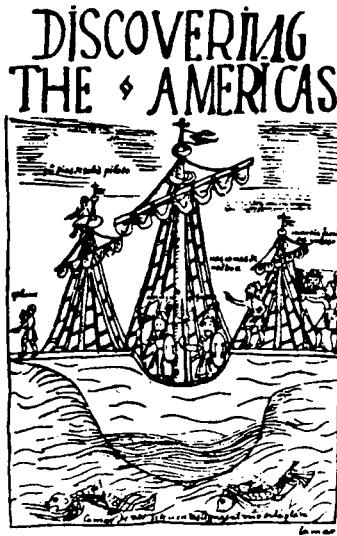


# Josaphat Kubayanda

On Colonial/Imperial Discourse and  
Contemporary Critical Theory



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## On Colonial/Imperial Discourse and Contemporary Critical Theory

Underlying the idea of colonial discourse is the presumption that during the colonial period large parts of the non-European world were *produced* for Europe.

Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*

[T]he teaching of literature is the teaching of values [...] It has become the teaching of an aesthetic and political order, in which no person of color, no woman, was ever able to discover the reflection of his or her cultural image. The return of “the” canon, the high canon of Western masterpieces, represents the return of an order in which my people were the subjugated, the voiceless, the invisible, the un[re]presented and the unrepresentable.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr.,  
“Whose Canon Is It, Anyway?”

Another way in which feminist theory can make a contribution to the study of colonialism is through a critique of the very concept of representation.

Kamala Visweswaran  
“Defining Feminist Ethnography”

I begin with these words in order to underscore one problematic we face in the corridors of literary and cultural studies. Our age (the 70's and beyond, I would say) is marked by an interrogation of canonical thinking; it is a period, depending on one's viewpoint, of canon revision, canon reformation, or de-canonical thinking. In the last decade or so, several kinds of writing have forced the academy to rethink the notion of theory and the question of discursive practice. The pressure has emerged not only from so-called minority voices, but also from the hegemonic centers of learning in Europe and America. A good example is the phenomenal rise of deconstruction since 1966 – a philosophical and critical stance rather than a scientific methodology. Deconstruction leads to issues larger than discourse because it establishes not only an anti-structuralist but also an anti-Establishment notion that it is difficult to pinpoint a stable link between word and thing, between signifier and signified.

Deconstruction's position is identified with a disintegrating principle called *sous rature*, i. e. "under erasure," so that there can be no real "essence," no absolute anything.

Now from a minority perspective (my idea of minority and majority is simply a question of power relations; it is a question of structures of subordination and domination, not a matter of numerical strength, or the size or space occupied by people) deconstruction is both a strength and a danger. And that is the reason I give it some attention in this study. The danger of it, as Rooney points out in *Seductive Reasoning*, is the possibility it offers for self-destruction in "a frenzy of deconstructions" (Rooney, 7). Spivak too says the notion of "erasure" is troubling. How can the "minor" ever come to be? How could new voices be heard? What would be the point of seeking a voice? Yet, to speak positively, deconstruction intensifies critical thinking and liberates the discursive act from the apparently iron-clad hold of the center. It destabilizes received formulations, and enables the marginalized to return at least to haunt the marginalizer. In part that is what minority discourse does; in part that is what women's studies and feminist discourse do as well. What we witness, in effect, to appropriate the words of Audre Lorde, is the intellectual task to "dismantle the master's house." I might add that we are as never before in critical theory provided with a context to theorize about and to critique notions of authority, of the truth and falsehood of representation or observation, and, in the American context, the veracity or reliability of the critical positions taken by the older Yale and Chicago critics such as de Man and Booth who assume that there is nearly always a universal audience that can be *persuaded*. Who is to be persuaded and why? *Who* should persuade? The colonialist on colonial people, the colonial writer such as Kipling and Conrad on the non-European other? Columbus on the Caribs? Or the functionalist anthropologist like Malinowski on the British colonial ethos vis-à-vis the "natives?" Who is the observer, and why is he/she reliable or not?

What I am alluding to is a resistance to theory or theories devised almost exclusively from a certain privileged ideological or power position, from a certain epistemological tradition, and, as Gates has noted, from a very small number of eurocentric texts. What is questioned is the hierarchical notion of texts, the narrow base or specificity of theory which is then automatically universalized. Critical theory has the potential not only to exclude, or marginalize, but to lie about its universality. This is not to suggest a theory-shy minority; on the contrary it means a greater minority involvement in theory

(Gates). Witness the two issues on minority discourse published in *Cultural Critique* nos. 6 and 7; the special issues on feminism, racism, and colonial discourse in journals like *Inscriptions* (nos. 3/4, 1988), *Discourse* (no.8, 1986; a special issue on Third World women), and *Third Text: Third World Perspectives on Contemporary Art and Culture* 6 (Spring 1989). I might add that one needs to consider the new "colonized" voices of a Gates or an Edward Said: I mean Gates' *Black Literature and Literary Theory*, *The Signifying Monkey*, *Figures in Black* and Said's *Orientalism* and *The Text, the Critic and the World*. Witness also the recent interest by major critics such as Jameson on Third World criticism. I am referring of course to Jameson's famous article in *Social Text* (Fall 1986) entitled "Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capital." Jameson pleads for syllabus reform to include texts from other lands, and for heterogeneity as the core of humanistic studies in Europe and the United States of America.

In all this "Race for Theory" (Barbara Christian), what is the contribution of Third World critics and minorities in the Western cultural setup? I believe it is in the arena of the discourse of empire and colony. That is an area that a Booth, a de Man, or even a Jameson either does not address theoretically or fails to deal with convincingly. There are countless literary traditions and experiences in Latin America, Africa and Asia, as Aijaz Ahmad pointed out to Jameson, that are presently virtually out of the reach of European and American theorists, especially those of the *belle-lettres* streak. If and when they know those traditions, Euro-American literary theorists might ask different questions. Meanwhile, it is to Gates, Edward Said, V.Y. Mudimbe, Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, among others, that we must turn. Although they share postmodernist's or deconstructionist's broad vein that all formulations are destabilizable, they seem to suggest that questions of race and racism, empire and imperialism, colony and colonialism are nevertheless "essential" social and historical phenomena. Literary theory has not made a final authoritative statement on them. And to speak of "indeterminacy" in this context is perhaps to err grievously. Spivak, a Marxist-feminist- deconstructionist herself, suggests that at this time in history, what is necessary in minority intellectual discourse is a "strategic essentialism" that will allow us to address those phenomena which can not be erased from historical memory or from the consciousness of our present epistemological age, especially as we seek new subjects. These subjects need not be abstractions only, for their historical subjectivity is the key to their existence. Gates too scoffs at the post-modernist rejection of all "essentialist"

thought, arguing, quite like other minority theorists, that there are certain "absolute" factors (absolute not because they are metaphysically unchangeable, or because there is no temporal desire to transcend them) around which a signifying system must be constructed. This construction would be beneficial to those who have to live with the consequences of colonialism or those who, in diverse ways, confront the end of empire and the disappearance of the dominant colonial hero such as Conrad's Lord Jim<sup>1</sup>. As a novel, *Lord Jim* is the classic tale of colonial adventure. Its hero, a "water-clerk" under a brave Scottish captain, is called Tuan Jim by "the Malays of the jungle village" (4) and is presented by the narrator as the epitome of energy: "He was an inch, perhaps two, under six feet, powerfully built, and he advanced straight at you with a slight stoop of the shoulders, head forward, a fixed from-under stare which made you think of a charging bull" (3) To his physical power was added an overwhelming spiritual presence all through his years in India, Malasia and Indonesia. "A water-clerk," we are reminded, "need not pass an examination in anything under the sun, but he must have Ability in the abstract and demonstrate it practically" (3) Thus the tale of English colonial adventure would not be a story of intelligence but an account of ignorance and brute force. The Spanish equivalent of Lord Jim is portrayed in the recent Dominican novel *El Reino de Mandinga* by Ricardo Aybar. Lucanor Arias y Reynaldos becomes the prototype of the Spanish conquistador; protected by the flag and the cross, he is condescending and abrupt with the natives, but nevertheless builds up an imperial order which in future years disintegrates into a complex political disorder called Latin America.

The study of colonial discourse is becoming more critical around 1992 with the waning of formalist criticism, the decline of deconstruction, and a renewed reflection upon the meaning of Columbus' voyages and adventures such as Lord Jim's or those of the Spanish "Caballero" Lucanor Arias. But it is a broader and more complex phenomenon than I can describe here, partly because it is linked up with Orientalist, Africanist and New World discourses and the indigenous forms of resistance against those discourses. The

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<sup>1</sup> For a provocative discussion of this problem, see *After Europe: Critical Theory and Post-Colonial Writing*, ed. by Stephen Slemon and Helen Tiffin (Sidney: Dangaroo Press, 1989). This collection of essays by ex-colonized readers is an interrogation of colonial/imperial discourse in a post-colonial context.



crucial issue it raises is how to approach the world without using the old European categories of representation which inscribe the Orient with spices and savagery, Africa with primitivism and mineral wealth, and the so-called New World with gold, slave labor and plantation economics. In other words, colonial/imperial discourse theory must be seen as an important illustration of the relation between self and other which is at the heart of humanistic and social science scholarship these days. But beyond that, it could be regarded as part of a specific literary criticism-and-its-others syndrome. Literary theory as Joseph Natoli et al. have pointed out in *Literary Theory's Future(s)* has become part of a general cultural critique, which means, among other things, that critical reading of texts will "trespass against disciplines and departments" [previously held to be discrete academic entities](2). Of course, language has always been the core of literary theory and analysis, but the belletristic tradition has slowly been in decline as literary critics have looked at other areas such as power relations, history/herstory, politics, race, gender, class, ethics, ideology and the "body" (for instance, the scarred African bodies that produced the wealth of America's mines and plantations). The difficulty with colonial/imperial discourse is that it has to do with all these heterologies (de Certeau); to study it is to seek to broaden our consciousness of *our* stories and the world. But its critique also forces us to consider the conflict between discourses of unity which are unilinear and power-based, and discourses of diversity which are heterogenous in inspiration. As readers of colonial discourse we are confronted with the mechanisms which a center uses to deny its periphery any voice, the means which the self employs to interpret its needs and the processes utilized by the other to appropriate its own being in the world. To study colonial discourse is therefore to engage in a critique of domination within the context of different cultural encounters and conflicts. A similar conclusion can be reached by a reading of the criticism of some of the leading Latin American colonialists in North America such as Rolena Adorno, Maureen Ahern, Jaime Concha, Walter Mignolo, Beatriz Pastor and Hernán Vidal.<sup>2</sup> Colonial discourse in Latin America began with the Spanish

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<sup>2</sup> See especially Rolena Adorno's superb study *Guaman Poma: Writing and Resistance in Colonial Peru*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986. Adorno presents the Amerindian's vision of his/her own historicity in conflict with that of the Spanish conquistador. Beatriz Pastor's *Discurso narrativo de la conquista de América* rejects "discovery" and accepts "encounter" as the correct term to describe the New World phenomenon. It claims that because the conquistadors' imagination was often fired by the readings of Marco Polo and the Spanish "libros de caballería," they painted

invasion of Amerindian territory and has been developed and critiqued for the past five centuries.

But if I must describe the emergence of colonial discourse in more recent times as an extension as well as an interrogation of imperial authority, I would like to begin with José Martí's famous essay, "Nuestra América," first published in New York in *La Revista Ilustrada* (Jan. 10, 1891) and end with the 1988 feminist critique of colonial discourse in *Inscriptions*, nos. 3 and 4. In between I will attempt to describe and analyze a number of separate but related epistemological ages: the 1930's through the 1950's, the 1960's through 1970's and the 1980's. Although several texts and authors are necessarily involved, my purpose is to help the reader reach some general overview of this rich discursive category in light of mainly African and Caribbean areas of intellectual activity.

In "Our America" Martí writes: "[Latin] America began to suffer, and still suffers, from the tiresome task of reconciling the hostile and discordant elements it inherited from a despotic and perverse colonizer..." (89). As a colonized Cuban, poet, journalist, political thinker and activist, and as "the mediator between his culture and that of the United States" (Espinosa, 1986:iii), Martí here critiques the hierarchical structure and the relations of domination of the colonial state. He touches upon the perennial question of the formation of new states in the context of colonial tyranny, the problem of ethnic discrimination and the general culture of inequality. The solution that he proposes for the American republican system is powerfully ideological but it is also, obviously, ethical-philosophical. It uses liberal reasoning, not the hard lessons of history, to reject racism and advocates an indigenization of the intellectual development of the American youth. Since Cuba was still a colony when these proposals were made, one can read in them an attempt to subvert the colonial order.

To my knowledge one of the truly significant examinations of the notion of empire and the pragmatic consequence of colonial hegemony came during the Negritude era, roughly the 1930's through the 1950's. Negritude was concerned with the problem of the official

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the "natives" as subhuman. However, that stereotyping improved about a hundred years after the Spanish settlement with the publication of *La Araucana* by the soldier Alonso de Ercilla. Vidal's *Socio-historia de la literatura colonial* identifies mercantilism as the principal motivation for the invasion of America. Conversion, religion, orderliness and similar pieties were only mechanisms to excuse the conquistador, especially Cortés, from moral responsibility.

representation of history, particularly its tendency toward homogenization or totalization. It argued, among other things, that representation cannot be a neutral undertaking and that European representations of the other were therefore fraught with the prejudices of European cultures and histories. It claimed, in addition, that the post-colonial societies of America did not successfully break with the cultural monolithism of their European forebears. Not surprisingly, its critique of history has sometimes been mistaken as an intellectual Balkanization of the Caribbean or Latin America. This view comes from those who wish to design a unified code as the utopian core of Latin American development. Negritude thought, however, insists that the post-colonial present (e.g., Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, Cuba and the Dominican Republic) is marked by social fragmentation due to the peculiarities of the colonial past. Where colonialism is still the order of the day, as in Martinique and Guadeloupe, totalizing models remain the key formulations for ideologies of control. The Negritude writers of the Caribbean demonstrate that the colonialists and their ideological agents organize their space and time in order to articulate the unfamiliar or the different as an emblem of evil and uselessness and, thus, to make cohesiveness a nearly impossible task. Césaire's long poem *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939) and his essay *Discours sur le Colonialisme* (1955), C. R. L. James's *The Black Jacobins* (1938), Jean-Paul Sartre's writings in *Les Temps Modernes* (especially from 1945-1964) and elsewhere, and Albert Memmi's *Portrait du Colonisé précédé du Portrait du Colonisateur* (1957) speak to the implantation in the consciousness of the European colonialist of a black otherness justifying the imposition of European imperial order. The European discourse of empire (military chronicles, tales of adventure, religious diaries, colonial laws, among others) portrayed the self to be morally superior and historically more civilized than the other. Césaire subverts this line of reasoning when he asserts in *Discourse on Colonialism* that "between *colonization* and *civilization* there is an infinite distance" (11). To this colonized intellectual, colonialism therefore represents an articulation of hegemonic power and a displacement of all possibilities for civilization. The perspective expressed here by this Martinican observer was revolutionary and troubling for the European order of knowledge in general because more than half the world in the 1950's remained a European territory lacking "sovereignty" and the right to its own alterity. Yet the logic of colonialism did not silence Caribbean indigenous testimonies on the arbitrariness of the colonial sign, for the colonial sign produces

an ethical dilemma which in turn generates a new critical voice. That voice, represented by Césaire the poet and essayist of the 1950's, reconstructs the experience of the colonized Caribbean subject: the physical and psychological burdens, the permanent exile from home, the loss of name and land, and the immersion in a world that privileges/underprivileges color. The geographical and racial bias of colonial humiliation does not escape the Césairean eye in *Discourse*, for until the emergence of Hitler "colonialist procedures [...] had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the coolies of India and the blacks of Africa" (14). Césaire is speaking here about the tacit connivance of the civilized world with the historical devaluation of non-white humanity in the times before Nazism.

On a more specific level, James had previously argued in *The Black Jacobins* that what ruined the West Indies was the old colonial system. He suggested that history be looked at from the standpoint of the *sans culottes* such as the black slaves of Saint Domingue who rebelled against the French, British and Spanish colonial authorities. Haitian independence marked the beginning of an anti-colonial discourse that would lead to the liberation of the entire Caribbean. In addressing the question of colonial liberation James had "anticipated by at least a half century the 'de-centering' of world culture from the West."<sup>3</sup> He had in an important way initiated a post-modernist discourse at the height of modernism, if postmodernism presupposes a logic distrusting modernity (the order and homogeneity of colonialism, for instance) and espousing difference and multiplicity as very crucial to our understanding of human reality.

The 1950's closed with an important work which has not been as well appreciated as it should; I am referring to *The Colonizer and the Colonized* by the Tunisian novelist and philosopher Albert Memmi. Banned in his native Tunisia, this book nevertheless impacted upon a large collection of colonized and other subjugated peoples especially Africans, South Americans, Japanese and African Americans. It was probably the first African work in modern times to portray so thoroughly the colonizer and the colonized and, simultaneously, to examine the ambiguous relationship between them. As some of the indigenous people had earlier described and as some writers were later to characterize him (Ferdinand Oyono, Ngugi, Achebe in Africa, Ricardo Rivera Aybar and George Lamming in the Caribbean), the colonialist/colonizer is presented by Memmi as "a noble adventurer,

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<sup>3</sup> On C.L.R. James, see his biographer Paul Huhle, quoted by Rob Nixon in *Voice Literary Supplement* (June 1989): II.

a righteous pioneer” who “must first of all bring a substantial profit [from the colonial society] where one earns more and spends less” (8). Thus, for Memmi, the principal motivation for colonization is economic, the second being “privilege” and the third “usurpation.” The colonizer all of a sudden finds that his mother tongue, his ancestral customs, his country’s laws and flag and not his personal ability guarantee him social respectability. He therefore benefits from a collective European “organization of injustice,” or an ideological and social system which facilitates the exploitation of differences to the advantage of the dominant class.

Who then is the colonized? Memmi describes him/her as the entity “removed from history and from the community. Colonization usurps any free role in either war or peace, every decision contributing to his destiny and that of the world...” (91). Yet colonization awakened the nationalism of the colonized making it possible for him or her to engage in undermining “the cyst into which colonial society shuts itself and hardens, degrading its own life in order to save it” (101). To preserve the “great collective aggression of Europe,” Memmi argues, all colonials, including the European Left of the 1950’s resisted the nationalist developments in Africa. Memmi may be exaggerating here, for some European radical thinkers championed the cause of African independence. Sartre was one of them. His critical essay “Black Orpheus,” and his introductions to Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*, *Lumumba Speaks* and Memmi’s own *The Colonizer* all express an intellectual and moral, if not ideological, solidarity with the emerging nationalisms from Africa. Yet Memmi’s point is well taken. From a Third World nationalist perspective, it appears that the support of the European Left for the anti-colonial movements in Africa during the 1950’s was driven toward achieving an international anti-imperialist agenda and not directly toward fostering the plans of particular nations. At that time it was not easy to make a choice between nationalist assertiveness and a critique of imperialism. If this analysis is plausible, it follows that the colonized agent was compelled to cultivate an alienated or fragmented discourse as an expression of his/her peculiar drama. This discourse structure is what one discovers, for instance, in the novel *Ambiguous Adventure* by the Senegalese Cheikh Hamidou Kane.

The 1960’s and 1970’s in Africa and the Caribbean were even more important to the development of colonial discourse precisely because of the achievement of political independence, and because of the general ideological climate of the Third World at that time.

Landmark studies in this connection are Frantz Fanon's writings, especially his *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1974) and Fernández Retamar's *Calibán* (1974).

Fanon's contributions to colonial discourse during his short life were stunning. I can only attempt to summarize them. First, there is the idea that the colonial system dichotomizes the colonized society economically and socially; second, colonialism and racism are reconcilable; and third, colonialism does psychological damage to its victims.

Like Memmi and Césaire, Fanon was more familiar with French colonialism. But unlike them he wrote more specifically in the context of the Algerian Revolution. In Algeria, which Fanon described as a settler colony, liberation was not the concern of only a handful of party leaders of the 1950's, it was more importantly a preoccupation of the "national consciousness." The result was a redefinition of the relationship between colonizer and colonized. For a representation of this revised relationship one has to go to the preface to Fanon's *A Dying Colonialism* which reads in part:

What we Algerians want is to discover the man behind the colonizer; this man who is both the organizer and victim of a system that has choked him and reduced him to silence. As for us, we have long since rehabilitated the Algerian colonized man. We have wrenched the Algerian man from a centuries-old and implacable oppression (22).

What this discourse piece testifies to is the liberating strength of the collective. Yet in the very crucial chapter "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness" from *The Wretched of the Earth* there comes to the fore a less optimistic predisposition. Indeed it is worth reexamining this chapter for the sharp relief it throws on the colonial problem. Unlike Memmi, Fanon does not regard nationalism as an adequate challenge to colonialism since the "national bourgeoisie" is too weak as a class and too compromised economically to transform society. Citing good examples from Cuba, Mexico, and Brazil, and parts of Africa to support his class analysis, Fanon describes metaphorically the national bourgeoisie of each colony or ex-colony as "the transmission line between the nation and [...] capitalism." This national situation is exacerbated by internal ethnic rivalries and religious conflicts and by greed and corruption. Thus what seems to undergird Fanonian discourse is the portrait of the pervasive and

corrupting character of the colonial economic and ideological system. But there is also an assiduous treatment of the psychological base of colonialism, which occasions the colonized's dependence on the images of him/her developed by the colonizer. This relationship of subordination also explains the phenomenon of cultural assimilation. Fanon writes à propos in *The Wretched*:

colonial domination, because it is total and tends to oversimplify, very soon manages to disrupt in spectacular fashion the cultural life of a conquered people. This cultural obliteration is made possible by the negation of national reality, by new relations introduced by the occupying power, by the banishment of the natives and their customs to outlying districts by colonial society... (236).

Because of these devastating effects of colonialism Fanon concludes *The Wretched* with a strong utopian vision consisting of a schema whereby the Third World might initiate "a new history of Man, a history which will have regard to the sometimes prodigious theses which Europe has put forward, but which will also not forget Europe's crimes" (315).

Most of what has been written on the colonial question in Africa and the Caribbean and elsewhere in the so-called Third World after *The Wretched* can be viewed as an attempt to annotate Fanon. One can speak with justification of a Fanonian school of thought in the 1970's and 1980's in which to include scholars as geographically and culturally set apart as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Chinweizu, JanMohamed in Africa, Edward Said and Trinh Minh-ha in the USA, Fernández Retamar and Rodney in the Caribbean and Hulme, Homi Bhabha, Barker and the Essex colonial school in England. What is particularly significant is that most of these Fanonian intellectual disciples, if I may say so, have brought colonial discourse, as we shall see presently, into the contemporary Anglo-American debate about theories of literature and culture. For example, Said's thinking on all this is arresting on at least two counts. First, as a theoretical principle, Said reunites the text with social issues by stating in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* that "a text in its actually *being* a text is a being in the world" (33). This "worldliness" is in opposition to the innocence and social disengagement that the American New Critics of the 1930's ascribed to the text. If the text is "wordly" it follows that criticism is in and of the world. Second, as a further consequence of this, it behooves both the writer and the critic from the post-colonial world

differentiation and colonialist ethnography, problematizes the idea of a generic woman and the whole question of how and why knowledge is organized against or about woman as subject. This implies that several practices and voices, including feminist modes from colonizing societies, may be unexpectedly called into question. For example, can people in different cultures – some who have colonized and others who have been colonized – have the same reality? Could we have a legitimate 'universal' representation for all peoples? Under what grounds would the experimentation of the one category of people (Kipling's images of colonized Indian women, for instance) be accorded authority by another (Indian women and men)? Unless they are very sensitive to cultural diversity and the possibilities of non-European women, "when [colonialist] feminists look overseas, they frequently seek to establish *their* authority on the backs of non-Western women, determining for them the meanings and goals of their lives." Aihwa Ong takes Kamala Visweswaran's anti-imperialist argument a step further by demonstrating that some feminist studies on the colonized women of Asia indirectly valorize the modes of discourse pertaining to the general Western modernist-masculinist view of non-Western societies. Thus the intersection of feminist theory and the critique of colonial discourse is not necessarily an easy undertaking but certainly one of the more profitable areas of intellectual activity. The future will tell whether or not eurocentric feminist criticism will heed the call from non-eurocentric feminists to deal with the authority of racism and imperialism.

But Michelle Cliff's Jamaican feminist novel *Abeng* (1984) is a very fine exploration of the interface between colonialism, racism and sexism. The principal subject of this imaginary topsy-turvy microstructure of the colonial world is Clare whose father is white and whose mother is black.

But she was a lucky girl – everyone said so – she was light-skinned. And she was alive. She lived in a [colonial] world where the worst thing to be – especially if you were a girl – was to be dark. The only thing worse than that was to be dead (77).

Here again the social parameters – historiography, education, religion – seem to conspire against Clare's subjectivity. Clare's importance to us in this essay is that she is portrayed as the quintessential female metaphor for the violated space and psyche of the colonized. She is sensitive to the issues of colonialism: her racial



and cultural identity in conflict with the national/dominant ideology, her place in history, her confrontation with the oppressive other.

Clare sees historical omissions in the majority colonial discourse; as in the case of Judge Savage, Clare's white great-great-grandfather, to include all of history's pieces would mean to have to explain in a hierarchically structured social pyramid "the changes in the complexions, eyes, hair, and why so many of them had freckles" (29). In other words the racial mixing was to be covered up in J.E.C. Savage's household because no one wanted to hear about black bodies, or, specifically, "a dark Guatemalan mistress, part Indian, with some Spanish blood, who appeared to them as the personification of the New World. They wanted to forget about Africa" (30). They wanted to hide the shameful historical details such as the cruel justice (flogging, hanging and burning, for instance) meted out to the runaway slaves who challenged "the history of Empire" (30), and the colonial ideology nourished by the following pathological prejudice: "To have a nation of Black freedmen, the justice thought, would be like wearing a garment [...] dipped in the germs of the plague" (38). Judge Savage's world also seeks to deny that "There was a Black man in Columbus' crew - Pedro Alonso Nino. And Black men sailed with Balboa, Ponce de León, Cortés, Pizarro, and Menéndez. In 1538 Estevanico, a Black explorer, discovered Arizona and New Mexico" (67). But the histories of other peoples, such as the Jews, are distorted as well in this colonized country which seemingly fails to recognize itself as a whole. For instance,

[w]hen the teachers finally got around to the event known as the Holocaust, they became vague again - and their descriptions crystallized into one judgment: Jews were expected to suffer. To endure. It was a fate which had been meted out to them because of their recalcitrance, their devotion to their own difference (70).

Quite significantly colonialism could not survive without assimilation or the disparaging or absorption of difference.

It seems appropriate to conclude by paying due respect to the warning of the distinguished historian Philips D. Curtin. Dr. Curtin remarks that "One problem in discussing imperialism and colonialism is the words themselves. Like 'nationalism' and 'tribalism,' any narrow meaning they may once have had has long since expanded into a cloud of loose implications and emotional overtones" (1974: 20).

Nevertheless, I believe that at least three elements emerge from this survey of the study of colonial discourse to some Third World colonies or ex-colonies.

First, it suggests that a critical analysis of our contemporary global society has to awaken us to the nature, context and ramifications of colonialism. If literary or critical discourse is indeed inextricably bound up with the world as Said has repeatedly suggested, it is bound to incorporate the colonial world which has been one of the major developments in world history. The decolonization of the Third World after World War II (India and Burma in 1947, Algeria in 1952, the Mau-Mau Revolution in the 1950's, Ghana in 1957, Angola and Mozambique in 1975) has awakened the contemporary society to colonialism. What is claimed in this essay is that since contemporary critical thinking proposes discourses of heterodoxy rather than theories of orthodoxy, considerable attention should be given to the colonial discursive formation. The evidence seems to suggest that literary theory can foresee its post-contemporary reality to be a more vigorous critique of empire and colony.

Second, a study of colonial discourse leads us into another area of discourse that some scholars call "the politics of difference." Colonialism raises some of the most interesting cultural and human questions such as barbarism in conflict with civilization, or "primitive" agents threatening enlightened culture. Students of the Caribbean and Latin America know this well enough; consider the "civilización y barbarie" debate that spanned the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. State formation and national integration/disintegration today remain among the critical problems of the colonial legacy because notions of progress are still embedded in the structuralist, binary typology of advanced and backward "races," nations and cultures.<sup>5</sup>

Third, a review of colonialism raises the problem of the observer/narrator. In a typical colonial situation the colonizer invents/observes/describes the "native" without observing himself. Yet if colonial discourse also represents a critique of culture, the "native" as in Bertene Juminer's Guyanese novel *Bozambo's Revenge* becomes an observer, so that, quite extraordinarily, we can talk about "African imperialism." In this novel France is colonized by Africa, and the ironic twist is a wonderful piece of fiction. Now, through a

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<sup>5</sup> I treat this problem in considerable detail in my forthcoming *Literature and Dictatorship in Africa and Latin America*.

reversal of the representational process, it is textually Europe's turn to justify its presence in history:

One could, for that matter, wonder how Europe managed to bring upon itself the implacable African domination. Decadence? Congenital weakness? Historians and archaeologists agree that at one time, Europe had reached a certain stage of social organization, but opinions differ when it comes to explaining its importance and nature.

The question is absurd for those who admit no civilisation or culture save the Black. A civilised Europe? You must be joking! She was nothing but wasteland, or nearly; a place of anarchy and banditry until establishment of the colonial outposts. (7-8)

But if this discourse piece is amusingly puzzling, we need for a rhetorical answer to go back to Sartre's *Black Orpheus*:

What would you expect to find, when the muzzle that has silenced the voices of black men is removed? That they would thunder your praise? When these heads that our fathers have forced to the very ground are risen, do you expect to read adoration in their eyes? (7).

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