

This article was downloaded by: [Rothberg, Michael]

On: 26 February 2009

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 909060812]

Publisher Routledge

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Wasafiri

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title-content=t716100725>

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Online Publication Date: 01 March 2009

To cite this Article Rothberg, Michael(2009)'In the Nazi Cinema',Wasafiri,24:1,13 — 20

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/02690050802588984

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02690050802588984>

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In the Nazi Cinema

RACE, VISUALITY AND IDENTIFICATION IN FANON AND KLÜGER

Michael
Rothberg

The opening section of Ruth Klüger's 1992 memoir *weiter leben* – self-translated and published in a revised English version in 2001 as *Still Alive* – recounts everyday life in Nazi Vienna from the perspective of a young Jewish girl. In describing a youth spent under the shadow of National Socialism and later in several Nazi camps, Klüger grants a central place to cinema as an exemplary site of fantasy, identification and social control. Besides evoking in general terms the fascination that Nazi propaganda, ideology and film held for her as a child, Klüger briefly recounts watching several films in particular. In addition to four German films from 1940–1941 – *Jud Süß*, *Ohm Krüger*, ... *reitet für Deutschland* and *Carl Peters* – Klüger mentions seeing Disney's first animated feature, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*. While the viewing of *Snow White* plays a significant role in the memoir, to which I will return, the film that left the greatest impression on the young Klüger, she reports, was the one about nineteenth-century German colonialism in East Africa; Hubert Selpin's *Carl Peters*, a politically inflected biopic portraying a legendary imperialist adventurer. In accounting for the film's power to imprint itself on her memory, Klüger draws attention to

a central scene [in which Peters] stood in his lily-white suit, whip in hand, in front of a group of barely clad and cringing black natives. ... [T]he symbols of brutality ... vibrated among the audience. ... They must have inspired the boys who were watching in their short pants and their Hitler Youth daggers ... just as they appalled the Jew girl with vague premonitions. (*Still Alive* 51–52)

Klüger's account of watching *Carl Peters* in the forbidden realm of the Nazi cinema establishes both an identification between an Austrian Jewish subject and colonised Africans and an analogy between colonial violence and the violence of the Holocaust. Why does Klüger – both as a young girl in Vienna

and as a much older memoirist long since emigrated to the United States – look to the colonial scene to make sense of the experience of living under Nazism? What is at stake in her identifications and analogies and how can they help shed light on the relationship between Jewish and postcolonial writing?

The analogy Klüger constructs between colonial and Nazi violence does not suggest an equivalence between what are quite distinct histories. Rather, something more interesting emerges. Klüger's cinematic stories occupy what may seem an exceptional space and time: after the 1938 *Anschluss* in which Nazi Germany annexed Austria, but before the genocidal killing of the Holocaust had begun. Focusing on this seemingly unrepresentative moment of everyday life under extreme threat and foreboding allows Klüger to reveal something paradoxically central, but often minimised in accounts of the Holocaust: the importance of the *process* of racialisation in the Nazi genocide. She reveals both how she was turned into a racial other and how that process also produced racially 'superior' subjects capable of complicity with the genocide of their neighbours. While the moments before and after this transitional period would imply a very different relation between European Jews and the subjects of European colonialism – because they would necessitate confronting periods of relative assimilation and of the most extreme annihilation, respectively – Klüger's focus on racialisation and complicity in an exceptional moment suggests that both postcolonial and Holocaust scholars can gain comparative insights by opening up their disciplinary borders.

Klüger's cinematic scenes possess a strong intertextual resonance with important works in the postcolonial canon. Most crucially for the analysis I undertake here, the scene of furtive spectatorship Klüger describes in her memoir strongly recalls the famous discussion of colonialism and cinema in Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952). Juxtaposing Fanon and Klüger reveals the intersection of race, visibility and identification as a prominent meeting ground for Jewish and black histories marked by trauma and diaspora. The texts of these very different writers thus provide an opportunity to take

up some seldom-explored issues, for the writings that have emerged out of and confronted the legacies of the Nazi genocide are rarely considered alongside the writings that have emerged out of and confronted the legacies of European colonialism. Yet, as the texts of Fanon and Klüger illustrate, these two bodies of writing are compelled to confront many of the same ethical and aesthetic questions and problems. Like the literature of the Holocaust, the literature of the colonial and postcolonial conditions testifies to the underside of European modernity. Both literatures bear witness to forms of extreme and everyday violence perpetrated in the name of racial ideologies and imperial political projects, and both literatures grapple necessarily with the burden of history, the destruction of cultures and communities and the fracturing of time — not simply into the familiar categories of before, during and after, but into uncanny, if not traumatic, constellations.

In the following pages, I look closely at scenes of cinema, racialisation and identification in Fanon and Klüger to reveal how visual culture becomes a site of articulation between histories often kept isolated from each other. This conjunction also reveals, however, that such reckoning does not take place in a 'homogenous empty time' — or a homogenous space. The locations that bring together supposedly autonomous histories also raise problems of translation and reveal gaps between histories. Reading Klüger through Fanon and the insights of postcolonial critique allows us to situate the experience of becoming a racialised subject within the unfolding of the Holocaust — an insufficiently explored line of inquiry. Simultaneously, Klüger's account of the experience of racialisation points to ambivalences and blind spots about Jewishness in much postcolonial scholarship, including that of Fanon. Finally, however, Klüger's memory of watching *Carl Peters* contains a cautionary tale about the nature of our access to the past and the modes through which we construct historical analogies. Taken together, the texts of Fanon and Klüger testify to the need for new models of comparative critique between the postcolonial and the post-Holocaust and beyond competitive notions of history and identity.

In the Colonial Cinema: Fanon's Footnotes

In a well-known footnote to the chapter on 'The Negro and Psychopathology' in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon anticipates Klüger's cinematic anecdotes and invents a new mode of cultural critique that links affect and psychic disruption to the 'cultural situation' of the colonised. The explicit theorisation of racialisation, visual culture and identification in *Black Skin, White Masks* can help illuminate Klüger's narrative. Fanon's famous footnote annotates his claim that

every neurosis, every abnormal manifestation, every affective erethism in an Antillean is the product of his cultural situation. In other words, there is a constellation of postulates, a series of propositions that slowly and subtly — with the help of books, newspapers, schools and their texts, advertisements,

films, radio — penetrate the individual by constituting the world view of the group to which he belongs. [*pénètrent un individu — en constituant la vision du monde de la collectivité à laquelle il appartient*] (*Black Skin* 152; *Peau noire* 124; translation modified)

Demonstrating his characteristic critical prescience in the footnote to that sentence, Fanon suggests that the racialising effect of the media might best be understood through a comparative study of audience reception:

I recommend the following experiment to those who are unconvinced: Attend showings of a Tarzan film in the Antilles and in Europe. In the Antilles, the young Negro identifies himself de facto with Tarzan against the Negroes. This is much more difficult for him in a European theater, for the rest of the audience, which is white, automatically identifies him with the savages on the screen. It is a conclusive experience. The Negro learns that one is not black without problems. A documentary film on Africa produces similar reactions when it is shown in a French city and in Fort-de-France. I will go farther and say that Bushmen and Zulus arouse even more laughter among the young Antilleans. It would be interesting to show how in this instance the reactional exaggeration betrays a hint of recognition. In France a Negro who sees this documentary is virtually petrified. There he has no more hope of flight: He is at once Antillean, Bushman, and Zulu. (*Black Skin* 152–53 note)

In this passage, Fanon draws attention to two important aspects of the cinematic scenes to which he and Klüger grant prominence. First, he reveals that these scenes are not simply scenes *depicting* racialisation, but are in fact scenes *of* racialisation. That is, cinema as an everyday institutional space supplements film's representational powers. Second, he demonstrates that within that institutional space racialisation takes place through the simultaneity of conflicting forms of identification. In other words, cinema plays at least a double role in the process of racialisation; as text, film seems to offer a set of naturalised identifications ('In the Antilles, the young Negro identifies himself de facto with Tarzan') while, as institution, the cinema produces what Mary Ann Doane has called 'a space of identificatory anxiety' in which text and context exist in tension with each other (Doane 227). The 'traumatic break' (Kaplan 151) that occurs in such moments of everyday racialisation derives from the conflict between the cinema's two roles; racist culture elicits certain identifications (eg with white heroes) that a racist society then renders impossible. As Ella Shohat and Robert Stam put it,

The conventional self-denying identification with the White hero's gaze . . . is shortcircuited through the awareness of being looked at in a certain way, as if one were being 'screened' or 'allegorized' by a colonial gaze within the movie theater. (348)

Cinema leaves the colonial subject ‘virtually petrified’ because it simultaneously elicits cross-cutting identifications that transgress racial categories *and* reproduces a Manichean colonialist worldview that fixes subjects in racialised slots (a Manicheanism Fanon theorised even more explicitly in *The Wretched of the Earth*).

Yet the act of revealing this petrifying bind also constitutes the critical, resistant edge of Fanon’s account. While colonialism, like the cinema of the time, sees the world in ‘black and white’ terms (as Klüger will also remark), Fanon renders both the gaze and identification *relational*; that is, he makes visible the criss-crossing looks that always constitute the production, distribution and consumption of visual culture. Here, the operative points from which gazes and identifications emerge are already at least fourfold — the Antilles forms part of a web connecting the site of Hollywood production, the controlling gaze of the French metropole and another colonial periphery in Africa. *Black Skin, White Masks* as a whole creates a web of what Shohat and Stam call ‘analogical identifications’ (351) — a web that also echoes in Klüger’s experience in the Nazi cinema. Fanon’s emphasis on relationality does not relativise the moral or political meaning of racism or colonialism; rather, he suggests that questions of moral and political responsibility do not map onto psychic disorder in any clear way. Political context disrupts psychic order across the board. Colonial and other racist societies intensively police relations among social groups and seek to produce various kinds of segregation, of course. But Fanon’s analysis reveals how, nevertheless, the traumas associated with racism create a psychically and socially relational intimacy across groups.

To this relational account of racialisation, *Black Skin, White Masks* adds another comparative dimension; it includes extensive discussion of anti-Semitism and traumas suffered by Jews.¹ When Fanon published his treatise in 1952, World War Two (which Fanon fought in) and the discovery of the Nazi camps were still relatively recent events. With frequent reference to Sartre’s *Anti-Semite and Jew* [*Réflexions sur la question juive*; 1948], Fanon carefully relates and distinguishes anti-Semitism and anti-black racism based on what he understands as the different place occupied by the Jew and the ‘Negro’ in the racist imaginary. If, Fanon writes, ‘[t]o suffer from a phobia of Negroes is to be afraid of the biological’ or sexual, then to fear Jews is to possess a phobia about the ‘intellectual danger’ that accompanies ‘civilization’ (*Black Skin* 165). Yet Fanon’s text proves ambivalent on the question of how to relate black and Jewish histories. While Fanon sometimes points to what Jews and blacks share, he also often assimilates Jews to the category of whiteness — an assimilation that recent history should have complicated, as analysis of Klüger’s text will indicate.

On the one hand, Fanon links blacks and Jews as ‘brother[s] in misery’ because of parallels between European racism and anti-Semitism, and he famously cites his ‘philosophy professor, a native of the Antilles, who recalled the fact to me one day: “Whenever you hear anyone abuse the

Jews, pay attention, he is talking about you”’ (*Black Skin* 122). Once again, such insight sometimes emerges in the liminal space of a footnote. As Bryan Cheyette has observed,

Much of Fanon’s response to Sartre takes place in the footnotes to *Peau noire*, which often act as a kind of Möbius strip which enables him to tell the differing stories of colonial racism and anti-Semitism simultaneously. (85)

Not long before Fanon introduces the Tarzan example, he explicitly links the experience of ‘becoming black’ under the racist gaze to ‘becoming Jewish’ in the face of anti-Semitism. Having commented that the black man’s ‘first encounter with a white man oppresses him with the whole weight of his blackness’ (*Black Skin* 150), Fanon appends a note citing Sartre’s discussion of Jews only becoming aware of their Jewishness in relation to the non-Jewish world. The example Sartre uses, and that Fanon cites without further comment, obliquely evokes the Holocaust:

During the Occupation there was a Jewish doctor who lived shut up in his home in Fontainebleau and raised his children without saying a word to them of their origin. But however it comes about, some day they must learn the truth: sometimes from the smiles of those around them, sometimes from rumour or insult. The later the discovery, the more violent the shock. Suddenly they perceive that others know something about them that they do not know. (*Black Skin* 150 note)

The traumatic ‘shock’ that Sartre describes anticipates the shock that takes place in the French cinema when, under the white gaze, the Antillean learns that ‘one is not black without problems’ (*Black Skin* 153 note). As Klüger will also note, both blacks and Jews are vulnerable to trauma via encounter and exposure — hence the recurrent use of visuality as an index of violence in both of their texts.

On the other hand, because of the primacy Fanon grants to the ‘racial epidermal schema’ (*Black Skin* 112) in the constitution of the colonial subject, he ultimately separates the experience of blacks from that of Jews by virtue of Jews’ allegedly greater ability to pass as white, even as, once again, he obliquely references the Nazi genocide:

the Jew can be unknown in his Jewishness. He is not wholly what he is. . . . His actions, his behavior are the final determinant. He is a white man, and, apart from some rather debatable characteristics, he can sometimes go unnoticed. . . . Granted, the Jews are harassed — what am I thinking of? They are hunted down, exterminated, cremated. But these are little family quarrels. The Jew is disliked from the moment he is tracked down. But in my case everything takes on a new guise. I am given no chance. I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the

'idea' that others have of me but of my own appearance. (*Black Skin* 115–16)

Fanon clearly employs an ironic rhetoric, here laced with litotes, which cannot be read literally. Nevertheless, even leaving aside the deliberate minimisation of Nazi genocide as a 'family quarrel', Fanon's passage ignores the contradictions and legacies of anti-Semitism that make it a very peculiar kind of family affair. Seen from the present, Fanon's distinction between the central role that the visual plays in anti-black racism and the centrality of ideas and ideology in anti-Semitism may seem like common sense. But this common-sense account amounts to a surprisingly unhistorical theory of Jewish visibility; it ignores the relative consistency of the image of the Jew over time, the frequent association of Jews with various 'anomalous' physical traits, including blackness (as demonstrated, for example, in the work of Sander Gilman) and – at the time Fanon was writing – the still recent production and mobilisation of a visible, highly biologised and even sexualised Jewish difference in the context of a genocidal project. In addition, whether employed in the early 1950s by Fanon or today in the works of some postcolonial critics, this simplified binary between blacks and white Jews risks homogenising Europe and casting blacks definitively outside European 'familial' space. Without doubt, Fanon provides critical resources for a post-Holocaust, postcolonial theory of racialisation and, in linking colonialism to Nazism and racism to anti-Semitism, anticipates insights only now being reclaimed. Yet his ambivalence about Jewish difference and about its relation to blackness also makes 'visible' ambivalences that continue to haunt postcolonial studies.²

In the Nazi Cinema: A Double Defiance

In a discussion of cinema remarkably reminiscent of Fanon's, Klüger's *Still Alive* focuses on a moment when, contra Fanon, Jewishness does become visible. At the same time, Klüger also reveals, as Fanon has taught us to expect, how during such moments the process of racialisation itself becomes visible in the institutional spaces of spectatorship and spectacle. In documenting the transitional period of everyday life under Nazism, Klüger stages two cinematic scenes that are linked in the English version of the memoir by the appearance of the ambiguous word 'native', a word that turns out to mark a site of transfer between Holocaust and colonial discourse.

The discussion begins with a story in which Klüger, like Fanon, becomes the object of the racial gaze:

In 1940, when I was eight or nine, the local movie theatre showed Walt Disney's *Snow White*. I loved movies. I had been weaned on Mickey Mouse shorts and traded pictures of Shirley Temple with classmates. I badly wanted to see this film, but since I was Jewish, I naturally wasn't permitted to. I groused and bitched about this unfairness, until finally my mother proposed that I should leave her alone and just go and forget about what was permitted and what wasn't. (*Still Alive* 45–46)

When, spurred on by her mother, Klüger summons the courage to attend, she finds herself seated 'next to the nineteen-year-old baker's daughter from next door with her little siblings, enthusiastic Nazis one and all' (*Still Alive* 46). After 'sweat[ing] it out' in the theatre for ninety minutes wondering 'whether the baker's daughter was really glaring at me, or if I was only imagining it' (*Still Alive* 46), Klüger is finally castigated by her young neighbour and threatened with the police if she transgresses again. As Klüger sums up the experience,

The story of Snow White can be reduced to one question: who is entitled to live in the king's palace and who is the outsider. The baker's daughter and I followed this formula. She, in her own house, the magic mirror of her racial purity before her eyes, and I, also at home here, a native [*auch an diesem Ort beheimatet*], but without permission and at this moment expelled and exposed. Even though I despised the law that excluded me, I still felt ashamed to have been found out. For shame doesn't arise from the shameful action, but from discovery and exposure. (*Still Alive* 47; *weiter leben* 47–48)

In this allegory of whiteness, the Jewish girl is simultaneously at home and uncanny, fixed and expelled. The appearance of the ambivalent word 'native' – not present in the German version, which deploys instead the discourse of *Heimat* – suggests at once a naturalised claim to belonging and the presence of a colonial discourse in which it is precisely 'natives' who are subject to displacement. The ambiguous deictics 'here' and 'at this moment' reinforce the traumatic destabilisation of location and identity that, as Fanon famously theorises in *Black Skin, White Masks*, results from the everyday racialising gaze (cf. 109–10). The spatial and temporal division at the heart of this act of racialisation suggests both the specific position of 'native' German and Austrian Jews under the Nazis and the more general uncertainty about Jewish positioning in the post-Holocaust and postcolonial moment of the text's enunciation. Marking expulsion from the 'here and now' of unproblematic belonging, Klüger's post-Holocaust, diasporic narration of the displacement of 'natives' by a project of 'racial purity' makes an implicit claim to postcolonial positionality. In other words, Klüger both confirms Fanon's links between racialisation and the visual and exposes the gaps in his assumption about what constitutes Jewish invisibility; in Nazi Vienna, the Jewish girl does not go 'unknown' and 'unnoticed'. Against the backdrop of a spectacle of whiteness, she becomes visible as a racial other. Perhaps equally importantly, the passage charts the conversion of neighbourliness to enmity, as the 'baker's daughter from next door' takes on the role of state agent policing the everyday. While this somewhat haphazard enforcement of racial segregation seems far removed from the systematic genocide to come, the very everydayness of this scene suggests how the preconditions for genocide were established — in part, as Fanon has suggested, through the relations of looking staged in the cinema.

Klüger's further cinematic memories illustrate the possibilities and limits of resistance to the dominant racial gaze that both she and Fanon locate in that cinematic space. Klüger describes her encounter with the baker's daughter as taking place in 1940, that is, after Jews had been banned from the cinema and other public spaces but before the 1 September 1941 police ordinance on the 'Identification of Jews', which required Jews to wear a 'clearly visible' yellow star on their clothing.³ While such a law seems to confirm Fanon's point that under ordinary circumstances Jews can go 'unnoticed' – hence, the need for supplementary forms of identification – Klüger's memoir reveals that this inconspicuousness is itself of limited value due to the everyday, panoptic gaze of a profoundly racialised society like that established by National Socialism and embodied by the baker's daughter. Yet, neither the young Klüger's disturbing encounter at *Snow White* nor even the identification ordinance prevents her from attending films. '[T]he cinema', she writes, 'was a magnet'. That magnetism indicates both the ideological pull of visual culture and the possibilities for counter-vision it sometimes makes possible:

The movies I wanted to see were Nazi propaganda films, which gave me the satisfaction of a double defiance: I was thwarting both the discriminatory laws of the state and the rules of my family, who had never permitted me to listen to a speech by Hitler on the radio. . . . These films taught me the dominant ideology, which concerned me, I reasoned, and which I couldn't just ignore because it wasn't palatable. The attraction lay in the critical distance I had to maintain, the resistance against any temptation to identify or agree. (*Still Alive* 51)

In this scene, the young Klüger's 'double defiance' recalls what cultural theorist José Muñoz has called 'disidentification': 'a survival strategy that is employed by a minority spectator . . . to resist and confound socially prescriptive patterns of identification' (Muñoz 28). Disidentification is not the opposite of identification, but a particular kind of appropriation of the dominant ideology, 'one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology' (Muñoz 11). Klüger's framing of her discussion of Nazi propaganda as 'forbidden' but 'irresistible' (*Still Alive* 50) suggests that what is at stake is indeed not a simple resistance to identification, but the necessity of passing through identification's magnetic pull on the way towards a defiant subjectivity.

As Klüger continues her discussion of cinema, the ambiguous disidentificatory relationship between Nazi and Jew becomes further complicated by the entry of a third term: the colonial African subject. Here, at greater length, is the passage in which Klüger describes Hubert Selpin's propagandistic film about colonialism in East Africa:

The representative of German power was named Carl Peters . . . and in a central scene he stood in his lily-white suit, whip in hand, in front of a group of barely clad and cringing black natives [*Schwarzen*]. You have to remember that it was decades before violence, realistically acted out, became part and parcel of common movie fare. In those days the symbols of brutality had a disturbing effect, which vibrated among the audience. They must have inspired the boys who were watching in their short pants and their Hitler Youth daggers . . . just as they appalled the Jew girl with vague premonitions. That is, I felt personally threatened by the whip, the boots, and the racist black-white confrontation in black-and-white. I call up this remembered image from the flickering screen as meaningful background to my later experience of a power structure that involved real men with boots and whips, for the film tried to make sense of it – to which I could oppose my contrary sense – whereas the reality was clumsy chaos. (*Still Alive* 51–52; *weiter leben* 54–55)

Mobilising for a second time in the English version of the memoir the concept of the displaced 'native', the temporality of this passage is complex; Klüger's post-Holocaust account of her 'Holocaust girlhood' (to cite the memoir's subtitle) draws on a 'postcolonial', Nazi-produced account of Germany's erstwhile colonial experience in order to map out relations of power and ideology that the subject had not yet fully experienced (for excellent collections of essays on German colonialism and its legacies, see Ames, Klotz and Wildenthal; Friedrichsmeyer, Lennox and Zantop). Identification serves as a means of cutting across the 'clumsy chaos' of reality and establishing lines of affiliation. But what exactly is the relationship between German master, colonised subject and Jew in this passage? On the one hand, the scene suggests a process of active identification in which the Jewish girl takes the place of the ungendered 'natives', just as the Hitler Youth boys take the place of the colonial master. It is precisely the native's visible difference from the master, doubled in the very medium of black-and-white film, that seems to support these parallel identifications. The shared, affective 'vibration' Klüger tracks in the cinema points once again to the simultaneous production of the racially 'superior' and the racially 'subaltern'. On the other hand, however, while the passage mobilises a series of oppositions – black and white, German power and cringing native, Hitler Youth and Jew girl, film and reality, sense and chaos – it concerns equally the transgression of the laws and boundaries that hold such terms apart. Klüger's presence in the theatre is impelled by a desire to move into forbidden space and to see forbidden images, despite the 'shame' that her earlier exposure by the baker's daughter entailed. The struggle to disidentify – to maintain critical distance – entails reoccupying the ideological machinery of exclusion.

It is not easy at first to understand why a minority subject would want to move into this deadening and deadly space — to identify not only with the victims of German power but with

the whole technical apparatus of Nazi ideology. Again, Muñoz's insights into the subjection and subjectivation of minority subjects are useful:

To disidentify is to read oneself and one's own life narrative in a moment, object, or subject that is not culturally coded to 'connect' with the disidentifying subject. It is not to pick and choose what one takes out of an identification. It is not to willfully evacuate the politically dubious or shameful components within an identificatory locus. Rather, it is the reworking of those energies that do not elide the 'harmful' or contradictory components of any identity. (12)

The colonial film is clearly not intended to 'connect' with the young Klüger — in fact, she is actively excluded from its address. And yet it clearly offers her something otherwise unavailable: 'sense'. In this scene, the already racialised subject passes through desire for and identification with that which is shameful because, under extreme circumstances, that toxic force also offers the only available vision of order. The powerful other and his fetishised accoutrements, the boots and whip upon which the young spectator focuses, are representative of the will-to-order of that other, his ideological 'sense'. The young Klüger's wilful submission to the ideological machinery of Nazi interpellation reveals a desire for meaningful structure and hints that, without disidentification, the experience of the subaltern would tend towards chaos and thus subjective dissolution (the phenomenology of which Fanon powerfully captures in *Black Skin*).

The active, productive quality of Klüger's disidentification helps us to identify a shortcoming in the dominant discussions of racialisation. As Rey Chow argues in *Primitive Passions*, much postcolonial theorisation has been invested in a binary framework in which the gaze is always European and the non-European world is mere object or spectacle (Chow 12–13). As we have seen, Fanon's work both fits that binary model and complicates the one-sidedness of the racialising gaze by revealing the multiplicity of gazes at work in the colonial cinema. Klüger also stages multiple gazes but, in addition, challenges the European/non-European binary that continues to structure Fanon's and Chow's arguments. While postcolonial studies has no doubt developed since Chow originally made her observation about the one-sided gaze, the counter-model she proposes, which takes into account the 'dialectics of [the colonised subject's] seeing' (13), is nonetheless illuminating for the texts under consideration here. In Chow's model — paradoxically but fittingly for Klüger's text — taking account of the non-dominant gaze also entails recognising that gaze as emerging from the subject's previous objectification; she thus could be seen as arguing for a kind of disidentification. Chow's reflections on the possibility of a postcolonial counter-ethnography supplement Muñoz and may be of use in unpacking the importance of spectatorship in Klüger's text.

Chow's suggestion that the 'new ethnography [of] those who were previously ethnographized' must take account of the 'memory of past *objecthood* — the experience of being looked at' resonates with Klüger's scenes of Nazi Vienna as much as with Fanon's anticolonial counter-ethnography (Chow 180). To the self-reflexivity of postmodern anthropology and the well-known theorisation of the male gaze by Laura Mulvey, Chow adds the postcolonial insight that 'being-looked-at-ness, rather than the act of looking, constitutes the primary event in cross-cultural representation' (180). For Chow, the 'memory of past *objecthood*' can be translated into a moment of subjective agency; she writes that

the state of being looked at not only is built into the way non-Western cultures are viewed by Western ones; more significantly it is part of the *active* manner in which such cultures represent — ethnographize — themselves. (180)

Read through the lenses of Fanon, Muñoz and Chow, Klüger's *Still Alive* becomes a form of disidentifactory counter-ethnography in which she recognises the violence of the production of 'Aryan' whiteness by working through the scene of colonial spectacle and spectatorship. The scene of colonial domination in Klüger's text, as well as the scene of exposure at *Snow White*, is part of an *active* disidentification with Vienna, the terrain of her childhood, 'the original slime from which life developed', 'a city that hated children — Jewish children, to be precise' (*Still Alive* 59–60). Returning in memory and discourse to the slime of Nazi Vienna allows Klüger to stage a form of resistance to historical erasure and to ethnographise a culture that expelled her after rendering her uncanny in her own home.

Yet Klüger's counter-ethnography bears one further cautionary lesson — a warning about memory, history and analogy. What is most fascinating about her description of the scene of colonial domination in *Carl Peters* is that, while all of the elements Klüger describes from the film are in fact there — a remarkable feat of memory if she has not seen the film for half a century — the scene itself is not. That is, a scene exists that features whips, shackled, half-naked Africans and Peters in his white suit, but in this scene — the only one to which Klüger might be referring — Peters is in the position, not of the sadist, but of the liberator. The scene takes place early in the film, when Peters and his crew have set out across East Africa for the first time to claim land for Germany. Coming over a hill they see a village burning and, on closer inspection, Arab slave traders on horses whipping shackled Africans. Peters challenges the slave traders, who claim in heavily accented English that they have British permission for their trade. But after Peters yells at them, the Arabs ride off, leaving the Germans to rip up the British papers and free the slaves. In subsequent scenes, tribe after tribe beg Peters for protection and, after performing 'exotic' dance and drum rituals before the colonisers, sign over their land in return.

Despite Klüger's understandable misremembering, we can profitably read the film as allegorising the relationship between the Holocaust and German colonialism — only, in a more indirect mode. On the one hand, Klüger is correct about the character of the historical Peters as she is about the contemporary significance of the film. Strictly speaking, all of *Carl Peters* constitutes a sort of Freudian screen memory in which innocent scenes of liberation, protection and inter-communal harmony cover over the brutality of Peters and German colonialism. Additionally, as Sabine Hake argues, 'German films about the colonies partook not in "the battle over Africa" but in the battle over Europe', a battle in which 'the terms of racial and national identity [were] in fact worked out' (174–75). Having lost its non-European colonies after the First World War, Nazi Germany's postcolonial representations of Africa were part of its neo-colonial projects of *Lebensraum* and genocide.⁴ Yet, on the other hand, Africa's place in this battle was not simply that of a site of racial otherness that could be analogised to Jewishness. Rather, as Hake shows, the connection made by the film between colonial relations and relations between Nazis and Jews is more mediated, and passes through a 'conflation of antisemitic and anti-British positions' (181; my emphasis). The film is, on its own terms, 'pro-African'.

At the same time, the fact that Klüger remembers the film as providing a more immediate image of her own condition is not without significance. Her translation of the scene seems to point to a two-way reshaping of history and experience; while the film clearly made enough of an impression on the young 'Jew girl' to mark her experience of the Nazi period, it also may be that her future experiences of the camps re-formed her experience of the film. While assuredly only one person's experience, such a mutual determination of the colonial and the genocidal remains suggestive for thinking about the cultural legacies of two autonomous histories that have continued to intersect in cultural memory and collective consciousness, despite the disciplinary divide between 'things Jewish' and 'things postcolonial' that has come to keep them apart. As scholars continue to seek links between German and European colonialism and the Holocaust, *Carl Peters* and Klüger's misremembering of it stand as a methodological warning; the form of the colonialism/Holocaust relationship should not be considered in the mode of simple historical analogy, a mode that the passage reveals as imaginary in the Lacanian sense. Both the film and Klüger's memory of it work at the level of the imaginary, defined by identification, mirroring and binary logic. A critical reading of the film and memoir suggests the contours of a different conception of the relationship between German colonialism and Nazi genocide as indirect, mediated and triangulated between multiple historical and phantasmatic positions.

The particularities of German colonialism, staged in Klüger and in *Carl Peters*, also serve as a reminder of the differentiated legacies of diverse European imperial projects. The same holds for Fanon's reflections on the particular stakes of racial representation in the Antilles. While both situations

have implications for general theories of race, empire and genocide, as I have tried to suggest, we cannot assume generalisability and translation — they must be constructed from the ground up. Such construction demands new forms of inter-ethnic, transnational comparison.

Conclusion: Beyond Competition

The dynamic interplay of colonial and Nazi domination and of racialisation and visual culture in the texts of Fanon and Klüger suggests the need for a new way of thinking about twentieth- and twenty-first-century global histories. Too often in recent years the 'black-Jewish' question has been rendered according to a logic of competitive victimisation and viewed through a lens of mutual accusation. According to this story, we must identify either blacks or Jews as the most suffering subjects of modernity and consider their histories in isolation from each other. Bringing together Fanon and Klüger produces neither a simple solidarity nor the pure symmetry of historical analogy; but it does reveal the inadequacy of the framework of competition with its zero-sum logic of either/or. Situating these writers under the overlapping signs of the postcolonial and the post-Holocaust demonstrates that cultural production, identification, fantasy and deadly violence do not respect the borders of the nation or of identity. To reoccupy the Nazi and colonial cinemas in order to learn their lessons and resist their logics demands the double task of disidentification; we must recognise the ideological force of their spectacle while transgressing their prescribed subject positions. One way to begin is by thinking through a comparative space beyond competition.

Notes

- 1 See Cheyette's nuanced account of Fanon's writings on blacks and Jews. Using a method congruent with that employed here, Cheyette explores the 'heterogeneous juxtapositions which bring together diasporic Jewry and the history of anti-Semitism with the colonial struggle and anti-Black racism' (75). A version of this essay appeared in *Wasafiri* (Spring 2005): 7–12.
- 2 The ambivalence of postcolonial scholars is, of course, matched and perhaps even exceeded by scholars of the Holocaust faced with questions of colonialism, slavery and race. In my book *Multidirectional Memory*, I provide a genealogy of works that articulate memory of the Holocaust alongside memory of colonialism and slavery without collapsing one history into the other or establishing a hierarchy of suffering. Making this counter-tradition visible requires rethinking the dynamics of memory and leaving behind the lens of 'competitive memory' through which these problems are generally thought. My concept of 'multidirectional memory' describes the dynamic intersection of different historical memories as productive and not as limited by a zero-sum logic.
- 3 A selection from the 1 September 1941 ordinance is included in the editorial notes to Klemperer (495). Upon

hearing of the new ordinance Klemperer writes that the star will mean 'upheaval and catastrophe' for him and his 'Aryan' wife (429).

- 4 Historian Pascal Grosse makes the pertinent argument that it is precisely Germany's peculiar experience of 'postcolonialism' that ties its colonial past to its later genocide of the Jews: 'While the major colonial powers underwent a process of decolonization much later and as a result of independence movements in the colonies themselves, Germany was stripped of its colonial possessions as a direct consequence of its defeat in World War I, which left a complete vacuum in the sphere of expansionism exactly when expansionist aspirations had reached their height. I therefore suggest that Germany's postcolonial experience – what might be called "colonialism without colonies" – became the fundamental factor in the interwar radicalization of pre-World War I ideas and practices of expansionist biopolitics' (118–19).

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