse" to "heaven." Instead of being reduced to a logic of primitivism or comfortably domesticated within the symbolic confines of the asylum, this immense sound impresses itself upon the entire mass of land, which in turn becomes "one immense drum," saturated with and effusive of an excessive sound composed of "rhizomatic ruptures and deviations" (Casarino 79). Here we witness the African drumming as "a pure and intense sonorous material that is always connected to *its own abolition* – a deterritorialized musical sound, a cry that escapes signification... a sonority that ruptures in order to break away from a chain that is still all too signifying" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 6). This remarkable, asignifying noise intensifies until the entire landscape becomes "a saturating body," terrifying in its de-contextualized and irreducible presence, "that breaks the symbolic structure" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 7). The material body of Africa is constructed in this scene as a gigantic asignifying mass, exceeding the poor domesticating strategies of colonial trade to an alarming extent.

It is this Africa, the Africa that is an asignifying mass of frightening proportions in the midst of the domesticated map of colonial trade, which attracts Marlow in the opening pages of *Heart of Darkness*. Marlow's initial explanation of his attraction to Africa focuses on "the blank spaces" of the map, and within "the biggest, the most blank," by which he designates the African Congo, there was

> One river especially, a mighty big river, that you could see on the map, resembling an immense snake uncoiled, with its head in the sea, its body at rest

curving afar over a vast country, and its tail lost in the depths of the land... it fascinated me as a snake would a bird... the snake had charmed me. (5-6)

When Marlow receives his commission as riverboat captain in the Belgian Congo, he comments that "I was going into the yellow [uncharted territory]. Dead in the center. And the river was there – fascinating – deadly—like a snake" (7). In these passages, the Congo River entices the protagonist like the snake in the Garden of Eden, fascinating Marlow with the promise of knowledge. While in some sense the meandering river into the center of the unknown region traces a "line of escape" into areas that have remained "blank" and therefore have resisted the progressive commodification of the globe that dictates the oppressive logic of empire, the reference seems too encumbered with dread to suggest the possibility of liberation. Rather, the image of the snake swallowing Marlow like a bird suggests that he will be claustrophobically engulfed and absorbed within the very logic he seeks to escape. The enticement of the yellow area is not that of a simple return to an edenic pure being in the moment, or a mythical, pre-lapsarian being which cannot be reduced to meaning.[7] The reference to the fall instead seems to suggest an intimate knowledge of alienation. In this case, alienation is not the experience of being exiled from the presence of God, but rather a permanent exile from oneself, a granting of the painful awareness that one can never be fully oneself that marks the mythical moment of the inauguration of both history and meaning.

Africa, to the extent that it is understood in terms of an irreducible *jouissance* as in the passages above, cannot be "represented," in the strict sense of the term, on Marlow's map. It exists on the map only as a blank space that cannot be made to signify. It is a sustaining internal limit to the colonial symbolic order which can become manifest

only in the form of a reality laying stubbornly and persistently outside of the symbolic order. As such, Africa not only sustains this order as its abject, excluded other, but additionally threatens to destroy it. The promise that draws Marlow irresistibly into the heart of darkness is therefore something entirely different from an escape from an oppressive civilization into some form of pure freedom or uninhibited being. What draws Marlow to Africa is a fascination with this yellow space on the map that marks both an absence and an excess of signification, with this thing that exists as an irreducible otherness at the very core of the colonial civilization that is represented by the map of the world. Marlow succumbs to the erotic allure of this indefinable something that sustains his symbolic existence.

As in "An Outpost of Progress," in *Heart of Darkness* Africa comes to be defined by a rhizomic logic of addition that overwhelms the evolutionary and reductive logic of civilization. It is in this sense that we must understand Marlow's introduction to the continent, during which he witnesses a French warship firing in apparently random fashion toward the land. Conrad writes that

> In the empty immensity of earth, sky, and water, there she was, incomprehensible, firing into a continent. Pop would go one of the six-inch guns; a small flame would dart and vanish, a little whit smoke would disappear, a tiny projectile would give a feeble screech – and *nothing happened. Nothing could happen.* There was a touch of insanity in the proceeding, a sense of lugubrious drollery in the sight; and it was not dissipated by somebody on board assuring me earnestly there was a camp of natives – he called them enemies! – hidden out of sight somewhere. [italics mine] (11)

In this scene, the ludicrous impotence of the French man-of-war begins with its inability to make any discernible mark on the sheer enormity of the landmass of Africa. The "insanity" of the proceeding, however, far exceeds the physical mismatch between the diminutive cannons firing "tiny projectile[s]" and the physical immensity of "a continent." The very fact that the strip of land that is the target of the shelling is indistinguishable from the entire continent of Africa indicates that the problem that is faced by the man-of-war, as by Marlow himself, is a problem of meaning rather than one of military incapacity. The very act of naming and categorizing a piece of this irreducible mass as human "enemies" strikes Marlow as inherently absurd, an observation that *under*scores the fact that within this scene Africa cannot be differentiated from itself (and there fore set in relation to itself) any more than it can be exchanged as a whole within the colonial system of signification. Regardless of the holocausts marking the movement of military and commercial "progress" across the continent (the ability of European capital to create devastation and genocide is amply documented within *Heart of Darkness*), Africa still forms a point at which meaning fails. This failure is not just incidental – "*nothing happened*" – but inevitable and seemingly absolute – "*nothing could happen.*" Yet within Conrad's writing, this very irreducibility typically marks the beginning, rather than the end, of a dialectical process: that which eludes definition, that which cannot be reduced to or exchanged for meaning, characteristically becomes a beginning point of the symbolic order.

While this incommensurable something cannot be divided or exchanged, cannot be set in relation to itself or anything else, it can be materialized. In the three scenes described above, the landmass of Africa itself materializes this something which is

nothing, this nothing around which a symbolic order can take shape, as the "collective psychology" of the *Narcissus* takes shape around the "nothing" that is James Wait, or, more specifically, the nothing that Wait materializes (*N. N.* xiv). In Lacanian terms, this unsignifiable kernel of *jouissance* is designated as the "real" and the object that materializes this void within the symbolic order is the *objet petit a.* This material void, this irreducible something, is the very condition of the dialectic of identity. It is around this primary exclusion, this asignifying object, that both the subject and the community take shape, and it is this object that inaugurates desire. We might note, then, that Marlow's desire to immerse himself in the yellow area of the map and thereby force it to reveal its secret is largely an effort to incorporate this indefinable something into the colonial symbolic order represented by the map, or to force the *objet a* to signify. To do so, however, would be the death of the colonial, white subject, which is built around the void of an asignifying blackness. In support of this interpretation, we might note that Marlow's preservation of this order of being can take place only through silence and evasion, for having "peeped over the edge," or encountered the limitation of the white subject in his experience in the Belgian Congo, he nevertheless lies about his discovery to the Intended at the conclusion of the story in order to preserve "*that great and saving illusion* that shone with an unearthly glow in the darkness" [italics mine] (65; 70). In this instance, Marlow has come to the realization that the illusion of civilization as a meaningful entity can only be preserved by a silence that conceals a set of relationships the revelation of which would be symbolic death.[8] Marlow's confrontation with the real in *Heart of Darkness* is marked by silence and evasion, culminating in "the lie" to the Intended which marks the end of the story, and we observe a similar instance when the

crew of the *Narcissus* mutinies over a vague and inarticulate dissatisfaction that somehow centers on the person of James Wait. When asked what they want by the captain, the entire crew is struck dumb. Significantly, Conrad depicts this silence in terms of an imaginary confrontation with an obscenely grinning Wait, "chuckling painfully over his transparent deceptions" (98). As the crew engages in this imaginary confrontation with James Wait and attempts to put the irritation that he somehow inspires in them into language, "all the simple words they knew seemed to be lost forever in the immensity of their vague and burning desire" (98-99). For Marlow as for the crew of the *Narcissus*, silence marks the confrontation with the real of the colonial symbolic order. In both cases, the real cannot be made to signify within the symbolic order that it enables, and therefore it is marked by silence.

Furthermore, we discover that this confrontation with the real effectively divides the desire of both Marlow and the crew of the *Narcissus*. For Marlow, this confrontation "had the appalling face of a glimpsed truth – the strange commingling of desire and hate" (65). This division of desire, reiterated throughout the story as an ambivalent attraction to black bodies, announces the approach of the real. A similarly violent ambivalence continually marks Wait's presence on the *Narcissus*. When introduced, he is alternately described as "calm, cool, towering, [and] superb" and as "pathetic and brutal... tragic... [and] mysterious" (12). Lacan writes that "there is an emergence of the subject at the level of meaning only from its aphanisis in the Other locus" (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 221). Meaning can only be instantiated as a result of this constitutive split, or aphanisis. The lack of consistency, the preservation of the irreducible core of *jouissance*, is the condition of the emergence of the subject within a signifying order. Throughout

Conrad's work, we witness a fascination with this core of inconsistency, this wound within the subject or the social order. Probing this core of nothing that is also an excess of signification proves impossible, because it also forms a limit of the symbolic order. Yet we find that Conrad's fictional characters cannot resist prodding it, poking at it with a stick, sniffing around its edges. We can understand the fascination with Wait's body in such terms. The play of desire over the surface of Wait's body is perhaps made possible by the way his body, as a materialization of the real, seems to perpetually conceal a secret that it cannot be forced to reveal even through extended scrutiny. His body acts as a veil, promising revelation yet refusing, in itself, to signify. The narrative gaze lingers on Wait's body from the moment it is introduced. The narrator comments that Wait's hands "seemed gloved" and describes Wait's face as "inscrutable" and as a "mysterious... repulsive mask" (12-13). The narrator's gaze glides over Wait's body, repeatedly returning to the mask-like face. Wait's face is first described as disconnected eyes and teeth hovering in the midst of an "indistinguishable" face. A couple of lines later we are merely told that "the man's face... was black." In the following paragraph, we are told that Wait possessed "a head vigorously modeled into deep shadows and shining lights – a head powerful and misshapen with a tormented and flattened face." The narrator continues to analyze the face as "pathetic and brutal... tragic... mysterious," and finally "a repulsive mask" (12). Finally, his eyes, once again disconnected from his body, "rolled wildly, became all whites" (13). Wait's face startles the first mate, causing him to lose his "composure," and renders the rest of the crew silent (13). Wait's impenetrable features inspire both a disturbed silence and a violently ambivalent emotional response, and, in the end, refuse to signify or to be characterized as anything other than

"indistinguishable," "mysterious," and "impenetrable." We might notice that Wait's body, as a limit to signification, gives rise to a play of desire as the narrative gaze roams indiscriminately over it, unable to force upon it any form that is not immediately overthrown or superceded by a contrary description. His eyes and teeth are disconnected and refuse to be set in a consistent relation to the rest of his body; they seem to take on a life of their own. This initial scrutiny ends, significantly, with Wait's cough, "tremendously loud... like two explosions in a vault," forcing both the "dome of the sky" and the body of the ship to resound to its pulsation (13). Like the drumming in "An Outpost of Progress" that turns the very land mass of Africa into an "immense drum" (471), Wait's cough seems to threaten to blow apart the symbolic order at the point of its constitution. The booming cough, like the rhizomically layered drumming, seems on the verge of forcing the very physical structure of the ship, which houses Conrad's ideal community of sailors (as "a small planet"), to become immediately present in its irreducible physical immanence (21). The presence of Wait's asignifying body threatens some form of devastating disruption to Conrad's ideal society from the point of its introduction.

Conrad speaks of this indefinable substance that eludes dialectical incorporation into the subject or the community in terms of "race" with varying degrees of ambiguity throughout his work. It is, of course, "the nigger" whose body forms the impenetrable point of asignification around which the community of the *Narcissus* is constituted, and the mysterious thing that Wait's impenetrable "mask" cannot be forced to reveal is "a nigger's soul" (12). The central role of the racialized body is explained in much more deliberate and overt terms, however, in "Youth." Like *Heart of Darkness*, "Youth"

(composed one year later, in 1900) is a story told by Marlow (this time over a few glasses of claret) to a group of important somebodies involved in imperial trade, "a director of companies, an accountant, a lawyer," and the unidentified and unnamed primary narrator (like *Heart of Darkness*, "Youth" is related to us second-hand) (115). It is the story of a voyage made by Marlow from London to Bangkok when he was twenty, many years prior to the narration. As in *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, Marlow reflects repeatedly and at some length on the ideal community of sailors. In attempting to explain the invisible bond that unites them in their work, he notes that

> There was a completeness in it, something solid like a principle, and masterful like an instinct – a disclosure of something secret, of *that hidden something, that gift of good or evil that makes racial difference*, that shapes the fate of nations. [italics mine] (140)

The impenetrable core of identity, that mysterious "something" that is indefinable and "hidden," yet "solid like a principle," is here defined as "*racial difference.*" The fact that this abstract, indefinable, and disembodied "something" that delineates the racial community is described in terms of "difference" should also alert us to its dependence on the deeply embodied racial other who is invariably discovered, as in the case of James Wait, to form its absent center. We are therefore not surprised to discover that the *Judea*, much like the *Narcissus*, counts a single black sailor amongst its crew, and that it is only in strict contradistinction from this character that the white racial community is clearly delineated. It is also only in opposition to this deeply embodied racial other that the "hidden something" that comprises "racial difference" and that determines the fate not only of nations, but of Conrad's fictional societies of sailors, springs into being. Thus,

during a storm that disables the *Judea* and sends it back to England without having completed its trip to Bangkok, the behavior of Abraham, the mulatto steward, stands out distinctly:

> As we had expected for days to see it swept away, the hands had been ordered to sleep in the cabin – the only safe place in the ship. The steward, Abraham, however, persisted in clinging to his berth, stupidly, *like a mule* – from sheer fright I believe, like an animal that won't leave a stable falling in an earthquake. [italics mine] (125)

I am less interested in the overt racism of this passage, according to which Marlow equates Abraham's intellect to that of an animal, than in the choice of animal: comparing Abraham to a mule emphasizes the mule-like stubbornness of his continued presence despite the fact that the storm should have swept him away.[9] The storm, the same natural force that has bound the rest of the crew into a community centered around an indefinable "something," should logically have carried off the unworthy mulatto, cowardly and motivated by unadulterated fear. Yet, against seemingly impossible odds, Abraham remains on board the *Judea*: "as if by a miracle... there he was sitting in his bunk, surrounded by foam and wreckage, jabbering cheerfully to himself" (125). Abraham, in this scene, remains in the midst of the ideal community of white sailors in spite of his symbolic exclusion, an exclusion that is embodied and violently imposed within the narrative by the impersonal natural force of a hurricane. He impossibly remains amidst the wreckage that surrounds him. His nonsensical "jabbering" attests to his continued presence following the storm, the asignifying noises issuing from his racialized body being described as "cheerful," in opposition to Wait's more menacingly disruptive cough,

because he testifies to the continuation of the community following the violence of the storm.

The episode of the storm functions, in this instance, as an allegory of the violent necessity and simultaneous impossibility of the constitutive racial exclusion that gives birth to Conrad's ideal society. Marlow's story of the events of the storm prior to the description of Abraham's punishment (and the miraculous continuation of his existence in the face of this punishment) is, in fact, structured by a metonymic progression that leads to the discovery of Abraham's tortured body. As Marlow is on deck strapped to a mast, he continually feels a hard object bumping against his leg. When he discovers that it is a saucepan, he realizes that the deckhouse, containing the cook's berth, has washed overboard. When he goes to look for the cook he discovers Abraham, at which point the episode concludes. Interestingly, having gone to look for the cook, fearing that he had gone overboard, Marlow forgets to mention him again, not even informing us whether or not he is still alive. The cook, in fact, only makes an appearance as a functional link in the metonymic chain leading us to Abraham, and ceases to exist as soon as he has served this function. Marlow concludes this scene with the observation that "[o]ne would think that the sole purpose of that fiendish gale had been to make a lunatic of that poor devil of a mulatto," conspicuously alerting us to the narrative purpose of the episode (125). The storm exists, in other words, to dramatize Abraham's embodiment of the asignifying, nonsensical core of the community. His persistent presence as the seemingly impossible material realization of the otherwise purely abstract and "hidden" "principle" of race that binds the community together is allegorized in this scene.

If, in Wait, there is a consistent emphasis on the disruptive power of the *objet petit a*, in the case of Abraham (in the scene following the storm) its generative power would seem to be stressed. Regardless of these emphases, however, in both *The Nigger of the Narcissus* and "Youth" we repeatedly witness the simultaneity of the generation and disruption of community through a constitutive exclusion, an exclusion that is materialized by a lone black body and a "jabbering" black voice. Furthermore, in both cases Conrad represents in extremely elemental fashion the dependence of the abstract and implicitly racially defined imaginary community on the deeply embodied racial other. The existence of the mysterious "something" (described as "nothing" in the preface of *N. N.*) which provides Conrad's "brotherhood of the sea" with solidity and "completeness," the "secret" and elusive thing that "shapes the fate of nations" and defines the ideal community of sailors, is therefore dependent not only upon "race," as Conrad recognized, but additionally the *embodiment* of the racialized other. The notion of belonging to a community, and particularly the ideal of disembodied liberal citizenship in the "public sphere" within which communication can take place, could hardly be more starkly demonstrated to be fundamentally reliant on the deeply embodied, racialized, and excluded other than it is shown to be in these two novels. In both cases Conrad presents a community of the ship which he explicitly positions as an ideal community or a "brotherhood of the sea," and as a microcosm of society or "a fragment detached from the earth" (*N. N.* 21). In both stories we witness this mysteriously cohesive community coalesce around a single, excluded, black crewmember, whose deep embodiment forms a stark contrast to the intangible and ultimately indefinable attribute that characterizes the condition of abstract belonging to the ship's community. In both novels, we therefore

witness the genesis of race as an asymmetrical relationship, according to which a disembodied whiteness can only be posited on the condition of the concomitant creation of a profoundly embodied blackness. Blackness / embodiment forms, in this case, what Judith Butler refers to as a "constitutive outside... composed of a set of exclusions that are nevertheless *internal* to" the community "as its own nonthematizable necessity" (*Bodies That Matter* 39). Thus, an incorporeal whiteness emerges through the constitutive exclusion of a profoundly corporeal racially marked body, which comes to function as the materialization of the central impossibility around which identity coalesces. Racialized bodies therefore come to exist as material reminders of the impossibility of the foreclosure of difference. Regarding this connection between racialization and embodiment, David Eng remarks that "whiteness" can exist as "an unnamed and invisible category" only on the condition of the projection of "racial difference onto those bodies outside a universalizing discourse of whiteness" (141). The symbolic logic of "whiteness" therefore requires bodies to set in opposition to an intangible community belonging, a requirement that results in the production of race.

This production of race as an asymmetrical relationship between black bodies and white citizens has other implications in *The Nigger of the Narcissus* and "Youth." Because the white community of sailors can never be fully consolidated, but can continue to exist only in the circumstance of its own incompletion, its existence is dependent upon the stubborn and seemingly unexplainable persistence of the black body in its midst. The white brotherhood of sailors can come into being only through its own reiteration, each reiteration representing a failure to achieve self-sameness. Each reiteration, and each failure of foreclosure, requires a fresh confrontation with the abject body, the persistence

of which is the condition of the continuation of the community. Thus, the reiteration necessary for community requires the simultaneous reiteration or reenactment of embodiment to be performed on the black body. The foundational exclusion has to be repeated with each iteration. In *The Nigger of the Narcissus* and "Youth," the performance of embodiment takes the form of torture of the single black body that allows the production of the intangible white social order.

As discussed above, the allegorical enactment of Abraham's centrality to the white community of sailors, in the form of the storm that batters the *Judea*, stages the performance of embodiment in the form of the physical brutalization of Abraham at the hands of natural forces. Recall that the storm in "Youth" batters Abraham's body to the extent that "[o]ne would think that the sole purpose of that fiendish gale had been to make a lunatic of that poor devil of a mulatto" (126). Indeed, Abraham disappears from the story at this point, perhaps because his cheerful, nonsense jabbering following the storm seems to safely ensconce him in a state of madness that perfectly suits him for the role of deeply embodied abject other within the social order of the *Judea*. In this regard, James Wait provides an interesting contrast to Abraham. Wait's body undergoes the torture of an unrelenting illness: considering both the place of Wait's body within the social structure (that of the *objet a*) and the omnipresence of the symptoms of his sickness, we might argue that his body itself is the product of this illness. His "cough, metallic, hollow, and tremendously loud" is hyperbolically described as "explosions in a vault" that cause the "ship's bulwarks to vibrate in unison" (13). The cough, in this scene, first marks Wait's audible presence on the ship with the threat to blow apart the physical structure of ship itself, an exaggeration that represents the threat of the ultimate

destruction of the community of the ship, as it simultaneously announces Wait's presence for the first time. Wait's body continues to undergo the torture of illness throughout the story, up until his death as the *Narcissus* enters the port and the crew disbands. Unlike Abraham, Wait's presence, symbolically necessary for the formation of Conrad's ideal community, constantly threatens to destroy the very community that it instantiates. The manner in which the symptoms of illness constitute Wait's body as the *objet a* underscores this distinction from Abraham. Abraham's role in constituting the secret racial social order of the *Judea* at crucial points in "Youth" seems to be generally elided on a thematic level through an effective strategy of containment: his potentially disruptive centrality is contained first through figuring him as animalistic or bestial and then through his enclosure within insanity, a convenient domestication of his symbolic role as the embodiment of non-sense or that which eludes the symbolic order.

At this juncture, we should recall that the point of departure of this argument was the assertion that Wait's voice represents the presence of an elusive *jouissance* that evades incorporation into the ideal community and preserves all of its disruptive power amidst the system that Conrad desperately seems to wish could be closed off against any disruptive possibility. As such, Wait's voice, like the mass of asignifying noise that becomes definitive of the continent of Africa in "An Outpost of Progress" and *Heart of Darkness*, becomes a reality laying stubbornly and persistently outside of the colonial symbolic order. His voice, as well as his body, therefore threaten to rend the social fabric of the ship whenever the two invariably confront each other, as they must with each reiteration and consequent failure of the attempt to foreclose the ideal community of the ship against the physical presence of Wait, which is also, of course, the condition of

existence of the community. Like the drumming that overwhelms the annihilating commodification of the colonial symbolic order in "An Outpost of Progress," saturating the African landscape until it resonates as a pure singularity out of reach of the instrumental reductiveness of commodification, Wait's cough threatens to detonate the symbolic order to which it gives rise. Just as the "discordant" and "shrill" noises that disconcert Kayerts and Carlier pile on top of each other until they become all-pervasive, intensifying and saturating the landscape until the land itself becomes "one immense drum" (471), Wait's cough causes the "ship's bulwarks to vibrate in unison" (13), the ship itself threatening to attain a pure immanent presence that would be irreducible to signification, and therefore would exceed the limits of incorporation of the community.

The irreducible singularity of Wait's physical being, which threatens to stall the dialectical link between the succession of moments that is the necessary condition for the community of the ship to attain a minimal degree of positive consistency, never loses its disruptive power during the entire journey of the *Narcissus*, and Wait only dies the moment before the ship reaches its destination in London and the community of sailors dissolves as each member of the crew goes his own way within the immensity of the metropolis. The immanent limit of the community becomes, in the case of Wait and the crew of the *Narcissus*, the impetus driving its reiterative existence. In this sense, in *The Nigger of the Narcissus* Conrad presents a radically anti-teleological dialectical inquiry into the conditions of possibility of community and identity within the context of race that forms the historical horizon of possibility within which he operates. The community in question does not undergo a progressive or evolutionary development in the course of the narrative. Rather, it is constructed around a series of disjunctive moments in which

the physical presence of Wait threatens its destruction. Synthesis, in this case, does not obliterate difference by reducing it to self-sameness or identity. Rather, we might understand synthesis as a negotiation of identity and difference in the terms that Slovoj Žižek outlines in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. "*The synthesis*," Žižek argues,

> *is exactly the same as the anti-thesis*; the only difference lies in a certain change of perspective, in a certain turn through which what was a moment ago experienced as an obstacle, as an impediment, proves itself to be a positive condition... [The] logic of the "negation of the negation" [or synthesis] does not entail any kind of return to positive identity, any kind of abolition, of cancellation of the disruptive force of negativity, of reducing it to a passing moment in the self-mediating process of identity... The "negation of the negation" does not in any way abolish the antagonism, it consists only in the experience of the fact that this immanent limit which is preventing me from achieving my full identity with myself simultaneously enables me to achieve a minimum of positive consistency, however mutilated it is. (176)

Within Žižek's explanation of synthesis, the disruptive power of difference is not eliminated, and the element of difference is not in itself altered. Rather than being cancelled or abolished, this difference becomes both the limit and the condition of identity, which can only be constituted around its own failure. Significantly, Žižek argues that "*the synthesis is exactly the same as the anti-thesis*." In other words, the thesis and antithesis do not merge into a new whole that might be understood in terms of the metaphor of birth, providing a Hegelian "organic unity" (Hegel 2; 6-7). Rather, the synthesis retains the thesis and the antithesis as antagonistic elements, but inverts the

predominance of the thesis over the antithesis. Etienne Balibar elucidates this process of synthesis in *Reading Capital* when he writes that

> To say that the modes of production are constituted as combination variants is also to say that they transpose the order of dependence, that they make certain elements move in the structure... from a place of historical domination to a place of historical subjection. (282)

This inversion of thesis and antithesis that is achieved in the synthesis would seem to be the process that Balibar has in mind when he states that "the capitalist mode of production is constituted by 'finding already there'... the elements which its structure combines" (283). Balibar comes to this conclusion as a result of reflecting on the logical impossibility of locating a pre-history of capitalism within the feudal mode of production that does not rely on a "genealogical" process of reading feudalism in terms of the analytical concepts provided by capitalism. Balibar therefore argues that the pre-existing elements necessary for the genesis of capitalism are reinflected, within the synthesis provided by the capitalist mode of production, as the effects of the very entity that they generated (282). Capital, as the both the necessary precondition for the existence of capitalism and the definitive effect of the system of capitalism, therefore serves as both an external and internal limit to capitalism, because it acts as both the cause and effect of the system it defines according to Balibar's geneology.

Žižek argues persuasively that such logic is compatible with a Lacanian explanation of the generation of the subject: the "'negation of the negation' does not in any way abolish the antagonism" between identity and difference; rather, it establishes the fact that the very thing that prevents "me from achieving my full identity with myself

simultaneously enables me to achieve a minimum of positive consistency, however mutilated it is" (*Sublime Object* 176). And returning, finally, to the character of James Wait, we must note that the same logic is at work in the relationship between Wait, as the *objet a*, and the race-based social order whose existence his bodily presence enables. The dependence of Wait and the community of sailors on each other for their mutual existence within the symbolic order means that each exists as both cause and effect of the other. And while the possibility of a divinely ordained schema of evolution oriented toward the horizon of an absolute good is lost in such a dialectic, the possibility of the overthrow of the social order is contained within each iteration of community. In the case of James Wait, we might note that as the *objet petit a* of the social order, his emergence within each iteration of community is not only responsible for the mutilated sense of positive consistency achieved by the community of the *Narcissus*. Additionally, each time Wait's body materializes the real, it becomes a potentially catastrophic source of disruption. As the constitutive outside that is simultaneously internal to the community, Wait "emerges within the system as incoherence, disruption, a threat to its own systematicity" (Butler, *Bodies That Matter* 39).

When we move from James Wait to Abraham, we notice the fact that while Abraham's presence seems to serve a similar function in constituting the community of sailors on the *Judea*, the strategies of containment of the potentially disruptive surplus of meaning that is embodied by Abraham are much more effective. Significant to the more effective control of the black body is the naming of the secret "principle" of community that can never be fully revealed but that nevertheless "shapes the fate of nations" as "racial difference" ("Youth" 140). Within Conrad's work, it would seem that explicitly

giving this mysterious thing the name of "race" is the counterpart to the careful control of the irruptions of the real connected to the repetitive emergence of the deeply embodied racial other. "Race" might, in this case, be understood as an effective site of containment of the problematic of community. In connection with the apparent effectiveness of the conscious designation of "race" as the principle of community are the overtly and traditionally racist methods that Conrad uses to characterize Abraham, first as an animal and then as insane.

Within Conrad's work, however, the centrality of the racialized body to the formation of the ideal community of the sea is, perhaps, most substantively evidenced in "The Secret Sharer." In fact, if we follow an arc of possibility that starts with Wait as a perpetually disruptive embodiment of the conditions of possibility / impossibility of community and continues through Abraham as a much more comfortably contained embodiment of the alien presence at the core of the ideal community, we might logically end up with the completely subsumed racial other that we encounter in "The Secret Sharer." This arc, beginning in 1897 with the publication of *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, progressing through "Youth" in 1902, and ending with "The Secret Sharer" in 1912, chronologically marks the beginning, middle, and end of the most productive period of Conrad's literary career. This chronological progression is much less important, however, than the fact that these three stories delineate the spectrum of possibility within which Conrad's literary quest for perfect communion takes place.

The initial objection to a reading of "The Secret Sharer" that underscores the importance of the racialized body to the formation of community would certainly be that any such body is apparently entirely absent from the story. This seeming absence,

however, is in fact a violent erasure of the black body. As Caesar Casarino points out in *Modernity at Sea*, "The Secret Sharer" was, according to Conrad, directly inspired by an actual event: the murder of a sailor by an officer aboard the *Cutty Sark*. In a letter, Conrad writes that Leggatt

> himself was suggested to me by a young fellow who was 2d mate (in the '60's) of the *Cutty Sark* clipper and had the misfortune to kill a man on deck. But his skipper had the decency to let him swim ashore on the Java Coast as the ship was passing through Anjer Straits. The story was well remembered in the Merchant Service even in my time. (Qtd. in Casarino 242)

What Conrad omits in both the letter and the story, according to *The Log of the Cutty Sark*, is that the murdered sailor in question was black.[10] We might view this violent erasure of the black body from the text as a fulfillment that neither the illness that ravaged Wait nor the storm that battered Abraham could accomplish: the removal of the alien racial presence from the ideal community of the sea. Yet, because of (rather than despite) this excision, we witness the fulfillment by the absent black body of the role assigned by Conrad to James Wait in the introduction to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*. The absent black sailor becomes, literally, the "nothing" that is simultaneously "the center of the ship's collective psychology" (xiv). In other words, this solution to the problem of achieving the perfectly self-identical community simultaneously becomes a crisis of identity.

The story opens with the nameless narrator / protagonist quietly surveying his ship and its surroundings. As he does so, he makes the kind of observation that is so often repeated within Conrad's fiction, especially his sea stories:

> Only as I passed the door of the forecastle *I heard a deep, quiet, trustful sigh* of some sleeper inside. And suddenly I rejoiced in the great security of the sea as compared with the unrest of the land, in my choice of that untempted life presenting no disquieting problems, invested with an elementary moral beauty by *the absolute straightforwardness of its appeal and by the singleness of its purpose*. [italics mine] (653)

The "deep, quiet, trustful sigh" is exactly the kind of asignifying noise that invariably represents the dream of perfect communion in Conrad's work. Here the sigh immediately calls to the narrator's mind the "great security of the sea," and again we seem to be in the midst of the promise of utopian society that so often defines the space of the ship. Like the *Narcissus*, the unnamed ship in "The Secret Sharer" is initially posited as a space of its own, "detached from the earth," "a small planet" carrying "a great circular solitude with her" (*N. N.* 21). Separate from the "unrest" of life on land, with its multitude of "disquieting problems," this ship, like the *Narcissus*, is defined by its disconnection from a larger and more complex society, by its "absolute straightforwardness" and "the singleness of its purpose."

Yet, we should also notice that as in the case of the *Narcissus*, this promise of a perfect, self-identical being retreats with the horizon as an "unattainable frontier" (*N. N.* 21). In "Youth," Marlow's final assessment of his time aboard the *Judea* characterizes the space of the ship in terms of a promise withheld: he summarizes his experience on the *Judea* as having been "always... looking anxiously for something out of life, that while it is expected is already gone" (154). In this spirit, Marlow's describes the sea, in his final remarks of "Youth," as "the sea that gives nothing" (154). The encounter with the

promise of communion here takes the form of a perpetually missed encounter. Furthermore, if we take this passage from "Youth" together with the passage from "The Secret Sharer" quoted above, in which the sea provides "great security," "singleness of purpose," and "elementary moral beauty," we realize that the sea is, in fact, an empty placeholder: if it denies nothing in the first passage, in the second it "gives nothing." The sea can stand for both an imaginary unity and the rupture of the real that is the condition of this unity, and we might therefore complement David Simpson's apt description of the sea in Conrad as an "image of completion, the repository and synthesizing medium of all created forms" with that of the sea as a site of constitutive alienation (120). We might, in fact, reasonably assert that these are the two primary meanings given to the space of the sea throughout Conrad's work. It is apparent that Conrad's narrators consciously define the idyllic space of the ship not only in terms of the fulfillment of an ideal of self-sameness, but equally in terms of a dialectic of alienation.

The centrality of the constitutive split of the subject to the definition of the perfect identity possible within the space of the ship is, if anything, stated in much stronger terms in "The Secret Sharer" than in "Youth." Here, the narrator introduces himself not only as "a stranger to the ship," but additionally as "a stranger to myself" (650). Following this introduction to the reader in terms of his failure to be quite himself, the narrator wonders about his ability to attain "that ideal conception of one's own personality every man sets up for himself secretly" (651). In this way, the dialectic of identity that defines the space of the ship is explicitly inaugurated with the narrator's introduction of himself.

The presence of a space of *jouissance* within identity that characteristically finds its troubling mode of control in the reiterative torture of racialized bodies is explicitly

introduced immediately following the narrator's reflections on the ideal space of the ship. Almost instantaneous with his notice of the reassuring sigh of the sleeping sailor he notices Leggatt, his double, swimming naked alongside the ship. He describes Leggatt's appearance in terms that seem to indicate a sort of supernatural birth. Leggatt seemed "to issue suddenly" from the sea, his appearance marked by "a faint flash of phosphorescent light" (654). The narrator initially perceives Leggatt's body as "a headless corpse" (654). Even after his head comes into view, the narrator cannot discern that it has any definable shape, and Leggatt's face is similarly indiscernible, appearing as "a dimly pale oval in the shadow of the ship's side" (654-55). The headlessness and facelessness of Leggatt's body is indicative of his lack of a definable identity as he is born into the narrator's consciousness. This lack of a stabilizing identity allows for the play of desire over his body under the narrator's gaze, as "the sea lightning played about his limbs at every stir" (655). When the narrator finally clearly perceives Leggatt's face, it is revealed to be an exact duplicate of his own, "as though I had been faced by my own reflection in the depths of a somber and immense mirror" (658).

Leggatt's body unleashes a play of *jouissance* precisely because it marks the point of anamorphosis. This is the point that directs perception in such a way as to reveal "the signifier's non-sense [that] erupts in the midst of Meaning" (Žižek, *Sublime Object* 99). It is an empty point within the field of vision at which the mode of perception is altered in order to reveal the difference in the midst of identity. The space of Leggatt's body, marked by its indeterminate form and the play of *jouissance* that it ignites, acts as the point of disruption in the consistency of the symbolic field that simultaneously guarantees the uniformity of the symbolic field. As in Lacan's analysis of Holbein's *Ambassadors*,

the point of anamorphosis directs the perception in such a way that the kernel of nonsense in the midst of meaning enters the field of vision, or the *objet a* is revealed (Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts* 88-89). (In Holbein's painting, the *objet a* is a skull that can be made out only if one views the painting from a particular angle.) The narrative equivalent of this process appears in "The Secret Sharer" when Leggatt's body first appears as a point of anamorphosis, a spot within the visual register that requires one to refocus. The body, as an anamorphic spot, forces the narrator to refocus his vision in such a way as to reveal the *objet a* of Leggatt's face, within which "*pure difference is perceived as Identity*" when the disruptive difference within the symbolic field takes the exact form of the narrator's face (Žižek, *Sublime Object* 99). Leggatt's body is therefore the anamorphic point that allows the emergence of the ship as a space of model identity, a space that is manifested through the "deep, trustful sigh" (653).

In Leggatt's story of his murder of an insubordinate crewmember (the black sailor of the actual event, whose race is excised from the text), we need to take note of similarities to both "Youth" and *The Nigger of the Narcissus*. Leggatt is driven to violence by "the cursed insolence" of the offending sailor (659). Leggatt relates that this "insolence" was not unusual, but rather an ordinary part of his interaction with the offending sailor. From the brief relation of this occurrence, we could find a number of parallels between this character and other rabble rousers in Conrad's fiction. In *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, for instance, it is not only James Wait, but the working class Donkin (who is closely allied to Wait; he becomes Wait's closest companion) whose insolence almost drives the crew to mutiny. Of course, Donkin is not a sufficiently disruptive presence on his own: he cannot act as the center of "the ship's collective

psychology" (*N. N.* xiv). This role requires the deep embodiment characteristic of the racial body. The nameless sailor whose insolence is punished by the righteous Leggatt seems to perform the same role in "The Secret Sharer." The storm that batters both the sailor's and Leggatt's bodies during the incident reminds us of the storm that batters Abraham in "Youth," the difference being that unlike Abraham, the sailor on the *Sephora* does not emerge cheerfully babbling nonsense; rather, he dies. Furthermore, his death is described in apocalyptic terms. As Leggatt grabs his throat there is "a crash as if the sky had fallen on my head" (659). Hit by an enormous wave which both announces the murder and literally conceals it from sight, the two men emerge, Leggatt still squeezing his foe's throat, the sailor apparently dead, described only as "black in the face" (659). With the death of the sailor, the ship is torn not only by the storm, which, like the storm that batters Lear, is perhaps representative of madness, but by the resultant "lunacy" among the crew and "raving" of the captain (659). The loss of this particular sailor, in other words, strikes the ship as a total psychotic breakdown of the social fabric, as though the kernel of *jouissance* around which it had been formed was annihilated. "When I came to," Leggatt explains to his double, the "first thing I heard... was the maddening howling of the endless gale, and on that the voice of the old man" (660). The raving lunacy of the captain overlaps the "maddening howling" of the gale, the two appearing to be indistinguishable in this scene. It is difficult not to read this scene as performing the symbolic murder of James Wait that Conrad had been itching to perform for the previous fifteen years. Wait's triumphant scorn is avenged, and the torture of the black body finally culminates in death. The symbolic murder of the black sailor predictably leads to

a psychotic breakdown of the ship's community, resulting in the exile of Leggatt, who then appears as a stranger on board a different, nameless ship as the captain's double.

Naming, in fact, provides an important psychic transfer point for the action of doubling, and it is therefore significant that the narrator's double, Leggatt, receives a name while the narrator himself remains nameless. This fact does not testify to the exchangeability of the "original" for the "copy." Rather, the fact that the narrator and his ship remain nameless while the double and his ship are named implies that the double, as stated above, provides the point at which the narrator initially misrecognizes himself in the field of the Other. It is this misrecognition that inaugurates the subject through aphanisis, or the constitutive split: if in a name, one misrecognizes oneself in the field of the Other in order to enter into the symbolic order, it would seem that Leggatt provides this point of entry for the narrator. Leggatt, in this case, has the relationship to the narrator of his own name: as I argued above, he is the point of anamorphosis, the quilting point of the symbolic field of the narrator's identity. Leggatt functions as a *point de capiton* or a rigid designator: he is the point at which "*pure difference is perceived as Identity*" (Žižek, *Sublime Object* 99). In appearing on board the second, nameless ship Leggatt not only sets the narrative in motion, but inaugurates a new symbolic order, different yet similar to the one that he annihilated on the old ship by virtue of murdering the insolent sailor. And if *The Nigger of the Narcissus* provides an example of the perverse obsession with the black body as the symptom (which is both the condition and the result) of community, and "Youth" presents a similar but much less self-conscious presentation of the black body as the symptom that allows for the quality of abstract belonging to the white community, "The Secret Sharer" gives us, in a sense, Conrad's

final solution to this problem, in which the resolution of the problem of community is simultaneously a crisis of identity. The violent foreclosure of identity against the racial other reemerges as an uncanny difference from the self.

Freud's 1919 essay entitled "The 'Uncanny'" in fact provides a very succinct conceptual framework for understanding the sort of doubling that we witness in "The Secret Sharer." In this essay, Freud examines the way that the German word *heimlich* contains within itself "two sets of ideas, which, without being contradictory, are yet very different: on the one hand it means what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight" (224-25). In its most archaic sense, ***heimlich*** refers to something "belonging to the house or the family," yet also means that which is "concealed" or "withheld" (222-23). Additionally, ***heimlich*** is defined as something that is "haunted" (221). *Heimlich* becomes an important term for Freud because its use invokes both that which is most familiar – the home, the community, or the family – and at the same time that which haunts these elemental forms of belonging. *Heimlich* therefore turns back on itself and invariably comes to mean ***unheimlich***, that excess which is concealed or withheld as the condition of belonging; it is a word that inescapably invokes not only that which represents one's identity, but the hidden surplus that serves as a limit to this representation, that stands behind it like a ghost. In Freud's terms, *unheimlich* comes to refer to an experience (exemplified in the encounter of one's own double) in which some archaic repression surfaces: "an uncanny experience occurs... when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression" (249). Julia Kristeva argues that for Freud, "the uncanny" therefore expresses the most basic problem of psychoanalysis, for it points to the symptom at the

core of identity. Kristeva describes "the concept – which arises out of Freud's text – of the *unheilich*" as "a crumbling of conscious defenses" resulting from an encounter with the other that points "at the same time [to] a need for identification and a fear of it" (332). The confrontation with the double, in this case, is an uncanny encounter with the point of symbolic identification at which the consistency of one's own being crumbles; it exposes one to the "alienation" or "fundamental division" from which "the dialectic of the subject is established" (Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts* 221).

The encounter with the double in "The Secret Sharer" should therefore be understood in terms of the ambivalent process of identification that we observe throughout Conrad's writing, and which consistently defines encounters with racial others. The gyration between an identification with the symptom of the physical presence of African voices and the act of wishing a violent and permanent foreclosure of one's own identity against the symptom is famously enacted in *Heart of Darkness*. In his note to the International Society for the suppression of savage customs, the ideal union between Africa and Europe that Kurtz outlines and that makes Marlow "tingle with enthusiasm" at "the notion of an exotic Immensity ruled by an august Benevolence," Kurtz scribbles in the margins, "Exterminate all the brutes!" (46) In this case, the secret wish for the violent foreclosure of identity against the intrusion of the other is literally relegated to the margins. In the dual movement of Kurtz's letter, the missionary ideal of reducing difference to sameness is simultaneously the wish for murderous extermination of the other, the benevolent missionary purpose is shown to be the subsumed desire for genocide, and the approach of even an imaginary self-identical, perfectly unified identity is shown simultaneously to be "horror" at the mere possibility of such an achievement.

In "The Secret Sharer" we see the dual movement in Kurtz's letter reduced to a single point: the double.

If we once again return to our three primary texts, *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, "Youth," and "The Secret Sharer," we do not necessarily discover a progression, but rather a layering or multiplication of possibilities for the textual management of the stubborn intrusions of the other that would seem to be the founding condition of the community that Conrad persistently uses the space of the ship to imagine. *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, which is chronologically the first of the three stories, provides what would seem to be the most extended and deliberate examination of the burden of something alien (to paraphrase Hegel) that inaugurates the dialectic of identity. Conrad's examination of this irreducible otherness at the core of identity takes the form of an obsession in this novel, as an intolerable awareness of the presence of the racial other in the form of a "nigger" repeatedly makes itself felt at the same instant as the sense of the possibility of a perfectly harmonious and self-identical community. In the effort to tease out an ideal communion of an achieved self-presence from this dialectic of identity, however, Conrad reiteratively discovers only the body of Wait, which is experienced as perpetually preventing the imaginary communion from manifesting itself, or as a fundamental flaw in the universal order, "the failure of some law of nature" (103). In "Youth" we encounter what would seem to be a much less conscious, but nevertheless narratively significant, focus on the presence of a single black body amidst the community of sailors. Once again, the racialized body appears as the precondition of Conrad's investigation of the possibility of community using the space of the ship. Also significant, I believe, are the more traditionally *racist* techniques of controlling the

irruptions of the real represented by the racialized body that Conrad employs in "Youth." In this case we witness a much more effective imaginary suture, which, I would suggest, results from Conrad's willingness to draw on the preconstituted imaginary discourses of racial science. In contrast to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, where we observe an emphasis on the persistent disruptive capabilities of the racialized body as the *object a*, in "Youth" the very lack of conscious attention directed toward the symptomatic presence of Abraham, the mulatto steward, suggests the dynamic power of racist discourse in effectively providing an imaginary suture for intrusions of the real. Labeling Abraham a *mulatto*, characterizing his speech as "*jabbering*," and portraying his actions as childlike and cowardly apparently effectively represses and even *sublimates* the space of the real through the imaginary formation of "race" in such a way that attests to the dynamic power of racism and helps us understand its continued importance through the past four hundred years of European colonialism up to the present day.

Finally, in "The Secret Sharer," Conrad presents the ideal community of the ship ethnically cleansed of the racial other through a symbolic murder that is doubly disavowed, both in the story itself and later in the letter explaining the story. In finally performing this symbolic murder, however, Conrad fails to discover a point of pure self-presence or perfect communion. What he uncovers is rather a certain alienation, or an originary spacing that inaugurates identity as necessarily different from itself, and that introduces the hallucination of a unified identity as always already under erasure. In "The Secret Sharer," Conrad's unnamed narrator experiences identity simultaneously as absolute difference, in the form of his double. This collapse of identity and difference into an originary difference from the self is effected because the body of the murdered

black sailor had functioned, following the symbolic logic of all three of Conrad's stories examined in this essay, as the *objet a* that guarantees the consistency of the symbolic order. The murder is therefore depicted in terms of a total psychotic breakdown of the community of the ship.

What this murder reveals, of course, is not a perfect self-presence that the black sailor's bodily existence has somehow been preventing, but rather that the *objet a* of his body forms the point at which one (mis)recognizes oneself in the field of the Other. The *objet a* is the point of one's own entry into the symbolic order, or the subject's "shadow among objects" (Žižek, *Metastases* 83); it is the necessary / impossible point at which the subject (mis)recognizes itself within symbolic order. It is the placeholder of the subject that manifests the "primal separation" of the subject from itself, the "self-mutilation" that is the condition of symbolic existence (Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts* 83). To expose it as such is to "traverse the fantasy" and recognize a difference from the self as the necessary / impossible structure of identity (Žižek, *Looking Awry* 137). In presenting the *objet a* as the mirror image of the protagonist, "The Secret Sharer," in effect, exposes its function of inaugurating and locating the subject within the symbolic order. In doing so, it encourages us, on some level, to traverse the imaginary content of this placeholder of the real, which the context provided by this essay reveals once again to be the fantasy of "race" that predominates in much of Conrad's fiction.

To traverse the fantasy of race, in this case, means to recognize race as a historically particular imaginary content occupying the space of the real. To recognize race as fantasy, in this sense, allows us to account for both its paradoxical and malleable nature and its continual and continually disavowed influence, and to simultaneously

recognize its radical contingency in relation to history. More specifically, recognizing the fantasy of race will hopefully raise the debate regarding Conrad's views on race to a more substantive level, a level that forces us to reckon with its centrality to his writing. We are no longer able to deal with race as though it were simply something that Conrad was free to accept or reject in its entirety, to embrace as a "racist" or to reject (albeit in an extremely arcane and indirect way) through a gloriously purifying gesture of literary irony. Conceptualizing race in Conrad's writing as the content of a Lacanian fantasy therefore not only directs our attention toward an important aspect of his work that has so far lain dormant, but, most importantly, forces us to think about it in the context of the colonial ideology which formed the historical horizon of possibility within which his persistent questioning into the possibility of community took place.

The "Bestial Mark" of Race

I would like to begin this chapter with a digression in order to refocus the argument that I have developed in the previous two chapters. In chapter one, focusing mainly on Marx's *Capital, Vol. 1* and Conrad's *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* and *Heart of Darkness*, I argued that racialization, in the late Victorian or early modern period, was intimately connected with the logic of the commodity. In order to give this argument greater specificity, I analyzed a particular form that racialization took in *Heart of Darkness*. According to a metonymic logic of contact, bodies that came into intimate physical contact with commodities (understood as objects that materialized the originary disjunction of capitalism, and thus embodied its logic of infinite systemic desire) became deeply embodied, or were, in effect, racialized. This particular logic of race, which I would associate with the "scientific" racism that became predominant during this period, in effect involved the inscription of certain physical stigmata on specific bodies through contact with commodities. These stigmata were then organized into a semiotics of the body that I would argue is coextensive with the "scientific" view of race. In chapter two, I focused on three sea stories of Conrad, *The Nigger of the "Narcissus,"* "Youth," and "The Secret Sharer" in order to further develop a particular strand of this argument. Because racialized bodies function as a site at which the foundational disjunctions and originary uncertainties of a given symbolic order are organized, systematized, and controlled, the nature of racialization could be illuminated through the Lacanian logic of the *objet a*. In each of these stories, I revealed how Conrad's imaginary ideal of the community of sailors was dependent upon the constitutive exclusion of a single, deeply-embodied black character. Because this disembodied racial brotherhood was in each case

reliant on the profound embodiment of the racial other, this ideal community was often explicitly, and always implicitly, an order that required racial violence in order to sustain itself. Thus, we discover that some form of torture of the single black body is required to sustain the racial brotherhood of sailors in each story. In each case, it would seem that Conrad creates a social imaginary that exists by virtue of violence enacted on racial bodies.

My digression is a brief one, to a period about fifty years prior to the majority of the literature under discussion. In 1855, on the eve of the American Civil War, Frederick Douglass published his second autobiography, *My Bondage and My Freedom.* Early in this book, Douglass takes issue with those who seek a Biblical justification for slavery. Specifically, Douglass addresses the popular argument within the American South that blacks are "the lineal descendents of Ham," that their dark skins are the mark of God's displeasure, and that they are therefore ordained by an act of God to serve as slaves (59). Rather than attack this argument textually, his strategy for addressing Biblical arguments in favor of slavery elsewhere, Douglass chooses to debunk this line of reasoning by pointing out that "thousands are ushered into the world, annually, who – like myself – owe their existence to white fathers" (60). Therefore, beginning his argument with the acceptance of the absurd premise that God created Africans in order that white folks might have slaves, he satirically remarks that "according to the scriptures, slavery in this country will soon become an unscriptural institution" (59-60).

I mention this passage not only to express my appreciation of one of Douglass's rare forays into satire, but because of the manner in which Douglass exposes, through ridicule, the obvious political motivation behind such an argument. Douglass

understands the game that is being played: the logical incommensurability of the divine act with any empirical reality is being exploited: within the symbolic order of slavery, the empty placeholder of the real is filled in with a certain imaginary content, the will of God, that serves both to justify slavery and place it beyond criticism. We might speculate that it is because he wishes to expose the nature of this ideological game that Douglass refrains from seriously engaging the argument. Recognizing the will of God, in this case, as an empty placeholder that can be filled with any particular content, Douglass replaces it with the perverse desire to exploit others sexually. The irony that Douglass generates in this passage is therefore not simply the result of the suggestion that the Biblical logic which holds race to be a divinely-ordained truth and therefore outside of the realm of empirical questioning is, in fact, nothing more than a disavowal of a very worldly motive: the desire to sexually exploit a group of women without legal or moral consequences. The irony of this passage seems more specifically to result from its exposure of the form of the argument for its simplicity and its arrogance.

My contention is that Douglass identifies the essential logic of race through this satirical deconstruction of the "sons of Ham" argument. Race is, within the view that Douglass attacks, divinely ordained, and the dark skin of blacks is the mark of God's displeasure. In this view, race originated through an ultimately unfathomable act of God. This act was registered through marks on the bodies of certain people, who were racialized through this act. The dark skin of Africans marks them as the abjected others of those in God's good grace (whites, of course), and the originary act of exclusion / creation must be indefinitely reiterated through the institution of slavery. Slavery itself becomes, in this account, a reenactment of an original, incomprehensible act of God, a

reiterative performance of God's will. The original act is therefore present in the reenactment as the kernel of nonsense, the incomprehensible moment of decision, which escapes incorporation into the series of events that it inaugurates (the enslavement of blacks). "Race" designates, in this case, what Derrida identifies as the "ungraspable... instant," the "*exceptional decision* which belongs to no historical, temporal continuum" ("Force of Law" 274).

In this chapter, I attempt to perform a critical operation similar to Douglass's exposure of the kernel of nonsense at the center of the Biblical justification for slavery in regard to what is often considered a diametrically opposite view of race. Specifically, I intend to demonstrate the performative basis of "race" in the scientific sense of the term that becomes prevalent during the half century following Douglass's criticism of the apologetics of slavery. I will focus on H. G. Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, a novel that allegorically stages the beginnings of society. I will concentrate on how the attempt to give the representation of a necessary / impossible origin a logical structure and, in doing so, grant it an empirical reality, relies on racial discourse. This account of the mythical origins of society represses and disavows its performative basis, and the space opened by this traumatic disavowal is given an imaginary structure (and therefore an empirical reality) through the application of racial hierarchy. "Race," in this case, names a form of imaginary suture of the rupture of the real that grants an evolutionary narrative structure to this allegory. "Race" names the inability of Moreau to come to terms with the performative act that both instantiates and exceeds a quasi-religious social "Law": Wells's account of the origin of the Law cannot acknowledge the supplementarity of performative acts which always exceed the law that they reiteratively enact and thereby

instantiate. We will therefore discover that in *The Island of Dr. Moreau* the "foundation of law... is a 'performative' event that cannot belong to the set that it founds, inaugurates, or justifies. Such an event is unjustifiable within the logic of what it will have opened" (Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge" 57). Having established the performative foundation of a law that contains, in both cases, an implicit racial hierarchy, I will examine how the excessive foundation of the performative event makes itself felt through a scopic drive in the character of Moreau, who obsessively attempts to contain this foundational excess within some object in the visual field and then eliminate it; in doing so, he hopes to inaugurate a reign of pure empirical rationality, within which all knowledge will be available to his own god-like mind.

The nature of law as a set of rules generated through an always originary performative act that conceptually exceeds the legal order that it inaugurates is demonstrated in a relatively direct fashion in *The Island of Dr. Moreau.* Wells's exploration of rapidly changing notions of humanity at the end of the nineteenth century in *Moreau* provides a very fertile ground for this type of examination because one of the novel's main thematic concerns is the relation of scientific and religious conceptualizations of humankind. Thus we discover in *Moreau* not only an examination and critique of the hubris contained in the belief of Wells's contemporaries that the biological and social sciences could eliminate the unknown or the excessive from the calculus of humanity. Also, we find an examination of religious belief, and religious emotion or rapture in particular, which anticipates numerous twentieth-century articulations of religion as a sort of sublimated sexuality. Moreau, a prototype of the mad scientist found throughout later science fiction, expresses this belief unambiguously in a

conversation with Prendick, the narrator and amateur biologist who is stranded on Moreau's isolated island in the South Pacific as a result of a shipwreck. In the course of this conversation, Moreau describes his experiment, that of creating humans from animals, to a horrified Prendick. Moreau's experiment is both medical and social: he is interested both in biologically altering the creatures through medical experimentation to resemble humans in thought and form, and in shaping them into social creatures who recognize themselves as part of a common society. While these two projects are never clearly separated, that of shaping the animals into a society that mimics human society centers explicitly around Moreau's instantiation and enforcement of "the Law." Moreau explains

> There's something they call the Law. Sing hymns about "all thine." They build themselves their dens, gather fruit and pull herbs – marry even. But I can see through it all, see into their very souls, and see there nothing but the souls of beasts, beasts that perish – anger, and the lusts to live and gratify themselves... Yet they're odd. Complex, like everything else alive. There is a kind of upward striving in them, part vanity, part waste sexual emotion, part waste curiosity. It only mocks me. (89-90)

Several aspects of Moreau's speech deserve comment. First, Moreau's notion of the Law equates the attachment to a social code of behavior with the attachment to a religious law. The Law therefore mediates the relationship of the "beast folk" to both society (agriculture, social organization, and sexual relations) and religion (the "complex" tendency toward "upward striving"). Moreau ascribes the emotional bond of the beast folk to this social / religious order to "waste sexual emotion." This claim is, in fact, a

repetition of Moreau's statement just a few pages earlier, that "much indeed of what we call moral education is such an artificial modification and perversion of instinct... suppressed sexuality [is trained] into religious emotion" (82). And while the passage from Frederick Douglass mentioned earlier suggested nothing more than that the religious justification of slavery obscured the true motive (rather than that the two stood in some sort of necessary relation), Moreau suggests an intimate connection between religion and sexuality, in that religious belief is a *result* of the diversion of "sexual emotion" toward the purposes of building a society. In other words, Wells's character puts forth the theory that social bonds, which are created through an attachment to a common law, are by their very nature religious, and that this religious bond upon which society is built is the result of a careful re-direction of "suppressed sexuality."

Moreau, however, also indicates his discomfort with this equation when he states that within his project of creating humans there is something that "mocks" him, or eludes a full and satisfactory explanation. And while Moreau's first statement directly equates suppressed sexuality with the creation of "religious emotion," he fills out the second statement with the relatively vague terms "curiosity" and "vanity," which creates considerable ambiguity. Moreover, Moreau frequently conflates this "complex... upward striving" that continually frustrates his understanding with that which is most primal or primitive in his humanized beasts. Thus, that which at times seems most human in the beast folk, such as some aspect of their religion that somehow exceeds the equation of religion with suppressed sexuality, can easily reverse into that which is most primitive or bestial. In the same conversation with Prendick, Moreau explains that

> [T]here is still something in everything I do that defeats me, makes me dissatisfied... And least satisfactory of all is something that I cannot touch, somewhere – I cannot determine where – in the seat of the emotions. Cravings, instincts, desires that harm humanity, a strange reservoir to burst suddenly and inundate the whole being of the creature with anger, hate, or fear... Each time I dip a living creature into the bath of burning pain, I say: this time I will burn out all the animal, this time I will make a rational creature of my own. (88-89)

In this passage, it is not the nature of "religious emotion" that escapes Moreau, but "[c]ravings, instincts, [and] desires" that cannot be neatly trained into a sense of social or religious duty. Moreau speaks of a "somewhere" that seems to indicate a nowhere, an empty place that cannot be located within Moreau's cognitive map but which stands in intimate relation to it. It is a space within which the most exalted "upward striving" can transform in the course of a statement into the most depraved and anti-social "instinct" or "desire." And it is within the space of this elusive somewhere that the beast folk are easily and repeatedly equated with "humanity." Furthermore, Moreau meets this place without a location, this undetermined thing that eludes incorporation into societal ends, with a reiterative violence, a "bath of burning pain," by which he metaphorizes his surgical operations performed without anesthetic. His stated goal in performing these operations is to "burn out" that which eludes the rational order of his created society, and in doing so to create a purely "rational creature." We therefore notice in this passage that the medical procedures that Moreau performs to alter the shape and the mental capacity of the animals are sublated to the end of building a purely rational society, one in which there is nothing to elude his own god-like mind that stands behind it as creator. Moreau's

operations on the bodies and brains of the animals, which, he indicates, inevitably fall short of producing rational creatures, are therefore superceded by the need to subject his experimental subjects to pain. It is through pain itself that the excessive something that eludes incorporation into society on the purely rational plane will be annihilated. Moreau, in an ongoing orgy of violence, attempts to eliminate the irrational kernel of nonsense from his experiment, and, in doing so, to establish himself in the place of, as the personification of, what Žižek terms "the big Other," the god-like mind that is imagined to stand behind the symbolic order and guarantee its rational consistency (*Looking Awry* 135).

The "bath of pain" functions as a performative act throughout *Moreau*, instantiating "the Law" that the beast folk must not only commit to memory in order to achieve the status of being "men," but which they ritualistically recite as part of a religious ceremony. When Prendick gets lost while exploring the island, and finds himself among the beast folk, he is only provisionally recognized as a man until he participates in a ceremonial recitation of the Law. Therefore the Ape Man, who first introduces Prendick to the community of beast folk as a man, makes it clear within the same statement that Prendick will not be accepted within the community of men unless he learns the Law: "'It is a man. He must learn the Law'" (64). There are no men, in other words, other than those subjects who are interpellated through the ceremonial recitation of the Law. The first statement that is addressed to Prendick is a simple command: "Say the words" (65). In this scene we witness a complex causality of the subject, according to which Prendick must first be recognized as a man in order to enter the community of the beast folk, but at the same time cannot be recognized as a member

of the community of men and therefore as fully human until he has been indoctrinated into the community through the performance of recitation. When Prendick obediently recites the Law along with the group, his response to the command to "Say the words" would seem to provide an elemental and mythical scenario of interpellation similar to Althusser's example of a person becoming a subject by responding to the "interpellation or hailing" of a policeman. By turning toward the policeman, and therefore recognizing himself as the subject of the policeman's address, the person in question "becomes a *subject*" (Althusser, "Ideology" 162).

In Wells's mythical staging of the inauguration of the subject in *Moreau*, we must recognize the complex causality of the performative event: that is, that the performative event appears simultaneously to be the result of an internal causality (Prendick is only a man following his ritualistic interpellation) and an external causality (Prendick had to be recognized as a man in order for the hailing to take place), a logic that Althusser seems to reject in explaining his own scenario of interpellation (which doesn't take narrative form, but rather is posited as a disconnected event). Althusser argues that

> what thus seems to take place outside ideology... in reality takes place in ideology. What really takes place in ideology seems therefore to take place outside it... ideology has always-already interpellated individuals as subjects, which amounts to making it clear that individuals are always-already interpellated by ideology as subjects, which necessarily leads us to one last proposition: *individuals are always-already subjects*. ("Ideology" 163)

Recognizing that subjects appear to both precede and to be the result of ideology, Althusser chooses to emphasize the latter aspect of the aporia, arguing that the interior

logic of ideology precedes that which is exterior to ideology; in other words, the internal logic of ideology creates the illusion of its own exterior. Judith Butler, in a critique of Althusser's scenario of interpellation, argues that according to Althusser, the

> interpellation of the subject through the inaugurative address of state authority presupposes not only that the inculcation of conscience already has taken place, but that conscience, understood as the psychic operation of a regulatory norm, constitutes a specifically psychic and social working of power on which interpellation depends but for which it can give no account. (*Psychic Life of Power* 5)

Butler therefore argues that Althusser's refusal to grant proper status to this foundational paradox within his system functions as a form of disavowal, causing the disavowed paradox to circulate through the logic of ideology in unacknowledged ways. In opposition to Althusser's decision to privilege the interior form of causality over the exterior form, Butler opts to recognize the aporia of the originary causality of the subject as a limit of ideology. In other words, "the subject" forms a location at which the internal contradictions of the logic of ideology as posited by Althusser forms an aporia, which she therefore recognizes as a limit to Althusser's logic of ideology. Rather than breaking this aporia with the decision to choose one or the other (the subject *either* precedes *or* is the result of ideology), Butler concludes that "the subject is *neither* fully determined by power, *nor* fully determining of power... [because] the subject exceeds the logic of noncontradiction, is an excrescence of logic, as it were." More concisely, Butler states that "the subject exceeds either / or" (17).

It is this sort of excessive subject, rather than the subject of Althusser's interpellation, that is performatively enacted with Prendick's inclusion in the ritual chanting of the Law. The Law itself takes the form of a series of prohibitions that incorporate this foundational uncertainty of what it means to occupy the space of subjectivity:

> "Not to go on all-Fours; *that* is the Law. Are we not men?
>
> Not to suck up Drink; *that* is the Law. Are we not men?
>
> Not to eat Flesh or Fish; *that* is the Law. Are we not men?
>
> Not to claw the Bark of Trees; *that* is the Law. Are we not men?
>
> Not to chase other Men; *that* is the Law. Are we not men?" (65)

Prendick describes the recitation as continuing for some time in this reiterative form, "on to the prohibition of what I thought then were the maddest, most impossible and most indecent things one could well imagine" (65). The Law therefore takes the form of a series of prohibitions, followed by the declaration that the prohibition *is* the Law, each formulaic prohibition then being followed by the question, "Are we not men?" The excessive nature of the action of interpellation, in this scene, is felt in the disjunction between each declarative statement of the Law and the question that follows; it is as though each declarative statement contains within itself the uncertainty of whether or not the statement of the Law is sufficient to make men. The reiterative nature further testifies to this excessive structuring of the Law, as though the uncertainty released by each declaration might be contained by the next.

The "long list" of prohibitions culminates with a series of statements regarding the enforcement of the Law, or the threat thereof:

"*His* is the House of Pain.

His is the Hand that makes.

His is the Hand that wounds.

His is the Hand that heals." (66)

The chant therefore indicates Moreau's "bath of pain" as the creative force behind the Law, which is simultaneously the power of enforcement. It is as though the endless list of prohibitions, each merely reiterating the uncertainty or incompleteness of subjection, finally culminates in a return to the violence through which the Law is instantiated and enforced, as though the ultimate meaning of the list, the final containment of the excess of the interpellative process of the act of recitation of the Law, is contained in the "bath of pain" through which the animals are created as human subjects. Thus, the uneasy question following the statement of each prohibition, "Are we not men?" is replaced with the chant of "none escape" following the list of Moreau's seemingly supernatural powers of creation (67). The final words of the performance underscore the suturing effect of the reference to the bath of pain: "'None escape... Punishment is sharp and sure. Therefore learn the law. Say the words" (68). When the list of Moreau's creative power is extended to include control over the natural world ("'*His* is the lightning-flash,' we sang. '*His* is the deep salt sea.'" [67]), Prendick is struck with the "horrible fancy... that Moreau... had infected their dwarfed brains with a kind of deification of himself" (66). Once again we are struck with the fact that Moreau has attained, within this ritual, the status of the Lacanian big Other, the god-like figure who provides imaginary suture for the rupture of the real, which is felt, in this case, as the failure of interpellation or the excessive structure of the subject of interpellation. Moreau's omnipotent creative power

here stands in as a guarantor of symbolic consistency, according to which the excessive structure of subjectivity that cannot be contained by any prohibition or list thereof is finally supplied with an imaginary containment from which "none escape." Following Lacan, we might state that within the linguistic chain through which the ritualistic subjection is performed in the chapter that Wells entitled "The Sayers of the Law," the figure of Moreau serves as the personified figure of the master signifier, or the "subject-supposed-to-know." Moreau, in the saying of the Law, functions as the "signified that... is given to designate as a whole the effect of there being a signified, inasmuch as it conditions any such effect by its presence as signifier" (Lacan, "Meaning of the Phallus" 80). Moreau and his power to inflict pain serve as the point at which the play of the signifier and the deferral of meaning along the signifying chain appear to cease, and therefore serve as the point at which meaning appears to achieve a self-consistent, unified being, disguising the fact that "man cannot aim at being whole" (Lacan, "Meaning of the Phallus" 81). It is within the god-like mind of Moreau, with the power to create and destroy, both of which are reduced, in the chant, to his power to inflict pain, that the symbolic unity of the subjects, or "men" whom he has created, is imagined to reside. In Moreau's conversation with Prendick, however, we discover that this failure to capture and freeze meaning and thereby grant a symbolic unity to one's being eludes Moreau just as it eludes his subjects. There is always, according to Moreau, the "something that I cannot touch" within his subjects that leads to the reiterative torture under his surgical knife in the attempt "to burn out all the animal" (88-89).

Because Wells provides us, with Moreau's obsessive attempt to destroy the necessary / impossible kernel of the real within his subjects, with such a pristine example

of the manner in which physical torture is employed to control the foundational excess of subjectivity, I would like to recall, at this juncture, the discussion from the last chapter regarding the reiterative torture of the black body that Conrad employs in *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* and "Youth." In *Nigger of the "Narcissus,"* James Wait undergoes the torment of illness, and his agony becomes definitive of his place within the community of sailors on the "Narcissus." While it is relatively de-emphasized within the story as a whole, Abraham is similarly battered by the storm in "Youth" at the very point in the narrative where the white sailors coalesce into a community that is defined by Marlow, the narrator, as "that hidden something, that gift of good or evil that makes racial difference" (140). As I argued regarding these texts, the trace of the other cannot be removed from the implicitly (or explicitly) racial community, and in the case of *Nigger of the "Narcissus"* and "Youth" we see how this constitutive failure results in the reiterative performance of embodiment and exclusion being performed on the single black body through depictions of physical torture. Moreau's method of interpellation of his subjects through torture demonstrates, perhaps even more baldly, this logic of racialization, or the creation of the racial other through abject embodiment. His attempts to burn out the secret, unnamable something that resides at an equally obscure somewhere within the bodies of the beast folk is his attempt to eliminate the obscene stain of the real from his subjects. What seems to elude Moreau, just as it eludes Marlow in "Youth" and the narrator in *Nigger of the "Narcissus,"* however, is the fashion through which this structurally necessary failure constitutes the very social order within which he moves. The surgical torture through which Moreau attempts to create perfectly intelligible creatures is represented, quite directly, to performatively instantiate the Law of the beast

folk. Within the chant, the "House of Pain" becomes the site of containment of the failure of interpellation through which the beast folk are constituted as subjects and as a society.

Given this structural similarity between Conrad's idealized communities of sailors and Wells's dark, fantastic vision of a society of half-human creatures, we are not surprised to discover that the beast folk are identified and placed in relation to "civilization" through the employment of a schemata of race. While Wells's exposure of the structure of his fictional community seems to be a great deal more deliberate than that of Conrad, Wells seems, at the same time, perhaps less aware of the role that race plays within this structure than Conrad, who has moments in which he is apparently quite cognizant of the fact that his ideal of community belonging is dependent on racial exclusion. Wells's use of race, in *Moreau*, seems to be largely unconscious in at least two senses of the word. First, race provides a structured series of reference points regarding of the evolution of society. We might understand this mechanical application of the belief that different "races" represent different stages of the evolution of mankind as ideological in the sense that Wells unquestioningly accepted the racism that was at the center of the development of the biological and social sciences at the turn of the century. We might understand, for instance, Moreau's description of his gorilla-man as "a fair specimen of the negroid type" to explain a stage in the progress of his research, or Prendick's description of one of the beast folk as having "a black negroid face," in this same sense (86; 27). The significance of Wells's use of racial schemata to provide an index of evolutionary development does not, of course, reside in the dull question of his personal responsibility or lack thereof for the obvious racism of this schemata. It is to be

found, rather, in the way that this type of ideologically given racism overlaps with the more strictly psychoanalytic application of the term "unconscious." Prendick experiences an inexplicable revulsion for the beast folk from his first encounter with them. In this first encounter with a creature described as "Montgomery's strange attendant," Prendick describes how "[t]hat black figure, with its eyes of fire, struck down through all my adult thoughts and feelings, and for a moment the forgotten horrors of childhood came back to my mind" (18). The fact that Prendick must express his revulsion through an allusion to the uncanny figures of childhood nightmares is obviously significant, as is the fact that his ambivalent, horrified fascination with the creature is attributed to a physical quality that cannot be pinpointed but is nevertheless definitive of his encounter with the creature. Thus, the creature's eyes first draw Prendick's attention, and while they flash in a way that "is not uncommon in human eyes," the "thing came to me as stark inhumanity" (18). There is a sense that some profoundly physical quality (for Prendick searches the physical features of the beast folk obsessively in order to locate it) marks the creature as nightmarishly inhuman and human at the same time, yet this physical quality cannot be named or ascribed to any particular feature or gesture. This impression "passed as it had come," and, in the end, can only be described in terms of self-canceling contradictions that indicate nothing more than a failure of language to capture the real meaning of "the thing" (18).

We encounter a limit to signification in the body of this beast man, a limit that is frequently reiterated and that Wells often meets with terms drawn from racial science. Thus, we might return to both of the examples of racialization given above. When Prendick first lands on the island, he repeats his repulsed fascination with Moreau's

creatures, a fascination with a "something" that eludes language: "I saw only their faces, yet *there was something in their faces – I knew not what – that gave me a spasm of disgust*. I looked steadily at them, and the impression did not pass, though *I failed to see what had occasioned it*" [italics mine] (26). Again, the elusive "something" is "in" their faces, yet it cannot be located or named. Prendick's fascinated gaze lingers over the bodies of the beast folk, cataloguing their various deformities, their "protruding lower jaws and bright eyes," their unusually short legs and long bodies (26). Yet this list of physical deformities fails to capture the strange quality that is definitive of the beast folk; it eludes Prendick, driving him to scrutinize the beast folk ever more closely in order to discover this thing that at once dwells "in" these bodies and yet remains somehow separate from any particular physical feature, or group of features, or even the long list of features that he compiles. At the end of the passage, Prendick describes one of the creatures on which his gaze lingers as having "a black negroid face," as though this uncanny quality requires the vocabulary of race if it is to be inscribed within a human subject (27).

If we examine the other example, that of Moreau's descriptions of one of his creations as "a fair specimen of the negroid type," we discover a similar use of the term (86). Moreau, in this case, indexes his experimental subjects racially in order to measure the "progress" of his research in the face of his ultimate, repetitive failure to eliminate the elusive "something that... I cannot touch," the "somewhere – I cannot determine where" that "defeats" him, leaves him "dissatisfied," and "challenges" him "to further effort" (88). In much the same manner as Prendick, Moreau is determined to locate this thing somewhere in the physical structure of the animal, hence his attempt to literally cut it out

with his surgical knife in order to create "a rational creature of my own" (89). But this voyeuristic desire to fix the elusive something onto a visible object in order to contain and remove it is invariably frustrated. "Negroid," in this case, has a more specific use for Moreau than for Prendick: it not only inscribes the foundational excess within the human subject; additionally, "negroid" establishes an imaginary progress within his process of endlessly reiterative experimentation and torture, marking, as it does, one stage on the evolutionary scale that ends, for Moreau, with the purely self-identical (and therefore fully comprehensible) creature.

If we examine other racial reference points within *Moreau*, we discover similar, repeated attempts to fix or locate the foundational excess of the subject through racial discourse. Thus, when Prendick witnesses the beast folk at work before learning of Moreau's experiment, he is first struck by the fact that they are "unnatural," which leads him to query of Mongomery, "what race are they?" (38-39). When Prendick wonders about Montgomery's apparent lack of discomfort in keeping company with the beast folk after learning that they had once been animals, he reasons that it is similar to Montgomery's having become inured to the company of the lower races: "He hardly met the finest type of mankind in that seafaring village of Spanish mongrels" (95). Prendick again locates his aversion to the beast folk within a racial hierarchy when he describes one of Moreau's creatures as having a "face ovine in expression – like the coarser Hebrew type" (98). Here the term "type," as in the previous quote or Moreau's reference to "a fair specimen of the negroid type," places Prendick's references squarely within the discourse of racial science, indicating a definitive essential center of a "race." Through examining the similarity of the use of "type" in *Moreau* and Edward Tylor's use of the

term in his influential textbook, *Anthropology*, we can better understand how race serves the ideological function of suture.

We have discussed the way in which Moreau's scopic desire generates "the Law" through the reiterated failure to locate and remove the excess that he supposes can be contained and eliminated through surgery (recall that it is this "bath of pain" that provides the point of suture within the beast folk's ritual of interpellation, the recitation of the Law). Similarly, in Tylor's text the narrative of social evolution finds its Lacanian quilting point, or *point de capiton*, in the visible evidence provided by the black body. Tylor, in fact, frames the examination of the "chief points of difference among races" in order to discover "what a race is" (75) in terms of a problem that his standardized narrative of historical progress seems, to him, to pose:

> *History points the great lesson that some races have marched on in civilization while others have stood still or fallen back*, and we should partly look for an explanation of this in differences of intellectual and moral powers between such tribes as the native Americans and Africans, and the Old World nations who overmatch and subdue them. [italics mine] (74)

This oft-repeated problematic of difference within late nineteenth-century social science is the result of a perceived disjunction within history between "primitive" and "civilized" societies. This disjunction seems, for Tylor, to require some form of imaginary suture in order to inscribe it within a continuous evolutionary narrative that will validate colonial conquest through assigning moral and intellectual priority according to an unbroken hierarchy of meaning. Here, we witness an attempt to find this suture through an appeal to the material evidence of physiology. As an imaginary suture to a reiteratively posited

disruption at the heart of colonial historiography, "type" is frequently used to indicate a statistical average of a race that generally conflates mean and mode (such is the case both in Tylor's *Anthropology* and Galton's *Hereditary Genius*, where a numerical average and likelihood of physical occurrence are assumed to correspond; Galton calls this combination of the two statistical concepts "the racial center" [xvii]). Tylor's endeavor to freeze the play of the signifier by inscribing it within a semiotics of body surfaces follows a Lacanian logic of the (missed) encounter with difference: we witness the attempt to create a phenomena known as "racial character" through sheer numerical accretion or the obsessive repetition of the impossible instance of difference. We are therefore not surprised that when Tylor seeks to discover "the general character belonging to... [a] whole race," the "chief points of difference among races" are established as legitimate through a repeated appeal to the self-evidence of the physiological fetishes of Victorian science: hair texture, width of nose, shape of skull, and color of skin (75). Tylor appeals repetitively to the self-evident nature of racial semiotics in order to clarify this choice of features: he remarks, for example, that "it is best to attend to the simplest cases first" by "looking at some uniform and well-marked race" (79-80), and that the "people whom it is easiest to represent by single portraits are uncivilized tribes" (79). Not surprisingly, Tylor takes his "most conspicuous example" of self-evident physiological "difference" to be the "negro" (80). We find, then, that the fetishized physical features which together form a racial "type" serve the same purpose as the references to racial "types" in *Moreau*: they become a site of containment for the slippage of meaning, which, in this case, allows the discourse of race to achieve the effect of scientific objectivity. Tylor's definition of "difference" requires no explanation, only a

reiterative appeal to common sense, because it is made self-evidently visible in the African body that provides Tylor with a *point de capiton* upon which to build his evolutionary narrative. Tylor's discussion of racial type, which contains, for instance, an intricate analysis of various hair textures, provides an exemplary instance of race as a regime of power under which "progress seems to unfold naturally before the eye as a series of evolving marks on the body... so that anatomy becomes an allegory of progress and history... reproduced as a technology of the visible" (McClintock 38).

We can therefore identify a scopic drive similar to that which we find in both Prendick and Moreau as the motivating force within Tylor's text. Tylor reiteratively attempts to fix "difference" through an appeal to a visible regime of power, and, in doing so, provides an imaginary structure for the encounter with otherness according to the logic of the stereotype. A stereotype, in this case, should not be understood as an oversimplification of a complex empirical reality that can be abolished or dissipated with a simple presentation of the "facts." Rather, a stereotype is a structuring device of racial discourse that "must always be in excess of what can be empirically proved or logically construed" (Bhabha 66). It provides a point of imaginary identification in a strictly Lacanian sense of the term "imaginary": the stereotype provides a constitutive point of identification for the (in this case, racial) subject. Homi Bhabha takes this location of the stereotype within the Lacanian imaginary further, closely equating the stereotype with the scopic drive of the mirror stage, as an image that allows the subject to "postulate a series of equivalences, samenesses, identities between the objects of the surrounding world" (77). In both Moreau's and Prendick's use of the term "negroid," as in Tylor's appeal to the self-evident difference manifested for all to see in the body of the African, we witness

the black body functioning as a point of suture for a subjective excess. This *point de capiton* gives birth to a scopic drive, which, in Tylor's case, as in the case of Prendick, leads to the compilation of a list of physical features. While in the case of Prendick the increasingly detailed list provides him with very little satisfaction, and his attempt to capture and freeze meaning and so contain the subjective excess of the beast folk ends with an appeal to the black body (the "negroid face" of one of the beast folk), we similarly witness the racial thing receding before Tylor's index of the features definitive of racial difference. In his attempt to capture this racial thing, Tylor liberally employs highly detailed illustrations of dark-skinned bodies and faces, as though the excess of the racial stereotype that seems to recede into the intricacies of language could be caught and banished through the visible testimony of the black body. In Moreau's case, the scopic drive is manifested through the horrific physical violence of his reiterative attempts to literally cut his creatures open, remove some offending object, and, in doing so, restore the imaginary unity to his subjects which the object of scopic desire seems to obstruct but in fact enables. In Tylor's case, the scopic drive reveals itself in the form of a constant appeal to the visible through pages of illustrations of Africans, Native Americans, Arabs, Polynesians, Indians, etc., with occasional pictures of whites for comparative purposes. Under the shelter of this appeal to the visible, Tylor is able to reaffirm that the "great races, black, brown, yellow, white" that have remained unchanged since "far back in the pre-historic period" (85) nevertheless correspond to stages within a continuous historical evolution, the "fair whites" representing the latest stage in "the world's progress" (75).

We must therefore note two important aspects of Tylor's *Anthropology*. First, there is the unspoken but prevalent opposition of written dissemination and visual suture.

While *Moreau* is not illustrated, we see a similar opposition foregrounded within the story; Moreau searches for a similar form of visual suture for the messy process of interpellation in the form of his medical experiments, which represent his absolute determination to visually locate and remove the racial object that he believes prevents his creatures from being absolutely transparent to his masterful gaze. The second noteworthy feature of Tylor's text is the fact that the need for this suture is articulated in the form of a historical disjunction between the originary, archaic, or primitive, and "civilization." The continual return of this originary disjunction is felt in the form of the reiterative return of the archaic as a disruptive force within the text that will not be sublated within Tylor's schemata of evolutionary history, even though it is the very condition of the existence of this schemata. Thus, not only does this constitutive disruption require the constant suturing effect of the illustrations of dark-skinned bodies, it also finally relies on this appeal to the visual to mask a glaring contradiction: the races must be both irreparably separate, formed as permanently distinct in a distant prehistorical era, and simultaneously each race must represent a successive stage of evolution. The result is that Tylor's evolutionary history of the races must be both smoothly continuous and radically discontinuous, each stage representing an absolute break with the previous stage, each age incommensurable with that which precedes it. This dual structure of Tylor's historiography, is, finally, attested to by his lingering fascination with the deviant physical structures of the dark faces and bodies that decorate his textbook. The dark and mysterious secret that these faces conceal is, on one level, the hidden performativity of his discourse on racial science, and, on another level, an ideological mask for the constitutive contradictions of his anthropology. In this case, the

self-evidence of the racialized body provides an imaginary unity that masks the performative nature of turn-of-the-century social science. We might therefore observe the similarity between the role the racialized body serves in Tylor's text and its use in suturing the performative basis of the Law in *Moreau*. In both cases, "the object of loss is written across the [racialized] bodies of people" (Bhabha 165).

If we move to Galton's *Hereditary Genius*, another foundational text of social science (one that finds present-day advocates among those who defend psychometrics), we observe a dual notion of history similar to that of Tylor. Galton embraces a view of the evolutionary history of humankind as one of cataclysmic leaps and bounds that finds its mythical scenario in the "conquering and ruling race" exterminating and displacing lesser races (xxiii). Thus, Galton remarks that the "frequency in history with which one race has supplanted another over wide geographical areas is one of the most striking facts in the evolution of mankind" (xxiii). This scenario becomes the engine that drives Galton's history, in which the existence of the "old and well established races" (xxiv) is attested to by the "hybrid and unstable result... of the fusion of different human races" (xix), a fusion that invariably results either in the eventual extinction of a weakly hybrid or an eventual regression toward the "racial center" of one or the other of the races (xvii). Galton therefore frames a notion of history according to which the progressive conquest of the various subject races by the superior races drives social evolution. Within Galton's schemata of history the result of each conquest is not a hybrid culture or race but the extermination of one race by the other. There is no substantive gradual change in Galton's history of civilization, but a series of events in which totally alien and incommensurable entities confront each other, one annihilating the other. Galton sees the

way that "savages... who are brought into contact with advancing colonization... perish, as they invariably do, by contact" as evidence of this process (334). The "races" in this case are simply carrying out an inevitable series of events that owe their genesis to a primordial act of creation of the races, prehistorical in the sense that it gives birth to history. Here we witness Tylor's primeval races, which both predate history and are the engine that drives it, carried to an absurd extreme where we once again confront the logic of the view that Frederick Douglass so effectively ridiculed. The separation of the races is due to an immaculate act of creation predating history, and if slavery is merely the reiterative performance of this primordial act of creation within the "sons of Ham" argument, colonialism, genocide, and economic exploitation are the reiterative performance of this act within Galton's science. We might even argue that Galton's science of race is a regression from the more enlightened view of the superstitious slaveholder. While the slaveholder was at least aware that a necessary / impossible act of God provided the underpinnings of an imaginary unity for the social order of slavery, Galton relies equally on an inexplicable final cause to provide the effect of continuity for his theory without, apparently, being aware of it. As such, the absent final cause circulates in his text as a series of recurring aporias. As is the case in Tylor's evolutionary theory, the races in Galton's account of history must be primordial in their formation and at the same time represent the progressive stages of historical development. While the "essence" of each race must be contained in the prehistoric act of immaculate racial conception, each race must at the same time wait for the act of violent racial confrontation within history for its meaning to be revealed. In other words, the evolutionary meaning of this strange holdover of an archaic act of creation remains in

limbo until it is retroactively determined through a historically disjunctive act of confrontation and conquest. The races must be both prehistoric and the very stuff of history; race is both the site of an aboriginal act of creation, predating the birth of history and meaning, and the result of the process of history working itself out; it is both the cause and the end result of history. The superficial overlay of an evolutionary *gradualism* that is required to distinguish the conquering white race from its primitive opponents sits uneasily atop this history of absolute breaks, and the two are never, of course, integrated with one another.[11]

As we move from Wells's *Moreau* through Tylor's *Anthropology* and finally through Galton's *Hereditary Genius*, we witness in increasingly stark and simplistic form a foundational disjunction between the performative basis of the modern problematic of subjectivity and history and the imaginary transmutation and resolution of this problematic into an evolutionary narrative. While a comparative study of these texts has tended to emphasize this feature in each of them, it has also provided us with a structurally sound basis through which to distinguish Wells's approach to this problematic through imaginative fiction from the social science tracts of Tylor and Galton. Perhaps the best measure of the distance between *Moreau* and the two social science texts is the fashion in which Wells's text exploits the disruptive power of the racialized body in a way that is fundamentally antithetical to the pristine Olympian objectivity that he takes as his target in *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. If Tylor's *Anthropology* is distinguished by a complacent satisfaction with the appeal to the visible and the role of the black body within this appeal for the purposes of stabilizing the truth effects of its discourse, *Moreau* stands as the uncanny double of such a text, allegorically

staging the performative subtext of *Anthropology* and *Hereditary Genius*. In *Moreau*, Wells foregrounds the performative basis of society and the subject within society. An uneasy invocation of the performative element of identity marks the main narrative of Prendick's experience on the island, and the inability to resolve this performative tension is emphasized by the overall narrative structure. As Prendick relates in the concluding chapter, "unnatural as it seems, with my return to mankind came, instead of that confidence and sympathy I had expected, a strange enhancement of the uncertainty and dread I had experienced on the island" (154). Prendick, upon his return to London, tells us that he remains "haunted" by his "memory of the Law" to such a degree that "I could not persuade myself that the men and women I met were not... Beast People, animals half-wrought into the outward image of human souls," tainted with the "bestial mark" that, as I have argued, is definitive of Prendick's encounters with the beast folk (154). It seems that within *Moreau*, this "bestial mark," this disruptive excess of the subject that demands the reiterative interpellation of the the beast folk through the performance of the Law and Moreau's surgeries in the "house of pain," cannot be narratively contained by the vocabulary of race. As Prendick indicates, it spills over from the island and the racialized bodies of the beast folk into the center of civilization, the metropolis, where the Prendick, suffering from the "disease" of "terror," cannot help but see the "bestial mark" everywhere, as it becomes definitive of all of humanity (154). The metropolis does not provide Prendick with a site of objectivity at the center of the civilized world from which to analyze his experience as a purely objective observer, but instead immerses Prendick in another, intensified version of his horrific experience on the island.

In underscoring the performative excess of subjectivity in this way, Wells provides a mythical scenario that not only brings the foundational aporias of subjectivity and history into high relief, but also, for an attentive reader, shows how these aporias are resolved into "sciences" according to the imaginary focal point of race. We discover in the case of Wells, as in that of Conrad, that "race" indicates not an organizing concept or metaphor for his work, nor an important "fact" or organization of facts with which his work strives to come to terms, but an absolutely foundational formal element of his thought. While the terms "concept," "metaphor," "fact," or "organizational hierarchy" would tend to place race squarely within the symbolic realm of empirical thought, my contention is that race stands as the foundational, reiterative gesture that creates and recreates the domain of the symbolic through providing a performative suture and foundation for this domain. It is as an imaginary suture for the rupture of the real that we can make sense of the multiple, polymorphous, and paradoxical significations of the black face and body throughout modernist literature. Only through adopting this insight can we see the functional similarity, for example, between James Wait's mysterious, mask-like face, of which "no one could tell... the meaning" (33), and the "negroid" faces of Moreau's humanized animals, whose disconcerting deep physicality somehow eludes definition and exceeds any observable physical deformity.

As we move through the literature of early British modernism, we will continue to discover racialized bodies that, like Conrad's "Nigger," are both "nothing" and "the pivot of the [narrative] action" (*N. N.* xiv). In the spirit of this discovery, we might amend Conrad's shrewd disclosure regarding the role of the "Nigger" by combining it with the observation of one of Conrad's later characters, Mr. Vladimir, who remarks that the

"sacrosanct fetish of today is science" (*Secret Agent* 42). This would yield something like: "the nothing around which science, the sacrosanct fetish, pivots is the Nigger."

The Performativity of Whiteness in *Kim*

Up to this point of the dissertation, I have consistently argued that race must be understood as a hegemonic form of imaginary containment for a foundational, supplementary excess within British colonial discourse. It is, I would argue, racial discourse throughout the modern period that best exemplifies Derrida's oft-repeated description of the dialectic of civilization as an economy of death (*Dissemination* 120). My discussion of race identifies the unequal and unstable relation between a normative and regulatory "inside" and an unacknowledged and disavowed "outside" as the discursive point of origin of colonial ideology. The outside, forming the "negative resource" for the reproduction of this symbolically constitutive relation, must be endlessly and reiteratively appropriated in order to maintain the "positive structure" of the normative inside (Barrett 23). In other words, the proper, normative identity of the inside is reliant upon the perpetual performance of abjection and exclusion of the outside. The production of race is a residue of this type of subjectivity, naming the disavowed performative element of identity that creates racialized bodies as deep physical presences. If the structuring principle of language and identity is that which Lacan refers to as a "constitutive lack" and Derrida refers to as "alienation without alienation" (that is, a foundational absence at the center of the subject that refers to no prior presence), then colonial ideology at the height of the British empire responds to this originary absence at the center of the self with racial violence, both discursive and physical (Derrida, *Monolingualism* 25). The vertiginous contingency of identity recognized by Lacan and Derrida is thickly overlaid with the science of race, which provides the symbolic certitude of historical necessity and self-consistency. The self-assurance provided by the

imaginary consistency of racial science seems, furthermore, both to increase and become more tenuous with each act of discursive and physical violence performed on violently abjected racial others. The marks on the bodies of certain people that come to designate the racial outside provide certainty but at the same time create doubt that demands further acts of violence.

An anatomy of this process is offered in the previous chapter with the discussion of *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, Tylor's *Anthropology*, and Galton's *Hereditary Genius*. In the third chapter, I argue that late nineteenth-century narratives of social evolution seek an enabling imaginary unity through an appeal to visual images of black bodies. Both the fictional Dr. Moreau and the non-fictional doctors, Tylor and Galton, seem to be in a perpetual state of discovery; they are always on the verge of the realization that their belief in the evolution of human society is threatened by its own constitutive rupture. All three doctors meet this threat to the rational consistency of their projects with a persistent appeal to the visual evidence provided by dark bodies and faces, which in each case supplies an imaginary visual suture to the discursive rupture that marks the originary moment of each of their narratives of social evolution. The function of the black body as a point of identification ordering a social scientific symbolic order interests me in part because it demonstrates my point that racialized bodies serve the purpose of ideological suture, and in part because it is a sort of identification that underscores the dialectical counterpart of the imaginary unity granted through identification with the image. That is, the recognition of the self in the unified image is in fact a misrecognition; this imaginary unity is purchased at the price of an equally primordial alienation, because the subject can only locate the image of himself within the field of the Other's desire. Thus, while the

imaginary identification with the image within Lacan's mirror stage is intimately connected with images of ideal, unified being, it must be understood as equally connected with a primal alienation that is the condition of becoming a subject, the dialectical counterpart of imaginary unity. If we are to understand the function of the black body within the discourse of Wells, Tylor, or Galton, we must acknowledge the dialectical nature of identification as a misrecognition that alienates the subject from himself in granting him access to his image. Wells provides an exemplary instance of this primordial split of subjectivity in the interpellative rituals of the beast folk, and, in doing so, also demonstrates how race functions as a sort of social imaginary within which this split is contained and disavowed. Kipling provides us with an example of how this fundamentally ambivalent process of identification, the ambivalence of which is underscored in the colonial setting, can be imaginatively recycled in the service of the British empire.

In the previous chapter I broaden the scope of the argument by demonstrating that this logic of race is central to influential social science texts as well as literary productions. By showing race to be an imaginary form of containment in the case of the story of evolution as it is articulated in the social sciences of the late Victorian period, I attempt to demonstrate an imaginary consistency that illustrates the existence of a cohesive British racial ideology during the early modernist period. Another step in this direction will be taken in this chapter, in which I will confirm the similar role of race in the writings of two authors who are almost always thought of as politically different rather than ideologically similar, H. G. Wells and Rudyard Kipling. While surprisingly little has been written on the role of race in Wells's writing, a great deal has been written

about race in the work of Rudyard Kipling. I would suggest that this disparity is due, at least in part, to the fact that Kipling so consistently defended the interests of empire in his writing, while Wells often acted, during the same period, as a defender of the intellectual left, writing essays and novels that critically question the nature of capitalism and creating complex fantasies exposing the horrific logic of empire, such as *War of the Worlds*. The question, however, remains: why has so little literary criticism addressed the role of race in Wells's work, filled, as it is, with morlocks and beast folk? I would argue that the political division that sets Kipling up as the literary bully-boy of empire and Wells as the chief literary scion of socialism, while not insignificant, can obscure the more historically significant ideological continuities within their work. Furthermore, I believe that a focus on race, not, as I have argued, in terms of a symbolic or rational schema of difference, but rather as an originary and imaginary form of difference, will allow us to restore a sense of the remarkable, omnipresent, and therefore historically significant similarity of the thought of Wells and Kipling. In the case of Wells and Kipling, we must understand the ideological stability of the social imaginary of race across the political divide of right and left.

Upon examining Kipling's work, I am repeatedly struck by his understanding (which is probably alternately unconscious and intuitive and conscious and thematically developed) of the difficulties of maintaining the strict racial and national boundaries that were so important to the maintenance of British colonial rule. His ubiquitous awareness of the fragility of the line between colonizer and colonized, Anglo-Indian and native, or white and black, and the fact that he utilizes this awareness to the end of a greater political conservatism and a more rigid defense of empire, perhaps accounts at least

partially for the ambivalent relationship he enjoys with contemporary literary criticism. Edward Said, for instance, elicits admiration of Kipling's "affectionate fascination" with Indian culture and his ability to "get into the skin of others with some sympathy"[12] (144-45). Yet the focus of his critique of *Kim* is how Kipling fashions this sympathetic fascination with Indianness into a tool of British power:

> We must read the novel as the realization of a great cumulative process, which in the closing years of the nineteenth century is reaching its last major moment before Indian independence: on the one hand, surveillance and control over India; on the other, love for and fascinated attention to its every detail. The overlap between the political hold of the one and the aesthetic and psychological pleasure of the other is made possible by British imperialism itself; ***Kipling understood this...*** [italics mine] (Said 161)

Said underscores, in this reading, that in *Kim* Kipling provides an ideal fictional synthesis between an aesthetic fascination with the colonized and the paranoid desire for surveillance of and control over the colonized. In implicating Kipling's aesthetic values with the colonial desire for both physical and psychic control over colonized peoples, Said points to the "troubling, even embarrassing truth" of the complicity between nineteenth-century aesthetics and colonial rule that culminates in Kipling's work (161). While not directly stated, a further implication of Said's insight is that Kipling's work utilizes the highly ambivalent nature of identification with the racial other for the purposes of fortifying empire within the British imagination. Kipling's work, in this sense, is exemplary of the interdependence of the desire to occupy the "skin" of the colonial other, or to enjoy the imaginary unified being represented by this image, and the

alienated desire to control and punish the racialized bodies of the colonial other. When confronted with this dualism within Kipling's fiction, we once again find ourselves working from within the dialectical logic of identification, according to which self-consistency is acquired only at the cost of alienation. What makes *Kim* so disquieting to Said, however, is obviously not the mere fact of this dualism in the character of Kim, which in itself he views as similar to the "paradox of personal identity" found throughout British fiction of the period (he employs Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* to illustrate this idea), but the fact that Kim so neatly and comfortably synthesizes these two opposing aspects: in immersing himself in Indian culture, Kim simultaneously occupies the space of the disciplinary, imperial gaze, and the fit between the two is so seamless that there seems to be no disparity: "The conflict between Kim's colonial service and loyalty to his Indian companions is unresolved not because Kipling could not face it, but because for Kipling *there was no conflict*" (Said 146).

I would add to Said's argument that the apparent lack of conflict between the two sides of Kim's ambivalent colonial identification is due to the effective recycling of this ambivalence in Kipling's notion of the pleasure of boyhood play. I find this idea implied but not necessarily explicitly stated in Said's argument, as when he explains that Kipling's influence on Lord Baden-Powell's notion of "boyology... confirmed this inventive conjunction of fun and service" as the source of "'fortifying the wall of empire'" (Said 138). To clarify, the pleasure that Kim takes in occupying his position of a British spy in disguise as a native is that it allows him simultaneously to indulge both aspects of his ambivalent identification with Indians: Kim is inhabiting the position of unified identity that is promised by the image of the (colonial) other, while

simultaneously instantiating and policing the symbolic racial boundaries that are dependent upon the performative production of this imaginary formation. The fact that Kim "loved the game for its own sake," which characterizes Kim from our first introduction to him, results from Kim's habitation of a position that does more than place him on both sides of the symbolic racial boundary (Kim is both a sahib and a native) (*Kim* 51). Additionally, Kim straddles the boundary of imaginary self-fulfillment and symbolic alienation that produces and reproduces the pleasure of an unresolved ambivalence of the process of identification. The boyish pleasure of play, which naturalizes the unique position that Kim occupies, is the pleasure of the performative reproduction of this ambivalence.

In Kim's racial masquerade we find an obsessive desire to render his Indian others transparent to his understanding, and it is clearly from this standpoint that Creighton, the head of both the Ethnological Survey and British Intelligence in India, finds Kim both fascinating and useful. When Kim first encounters the Lama at the Lahore museum, his desire for a performative mastery leads him to attach himself to the Lama:

> Kim followed like a shadow. What he had overheard excited him wildly. This man was entirely new to all his experience, and he meant to investigate further, precisely as he would have investigated a new building or a strange festival in Lahore city. The lama was his trove, and he purposed to take possession. Kim's mother had been Irish too. (60)

In this striking passage, we should first note that Kim's excitement for the novelty of the situation follows, rather than precedes, his mimicry of the Tibetan monk: as a shadow

exactly duplicates the movements of a person, we are invited to imagine Kim's exact mimicry of the lama's movements. It is in his performance that Kim becomes wildly excited about the "entirely new... experience" that the lama promises. A couple of sentences later, Kim's performance is equated to an investigation, a term that is repeated in the short passage. The fact that Kim wished to know the lama as a "new building" or "strange festival" also recalls us to the oft-repeated scene of Kim's clandestine movement throughout the city: Kim's "stealthy prowl through the dark gullies and lanes, the crawl up a waterpipe... the headlong flight from housetop to housetop under cover of the hot dark" (51). His intimate knowledge of the streets and of otherwise unseen and unknown passages of the city place him in a position of invisible omniscience: he sees without being seen, he knows the intimate details of others while they cannot penetrate his ever-changing disguises. It seems that this is the aim of his investigation of the lama: Kim seeks to place himself in a position of omniscience and invisibility, the combination of which will allow him to "take possession" of this eccentric person.

We see the basic outline of the Western order of knowledge represented by Creighton, ethnologist and spy, present in Kim's playful desire to take possession of the lama from the outset of the story, and it is here that we witness the seamless fit of knowledge and power in Kipling's universe: Kim is already rehearsing the relationship between ethnographic knowledge and imperial rule in his childish play and mimicry. In this sense, the rules of the Great Game appear naturalized as the play of children. Thus, when Kim meets Creighton, he recognizes that "Here was a man after his own heart – a tortuous and indirect person playing a hidden game" (165).

The strange statement that "Kim's mother had been Irish too," which is not contextualized in any way in this passage, most nearly refers to a discussion of Kim's Irish father several pages earlier. The startling disconnection of this statement from all that both precedes and follows requires a close examination. Critics have often noted that Kim's Irish heritage grants him a sort of special status within the ontological order of race[13]: the Irish, at the turn of the century, are still only considered, at best, ambiguously white, and their inclusion or exclusion from the category of "white" is always tenuous and subject to revocation depending on the situation.[14] Thus, it has been reasoned that a liminal and shifting racial status is more accessible to Kim because he is Irish. While there exists significant textual evidence within *Kim* that points towards this conclusion (such as the strange reference to Kim's Irish mother in the passage quoted above), the idea of the Irish as a being that straddles an otherwise rigid colonial racial hierarchy has caused considerable confusion among critics. Juniper Ellis, for instance, has argued that

> In British social order and hierarchy, Kim must remember to hold himself "lowly," for his father was one of the poorest of poor whites, as we learn at the novel's beginning, and the army ministers immediately identify Kim accordingly. As the child of an Irish father, Kim's identity within the British empire is troubled; he must be recognized as a colonized person who then helps maintain external colonization. (316)

Ellis makes a salient point in this passage: within British racial hierarchy, being poor and Irish meant that one's whiteness was of dubious status and likely to be revoked as a result of subtle changes in the context of a given situation. One might argue, for example, that in the scene in which the "blow" of his Russian adversary "waked every unknown Irish

devil in the boy's blood," Kim's Irishness is downgraded from white to something quite different, more akin to the primal masculinity attributed to Sikhs and other war-like primitives in the novel (*Kim* 291). The difficulty of Ellis's position, in my view, is that he believes that Kim's in-between status exposes "the strained work that the novel must perform in order to represent the White Man's authority" (320). While something akin to the tortuous discourse on race present throughout the work of Conrad exists in many other works by Kipling, this is not the case with *Kim*, which instead seems representative of the flexibility of racialism as an ideological device for normalizing English military and political hegemony. My difficulty with Ellis's position is that he bases it on the assumption that in *Kim* whiteness functions as a system of power based on some type of positive content, and that any fissure or inconsistency in this content points towards a weakness in the system. This view ultimately underestimates the ideological savvy that Kipling displays in *Kim*. This presupposition is perhaps even more apparent in Philip Holden's argument that "if we turn to look at Englishness, we find only an absence, a series of prohibitions or restraints," which indicates Kipling's "anxiety" regarding the status of British masculinity (98-99). Again, the problem with this position arises when one assumes that "fissures" within (racial) ideology cannot indicate anything other than frailty. In the case of race, fractures or contradictions often indicate just the opposite of what Ellis and Holden presuppose: a flexibility and adaptability that accounts for the persistence of racialism as an organizational mechanism of power up until the present day. What *Kim* demonstrates is something very different from the panicked and defensive anxiety over epistemological contradictions that Ellis and Holden presume. In *Kim*, we witness an instance in which anxiety over the stability of white identity becomes

the basis of intense pleasures that are directed back into the service of the maintenance of empire.

The constitutive split of racial subjectivity is not, in *Kim*, a source of horror and fascination as it frequently is in Conrad's work. Rather, it is the source of an intense pleasure that is normalized and naturalized through the figure of boyhood play. We are introduced to Kim in the midst of play, as he symbolically knocks a Muslim and a Hindu boy from a cannon to take possession of it. The next action that Kim performs is that of attaching himself to the lama inside the Lahore museum of ethnology, in order to rapturously "investigate" and "take possession" of him (60). If the story begins with empire as the inspiration for a child's game ("king-of-the-castle"), it quickly reverses this equation so that boy's play is exposed as the motive force behind empire. Empire, in *Kim*, relies on an economy of pleasure that functions in the following fashion: (1) Through racial masquerade, Kim extracts an intense pleasure from the instability of racial identity that is the structurally necessary corollary of rigid racial and ethnic boundaries. (2) This racial masquerade is utilized, once Kim comes under the influence of Creighton, to the end of strengthening and reinforcing rigid racial and ethnic boundaries in the name of empire. (3) This channeling of pleasure to the end of reinforcing rigid racial boundaries, the ultimate source of the pleasure of racial masquerade itself, insures that the pleasure of racial masquerade will be preserved and renewed. The renewal of this pleasure therefore becomes the renewal of empire itself, and empire becomes self-sustaining according to this closed economy of pleasure that is naturalized as the play of boys. Of course I exaggerate (slightly) the smooth functioning of the psychic economy

of *Kim*, although Kim does seem predestined to success according to the logic of Kipling's narrative.[15]

Let us, then, return to the argument that Kim's unstable racial designation indicates a profound anxiety over the stability of racial identity at the center of the text. Kim's Irishness, evoked so strangely in the passage quoted above and alluded to frequently throughout the text, is one possible focal point for such a claim. At the end of the episode in which Kim's personal Irish devil takes control of him (if only for the purpose of securing British hegemony), for instance, the omniscient narrator tells us that the "situation tickled the Irish and Oriental in his soul" (297). Given that "Irish" is elsewhere equated with being white, as in the initial description of Kim at the beginning of the novel, one could argue that the subject position labeled "Irish" in this text is in some ways troublesome to racial identity as it is constructed in the novel, as "Irish" can occupy subject positions on either side of the great divide between white and "Oriental" (49). Such an argument, however, would have to operate according to the assumption that in *Kim* whiteness is constructed in a way that is challenged by such an inconsistency, and if we return to a scene mentioned above in which hand-to-hand combat "waked every unknown Irish devil in the boy's blood" and allowed the slight and stealthy adolescent Kim to pummel his adult foe (Babu intervenes to prevent Kim from beating the man to death), we do not witness any textual anxiety that is not tinged with pleasure (291). Nor do we experience any of the uncanny effects that we would expect if Kim's Irishness were a point of especial fragility within Kipling's imperialist narrative. Kim's temporary reversion into Irish barbarism does not trouble the text in this way because there is no interior to Kim's whiteness in the sense of a positive and stable content. To the extent

that Kim's Irishness overlaps with his ability to exist simultaneously on both sides of the racial divide, it does not trouble the text so much as it suggests a way of conceiving whiteness that thrives on the indeterminacy and contingency of racial boundaries rather than being threatened by these qualities.

If Kim's status as "sahib" has any constant meaning throughout the story, it is not in the sense that he possesses a racial essence. Whiteness, in *Kim,* does not connote purity, stability, or permanence of racial identity, although such is the racial ideal that saturates the social sciences, literature, and popular culture at the time that the novel is composed. Kim does not strive to attain such an image of ideal being, as does Moreau; if Kim were seduced by such an image, he would truly be Moreau's literary counterpart. We can, on the other hand, best understand the meaning of whiteness in *Kim* through a comparison to *Moreau*: if Moreau is seduced by one half of the dialectic of identity, and is dangerously fascinated with the image of ideal, self-identical being in a way that is much more emblematic of the period, Kim revels in the supplementary space created between image and alienation within this dialectic. For Kim, to be white does not mean to possess a positive and self-identical racial content that might be exposed as empty; it implies, rather, immersing oneself simultaneously in the pleasures of the ideal and the alienation from such an ideal. Kim's pastiche of racial identities therefore fails to trouble his whiteness; whiteness, in fact, acts as a set of formal conditions according to which such a pastiche might be staged. Irishness fails to trouble Kim's whiteness as an in-between or hybrid category, as a thing that might create disturbing resonances and, in doing so, expose the instability of Kim's white imperial masculinity, because whiteness

itself is nothing other than a state of intense pleasure in the perpetual failure of racial boundaries that turns out to be the same thing as the instantiation of racial boundaries.

We might, then, attempt to postulate the coordinates of whiteness in *Kim*, given that it does not simply designate an impossible desire to attain an imaginary point of identification or achieve a state of self-sufficient purity, but instead embraces the production of such a desire through a series of multifarious displacements.

As discussed above, Kim's prodigious talent of racial mimicry is introduced as an ability to possess, or take ownership of, that which he copies. Thus, when Kim first encounters the lama, we are told that the "lama was his trove, and he purposed to take possession" (60). This description of Kim's mimicry takes on an obvious centrality for the patchwork identity that Kim constructs as the novel progresses, for we discover that his education as an undercover agent for the British government is framed in terms of his ability to take ownership of that which he mimics. Given the interchangeability between child's play and the business of empire in the book, it is not surprising that Kim's childish desire to "take possession" of things through imitation should become a paradigm for his more advanced racial masquerade once he engages in the Great Game. Thus, when Kim first begins to study the art of disguise under Lurgan Sahib, this stage of his education begins with a game of counting money. While a Hindu boy easily defeats Kim in this game, their competition rapidly shifts from a contest of counting money into one of disguise. In this latter contest Kim easily outshines his opponent:

> The Hindu child played this game clumsily. That little mind, keen as an icicle where tally of jewels was concerned, could not temper itself to enter another's soul; but a demon in Kim woke up and sang with joy as he put on the changing

dresses, and changed speech and gesture therewith. (207)

(One has to wonder if the demon that possesses Kim in this scene, allowing him to wake up and sing with joy as he constructs his identity as a process of accumulation, is the Irish demon that possesses Kim in the fight scene and supposedly troubles the text so much). We might note that the pleasure Kim draws from racial mimicry is expressed, in this scene, in terms of the pleasure of monetary exchange; that is, Kim's acuity in exchanging one identity for another and the joy he takes in doing so is directly equated to the other boy's ability at and pleasure in counting money. We are therefore not surprised that the determinate ethnic identities that Kim occupies one after the other are named but not dwelt upon, but instead appear merely as a list, one following another in a process of addition that never results either in Kim's successful identification with any one of them or in Kim attaining a sense of the completion of his own identity. Rather, the exercise ends with Kim being "[c]arried away by enthusiasm" and refusing to let the game come to an end. The ethnicities that Kim mimics in this scene are presented in this way because, like the Hindu boy counting money, Kim's pleasure derives not just from the sensuous particularities of the identities he assumes, but from the process of exchanging one for the other in a process of ceaseless accumulation. Kim's pleasure is that of exchange, and according to the logic of the passage the determinate ethnic identities are valued for their apparently limitless exchangeability, which exists entirely apart from their specificity. The ethnicities of India become infinitely interchangeable on the basis of a purely abstract notion of value that does not recognize the particularity of the identities as relevant. The division of exchange value from any concrete particularity in this scene mirrors Marx's explanation of the commodity as the central fetish object

enabling the existence of capitalism: "As use values, commodities are, above all, of different qualities, but as exchange value they are merely different quantities, and consequently do not contain an atom of use value" (305). Stated bluntly, Kim is placed in the position of the capitalist in this scene, and the determinate ethnic identities of India are his commodities. The pleasure that he takes in mimicry is here shown to be the pleasure of exchange.

It would therefore seem that this passage invites us to understand Kim's desire for possession through mimicry in terms of the "interminable" desire of the capitalist for surplus value. This recognition grows naturally, I believe, from the consistent emphasis throughout the story that Kim's pleasure results not so much from the particularities of his ethnic disguises as from the performance of mimicry itself. Kim's seeming unwillingness to end the game in the scene just discussed or his habit of putting on one disguise after another for no apparent reason throughout his travels both point to an inexhaustible desire to accumulate identities. We apprehend that Kim's open-ended process of creating an identity for himself through a method of sheer accretion closely resembles that of Marx's capitalist, for whom the "repetition or renewal of the act of selling in order to buy, is [no longer] kept within bounds by... consumption or the satisfaction of definite wants" (Marx 332). Similarly, Kim does not seek pleasure through using any of his cumulative identities for a single, determinate end; it is rather the endless process of accumulation of an infinitely interchangeable commodity through racial mimicry that feeds his desire. It is not any particular end that Kim seeks, but rather the continuation of "the Game."

If we accept the argument that Kim's pleasure is structured like that of capitalist exchange, we realize that Kim's own identity is separate from and incommensurable to the determinate identities of which he takes possession and which he adds up as coins. Within the logic of Kim's mimicry, Kim does not occupy any determinate or embodied subject position but instead occupies a purely immaterial position that frees him from the constraints of those who do occupy such a position (all racial others). It is this unique position that makes all other identities available to Kim. Such ability to take possession of multitudinous identities is not, of course, available to Kim's racialized counterparts. Recall, for instance, that the Hindu boy who is Kim's companion during his stay with Lurgan Sahib "could not temper [his mind]... to enter another's soul" as could Kim (207). While such minor characters who are explicitly denied the white man's privileged access to the "souls" of others are peppered throughout the novel, this point is made most bluntly and repetitively through the attempts of Kim's Bengali mentor Hurree Babu to master English science and literature. While the displacement of meaning that occurs when the racial other adopts European discourses has often been examined as a source of profound anxiety – most notably in the work of Homi Bhabha[16], as well as in the introduction and first chapter of this dissertation – in *Kim* it seems as though this threat to colonial authority has been effectively neutralized. Kipling accomplishes this feat through his unique positioning of whiteness in the novel: whiteness does not name the unstable imaginary ideal, but the series of heterogeneous displacements through which this ideal emerges. Within this formulation, Babu's inability to engage effortlessly in the game of ethnic exchange allows him to be positioned as a clownish counterpart to Kim without the type of destabilizing textual ambivalence that marks the texts of *A Passage to*

India or *Heart of Darkness*. Babu's failures, in this regard, are kept constantly before us through his bungled attempts to quote Shakespeare and Spenser (272), his inability to observe a Hindu exorcism scientifically because he is frightened by ghosts and spirits (222), his unrequited desire for recognition from British scientific institutions, the rejection of all of his sociological submissions by *The Asiatic Quarterly Review* (229), and his constant mispronunciations and malapropisms. Unsurprisingly, then, the structurally disembodied position of the capitalist is not only reserved for the principal white character, but becomes definitive of racial difference in *Kim*.

Kim's own relationship to this economy of racial exchange can only be figured negatively within the text, first of all through his constant questioning of his own identity, and his inability to provide any answer to this question once it is opened. Such queries characteristically begin with a statement but end with a question. Thus, "'I am a Sahib... No, I am Kim. This is the great world, and I am only Kim. Who is Kim?'" (166). The statement that Kim is white becomes the occasion for repetitively posing the question "who is Kim?" The question, in turn, comes to function as its own end, independent of any particular answer, as when Kim is able to "throw" himself "into a mazement," letting his "mind go free upon speculation as to what is called personal identity" through repeating his own name, mantra-like, in the form of a question: "'Who is Kim – Kim – Kim?" (233). This structuring of Kim's identity as an open-ended question is accompanied by an equally persistent naming of Kim's identity as white. This naming takes place both through the narrator ("Where a native would have lain down, Kim's white blood set him upon his feet" [94]) and by various characters, most authoritatively Creighton ("'thou art a Sahib and the son of a Sahib'" [167]). We notice also, from these

examples, that the designation of Kim as white tends to take place either on the basis of a familial inheritance, as when Creighton explains that Kim is white because his father was white – a formulation that repeats the narrator's introduction of Kim in the first paragraphs of the novel – or on the basis of Kim's genetic inheritance, as in the frequent references to Kim's "white blood." In this way, the text performs Kim's identity through a reiterative structure of misrecognition: Kim is white, and in naming him so, the narrator and the various characters are apparently naming not a determinate entity, but a type of *failure* to ever fully occupy any given subject position that distinguishes Kim from the natives. If Kim performatively creates his "white" identity at the level of the action of the story, this same performative structure determines the meaning of whiteness on a textual level. Whiteness is embraced not simply as an imaginary ideal, but as an imaginary ideal that exists only by virtue of its own failure.

We see this structure of whiteness expressed simultaneously at the levels of form and content when Mahbub Ali, another of Kim's mentors, admonishes Kim regarding the importance of mastering the specific logics and linguistic skills to match his disguises. Ali advises Kim that

> "foolish it is to use the wrong word to a stranger; for though the heart may be clean of offence, how is the stranger to know that?... Therefore, in one situate as thou art, it particularly behoves thee to remember this with both kinds of faces. Among Sahibs, never forgetting thou art a Sahib; among the folk of Hind, always remembering thou art –" (191)

In this passage, Ali first names Kim as white – "thou art a Sahib" – but is then unable to repeat this formulation. Ali cannot finish the statement that when Kim is "among the folk

of Hind" he is one of them. Ali is equally unable to fill in the space that is opened up by this failure by repeating that Kim is white. Here we see the performance of whiteness that consistently defines Kim's status enacted in the space of a single sentence: the sentence begins by naming Kim's identity as white, and ends with an open-ended questioning of who, exactly, Kim is. The formulation that Kim is Indian fails, but this failure cannot be corrected by repeating that Kim is white because a subtle displacement has occurred; by the end of the sentence, to be a Sahib has taken on a different meaning, has differentiated itself from itself. It seems that to be white is to be different from oneself, such that the very act of naming one's own whiteness – "thou art a Sahib" – initiates a split, a dialectic of misrecognition that can be repeated through a series of such slippages of meaning but that cannot be resolved. For Kim, to be white is to always be different from himself. This difference cannot be eliminated, in Ali's formulation, either by retreating into a unified imaginary whiteness or by successfully and fully identifying with any of the forms of Indianness that Kim mimics. Whiteness, in this sentence as in the novel, can be registered only as a linguistic absence, a gap in the text that is materialized by a dash. Kim's identity, in other words, cannot be simply stated; it must instead be registered as an absence or a failure resulting from the attempt to delineate a racial hierarchy, which is continually displaced in discourse.

Furthermore, we are unsurprised to discover that Kipling figurally resolves this dilemma of identity through equating Kim's position with that of a trader – or capitalist – who profits from exchange. Thus, when Kim realizes that Ali's attempt to name any stable and determinate identity on his behalf once again fails, he asks "What am I?" (191). In response to this query, Ali flounders until he strikes upon the analogy that the

"matter of creeds is like horseflesh... there is a profit to be made from all" (191). Within this formulation, Kim occupies the figurative space of the one who profits from horseflesh / creeds; it is simultaneously implied that the question of belonging is of no apparent significance for the one who occupies the position of enjoying profit. The question of determinate identity is immaterial for one like Kim who profits from / enjoys creeds.

If we understand Kim, the white man in India, as occupying the position of the capitalist, it is therefore not because he is rich or possesses the economic power reserved for whites in British India: his lack of material possessions is irrelevant to this claim. The correspondence is rather a structural one; Kim occupies the same (non)position within the racial order as the capitalist does within the economic order. In other words, Kim occupies a position outside of the symbolic order of race that enables this order to come into being. Another way to state this idea would be to say that any discreet ethnic identity forms a potential site of identification for Kim, or a point of his possible insertion into the symbolic order of colonial India. Such points of racial identification give body to Kim's immaterial whiteness which has no existence apart from the determinate identities that it collects, just as the determinate identities themselves have no existence apart from Kim's disembodied possession of them. If they bring Kim into being as white, he simultaneously brings them into being as determinate and embodied; that is to say, without their discursive relationship to the tear in the symbolic fabric that is whiteness, they would not have their given meaning within the symbolic order of Kipling's India. The point of this argument, then, is that Kipling's most famous fictional presentation of India envisions whiteness not in terms of an imaginary unitary identity with a positive

content that might be exposed as hollow and thereby lose its power; rather, whiteness in *Kim* is structurally homologous to the immaterial systemic excess driving capitalism. To be white, as Kim is white, is not to realize a self-unified ideal of Aryan purity, but to put oneself in the disembodied position of this systemic excess, and, in doing so, to occupy the place of enjoyment of the intense pleasure of exchange. Whiteness is therefore not interchangeable with other racial identities. While dependent upon various sites of racial identification, or *stereotypes*, for its existence, it is not in itself structured in the same way as the other racial entities within the racial symbolic order of *Kim*. And Kipling's seemingly deliberate development of this incommensurability between whiteness and all other racial designations is precisely why racial anxiety can become the engine driving his racial hierarchy.

Kipling's famous protagonist therefore embraces a much more durable sort of identity than Wells's Moreau. Moreau's disavowal of the performative ontology of identity left him to embrace a fragile imaginary absolute; Kim does very much the opposite, embracing the performative element of his racial identity and, in doing so, opening the manifold cultures of British India to himself. Kim makes performance the center of his identity, and, in doing so, is able to exchange one ethnicity for the next as though they were commodities. If Moreau refuses to acknowledge his position as that of the obscene obverse of the big Other, eliminating all excess from his creatures and, in doing so, claiming all enjoyment for himself through sadistic torture, Kim acknowledges another possibility within the same structural schemata; by identifying not with the fragile imaginary racial absolute, but with the process of producing this racial ideal, he is able to recognize that his pleasure is the pleasure of the process of the production of a

racial imaginary. *Kim* thereby produces a different narrative logic than *Moreau*; if we are unsurprised by Moreau's gruesome death, in which he is literally devoured by the creatures he has created, we are equally unsurprised by Kim's successful defense of the British empire. Unlike the case of Moreau, Kim's failure does not come with his inevitable failure to inhabit a static, self-contained ideal; rather, this failure enables Kim's success.

We should recognize, on the other hand, that the two novels work through the same set of paradoxes of identity, and, in doing so, rely on the same racial imaginary to provide structure to these paradoxes; race, in both texts, functions as an imaginary containment for the performative element at the center of the specific paradoxes of the modern self identified in each story. *The Island of Dr. Moreau* contains an extremely pointed critique of the main character's view of rationality; Wells provides a strong narrative focus on Moreau's blindness to the impossibility of creating a perfectly rational creature or an ideal and perfectly stable identity, and, in doing so, Wells anatomizes how Moreau's insane quest to produce a subject with a perfectly legible identity results in a brutal campaign of torture directed at his implicitly racialized subjects. In *Moreau* we are invited to contemplate the shortcomings of Moreau's exuberant but narrowly focused intelligence, and in doing so we find that Moreau's strange quest for purity leads to an implicitly racial violence as a result of his disavowal of the performativity of identity. *Kim* does very much the opposite. While we can understand Moreau's tragedy in terms of his disavowal of the performative foundation of identity, *Kim* embraces this performativity, but not to the end of any greater liberation from ideological or political oppression. Rather, Kipling demonstrates the compatibility of such oppression with an

imaginative identity that enacts the basic attributes of poststructural identity in an aesthetically pleasing fashion. Kim's identity is forever incomplete and in the process of becoming; it is open-ended and always in the midst of being refashioned according to the pure contingencies of circumstance; it thrives on the *jouissance* of such contingency. Yet Kim is a British spy in India precisely because he possesses these virtues.

If Moreau's embrace of a racial ideal is fragile, Kim's is sturdy, for we are by now fully aware that Kim's ability to exist outside determinate racial boundaries does not indicate that he is subversive of the racial order of Kipling's British India any more than the capitalist's existence subverts Marx's capitalism. The capitalist occupies an economic position that is mired in contradiction, but this does not necessarily mean that the capitalist forms the weak link of capitalism. Rather, the capitalist is in the position of *enjoyment*: Marx defines the very being of the capitalist in terms of his insatiable systemic desire; he occupies the position of infinite enjoyment. The system of capitalism does not exist, in Marx's formulation, apart from this enjoyment. The first important point that can be drawn from *Kim* is therefore that a site of systemic contradiction or aporia cannot be adequately understood by the catch-all term "anxiety," with its connotations of an invariable fear, frailty, and vulnerability, for the same site is potentially the location of pleasure, eroticism, and enjoyment. Kim, in occupying such a position, in straddling racial boundaries within a system of power reliant on their strict maintenance, is a perfect example of this possibility. Racial anxiety, claimed by the system of racial hierarchy itself, is recycled in such a way that it sustains the intricate system of racial boundaries in *Kim*; as the residue of the dialectic of racial identity,

anxiety over racial boundaries is normalized, or made to sustain the very system of race that it violates, through Kipling's conceptual framework of "boyology."

A second and related point is that the reductive isolation of the excess that drives the dialectic of identity leads to the formation of an ideal just as fragile and incapable of articulating its own conditions of existence as Moreau's blind embrace of the imaginary ideal of the perfectly rational creature. Kim's personality, founded on mimicry, provides an excellent example of the possibility of an identity founded on systemic excess; he becomes himself through an on going performance, the logic of his identity being an open-ended one of pure addition without synthesis. Kim therefore provides a fine example of a poststructural ideal such as those posited by Deleuze and Guattari or Casarino, which are discussed at length in chapter two of this dissertation. One point argued in chapter two that I will now reiterate is that such an ideal, isolated from the dialectical process that produces it, results in a particular type of critical myopia from which poststructuralist criticism often suffers. We notice, first of all, the ease with which this reductive ideal of identity can be accommodated by Kipling's imperialism. Reading *Kim*, one realizes that the exclusive embrace of particularity isolated from the dialectic of identity is only made possible by the "prior equalizing of all terms which then allows them to enter into the most shockingly idiosyncratic permutations": in other words, the logic of exchange is the condition of the infinite interchangability of identities, and is therefore the precondition of the construction of an identity such as Kim's (Eagleton 36). Without the invisible background of exchange, within which the sensuous particularities of use value are replaced by an incommensurable system of abstract equivalence (recall that as commodities, objects "do not contain an atom of use value" [Marx 305]), Kim's

pastiche identity would be impossible. Kipling emphasizes this aspect of Kim's nomadic construction of self through repeatedly figuring it in terms of monetary exchange: his frequent characterization of Kim's enjoyment of racial masquerade through figures of monetary exchange serves to underscore the fact that Kim's identity is modeled on the abstract equivalence of exchange value. Kipling does not simply assume, as many contemporary critics do, that such an identity is invariably disruptive of rigid social hierarchy; instead he recognizes that a being such as Kim is an integral part of even the most oppressive society. Kim violates the racial norms of British India, and in doing so provides the necessary supplementarity that these norms require for their own maintenance. Kipling has anticipated the pastiche of postmodern identity, and incorporated it into an imaginative system of unparalleled racial oppression. Furthermore, Kipling's version of pastiche identity can be given a name: *whiteness*. Whiteness is the condition of such a possibility within Kipling's India. Within Kipling's durable formulation of racial hierarchy, then, whiteness is the condition of possibility of pastiche; within Kipling's discourse on identity, whiteness is the unspoken background of abstract equivalence that is structurally identical to exchange value in Marx's discourse on capitalism; to be white, in *Kim*, is therefore to occupy the site of enjoyment, a site systemically equivalent to that of being a capitalist in *Capital, Vol. One*.

The inability to remark this relationship frequently renders poststructural critiques of *Kim* ineffectual, while Said's critique, which is often implicitly psychoanalytic and dialectically structured, is much more effective in diagnosing the real problem of imperial ideology represented in *Kim*. Thus, while Ellis and Holden believe that they have found a secret weakness in Kipling's imperial ideology in the rhetorical complexities of race in

Kim, Said finds, in the same sites of textual ambivalence, that "what is never far from the surface" is "a sense of assertion and domination over all the complexities of Oriental life" (qtd. in Low 211). And while the poststructuralist approach has the clear benefit of recognizing race as a formal, textual characteristic of colonial discourse, it has the significant shortcoming of failing to recognize the durability of race as a discursive feature both between various discourses and disciplines and through large expanses of historical time: in other words, this approach suffers from the inability to formulate any concept of ideology or hegemony as a connective tissue between discursive formations across time and space. This inability frequently renders the interventions of poststructuralism both discursively and politically ineffectual. Holden, for instance, connects Kipling's formulations of race to those being made within the emergent science of eugenics, but then attempts to isolate this notion of race within a "precise" historical and discursive context. In doing so, he hopes to underscore "the possibility of evolution and change" within racial discourse (93). The result would arguably be that Holden attempts to antiseptically quarantine (to paraphrase Said) early modernist racial discourse within the historical past, and, in doing so, to artificially silence resonances with contemporary racism. It is therefore telling that Holden, to demonstrate the payoff of his analytic precision, suggests an intellectual connection between policies instituted in Singapore in the 1980's to limit the birth rate and early modern eugenics policies in Great Britain. Without attempting to downplay the importance of eugenicist government policy throughout the world (especially in former British colonies such as Singapore), it is a noticeable failure that Holden discovers similarities only at a considerable historical or geographical distance from himself. While evidence of the institutionalization and

practice of racist policies in contemporary Great Britain, the United States, Canada, and Australia is so extensive and widespread that it is scarcely possible to know where to begin drawing examples, Holden does not cite a single example from within the "Western" world. Pfizer's secret experimentation on Nigerian children testing meningitis drugs, the extensively documented and notoriously differential treatment of whites and blacks by the criminal justice systems in Great Britain, the United States, Canada, and Australia, the involuntary sterilization of hundreds of thousands of black and Native American women in the United States in the past three decades (the United States easily surpasses Nazi Germany in this practice[17]) all evade Holden's notice. The failure of this approach to formulate a politically relevant criticism only becomes more glaring when compared to the numerous literary and cultural analyses which have succeeded in drawing pointed connections between nineteenth-century formulations of race and contemporary political, economic, and social practices. Such analyses have been produced by a diverse group of thinkers including Terry Eagleton, Anne McClintock, Slavoj Žižek, Edward Said, Fredric Jameson, and Anthony Appiah.

Fredric Jameson, in fact, provides a much more durable and relevant framework in *The Political Unconscious* for interpreting the historical significance of Kim's patchwork identity. In this work, Jameson argues that literary modernism transforms the fragmentation of the body and mind that is one of the definitive characteristics of modernity into a form of "Utopian compensation" for this experience of fragmentation (236). According to Jameson's argument, the emphasis on "the semi-autonomy of the fragmented senses," in Conrad's work, in particular, tends to turn "these waste products of capitalist rationalization" into "a life space in which the opposite and the negation of

such rationalization can be, at least imaginatively, experienced" (236). Without too much work, we can see a very similar logic at work in *Kim*. Whiteness, as I have argued, is the condition of unlimited exchange that enables Kim's immersion in the sensuous particularities of each ethnicity of which he takes possession through mimicry. The enjoyment that Kim extracts from immersing himself in the sensuous particularities of the various ethnic identities he assumes should be understood as compensation for the fragmentation inherent in the logic of unlimited exchange that dictates the parameters of whiteness within the novel. Kim's rhizomatic identity, always under construction within this Utopian space of sensuous compensation, composed according to the accretive logic of an open-ended addition of ethnicities without any totalizing synthesis, allows him to transform the logic of exchange / whiteness into pleasure. The much-remarked narrative pleasure that Kipling extracts from the sensuous particularity of his descriptions of Indian life, which has so often been seen as evidence of Kipling's sympathetic identification with India and Indians, in fact reveals not only the compatibility of aesthetics with colonial structures of power, but demonstrates how structures of power can be reliant on the formulation of durable aesthetic values. Simply put, Kim's racial masquerade is a form of aesthetic sublimation. In assuming an identity, Kim elevates this identity to place of the racial thing – each of the identities that he assumes comes to function as an *objet a* – which then becomes a unique occasion for an immersion in the pleasure of the necessary / impossible structure of identification. This aesthetic sublimation provides the conditions of possibility for the construction of a racial hierarchy as a technology of colonial domination because the racial masquerade itself is nothing other than the sublimation of the necessary / impossible conditions of identity dictated by the

instantiation of inflexible racial boundaries. Without Kim's mimicry, these boundaries would be fragile, their violation seemingly inevitable and threatening, and the contemplation of the possibility of their breach the cause of anxiety and potentially psychosis. Supported by Kim's playful mimicry, they are stable because their inevitable failure is sublimated as the pleasure and excitement of a child-like play. Through the ceaseless enactment and sublimation of the inevitable failure of these racial boundaries, racial mimicry sustains them.

Conclusion

In the course of this dissertation, I trace a number of early modernist formulations of race. Through the examination of writing in economics and the social sciences as well as fiction, I argue that "race" provides an ideologically dominant mode of suturing the rupture of the real: discourses of race provide an imaginary resolution to the constitutive limitations of British society in a period marked by the dominance of industrial capitalism and the overseas expansion of this economic system in the form of imperialism. In the case of Marx and Conrad, I argue that this society's constitutive rupture appears in the form of the commodity, which interpellates bodies with which it comes into intimate contact as racialized. For Tylor and Galton, I contend that race conceals the performativity of the discourse on social evolution, which provides a form of ideology through which colonial conquest is naturalized. Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, on the other hand, provides a trenchant criticism of the episteme of evolution, exposing the hidden performativity of this theory both through its thematic development and its narrative structure, as well as highlighting the role that race plays in providing an imaginary continuity which sustains this theory. Finally, through an examination of *Kim*, I attempt to dissect the manner in which Kipling enlists the hidden performativity definitive of national identity during this period in the service of strengthening the British empire. In the character of Kim, Kipling presents us with a form of whiteness that is defined through the enjoyment of the performative excess of subjectivity, which contrasts with the deeply-embodied, determinate, and static identities of Indians. The variety of meanings that race takes in the texts under examination all have this in common: race serves as a site of imaginary containment for the paradoxes that result from the persistent

questioning of the conditions of subjectivity and community in the era of early modernism.

To conclude, I think it appropriate to point out the logic of race traced throughout this dissertation suggests another possibility that is not directly addressed in the discussion of the previous texts. Although I have tried to suggest the different ways of regarding the racial other, or distinct ways of positioning oneself in relation to the racial other within the body of literature under discussion, what I have not directly discussed is the final possibility of transcending the horizon of race. I think it is perhaps emblemmatic of the centrality of race to British thought and literature that we cannot find this possibility imagined in anything but a very circuitous route in the writing of Kipling, Conrad, or Wells. E. M. Forster seems to express the difficulty of thinking outside of the episteme of racial difference in the conclusion to *A Passage to India*. Forster, who dissects the traumatic kernel of race that sustains colonial justice at length, focuses on the inability of Fielding and Aziz to become friends at the end of the novel:

> "Why can't we be friends now?" said the other [Fielding], holding him [Aziz] affectionately. "It's what I want. It's what you want."
>
> But the horses didn't want it – they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass single file; the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House, that came into view as they issued from the gap and saw Mau beneath: they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices, "No, not yet," and the sky said, "No, not there." (322)

Fielding and Aziz, who are discussing the possibility of the end of British rule in India, find that it is not the end of British rule that is difficult to envision, but the possibility of

an Englishman and an Indian relating to each other without the strange division of racial difference in some way determining and limiting this relationship. Just as the Marabar Caves come to represent that thing which is always lost in inter-cultural communication, the very earth and sky seem to come alive to keep Fielding and Aziz apart. Once again, it is not only the temples and the buildings, representing the different empires that have claimed India as their own, that prevent Fielding and Aziz from being friends, but the horses, the birds, and the rocks, or the earth itself, which seem to thwart their friendship. Race is something that divides them and that apparently precedes culture and empire, and finally that can be envisioned only in terms of a mysterious natural difference. Forster, an astute critic of empire, isolates racial difference as the traumatic kernel of cultural belonging, and the transcendence of racial difference requires something more fundamental than a change of governments. It seems that the end of the direct rule of the British empire can be envisioned, but the destruction of the traumatic kernel of colonial subjectivity cannot.

It is for this reason that we can locate the possibility of something beyond race only through tortuously indirect routes in the writings of the authors under discussion. Within this group, I think that it is Conrad who most closely approaches imagining the end of race in *The Secret Agent*, a story that centers on an attempt to blow up the Greenwich Observatory. This "anarachist" plot is envisioned by Mr. Vladimir, an unscrupulous Russian diplomat who hopes to provoke a reactionary crackdown on radical political groups, as an attack on the "sacrosanct fetish of today... science" (*Secret Agent* 42). The "bourgeoisie," Vladimir states,

believe in some mysterious way science is the source of their material prosperity. They do. And the absurd ferocity of such a demonstration will affect them more profoundly than the mangling of a whole street – or theater – full of their own kind. To that last they can always say: "Oh! it's mere class hate." But what is one to say to an act of destructive ferocity so absurd as to be incomprehensible, inexplicable, almost unthinkable; in fact, mad? Madness alone is truly terrifying... (43)

The attack on "science" envisioned by Vladimir "must have all the shocking senselessness of gratuitous blasphemy"; "Any imbecile that has got an income believes in that [science]. He does not know why, but he believes it matters somehow. *It is the sacrosanct fetish*" [italics mine] (43).

In these passages the term "fetish" takes on a meaning very nearly equivalent to its use in other texts we have discussed: it is a mysterious thing that inaugurates a symbolic order and around which this symbolic order is organized, but which escapes the very symbolic structure that it establishes. In these passages, "science" therefore takes on the value of "that very thing within a structure which while governing the structure, escapes structurality" (Derrida, *Writing and Difference* 279). Alternately, we might state that "science" marks the internal limitation of the symbolic order. Because "science" serves this role within 1890's English bourgeois ideology, it falls entirely outside the scope of this ideology to explain an attack on it rationally, or according to the symbolic order that "science" itself establishes. Such an attack can therefore only be construed as "madness": at the end of this passage, Vladimir comments cynically, "I defy the ingenuity of journalism to persuade their public that any given member of the proletariat

can have a personal grievance against astronomy" (44). While class falls squarely within the explanatory capability of "the bourgeoisie" within Vladimir's estimation, science by definition defies bourgeois rationality: it is the traumatic core of bourgeois ideology, the destruction of which can only be experienced as "madness." To destroy it is to destroy rationality itself. To attack science is to "make a clean sweep of the whole social creation" (52).

Furthermore, it is significant that Vladimir chooses the Greenwich Observatory as the target of this "purely destructive," "incomprehensible," and "absurd" act (43). Science as "pure mathematics" comes to be represented by nothing other than the Observatory, which was designated as the site of the prime meridian in 1884 (a date that coincides with the division of Africa between the European states at the Berlin Conference), therefore becoming the official center of the world according to a new universal system of geography that was also a technology of colonial control (44). The fact that the Observatory functions as the official metropolitan center of the British empire is not lost on Vladimir, who proclaims that "blowing up the first meridian is bound to raise a howl of execration" (44).

I believe that the attempt "to destroy the imperial metropolitan center at its heart" described in *The Secret Agent* represents Conrad's most direct imagining of the destruction of the *episteme* of the British colonial order (Young 2). If, as I argue throughout this dissertation, the traumatic core of the British colonial symbolic order is race (which, as I claim in chapter three, also names the ideologically predominant form of suture for the constitutive contradictions of turn-of-the-century social science), we might see the attempt to symbolically destroy the colonial episteme described in *The Secret*

Agent as a model for the destruction of race. If the transcendence of the traumatic core of a cultural order can only be envisioned as a mad act of destruction, in this novel we witness Conrad's own imagining of the end of race. Moreover, we might discern in this act of symbolic destruction a distinct contrast to the logic of transgression staged in *Kim*. In Kipling's novel, we perceive the logic of what Žižek terms the obscene obverse of the Law, or "the inherent transgression which sustains the Law" (*Fragile Absolute* 147). Kim, through his racial masquerade, reiteratively instantiates racial hierarchy specifically by violating it. Kim converts the ambivalence of racial identification into a form of performative pleasure that strengthens, rather than weakens, the colonial apparatus of surveillance and control. Conrad's Vladimir, on the other hand, envisions something very different according to the logic of racial identification: he imagines the destruction of "the transgressive fantasmatic supplement that attaches us to" the Law (*Fragile Absolute* 149). While Kim sustains racial Law through a sort of continual, pleasurable sacrifice to the racial thing (he will, finally, renounce the Law itself out of dedication to the traumatic thing that sustains it), Vladimir imagines the destruction of this thing, the act of striking down the center of symbolic existence which could clear the terrain for a new set of subjective coordinates.

The end of race, or the traumatic core of the colonial symbolic order, can finally be imagined by the most perceptive of the novelists of empire only as an act of self-destruction. (Moreover, it can only be imagined very obliquely, for it is mediated by the term "science.") If race functions, as it does in *Anthropology* and *Hereditary Genius*, as a necessary / impossible primordial cause, or an immaculate, primal act of creation preceding history only to be ceaselessly reenacted in the unfurling of history, the act that

Conrad envisions renounces all fidelity to this primordial cause, and therefore takes on a radical contingency: it breaks free of the predetermination of the primordial cause, and therefore announces the possibility of something new.

Endnotes

[1] Watt comments on the role of this document as a transitional piece bridging nineteenth and twentieth century aesthetic theories in his discussion of literary "impressionism" in *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* (76-87). Also notable are his comments on this topic in "Conrad's Preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*" in the winter, 1974 edition of *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* (101-15). Jameson's analysis of the language and aesthetics of *The Nigger of the Narcissus* can be found in the fifth chapter, entitled "Romance and Reification," of *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (206-80).

[2] In his discussion of "sympathetic magic" in *The Golden Bough*, Frazer divides magic into two general types, "magic of similarity," which operates metaphorically, and "magic of contact," which operates metonymically (14). Michael Taussig argues that this division of contact and similarity, which should more properly be understood as different stages in the same process, is, in fact, an important measure of capitalist alienation in Marxian terms. According to Taussig, in Marx's analysis of "commodity fetishism" a displacement of the "'social character of men's labor' into the commodity, where it is obliterated from awareness by appearing as an objective character of the commodity itself," is, in fact, the "swallowing-up of contact by its copy," a process that "ensures the animation" of the copy, or the commodity (22). It is because the sensuous particularity of real labor relations are obscured by capitalism that the commodity is fetishized, seeming to be animated by mysterious forces. The idea that the commodity, having absorbed the law of contact into itself, therefore carries a mysterious power to transform those with whom it comes into contact, informs my argument on the construction of the racialized

body.

[3] In this spirit, the 1890 edition of *Chambers's Encyclopaedia* declares that regarding "religion... it may be questioned whether some of the [African] tribes... can be fairly described as having any religion... The lowest form of superstition, styled *fetichism*, prevails among the uncultivated negro tribes" (52).

[4] For Achebe's argument, see "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*." While the term "racism" did not exist during Conrad's lifetime, this is undoubtedly because "thinking in terms of race was... so widespread... during the late Victorian period that a word like *racism*, which suggests a negative view of race, was simply not needed and hence not thought of" (Firchow 4). We should therefore note that a concept such as "racism" can be retroactively applied in a productive fashion. We might observe with Balibar, for instance, that Marx encounters a similar problem in defining capitalism: in order to locate the pre-history of capitalism within the feudal mode of production, Marx must employ a "genealogical" process of reading feudalism in terms of the analytical concepts provided by capitalism. Balibar therefore argues that the pre-existing elements necessary for the genesis of capitalism are reinflected within the synthesis provided by the capitalist mode of production as the effects of the very entity that they generated (282). Although "racism" is not an important term in my own analysis, my point is that there is nothing erroneous in Achebe's assertion that Conrad was a racist.

[5] The continual recurrence of the need to respond to Achebe's essay in predictable and repetitive terms suggests that this debate is both a dead end and an evasion of more important issues. As recently as 2002, J. Hillis Miller joined the debate, with "Should

We Read *Heart of Darkness*?" Miller, in attacking a then twenty-seven year old essay, repeats a "defense" of Conrad against the charge of racism that is equally old. Miller argues that Conrad's use of literary irony isolates him from the charge of racism. Predictably, Miller also feels the need to present the seemingly contradictory claim that "it is not surprising" that the novel contains "sexist" and "Eurocentric" views because such views were part of the historical context within which the novel was written (34). This two-tiered defense of Conrad, that Conrad merely reflects the beliefs of his time and place, and that his use of irony renders such charges irrelevant in the first place, has been repeated often since the initial publication of Achebe's essay. See, for instance, C. P. Sarvan's "Racism and 'Heart of Darkness,'" first published in 1980, or Hunt Hawkins's "The Issue of Racism in 'Heart of Darkness,'" first published in 1982. For other repetitions of this argument, see Cedric Watts's "'A Bloody Racist': About Achebe's View of Conrad," or Marcus Ramogale's "Achebe and Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness.'"

I attempt to refute the presupposition behind these arguments (that the formal qualities of literature are ontologically prior to and therefore isolated from peripheral, "surface" issues such as racism) in this chapter. A number of claims of this sort have, of course, been made with a great degree of critical complexity in the past twenty years, but very few focus on extricating Conrad's writing from the superficial debate on racism described above. Important exceptions are Edward Said's comments on Conrad in *Culture and Imperialism*, Susan Andrade's "Unending the River: Surface Equanimity, Submerged Ideology," which focuses on the racial implications of Conrad's textual strategies, and Bette London's "Reading Race and Gender in Conrad's Dark Continent," which focuses on how the textual construction of woman as "lack" is central to Conrad's

production of the racialized subject. None of these exceptions, however, focus on redefining race as a fundamental thematic and *linguistic* aspect of Conrad's writing, as I do in this chapter. While there has been a great deal of psychoanalytic criticism on Conrad's work, it has been dominated by Freudian approaches, such as that of Joseph Dobrinsky's *The Artist in Conrad's Fiction*, and Jungian approaches, such as that of Frederick Karl's "Introduction to the *Danse Macabre*." Uzoma Esonwanne, in "Race and Reading: A Study of Psychoanalytic Criticism," notes that the impact of Lacanian thought within Conrad criticism has, so far, been "negligible" (202). My approach of reading the textual production of race in terms of a Lacanian "real" is, I believe, unique.

From a theoretical standpoint, one of the closest readings to my own that I have encountered is that of J. Hillis Miller, who, relying heavily on a Derridian schemata of literature as an "endlessly deferred promise of a definitive revelation that never occurs," argues that "Heart of Darkness" is an extended examination of perpetual deferral as a structure governing narrative (36). Miller, however, believes that this formal purpose is antiseptically quarantined from a superficial reality like race. The way that his refusal to acknowledge the issue of race in any substantive manner distorts his argument, is, I believe, most obvious when he attempts to exonerate Conrad from charges of sexism. In doing so, he argues that Kurtz's African mistress, who is represented as possessing an instinctual knowledge of "fecund and mysterious life," is quite the opposite of "the Intended," who is "invincibly innocent and ignorant" (28). Miller, without any apparent irony, argues that this representation of the African woman undermines Marlow's sexist assertions that women are "out of it." Miller therefore concludes that judging the novel to be sexist is all but impossible. Miller's argument, in this case, proceeds according to

the assumption that one of the most antiquated and widespread stereotypes about black women somehow undermines one of the most antiquated and widespread stereotypes about white women, as though the two are unrelated, or as though they cancel one another. This blunder would certainly not have occurred had Miller acknowledged that race and gender are not only implicated in the very narrative structure of the novel, but that each is implicated in the concept of the other, as well.

[6] Peter Firchow's *Envisioning Africa* is a study that opens with a behaviorist definition of racism and proceeds to demonstrate the limitations of such a definition for a substantive inquiry into the meaning of race. We might note, for instance, Firchow's deduction, based on his questionable definition of "racism," that Conrad was more racist in his attitude toward Belgians than Africans (9-10).

[7] We might expect this to be the case if Conrad had written a story that took "civilized" and "primitive" societies to be things that actually exist, rather than structural effects of the evolutionary logic of capitalism. In this case, we would expect Marlow to discover in primitive culture an unproblematic self-sameness in direct opposition to the self-divided nature of his civilized existence, as Freud "discovered" that primitives lacked an unconscious in *Totem and Taboo* (202). Perhaps Marlow would even run across his "essence," or undergo a sexual re-awakening.

[8] I discuss the connection between race and gender within *Heart of Darkness* at considerable length in chapter one of this dissertation. See pages 41-55. Bette London has also explored the connection between women posited as "lack" and the construction of racial ideology in Conrad's writing in "Reading Race and Gender in Conrad's Dark Continent."

[9] Perhaps a parallel should be drawn between Abraham's stubborn persistence in the face of a nature that seems determined to eliminate him and contemporary beliefs regarding people of "mixed" ancestry, who were a persistent thorn in the side for dominant nineteenth-century racial theories. Racial science repeatedly sought to prove that, like Abraham, those of mixed race were on the verge of extermination at the hands of natural forces. Mulattos, like the mule after which they were named, were supposed to mark the boundary between separate species, and therefore not only were they supposed to be unable to reproduce, but their very existence had to be scientifically demonstrated to be fragile. People of mixed European and African ancestry, were, for instance, thought to be physically weak, prone to insanity, and unable to withstand inhospitable climates. For an early exposition of this theory that was influential in both the United States and England, see Nott, 227-32. For a thorough overview of the influence of such theories, see Young, 118-41.

[10] Also omitted was the characterization of the officer who committed the murder. According to *The Log of the Cutty Sark*, he "was apparently a despotic character with a sinister reputation," a description almost antithetical to Conrad's portrayal of Leggatt (Casarino 242).

[11] The white race is frequently distinguished from the primitive races in Galton's text by its ability to gradually evolve in order to adapt to higher forms of social organization. Such, for instance, is clearly the case when Galton argues that through the "steady riddance of the Bohemian spirit of our race, the artisan part of our population is slowly becoming bred to its duties, and the primary qualities of the typical modern British workman are already the very opposite of those of the nomad" (335). The British

workman, in other words, is the result of a process of gradual adaptation to change, while the nomad is mired in stasis. It is on this basis that Galton distinguishes between the "more stationary forms of society and our own" (351).

[12] Said's judgment that Kipling's portrait of India is sympathetic to the manifold cultures that are portrayed therein is something of a critical commonplace by the time it is written. Unlike Said's analysis, however, previous critical assessments almost invariably assumed that *Kim*, for this reason, both attested to the "authenticity" of Kipling's Indian experience and redeemed him from charges of being a racist or an imperial toady. Thus, Phillip Mason refers to *Kim* as "a series of clearly sketched figures moving against brilliant scenes from the India that Kipling remembered" (180), while J. M. S. Tompkins believes that the novel confirms "the depth of memory and delight from which it was drawn" (26). More outspoken in this matter is Andrew Rutherford, who believes that *Kim* demonstrates Kipling's "wisdom and humanity" and disproves "nine-tenths of the charges leveled against the author" (qtd. in Low, 201).

[13] See Said 136-44, Ellis 316, and Holden 94. Gail Ching-Liang Low emphasizes, in a similar fashion, how Kim's status as "poor white" grants him an ambivalent racial status (212-13). In a different context, Enda Duffy succinctly states this position: "Given the relative lack of difference between the Irish and... the English themselves, it was inevitable that the Irish would be seen to occupy an ambivalent middle ground between the 'master' and 'dark' races" (43).

[14] See Omi and Winant 23-25 for a general explanation of the changing nature of the category of "white" over the past one hundred years. See Brodkin Sacks 55-68 for a

more specific analysis of how specific ethnic groups have had their racial status upgraded to "white" during the 20th century.

[15] We might note, for instance, that in his first meeting with Kim, Creighton, the ethnologist-spy who maintains control of a sprawling empire with a degree of certitude that even Sherlock Holmes would envy, gives Kim a piece of advice that serves as both a maxim for Kim and a lynchpin of the narrative action: "There is no sin so great as ignorance" (167). Thus when Kim meets his bumbling Russian and French adversaries with their disdain for Indian culture, there is little doubt that he will triumph: it is clear that the comically ignorant Russians and French do not have the right stuff to control an empire.

[16] In particular, see chapter six, "Signs Take for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," in *The Location of Culture*.

[17] See chapter two Dorothy Roberts's *Killing the Black Body*, entitled "The Dark Side of Birth Control," for an extensive account of the practices of involuntary sterilization in the United States during the 1970's and 1980's. Roberts reports that by the early 1970's the rate of women being sterilized under federal programs such as Medicaid and AFDC equaled the rate reached at the peak of the Nazi sterilization program in the 1930's, and that by 1980 the rate the rate had surpassed this number (90-93). Roberts documents the various ways that women, the large majority of whom were, of course, black, latina, and Native American, were involuntarily sterilized under these programs. Federal programs promoting sterilization were effective in sterilizing 25% of Native American women of child-bearing age by the end of the 1970's (94-95).

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