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For Suvir and for Tariq

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shown to be an integral part of colonial violence. As Obeyesekere reminds us, a

> discourse is not just speech; it is imbedded in a historical and cultural context and expressed often in the frame of a scenario or cultural performance. It is about practice: the practice of science, the practice of cannibalism. Insofar as the discourse evolves it begins to affect the practice.
>
> (1992: 650)

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COLONIAL AND POSTCOLONIAL IDENTITIES

CONSTRUCTING RACIAL AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCE

Are human beings essentially the same or different? Is difference defined primarily by racial attributes? Colonial and racial discourses and their attendant fictions and sciences, as well as anti-colonial thought, have been preoccupied with these questions. The 'othering' of vast numbers of people by European colonialist thought, and their construction as backward and inferior, depended upon what Abdul JanMohamed calls the 'Manichean allegory', in which a binary and implacable discursive opposition between races is produced (1985: 60). Such oppositions are crucial, not only for creating images of non-Europeans, but also for constructing a European self. Therefore many anti-colonial and postcolonial critiques are preoccupied with uncovering the way in which they work in colonialist representations. But now, many critics are beginning to ask whether, in the process of exposing the ideological and historical functioning of such binaries, we are in danger of reproducing them. Do we end up overemphasising cultural/racial difference and alterity, albeit from a different ideological standpoint than those of colonialist discourses?

In reality any simple binary opposition between 'colonisers' and 'colonised' or between races is undercut by the fact that there are enormous cultural and racial differences within each of these categories as well as cross-overs between them. What should be our strategy in dismantling the legacies of such beliefs? Several critics, and most notably Homi K. Bhabha,

have emphasised the failure of colonial regimes to produce stable and fixed identities, and suggested that 'hybridity' of identities and the 'ambivalence' of colonial discourse more adequately describe the dynamics of the colonial encounter. But JanMohamed argues that ambivalence is itself a product of 'imperial duplicity' and that underneath it all, a Manichean dichotomy between coloniser and colonised is what really structures colonial relations. These are tricky questions and we will approach them by examining various discourses about racial difference and how they work in relation to class, gender, sexuality and other social hierarchies.

First of all, racial stereotyping is not the product of modern colonialism alone, but goes back to the Greek and Roman periods which provide some abiding templates for subsequent European images of 'barbarians' and outsiders. These were reworked in medieval and early modern Europe, where Christianity became 'the prism through which all knowledge of the world was refracted' (Miles 1989: 16). But, since the Bible held that all human beings were brothers descended from the same parents, the presence of 'savages' and 'monsters' was not easy to explain. One response was to locate them as creatures who had incurred God's wrath—hence the Biblical association of blackness with the descendants of Ham, Noah's bad son, and with the forces of evil. However, such an explanation created more conceptual problems than it solved. If there was a single origin for all humanity, then presumably these fallen people could be brought back into the fold, and converted to Christian ways. But could racial difference be so easily shed? In early modern times, aphorisms such as the impossibility of 'washing the Ethiope white' were commonly used to indicate the biological basis and hence the immutability of race and colour. For example, Thomas Palmer's *Two Hundred Posies*, England's earliest known emblem book (first published 1565), depicts, under the title 'Impossible things', two white men washing a black man. The accompanying lines read:

> Why washeste thou the man of Inde?...
> Indurate heart of heretics
> Much blacker than the mole;
> With word or writte who seeks to purge
> Starke dead he blows the coal.
>
> (1988: 56)

This image was extremely common throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In medieval and early modern Europe, Christian identities were constructed in opposition to Islam, Judaism or heathenism (which loosely incorporated all other religions, nature worship, paganism and animism). Above all, it was Islam that functioned as the predominant binary opposite of and threat to Christianity (Chew 1937). Religious difference thus became (often rather confusedly) an index of and metaphor for racial, cultural and ethnic differences. Shylock's reference to his 'tribe' includes all these shades of meaning. The term 'Moors' at first referred to Arab Muslims, but although not all Muslims were dark-skinned (and travelogues as well as literary texts abound with references to white Moors), over time Moors came overwhelmingly to be associated with blackness, as is evident from the term 'blackamoors'. Religious and cultural prejudice against both blackness and Islam, each of which was seen to be the handiwork of the Devil, intensified the connection between them.

With European colonial expansion, and nation-building, these earlier ideas (and their contradictions) were intensified, expanded and reworked (see Loomba 2002). Despite the enormous differences between the colonial enterprises of various European nations, they seem to generate fairly similar stereotypes of 'outsiders'—both those outsiders who roamed far away on the edges of the world, and those who (like the Irish) lurked uncomfortably nearer home. Thus laziness, aggression, violence, greed, sexual promiscuity, bestiality, primitivism, innocence and irrationality are attributed (often contradictorily and inconsistently) by the English, French, Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese colonists to Turks, Africans, Native Americans, Jews, Indians, the Irish, and others. It is also worth noting that some of these descriptions were used for working-class populations or women within Europe. But, at the same time, travel collections like *Principall Navigations* or *Hakluytus Posthumus* do not simply project some generalised 'other', but also begin to shape particular groups of 'Indians': Americans as opposed to 'Turks' or Africans as opposed to the people of 'Indoostan'. While these are rather confused categories ('Moors' for example being a term that applies vaguely to all non-American 'Indians') these collections are early ethnographies that simultaneously note, blur and produce the specific features of different non-European peoples. Note the contradiction here: the subtleties of

each encounter recorded by collectors of early travel narratives like Richard Eden, Gian Battista Ramusio, Richard Hakluyt and Samuel Purchas contributed to the consolidation of various European national cultures, a pan-European 'Western' culture and a central division between Europe and its 'others'.

Columbus's 'mistake' about the location of India swelled to become a metaphor for this division. As Samuel Purchas noted in 1614 the 'name of India is now applied to all farre-distant Countries, not in the extreeme limits of Asia alone; but even to whole America, through the error ... in the Western world' (1614: 451). In unravelling the histories of 'race', the real difficulty lies in walking the tightrope between highlighting the specificity of various images and recognising the flexibility of colonial ideologies.

Contact with racial others was structured by the imperatives of different colonial practices, and the nature of pre-colonial societies. Early colonial discourses distinguished between people regarded as barbarous infidels (such as the inhabitants of Russia, Central Asia, Turkey) and those who were constructed as savage (such as the inhabitants of the Americas and Africa). Peter Hulme identifies a central division between colonial 'discursive practices which relate to occupied territory where the native population has been, or is to be, dispossessed of its land by whatever means' and 'those pertaining to territory where the colonial form is based primarily on the control of trade. ... America and India', he says, 'can exemplify very roughly this division' which also manifests itself as 'a discursive divide between those native peoples perceived as being in some sense "civilized" and those not ...' (1986: 2–3). With respect to the Americas, Columbus's arrival functions as an 'originary moment' that diminishes native histories and cultures which precede it and that is endlessly revisited by subsequent encounters (Greenblatt 1991: 52–53). In the East, however, each journey only adds another layer to a thick and confused pre-history: not only had other Europeans always gone before, but before Europeans other foreigners had trodden so that no one could say of India, as Ralegh did of Guiana, that she still had her 'maidenhead'. No one encounter could be discursively enshrined as primary.

These differences feed into colonial stereotyping. 'New World natives' have been projected as birthed by the European encounter with them; accordingly, a discourse of primitivism surrounds them. On the other hand, 'the East' is constructed as barbaric or degenerate. Europeans travelled in both directions in search of wealth. But if, in the New World, to use Stephen Greenblatt's words, 'the European dream, endlessly reiterated in the literature of exploration, is of the grossly unequal gift exchange: I give you a glass bead and you give me a pearl worth half your tribe' (1991: 110), in the Ottoman or Mughal territories, that dream turned into an endless nightmare in which the European pearls were treated as baubles by Eastern emperors. In a letter to his employers, the East India Company, Sir Thomas Roe, resident for many years at the court of the Mughal Emperor Jahangir, complained that the presents sent by the Company 'are extremely despised by those [who] have seen them; the lyning of the coach and cover of the virginalls scorned. ... Here are nothing esteemed but of the best sorts: good cloth and fine, rich pictures ... soe that they laugh at us for such as wee bring' (1926: 76–77). In 1605 James I allocated £5,332 to the Levant Company for a present to the Turkish Sultan, who was, like the Mughal Emperor Jahangir, always unimpressed. The English turned their feeling of inadequacy into an account of Oriental greed or lack of manners. Edward Terry described the Mughal Jahangir's heart as 'covetous' and 'so unsatiable, as that it never knows when it hath enough; being like a bottomless purse, that can never be fill'd' (1655: 378–379). Medieval notions of wealth, despotism, and power attaching to the East (and especially to the Islamic East) were thus reworked to create an alternative version of savagery understood not as lack of civilisation but as an excess of it, as decadence rather than primitivism.

Differences were 'noted' *within* each group as well. Columbus distinguished between 'canibales' and 'indios'—the former were represented as violent and brutish, the latter as gentle and civil. Both, however, were regarded as inferior to the white people. In some cases, colour was the most important signifier of cultural and racial difference (as in the representations of Africans) and in other cases it was less remarked upon (as in the case of the Irish). In fact the lack of colour difference *intensified* the horror of the colonial vis-à-vis the Irish. Thus Charles Kingsley observed after his first trip to Ireland: 'I am haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw along that hundred miles of horrible country. ... But to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one would not feel it so much, but their skins, except where tanned by exposure, are as white as

ours' (quoted by Gibbons 1991: 96). The construction of racial differences had to do with the nature of the societies which Europeans visited, the class of people who were being observed, as well as whether trade or settlement was the objective of the visitors. The crucial point is that such constructions were based on certain observed features, the imperatives of the colonists, and preconceptions about the natives. Moreover, they were filtered through the dynamics of actual encounters. 'Construction' should not thus be understood as a process which totally excludes those who were being represented, although this does not mean that the vast populations that were stereotyped in colonial discourses were responsible for their own images. Rather, the very process of misrepresentation worked upon certain specific features of the situation at hand. Thus misrepresentations or constructions need to be unravelled rather than simply attributed to some timeless, unchanging notion of racism or Orientalism. Obeyesekere's analysis of cannibalism in the Pacific islands (discussed in the previous chapter) is a good example of such unravelling.

Colonisers differed in their modes of interacting with the local populations, thus producing variable racial discourses and identities. For example, the Spanish in America and the Portuguese in India settled down in the lands they colonised, adopted local manners and intermarried in a way that the English derided. Eventually, inter-marriages and concubinage blurred racial distinctions and created a population which acted as a strong base for colonial rule. According to some commentators, this showed a 'lack of racial feeling' on the part of the Portuguese or the Spanish. But in fact colour and race consciousness marked even the policy of cohabitation, and racial distinctions continued to inform the subsequent 'mixed' social order. Albuquerque invited his men to marry 'the white and beautiful' widows and daughters of the defenders of Goa, making a distinction between them and the darker South Indian women whom he called 'Negresses'. The Jesuit priest Francis Xavier, who worked in both India and the Spice Islands, drew sharp colour lines even as he urged the casados to marry their local concubines, encouraging the men to abandon the dark ones and even offering to find lighter-skinned substitutes for them. Class was also an important factor in interracial marriages, with poorer casados marrying locally and the elite keeping mistresses, but also maintaining their marriages in Portugal. Similar fine-tuning is evident in Latin America

where the hybrid population resulting from Spanish and Indian sexual contact encoded a complex hierarchy of colour, class and gender.

British colonialism, on the other hand, did not allow for easy social or sexual contact with local peoples. Although of course this policy was hardly watertight or successful, in India it also reflected the nature of colonial administration, which functioned to a large extent through local authorities and existing power structures. Thus it often incorporated rather than disturbed native hierarchies: in Bengal, for example, taxes were collected through hereditary Indian collectors who were liable for a fixed sum as laid down in the 'Permanent Settlement' of 1793. Millions of Indians never saw an English person throughout the term of the Raj, although that did not mean their lives had not been woven into the fabric of empire. This kind of 'shallow penetration' can be seen as a prototype for modern imperialism, which functions largely through remote control. But in countries like Namibia and South Africa there was yet another pattern where racial divisions were maintained along with direct and powerful intervention, and with fewer spinoffs of power and wealth among the indigenous population.

Heterogeneity, variety and diversity are sometimes understood as lack of purpose or ideology: Jan Morris contends that the British Empire 'never really possessed an ideology—was temperamentally opposed, indeed, to political rules, theories and generalizations. It was the most important political organism of its time, yet it was seldom altogether sure of itself or its cause' (1994: 2). Analyses of colonial discourses are most useful in deconstructing precisely this assumption that only a tightly controlled operation could be ideologically motivated. Certainly, colonialism had not one but several ideologies, and these ideologies were manifest in hundreds of different institutional and cultural practices. But we also cannot forget that they all fed into a global imbalance. Colonialism did have an economic as well as philosophic imperative, although it did not always succeed in either making money or entirely suppressing the peoples it exploited. Moreover, military violence was used almost everywhere, although to different degrees, to secure both occupation and trading 'rights': the colonial genocide in North America and South Africa was spectacular. In the 'scramble for Africa', only Ethiopia held out because of her technological and military superiority. The fact that Asian armies had been equipped with firearms

prior to the coming of the Europeans was undoubtedly a crucial factor in shaping the relationship of coloniser and colonised. Gunpowder had been invented in China, and used by the Mughals and the Ottoman Empire. But, even in the East, 'present profit' was not divorced from the use of arms: Irfan Habib has suggested that the 'European triumph' over Asian merchants was 'a matter of men-of-war and gun and shot, to which arithmetic and brokerage could provide no answer ...' (1990: 399). The point is that violence was readily resorted to wherever necessary, and the enormous differences of strategy in different places indicate the flexibility of colonial ideologies and practices, rather than the absence of the desire for conquest in some colonial ventures.

Moreover, colonial discourses fluctuated in tandem with changes in political situations within the same place over time. In December 1783, Edmund Burke delivered an angry speech to the British Parliament on the humiliating treatment meted out to the Mughal Emperor by officials of the East India Company. Burke observed that when he was born it could not have been believed that 'on this day, in this House, we should be employed in discussing the conduct of those British subjects who had disposed of the power and person of the Grand Mogul'(Parker 1991: 162). The reversal in the relations of power between the English and the Mughals was indeed so swift as to be conceptually bewildering for both parties; my purpose in recalling it is to remind us that if the history of America moved from colonisation to trade, that of India moved the other way around. Constructions of the 'other' shifted in response to these changes; in Australia, for example, images of the Aboriginal population changed drastically (from meekness, savagery became its supposed attribute) as the colonists encountered Aboriginal resistance to working as manual labourers.

I have been suggesting that representations of the 'other' vary according to the exigencies of colonial rule. At the same time, racial ideologies do not simply *reflect* economic and material factors. European discourses about Africans make it clear that even before the actual enslavement and colonial plunder of Africans began, racist stereotypes which were obsessed with colour and nakedness were well in place. In fact in several colonial situations these stereotypes provided an ideological *justification* for different kinds of exploitation. Therefore the relationship between racial ideologies and exploitation is better understood as

dialectical, with racial assumptions both arising out of and structuring economic exploitation (Miles 1989: 27).

During colonial expansion and consolidation, the contradiction between universalism and racist thought intensified as Europeans seemed bent on the supposedly impossible task of washing black people white. The efforts to convert natives accompanied most colonial endeavours, even though they were often unsuccessful. From the earliest ventures, the fantasy of conversion was rampant, and sixteenth- and seventeenth-century plays, travelogues and pamphlets all showed 'good' Turks, Moroccans, 'Indians' and others willingly embracing Christianity. In fact religious conversion begins to figure as a justification for economic plunder: for example, in *The Triumphs of Honour and Virtue*, a pageant written by the well-known dramatist Thomas Middleton for the Lord Mayor of London's inaugural ceremonies in 1622, an Indian Queen celebrates her own conversion to Christianity which, she says, 'settles such happiness' on her that the 'gums and fragrant spices' which the English traders take away with them, indeed all 'the riches and the sweetness of the east' are only fair exchange for the 'celestial knowledge' that is now hers. She also asks the viewer to observe her 'with an intellectual eye', to see beyond her blackness and its associations with depravity, sin and filth, and to perceive her inner goodness, which, she suggests, is made possible by her new faith.

The Indian Queen's speech here, like other writings of the period, intricately mixes the language of religion with that of commerce: it is 'blest commerce' that becomes a crusader for Christianity. Two points are important here. First, what was once impossible—washing the Ethiope white—is now rendered feasible by Christianity. But in the process, skin colour is unyoked from moral qualities. The black queen must now be recognised as good. Secondly, colonial plunder of goods is justified by the gift of Christianity. But if blackness can be washed white, that means whiteness is also vulnerable to pollution. The recurrent images of black people, Moors and heathens and other outsiders converting to Christianity try to keep at bay another set of anxieties, those generated by the possibility of Christians 'turning Turk' (a phrase that also enters the English language during the Renaissance and begins to stand in for all betrayals and desertions) and Europeans 'going native'. As Peter Hulme reminds us,

> the boundaries of civility proved extraordinarily permeable in the other direction. Just as Othello was a single, fictional counterexample to the thousands of Christians who 'turned Turk' in the ports of Southern Europe and North Africa in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, so Pocahontas was a unique convert, uniquely remembered.
>
> (1985: 26)

As colonialism advanced, missionary activities expanded, but so did European fears of contamination.

Ideologies of racial difference were intensified by their incorporation into the discourse of science, which intensified the supposed connection between the biological features of each group and its psychological and social attributes. Linnaeus had drawn a distinction between *Homo sapiens* and *homo monstrous*; by 1758, Mary Louise Pratt points out, the first category had been further bifurcated in John Burke's *The Wild Man's Pedigree* into the following:

a Wild Man. Four footed, mute, hairy.
b American. Copper coloured, choleric, erect. Hair black, straight, thick; nostrils wide; face harsh; beard scanty; obstinate, content, free. Paints himself with fine red lines. Regulated by customs.
c European. Fair, sanguine, brawny; hair yellow, brown, flowing; eyes blue; gentle, acute, inventive. Covered with close vestments. Governed by laws.
d Asiatic. Sooty, melancholy, rigid. Hair black; eyes dark; severe, haughty, covetous. Covered with loose garments. Governed by opinions.
e African. Black, phlegmatic, relaxed. Hair black, frizzled; skin silky; nose flat, lips tumid; crafty, indolent, negligent. Annoints himself with grease. Governed by caprice.

As Pratt comments, 'Except for monsters and wild men, the classification exists barely modified in some of today's schoolbooks' (1992: 32).

Three points about scientific theories of race (which are actually fairly diverse and not always in agreement with one another) should be noted. First, the idea of biologically constituted races intensified the earlier contradiction between racial difference and the Biblical notion of the human species as a unitary creation of God. Many scientists attempted to erase this contradiction by suggesting that environmental factors such as climate had mutated the single originary species. However, science itself revived an older objection to this argument by pointing out that when people were moved to new locations their racial attributes did not change. The movement of African slaves to the Americas and elsewhere was cited as an example (Miles 1989: 33). Robert Young discusses how the question 'Are human beings a single species or not?' was the central issue at the heart of anthropological, cultural and scientific debates throughout the nineteenth century. Different species were supposed to be unable to sexually reproduce with each other. Thus the interpretation of 'race' as 'species' tries to deny the possibility of inter-mixing between races, and the inevitable dissolution of racial difference. But the mixed populations of places like the West Indies and parts of the United States obviously gave the lie to any notion of black and white as distinct species. One response was to argue that intermixtures between races led to diminishing fertility. Another was to suggest that racial difference indicated variety *within* a single species, rather than different species altogether. Young traces some of the tensions between Enlightenment ideals of universality and equality and theories of racial difference, pointing out that

> debates about theories of race in the nineteenth century, by settling on the possibility or impossibility of hybridity, focused explicitly on the issue of sexuality and the issue of sexual unions between whites and blacks. Theories of race were thus also covert theories of desire.
>
> (Young 1995: 9)

Secondly, scientific discussions of race, rather than challenging earlier negative stereotypes of savagery, barbarism, and excessive sexuality, extended and developed these. By attributing racial characteristics to biological differences such as skull and brain sizes, or facial angles, or genes, and by insisting on the connection between these factors and social and cultural attributes, science turned 'savagery' and 'civilisation' into fixed and permanent conditions. Again, such fixity seems to contradict the imperial claim of civilising the natives: if savagery is a biological

condition then improvement by social means seems pointless. Thus, in 1859, the German anthropologist Theodor Waitz's *Introduction to Anthropology* pronounced:

> If there be various species of mankind, there must be a natural aristocracy among them, a dominant white species as opposed to the lower races who by their origin are destined to serve the nobility of mankind, and may be tamed, trained, and used like domestic animals, or ... fattened or used for physiological or other experiments without any compunction. To endeavour to lead them to a higher morality and intellectual development would be as foolish as to expect that lime trees would, by cultivation, bear peaches, or the monkey would learn to speak by training. Wherever the lower races prove useless for the service of the white man, they must be abandoned to their savage state, it being their fate and natural destination. All wars of extermination, whenever the lower species are in the way of the white man, are fully justifiable.
>
> (quoted Young 1995: 7)

Thirdly, science extended the association of 'race' and 'nation'. From the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, the word 'race' was often read as synonymous with various forms of social collectivities such as 'kinsfolk', 'lineage', 'home' and 'family'. At other times, 'race' and 'caste' were used as interchangeable terms. 'Race' thus became a marker of an 'imagined community', a phrase that Benedict Anderson has used in relation to the nation. Both nations and races are imagined as communities which bind fellow human beings and demarcate them from others. Both speak to members of all classes and genders (although this does not mean that all classes and genders are treated as equal within them). From the sixteenth century on, we can trace the connections between the formation of the English nation (for example) and the articulation of the superiorities of the Anglo-Saxon race (see Loomba 2002). Scientific racism from the eighteenth century calcified the assumption that race is responsible for cultural formation and historical development. Nations are often regarded as the expression of biological and racial attributes. The yoking of race and nation was especially powerful in the writings of Gobineau and others who articulated fascist doctrines. While sometimes

nations can be imagined as multi-racial, more often, as in the case of Australia, the very idea of nationhood was developed by excluding certain racial others, such as the Aboriginal peoples (Miles 1989: 89, 91).

As we have seen, the connection between the outer manifestation of racial difference and the moral and social differences they were supposed to signify hardened over time. According to Hayden White, the ideological effect of the term 'noble savage' is 'to draw a distinction between presumed types of humanity on manifestly qualitative grounds, rather than such superficial bases as skin color, physiognomy, or social status' (1987: 17). The noble savage idea therefore represents a rupture, a contradiction, a point at which the seamless connections between inferiority and external characteristics are disturbed. Similarly, the converted heathen and the educated native are images that cannot entirely or easily be reconciled to the idea of absolute difference. While at one level they represent colonial achievements, at another they stand for impurity and the possibility of mixing, or to use a term that has become central to postcolonial theory, 'hybridity'.

Theories of race, and racial classifications were often attempts to deal with the real or imagined 'hybridisation' that was a feature of colonial contact everywhere. A table from W. B. Stevenson's *Narrative of Twenty Years' Residence in South America* (1825) detailing 'the mixture of the different castes, under their common or distinguishing names' is worth reproducing here (see p. 104 overleaf).

Notice how the category 'European' in relation to other Europeans or Creoles becomes 'white' when put in relation to 'Indian' or 'Negro'. The chart also suggests that paternity is genetically dominant (the child born to a white father and an Indian mother will be 6/8 white and 'very fair') as is the white race (the offspring of a white father and Negro mother is 7/8 white, but that of a Negro father and white mother is 4/8 white).

The need for detailed classification is testimony to the constant transgression of racial boundaries in colonial America. Such transgressions did not diminish the effort to maintain the racial purity of whites. There is a wonderful anecdote about an American journalist's interview with Haiti's Papa Doc Duvalier which indicates the connections between theories of racial purity and social dominance. The journalist wanted to know what percentage of Haiti's population was white. Ninety-eight per cent, was the response. Struggling to make sense of

Table 2.1 W.B. Stevenson's chart of different 'castes' and their mixtures

Father	*Mother*	*Children*	*Colour*
European	European	Creole	White
Creole	Creole	Creole	White
White	Indian	Mestiso	6/8 White, 2/8 Indian —Fair
Indian	White	Mestiso	4/8 White, 4/8 Indian
White	Mestiso	Creole	White—Often Very Fair
Mestiso	White	Creole	White—But Rather Sallow
Mestiso	Mestiso	Creole	Sallow—Often Light Hair
White	Negro	Mulatto	7/8 White, 1/8 Negro —Often Fair
Negro	White	Zambo	4/8 White, 4/8 Negro —Dark Copper
White	Mulatto	Quarteron	6/8 White, 4/8 Neg ro—Fair
Mulatto	White	Mulatto	5/8 White, 3/8 Negro —Tawny
White	Quarteron	Quinteron	7/8 White, 1/8 Negro —Very Fair
Quarteron	White	Quarteron	6/8 White, 2/8 Negro —Tawny
White	Quinteron	Creole	White—Light Eyes, Fair Hair
Negro	Indian	Chino	4/8 Negro, 4/8 Indian
Indian	Negro	Chino	2/8 Negro, 6/8 Indian
Negro	Mulatto	Zambo	5/8 Negro, 3/8 White
Mulatto	Negro	Zambo	4/8 Negro, 4/8 White
Negro	Zambo	Zambo	15/16 Negro, 1/16 White —Dark
Zambo	Negro	Zambo	7/8 Negro, 1/8 White
Negro	Chino	Zambo-Chino	15/16 Negro, 1/16 Indian
Chino	Negro	Zambo-Chino	7/8 Negro, 1/8 Indian
Negro	Negro	Negro	

Source: Reproduced from Pratt 1992:152

this incredible piece of information, the American finally asked Duvalier: 'How do you define white?' Duvalier answered the question with a question: 'How do you define black in your country?' Receiving the explanation that in the United States anyone with black blood was considered black, Duvalier nodded and said, 'Well, that's the way we define white in my country' (Fields 1982: 146).

If miscegenation was a nightmare, colonial administrators nevertheless dreamt of racial mixings that would produce the ideal colonial subject. Here is what Sir Harry Johnson, the first commissioner of British Central Africa, visualised in 1894:

> On the whole, I think the admixture of yellow that the Negro requires should come from India, and that eastern Africa and British central Africa should become the America of the Hindu. The mixture of the two races would give the Indian the physical development which he lacks, and he in turn would transmit to his half-Negro offspring the industry, ambition, and aspiration towards civilized life which the Negro so markedly lacks.
>
> (quoted Robinson 1983: 131)

Race has thus functioned as one of the most powerful and yet the most fragile markers of human identity, hard to explain and identify and even harder to maintain. Today, skin colour has become the privileged marker of races which are thought of as

> either 'black' or 'white' but never 'big-eared' and 'small-eared'. The fact that only certain physical characteristics are signified to define 'races' in specific circumstances indicates that we are investigating not a given, natural division of the world's population, but the application of historically and culturally specific meanings to the totality of human physiological variation ... 'races' are socially imagined rather than biological realities.
>
> (Miles 1989: 71)

While colour is taken to be the prime signifier of racial identity, the latter is actually shaped by perceptions of religious, ethnic, linguistic, national, sexual and class differences. 'Race' as a concept receives its meanings contextually, and in relation to other social groupings and hierarchies, such as gender and class. For example, Paul Gilroy has explored how:

> the idea of the city as a jungle where bestial, predatory values prevail preceded the large-scale settlement of Britain by blacks in the post-war period. It has contributed significantly to contemporary definitions of

> 'race', particularly those which highlight the supposed primitivism and violence of black residents in inner-city areas. This is the context in which 'race' and racism come to connote the urban crisis as a whole. ... This connection between contemporary British racism and the city is an important reminder that 'race' is a relational concept which does not have fixed referents.
>
> (1994: 409)

In order to signal the mutability and constructedness of race, many writers frame the word within quote marks and others substitute it with 'ethnicity'. But despite the fact that racial classification may be at several levels a 'delusion' and a myth, we need to remember that it is all too real in its pernicious social effects. Ethnic, tribal and other community groupings are social constructions and identities that have served to both oppress people and radicalise them. In southern Africa, pre-colonial tribal groupings were transformed by white differentiation and the assignment of particular kinds of jobs to different groups of people. Colonial regimes manipulated as well as created ethnic and racial identities. But Africans also participated in the process of tribal creation. In fact the same tribalism also fed into the creation of anti-colonial movements (Ranger 1982). Similarly, the discourse of race has also been appropriated and inverted by anti-colonial and black resistance struggles, such as the Negritude or Black power movements. But equally, many resistance movements have had to struggle to *transform*, and not simply invert, existing discourses about race. In his remarkable autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, Nelson Mandela describes how the hardest, most complex task for the African National Congress was to build solidarity across the racial and tribal divides that had been calcified and institutionalised by the apartheid state.

To sum up, then, perceived or constructed racial differences were transformed into very real inequalities by colonialist and/or racist regimes and ideologies. Accordingly, the analysis of race must take cognisance of both the reality of racial discriminations and oppressions, as well as call attention to the constructedness of the concept itself. Having established that racial constructions are shaped within particular historical contexts and alongside other social hierarchies, we can examine, more specifically, the relationship between race and class.

RACE, CLASS AND COLONIALISM

In Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*, the young orphan Jane is to be sent away from the house of her rich relatives who think of her as a badly behaved burden. Jane chooses to go to a boarding house rather than to her poorer relations because, she says, 'I was not heroic enough to purchase liberty at the price of caste' (1981: 19). Caste was of course a concept that became familiar in England from colonial experiences in India, and it marked a social, economic and religious hierarchy overlaid with connotations of purity and pollution, similar to those that shape the idea of race. For the young Jane a movement down the class ladder is understood as a transgression of caste, a virtual crossing of racial divides. Robert Young points out that 'If, according to Marxism, race should be properly understood as class, it is clear that for the British upper classes class was increasingly thought of in terms of race'. He cites the first version of D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* as an instance: when Connie thinks of her lover Parkin at home in his shirt sleeves, eating bloaters for tea and saying 'thaese' for 'these', she gives up the idea of moving in with him, for 'culturally he was another race' (Young 1995: 96). Precisely the opposite sort of movement is registered by Hanif Kureishi's film *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) in which a white working-class lad suggests to his Pakistani employer that as a non-white person he should not evict his Caribbean tenant. The landlord replies: 'I am a professional businessman, not a professional Pakistani'. As an upwardly mobile immigrant, the landlord refuses to overlook the class distinctions that fracture racially oppressed communities as much as racially dominant ones. In this section we will examine the intersection of race and class in the colonial context.

There have been two broad tendencies in analyses of race and ethnicity: the first, which stems from Marxist analysis, can be referred to as the 'economic' because it regards social groupings, including racial ones, as largely determined and explained by economic structures and processes.[1] Colonialism was the means through which capitalism achieved its global expansion. Racism simply facilitated this process, and was the conduit through which the labour of colonised people was appropriated. The second approach, which has been called 'sociological', and derives partly from the work of Max Weber, argues that economic explanations are insufficient for understanding the racial features of colonised societies.