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The Black Body and Representations of the (In)human

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Li-Chun Hsiao,
"The Black Body and Representations of the (In)human"
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Abstract: Li-Chun Hsiao, in his article "The Black Body and Representations of the (In)human," takes cues from the theoretical insights of Agamben's "bare life" as well as Laclau's and Mouffe's "social antagonism" and explores how the slave can be considered a constitutive element which is nevertheless foreclosed from Western democracies. Hsiao also analyzes the various ways the term "slave" functions as trope in the founding discourses of Western democracy. "Bare life" remains included in politics "in the form of the exception," as "something that is included solely through an exclusion." Such an "inclusive exclusion" is represented not in its differential relationship to the existing social order, but foregrounds an internal limit penetrating everything in society -- an impossibility of representation that lapses into a series of tropological substitutions. Slave labor, often if not always associated with the black body, inevitably poses uneasy and thought-provoking questions about the human/inhuman as evidenced by a long line of social, political, and literary Western discourses. Hsiao's focal point in this analysis is the discourse of post-Bastille France which he examines through his readings of George Sand's novel *Indiana* and in light of Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*.

Li-Chun HSIAO

The Black Body and Representations of the (In)human

In the opening pages of *Black Skin, White Masks* Frantz Fanon assumes not only a white mask but a white gaze and addresses provocatively his race as "other than human." Consistent with the ambivalent vacillations characterizing the writing of this book, Fanon, however, does not simply interpellate his fellow Blacks as either outright "non-human" or affirmatively human. On the very same page, he states that "the black is a black man," which does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the Black is therefore a man -- and not only because a sophist or nominalist argument would remind us that *a Black man* is not equivalent to *a man*. For later in the book Fanon would tell us that he sees "in those white faces that it is not a new man who has come in, but *a new kind of man*, a new genus. Why, it's a Negro" (116; my emphasis). From our historical hindsight -- which has witnessed the weakening, if not the total dismantling, of many a bigotry -- this ostensibly difficult and excruciating conception of Black in terms of human/non-human would seem to us moot. Yet, Fanon's difficulty lies precisely in the obvious, as he points out: "I am the slave not of the 'idea' that others have of me but of my own appearance" (116) -- the fact of his blackness. And that is probably why Fanon closes his book with an often-cited appeal: "O my body, make of me always a man who questions!" (232)

But why conceive of the Black man as "rooted at the core of a universe from which he must be extricated"? (8). How is the readily recognizable black body included, even embedded at the core of the dominant colonialist / racial socio-political order, and emphatically excluded from it at the same time? How can the concept/designation of Black invokes diverse and even conflicting designations, ranging from the non-human, the barely human, a sub-human, a renewed human, and, as Fanon affirms occasionally in his text, the unequivocally human? I approach these questions, and similar issues raised in other historical and literary examples, by means of Giorgio Agamben's conception of "bare life" and Ernesto Laclau's and Chantal Mouffe's notion of "social antagonism." Based on these theoretical insights, I highlight a certain *constitutive exclusion* that would be pivotal in the representations of the (in)human. I illustrate such a constitutively excluded element by examining the popularity of the term "slave" as trope in post-Bastille social, political, and literary discourses and the figuration of the black body in Fanon's writings.

In his book *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Agamben conceives of "bare life" in light of the two distinct Greek terms for the same word "life" -- *zoē*, "which expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings," and, on the other hand, *bios*, which "indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group," from which political life is derived (*Homo Sacer* 1). This distinction between *zoē* and *bios politicos* in the classical world, that is, the conception of an uncontaminated, natural state of life as separated from the *polis*, however, could no longer hold, as it was undermined by the obscure figure of *homo sacer*, who "*may be killed and yet not sacrificed*" (8; italics in the original). The inclusion of *homo sacer* in the archaic Roman law, argues Agamben, revealed that human life was first *included* in the juridical order "solely in the form of its exclusion," i.e., its capacity to be killed with impunity or its pronounced fate of being excluded from the state's protection (8). By the same token, *zoē*, according to Agamben, serves as "an inclusive exclusion" in the *polis* (7). Bare life, with its "natural sweetness," "remains included in politics in the form of [an] *exception*, that is, as something that is included solely through an exclusion" (11, emphasis mine). Cast in our contemporary theoretical lexicon, bare life no longer is, or never was, an innocent, politically uncontaminated sphere, but is always already politicized. However, as Agamben contends, this inclusion of *zoē* in the *polis* has more theoretical and political implications than the familiar Foucauldian thesis of biopolitics characterizing modern regimes of power at the "threshold of biological modernity," wherein life as such became a "principle object of the projections and calculations of State Power" (9). First of all, the Foucauldian scenario of *biopolitics* -- what Agamben observes as the inclusion of *zoē* in the *polis* -- is not a patently modern phenomenon but is "absolutely ancient" (9; see also 119-120; Nikolopoulou

129; Norris 39-41). What further distinguishes Agamben's analysis from that of Michel Foucault's is that, for Agamben, the workings of biopolitics, whether ancient or modern, foreground a founding operation of exclusion simultaneously at work with the inclusion of the human's biological or simple life in the mechanisms and calculations of state power.

I argue that it is only by foregrounding such a form of exception involving both exclusion and inclusion that we can grasp the ostensibly paradoxical "inclusive exclusion" underlying both the inscription of *homo sacer* into the juridical order and the relation of bare life to the *polis*. In his other works Agamben makes clear that political power always founds itself "on the separation of naked [or bare] life from the contexts of the forms of life [*bios*]," and such bare life is "kept safe and protected" by state power "only to the degree to which it submits itself to the sovereign's (or the law's) right of life and death" (*Means* 4, 5; see also *State of Exception*). If we take bare life to be not merely the biological life but the much cherished private spheres vis-à-vis the public / political realm -- the former's exclusion from the latter, the writing of the putatively private enterprise of "the pursuit of happiness" into one of the most important documents of modern democracy (which, as Agamben points out, have their archaic roots in Aristotle's conception of the political life as "good life" [*Homo Sacer* 7]) would then betray the inclusion of bare life in politics as the latter's absolute concern. Dating back to the classical world, a separated mere life has always been *postulated* by the *polis* (the exclusion), which defines itself and subjects *zoē* into its fold precisely through such postulation (the inclusion). Such an "extreme form of relation by which something is included solely by its exclusion" is what Agamben calls the "*relation of exception*" (18; italics in the original). To further explore this logic of exception -- as simultaneous exclusion and inclusion -- I examine the figure of slave in relation to the corresponding slave-holding socio-political orders.

In the first book of his *Politics*, Aristotle appears to be delineating a "chronological account of the rise of the *polis*," which seems to coincide with and serve to undergird the commonplace distinction between the properly political and private spheres in the Western tradition of politics and political thought (see Norris 39-40). In this delineation of the community's move toward a state of self-sufficiency (from the family to the village to the city-state), the slave and slavery occupy a peculiar place and prove to be troublesome categories for Aristotle. On the one hand, slave acquisition/holding is conceived as one of the aspects of familial life -- the natural, veritably bare life, since both the "union of female and male for the continuation of the species" and "the union of natural ruler and natural subject for the sake of security" (master-slave relation) belong to the same order of "the first coupling together of persons" (*Politics* I.I. 4). The slave thus appears to be radically excluded from the public sphere of the *polis*, being subject to the government of a household headed by the master, "whereas statesmanship is the government of men free and equal" -- a form of governance distinct from the former (I.II. 21-22). Moreover, the slave's knowledge and crafts (his "sciences," as Aristotle puts it) are "all the various branches of domestic work" (I.II. 23). On the other hand, however, the slave is included in the *polis* in the commonplace scenario of "slavery by law" in which those conquered in wars become legalized slaves of the conqueror (I.II. 16-18). The fact that certain people who are not born slaves can end up being enslaved, as Aristotle notes, renders the terms slave and slavery "ambiguous" (I.II. 16-18) and problematizes the principles further by which "natural" slavery is justified in the first place, which in Aristotle's scheme are ultimately a deference to a teleological design of "Nature": certain people are fitted by mind and body for slavery, while others for mastership; however, one is also tempted to wonder whether the "natural" slaves kept in private households were originally acquired through wars between city-states or survivors of the rules of jungle on individual basis. Regardless of their origins, the slaves remain separated from the formal political structure of the city-state, in the form of an exception to "the government of men free and equal" which is classical democracy. Whether being construed as an exclusion from or inclusion in the *polis*, the slaves undoubtedly play an integral part of the city-state in Aristotle's conception, not only for the obvious reason that they provide the freemen with the necessities of survival as well as the basis of "good life," but also

that the *polis*, which consists of homogeneous and equal members striving for a just, common life, is inconceivable without the constitutive exclusion of those who are not to be considered homogeneous or equal. In fact, Aristotle illustrates the master-slave relationship with the following analogy: "the slave is a part of the master -- he is, as it were, a part of the body, *alive but yet separated from it*" (I.II. 20-21; my emphasis). How can a body part -- or an organ -- be separated from the body and still alive? I argue that this relation can only be illuminated in terms of the above-mentioned "inclusive exclusion" as well as its underlying "logic of exception," which can be extended to the slave's relation to the city-state. Such a relation, furthermore, engenders (or even highlights) an entangled status of indistinction between exclusion and inclusion, between *zoē* and the *polis*, so much so that the political power of the city-state is premised not only on the "categorical distinction between bare life and the good or political life," but also the indistinction between the two (Norris 40). For if this distinction serves as the foundation of Western politics, Aristotle's schema also prepares the way for its being undone from within (see Norris 40).

First of all, what seems to be a "chronological account of the rise of the *polis*" in Book 1 of *Politics* is disproved by Aristotle's own claim that "the city-state is prior in nature to the household and to each of us individually" because "the whole [the state] must necessarily be prior to the part" (I.II. 11). Although Aristotle may not refer to the precedence in time in this statement, his conception of the political organization of the city-state is that which embodies and operates in accordance with the workings of nature, if not coinciding with them. It is therefore "natural" for the *polis* to dictate the modalities or even contents of *zoē*, although the latter is oftentimes considered closer to the state of nature and is to be separate from as well as constitutive of the former. More importantly, to interpret the delineation toward the beginning of *Politics* as merely a history is, as Andrew Norris comments, to assume that "political life can be simply added on to human life," a mistake also committed by Foucault in his reading of Aristotle (40). A simple, politically uncontaminated "bare life," as implied in Agamben's reflection, can only be posited retrospectively by the political power. For Aristotle, human life presupposes political life, in which man utilizes the capacity for speech -- which is absent from other animals -- to establish a mode of existence concerned not only with the perpetuation of biological life, but also with (politically qualified) good life (*to eu zēn*): "To be truly human," according to Norris's interpretation of Aristotle, "one must be a member of a *polis*" (40) -- hence the well-known pronouncement of Aristotle, "man is a political animal" (I.I. 10). It is therefore plausible to extrapolate that those who are prevented from participating in the *polis* -- for example, the slaves -- are "less than human," if not inhuman. For the slaves apparently possess the ability of speech, are adept in their own sciences, and even have their own virtues (I.V. 3). In his own definition of the slave Aristotle does not shy away from using the word "human" when he stipulates that "one who is a human being belonging by nature not to himself but to another is by nature a slave" (I.II. 7), although at times he appears to equate the slaves with domestic animals in terms of their being the tools and service providers for the master. What would the life of the slave be if s/he, as a human, is foreclosed from the bestial existence of bare life (political life being the sole embodiment of nature for humans) and excluded from the political life at the same time? In addition to allowing for the conflation of bare life and political life, Aristotle's treatise on politics therefore also entails the indistinction between human and inhuman in his conception of the slave.

In light of Agamben's account of *homo sacer*, we see how "bare life" is from the very outset implicated in the *polis*, through an "inclusive exclusion" which is the very precondition of the political realm that renders bare life an exception. By the same token, the slave in Aristotle's schema is included in the *polis* via its very exclusion: being integral to the political order of the city-state, the slave nevertheless makes possible the *polis* by not being integrated into it. The slave is literally "captured" in the political, for even "natural slavery" within households is a manifestation of what nature dictates for human life ("the city-state is prior in nature to the household") -- as always already political. As in the case of *homo sacer*, what this constitutively excluded element foregrounds is a relation of excep-

tion that turns on both inclusion and exclusion, that is, "the extreme form of relation by which something is included solely through its exclusion" (*Homo Sacer* 18). The nuances between the slave and *homo sacer* notwithstanding, I focus on the relation of exception (and its underlying logic) found in both in order to conceive of the slave's relation to a slave-holding political order at a given historical juncture. Is the slave, then, an exception to being a human, or an exceptional human being in Aristotle's city-state? One should be aware of the incommensurability between the slave's relation to the *poli*s and the differential, definable, and internal relations among members of the *polis*. What we have in the former is an extreme form of relation that hinges on exception -- an exception intertwined with the rule. "To refer to something," writes Agamben, "a rule must both presuppose and yet still establish a relation with what is *outside* relation (*the nonrelational*)" (19; my emphasis). The relation of exception, therefore, can be defined as "the simple positing of relation with the nonrelational" (29). The constitutive character of the nonrelational to the network of relations to which the rule is applicable is illuminated by Agamben as follows: "The exception does not subtract itself from the rule; rather, the rule, suspending itself, gives rise to the exception, and, maintaining itself in relation to the exception, first constitutes itself as a rule" (18). In this context, the slave is the nonrelational vis-à-vis the *polis*, since conceiving it in terms of the egalitarian relations between freemen would render the *polis* -- as a just, common life -- totally inconceivable (unless the slave ceases being a slave).

To be sure, Aristotle seeks to incorporate the slave into his seemingly systematic taxonomy of politics that justifies each given socio-political position/relation in the name of nature by referring to a holistic idea of whole and part. Despite the inherent inconsistency pointed out earlier, the constitutive paradox of unequivocally excluding the slaves from being members of the *polis* on the one hand and highlighting their predestined entanglement (if not their constituent role) in the political order on the other, is disavowed, rationalized, or taken for granted in a relatively stable and hierarchical social-political structure. In other words, the political power of the city-state counts on both the separatedness of the slave from the political -- which is also the human -- and the slave's status of indistinction between human and inhuman. For an unaccountable component such as the slave, to maintain a relation of exception to the political is therefore to occupy a liminal sphere, "a paradoxical threshold of indistinction between the two" (18): inclusion and exclusion, *bios* and *zoē*, right and fact, human and inhuman, etc. By the same token, bare life can be characterized as a threshold which is "neither simple natural life nor social life," and this threshold of indistinction alone is "the always present and always operative presupposition of sovereignty" (106). Such "inclusive exclusion" of the liminal figures of *homo sacer* and the slave, as well as the obfuscation of the alleged boundaries of "bare life" in its presumed exemption to political life, points to not only the workings of political power of "classical democracy" in the Greco-Roman City, but also, I argue, to the ways in which a constitutive element of the modern democratic state was radically excluded as a founding exception at its dawning moments -- in Revolutionary France, a veritably liminal phase in which preceding forms of exclusion and subjugation are to be, ideally, transformed into those of inclusion and equity. In my subsequent discussion of the representations of the slave/slavery in this socio-historical context, I shall underscore its role as what is nonrelational to the dominant political order in light of Laclau and Mouffe's notion of "social antagonism."

If "bare life," postulated and celebrated as an idyllic ideal in the ancient world, required the inclusive exclusion of *homo sacer*, then its counterpart in the modern democratic state, which one may argue consisted in enlisting personal liberty and property as natural rights in *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* (1789) as well as inscribing "the pursuit of happiness" in *Declaration of Independence* (1776), would hinge on one form of being which is "barely life," namely, on the life of the slave under colonial slavery. Of all forms and relationships of exploitation, slavery was probably the most blatant, brutal, vicious, and weighed the heaviest on the human conscience, if it was ever awakened. The appalling atrocities committed by French colonialists were perhaps best epitomized in C.L.R. James's account of French colonialism in San Domingo, today's Haiti: "Many slaves could never be got

to stir at all unless they were whipped. Suicide was a common habit, and such was their disregard for life that they often killed themselves, not for personal reasons, but in order to spite their owners. Life was hard and death, they believed, meant not only a release but a return to Africa" (15-16). For the slaves, their mode of existence could therefore be considered that between life and death -- the status of the "living dead" -- and the only right remaining for them was, ironically, the unauthorized right to choose to take their own lives, lives that have become indistinguishable, if not less desirable, from deaths under colonial slavery. The fact that slavery was still upheld in San Domingo in the earlier years following the Bastille should have been a slap in the face for the French who were still consumed in revolutionary fervor, if this glaring inconsistency of the new Republic was ever acknowledged. The "colonial question" did not sit too well with the leadership of the Revolution, regardless of which faction or ideological camp they belonged to, and yet many of the shrewd bourgeois revolutionaries sensed that the colonies, especially San Domingo, the richest of all, essentially funded the Revolution. It was the wealth the bourgeoisie accumulated in the highly profitable trade opportunities opened up by colonialist exploitations of cheap labor and fertile lands overseas that gave the bourgeoisie the economic means and political status to challenge the monarchical authorities and the monopoly of trade privileges of the *ancien régime*. Until the formal abolition of slavery proclaimed in 1794 (which was so precarious and provisional that it was soon followed by Bonaparte's eventual restoration of slavery in 1802), the issue of slavery underwent what we might call an "institutionalized forgetting" in the post-Bastille bourgeois Republic, and emerged as a constituent exception for the new socio-political order. For it was at once what made the Revolution possible, not the least economically, and what would render the Revolutionary ideals constitutively, irrevocably unreachable. In the earlier years after the Bastille, "everybody," as James puts it bluntly, "conspired to forget the slaves," except for some lukewarm attempts by the Friends of the Negro (70).

What is at stake here is not a simple exclusion of the slaves from the newly established political order of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*; rather, it is their "inclusive exclusion" -- an exclusion which is nevertheless the precondition of the establishment of this order -- that has to be disavowed and *neutralized*. It is only by disavowing the constitutive role of the slaves -- economically or otherwise -- that the post-Bastille society can claim to be what it conceives itself to be, as one that is founded on the precepts of the Revolution. By virtue of this disavowal, the slave is not even considered part of the current socio-political system (not even along the lines of the antagonistic relations such as revolutionary/counterrevolutionary, Jacobin/Girondist, etc.), but is posited as a radical outside with no definable relations to the existing network of social relations, that is, an exception which constitutes nothing more than what Agamben describes as "the simple positing of relation with the nonrelational" (*Homo Sacer* 29) -- which is ultimately a move involving both disavowal and neutralization. To further illuminate such positing in terms of my analysis of how the term slave/slavery functions as trope in a couple of examples of post-Revolutionary discourse, I engage Laclau's and Mouffe's concept of "social antagonism": a radical negativity or exclusion, which stems from the positing of some threatening otherness as its outside and which brings about the dissolution of all positive, differential determinations. One crucial point not to be mistaken is that antagonism, as Laclau and Mouffe conceive it, is not reducible to antagonistic relations between particular sectors in a given social order; rather, antagonism is precisely the internal limit of the social itself (see Žižek, "Discourse" 253): "Antagonism as the negation of a given order is . . . the limit of that order, and not the moment of a broader totality in relation to which the two poles of the antagonism would constitute differential -- i.e. objective -- partial instances. . . . The limit of the social must be given *within* the social itself as something subverting it, destroying its ambition to constitute a full presence. Society never manages fully to be society, because *everything in it is penetrated by its limits*, which prevent it from constituting itself as an objective reality" (Laclau and Mouffe 126-27; my emphasis). "Society doesn't exist" -- if we adopt Žižek's patently provocative phrasing when he comments on Laclau -- because *antagonism does* ("Discourse" 249). It is important to note that in Laclau's and Mouffe's political theory, antagonism is not only what

prevents society from reaching a communitarian fullness -- a utopian society with no strife, conflict, nor unsatisfied demands -- but is also what is constitutive of the social. That is, antagonism, which signals that there is something fundamentally antagonized and excluded, points to a radical impossibility or absence of the fullness of the community, yet this exclusion or impossibility is precisely the precondition of the social.

If radical antagonism is irreducible to the antagonistic relations between the particulars within a given socio-political order, how does one represent -- or, in Laclau's and Mouffe's terminology -- articulate it without resorting to the existing terms of relation? More specifically, since the slave appeared to be the constitutively excluded element that made possible the post-Bastille socio-political discourse, how did the latter accommodate (represent, disavow, or neutralize?) the unbridgeable gap revealed by the question of the slave/slavery, this inherent antagonism which threatened to undermine its validity yet was constitutive of it? The slave, of course, did (physically) exist, but had no place in the post-Revolutionary ideology -- which was why s/he was met with a resounding disavowal -- a disavowal of both the inclusion and exclusion of the slave -- in the dominant post-Bastille socio-political order. The slave was thereby postulated as a radical outside, a nonrelational. This, however, is by no means the end of the story. The postulation of a radical "outside" does not result in its differential relationship to the "inside" or the existing order, which would be another differential relationship defined by the particularities of the terms; rather, the deprivation, degradation, and exclusion of the slaves is so total and profound that it divests itself of any particular, positivized content (of their antagonism) and cancels out any (previous and extant) differential relations with the "social." At such a moment of emergent radical antagonism, one is confronted not with a positivized content of antagonism, but the foregrounded internal limit penetrating every existing social identity—which lays bare the inherent inconsistency of the present socio-political order and is not yet representable in it. We are faced, in other words, with an impossibility of representation; however, the gap or fissure opened up by constitutive antagonism, which is *not merely another internal difference*, can only be mapped, in a distorted way, onto the particular differences *within* the social (Žižek, *Contingency* 92; my emphasis). Any attempt at representing radical antagonism, therefore, would end up being a misrepresentation or misrecognition that falls short of "suturing," as it were, the constitutive gap of the social fabric -- which is what I term "neutralization." On the flip side, the impossibility of representing radical antagonism is also the impossibility of representing the communitarian fullness of society. It does not prevent antagonism from being (mis)represented -- which means that antagonism does not just go away but has a series of effects even as it emerges without fully objectifiable predicates. Rather, thanks to the unbridgeable gap opened up by radical antagonism between the incarnating body and the communitarian fullness it claims to represent, such impossibility of representation appears to allow for, or even gives rise to, a series of tropological substitutions that amount to what Laclau and Mouffe call hegemonic operations: "The fullness of society is an impossible object which successive contingent contents try to impersonate through catachrestical displacements. This is exactly what hegemony means" (*Contingency* 79, 56-57).

Based on the preceding theoretical elaboration, I examine a couple of exemplary cases of such tropological substitutions in post-Bastille France. I mentioned that the volatile issue of colonial slavery underwent some sort of convenient, widespread, and institutionally-endorsed forgetting. Quite paradoxically, however, such forgetting of the question of slavery, whether knowingly or unknowingly, coincided with a proliferation of the term slavery as trope in post-Revolutionary social and literary discourses. The critic Debra Jenson notes that "appropriation of the term *slavery* to describe other, less drastic, forms of oppression had been popularized during the Revolution," sometimes even to the extent of obliterating the original referent of the word and the troubling connotations it incurs (198; emphasis in he original). For example, in George Sand's novel *Indiana* (1832), a story about a young woman who suffers both from her unhappy marriage to a much older husband and her love affair with an unfaithful man, the theme of "marriage as a form of slavery by analogy" evolves into "a political

mutation," whereby "the term *slavery* virtually sacrifices its meaning to the term *marriage*" (197, emphasis in the original). Examples of stretched and mutated analogy of this sort are rampant in the novel, not the least in descriptions of romantic relationships. The third-person narrator thus says of the dandy Raymon's fancy of Indiana, the sensitive and frail heroine who is bound in a gloomy marriage with a domineering and aged colonel: "Was she not born to love him, this enslaved woman who was only waiting for a sign in order to break her chain, for a word in order to follow him?" (Sand 52). Through Raymon's first passionate confession of his love to Indiana, we are presented with an uncannily facile and ironic reversibility of the master/slave relationship: "on awakening, Indiana, you would have found me at your feet, guarding you like a jealous master, serving you as a slave" (56). Furthermore, what best epitomizes the prevalent forgetting of the burning question of slavery in this turbulent era and the simultaneous proliferation of the figurations of the slave is probably the following passage (here I am citing Jenson's translation alongside the French original because the otherwise faithful English edition quoted above happens to sacrifice the semantic ambiguity and explosiveness caused by the problematic apostrophes and shifts of pronouns in the original): "Living in the midst of slaves, for whom she had no other aid, no other consolation than her compassion and her tears, she had become accustomed to saying, 'A day will come when everything will be changed in my life, when I will do good for others; a day when someone will love me; . . . while waiting, *let us* suffer, *let us* keep our silence; let us save *our* love for whoever will deliver *me*" (qtd. in Jenson 197; emphasis in the original) ("vivant au milieu des esclaves, pour qui elle n'avait d'autre secours, d'autre consolation que sa compassion et ses larmes, elle s'était habituée à dire: "Un jour viendra où tout sera change dans ma vie, où je ferai du bien aux autres; un jour où l'on m'aimera … en attendant, *souffrons; traisons-nous;* et gardons *notre* amour pour récompense à qui *me* délivrera" [Sand 89])

In the passage above the suffering of the slaves themselves has been relegated to oblivion not only because it is merely a vehicle through which Indiana expresses her own sense of oppression and suffering, but also because Indiana apparently forgets and in effect cloaks the fact that she still maintains a master/slave relationship with her own slaves even while bemoaning her fate in front of them. One may well wonder: what is it that allows for this extraordinary disavowal (of the slaves' status of being her slaves as well as being part of the plead for emancipation) in conjunction with its neutralization (the word "slave" now functioning strictly as trope), all coming from an ostensibly sympathetic, well-meaning fellow-sufferer? What could it have been, if not for a logic of exception elaborated on earlier, which posits the slave as a nonrelational exception, effecting an inclusion solely by her/his exclusion? In the quotation above the slaves, the impersonal non-character, are included only insofar as their literal sense and real plight are excluded -- an exclusion serving as the precondition of Indiana's emancipation (this is, at least, how Indiana's symbolic universe, or the dominant post-Bastille ideology, inadvertently conceives of it). The constitutive character of the term "slave" in the quoted passage, which functions as the basis or impetus of Indiana's speech (more of a monologue than one that is delivered to the surrounding slaves) then fades away, giving in to or displaced by tropological substitutions (from "us" to "me") in the catachrestic movements of the speech. Within the confines of the private, family life of Indiana, her "bare life" is nonetheless penetrated and captured by the larger, widespread political life of post-Revolutionary France, which predicates itself on securing a separate, apolitical sphere of bare life in which individuals -- more precisely, legitimate members of the socio-political order -- can enjoy personal liberty and property. On the other hand, in the saliently political arena, many French deputies would take advantage of the strong emotional appeal of the word *esclaves* [slaves] to refer to the status of the French people they professed to represent, yet when issues of colonial slavery arose, the term, interestingly, "was sporadically replaced by the euphemism 'unfree persons'" (Jenson 198). The phenomenon of "speaking of the slaves without really speaking for the slaves" is made possible only on condition that the slave is postulated as radically outside any hitherto conceivable relations -- which is oftentimes a move of disavowal entailing a move of neutralization of what is now posited as a nonrelational (or of establishing a relation with the nonrelational). It

was as if the slave figure emerged as an "other-worldly spectacle" in a great deal of post-Bastille discourse: the presupposed distance between spectacle and spectator ensured the disavowal of the immanence of colonial slavery, while the prolific figurations of the slave fed off the theatricality of the bestial existence and even real suffering of the slaves. In a fashion similar to the way bare life is captured in political life by modern power regime's move of putting bare life and its separateness at the top of its agenda, the literality of the word "slave" as well as the antagonism it invokes is concealed precisely by means of exposing itself in full view, as a tropological spectacle.

Such a conspicuous disavowal, of course, didn't always go unnoticed, nor unchallenged, and it was even more conspicuous than ever because the newly established political order was predicated on a theoretically sweeping reach of equality ("Men are born and remain free and equal in rights," reads one of the famous lines in *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*). Across the Atlantic Ocean, in France's most cherished colony San Domingo, a series of events was putting the whole foundation of post-Bastille discourse to the test when the legendary former slave François-Dominique Toussaint L'Ouverture (1743-1803) led the Haitian Revolution, the first successful slave revolt that, according to Eugene Genovese, was not merely another revolt, like the numerous slave insurrections before it, but the first true revolution undertaken by slaves (94; see also Blackburn; Davis). The commonplace view that the Haitian Revolution, taking place in the wake of the French Revolution, was an imitation of the latter, together with the perception of the slave leader Toussaint as a mimic man who recited and copied the precepts of the French Republic in its richest colony, has been rendered problematic, since it underestimates the extent to which the inherent antagonism of post-Bastille France was laid bare and forced upon itself by its counterpart in Saint Domingue. Historians have even pointed out how the colonial question brought up by the turmoil in the colony in fact altered the course of the French Revolution (Blackburn 257-60; James). As Hardt and Negri indicate, Toussaint simply "takes the Declaration of the Rights of Man and insists on its full translation into practice" (118). Toussaint's revolution is, I argue, a radical mimicry, as he turns the universalism of the French Revolution against itself by pushing its lofty, universalist discourse until it reaches its *internal limit*, by being more Jacobin than the Jacobins. The struggle between Toussaint and post-Bastille France, therefore, was not a showdown between two particular forces within the same (existing) socio-political field; rather, it is an arena in which a given socio-symbolic order is confronted with what is foreclosed from it -- an exclusion which is nevertheless constitutive of this order. In other words, Toussaint's struggle exemplifies what Žižek calls as a confrontation "between the social and its exteriority, the non-social" (*Contingency* 92). The limit between these opposing camps, "the limit that separates society itself from non-society," again, has to be an *internal limit* instead of an external one" (*Contingency* 92; my emphasis). If it is an external limit, it would only constitute another difference between particular elements within the same socio-symbolic edifice. Such positioning of the internal limit, as at once radically outside and penetratingly internal, is precisely how this non-social element, this "constitutive exclusion," or what Žižek calls, à la Jacques Rancière, "the part of no part," embodies radical antagonism (*Ticklish* 188). The slave, as a non-social element, therefore effects a blurring of boundaries between social and non-social, and, by extension, the indistinction between the political and the (non-political) private sphere, as we have seen in the case of *Indiana*.

What such a constitutively excluded element (*homo sacer*, the slave) brings to the fore is not only a crisis in the dominant social structure -- its immanent as well as imminent disintegration -- but also a crisis in the means of representation available to a given socio-symbolic order -- hence the emergence of a plethora of tropological substitutions for the impossible representations of radical antagonism, which, as mentioned above, typically involves the postulation of a radical outside or otherness, as a move of disavowal, and the accommodation of such postulation, in a move of neutralization. Without further recounting the subsequent historical trajectories taken by the French Republic to accommodate the crises posed by colonial slavery, I focus on how the life of the slave, as constitutive of the colonialist and capitalist regime, is conceived and/or accommodated under colonial slavery,

which funded/founded the model Western democracy. It is tempting and commonplace to posit the nonrelational outsider, the unnamable Other (or otherness, *alterité*) in terms of the inhuman, and the Body as a reminder of bestiality. Reflecting on the origin of medieval werewolf, or wolf-man, Agamben writes that "what had to remain in the collective unconscious as a monstrous hybrid of human and animal . . . is, therefore, in its origin the figure of the man who has been banned from the city" -- the bandit now defined by the law as falling under the category of "werewolf" (*Homo Sacer* 105). "The life of the bandit," Agamben continues, "like that of the sacred man [*homo sacer*], is not a piece of animal nature without any relation to law and the city." Rather, it resides in a "threshold of indistinction," a liminal sphere between "animal and man, *physis* and *nomos*, exclusion and inclusion," inhuman and human (*Homo Sacer* 105). Like the medieval juridical order that in effect stipulated the outcast wolf-man (not simply a wolf) as "*neither man nor beast*" (*Homo Sacer* 105), the widespread perception of the slave as neither human nor inhuman has been well-documented. James, for instance, has the following acute observation: "The difficulty was that though one could trap them like animals, transport them in pens, work them alongside an ass or a horse and beat both with the same stick, stable them and starve them, *they remained, despite their black skin and curly hair, quite invincibly human beings*; with the intelligence and resentments of human beings. To cow them into the necessary docility and acceptance necessitated a regime of calculated brutality and terrorism, and it is this that explains the unusual spectacle of property-owners apparently careless of preserving their property; they had first to ensure their own safety" (11-12; my emphasis).

Here, in James's description, the issue of colonial slavery is brought up in conjunction with that of racism, or more precisely, a universal racism against the black race, as European colonialism was largely built on slave trades out of Africa and the ensuing exploitation of slave labor performed by the black body. The shackled, subjugated life-forms, now reduced to human-less properties, always present themselves as a potential, implacable threat -- which is their reversibility to human beings. Traveling to the heart of the Dark Continent, Marlow, sensing the natives stirring behind the dense, impenetrable "curtain of trees," had an uneasy realization about the human (re)sources of the "conquered monster," the slave: "No they were not inhuman. Well, you know it's the worst of it -- this suspicion of their not being inhuman" (Conrad 37). Of course, what made both Marlow and the slave owners uneasy was also the perceived bestiality or even physical prowess of the black bodies, which justified the racist view that they are built by nature's design for the rigors of working in the plantations under unforgiving climate. Hence the prevalent presupposition of the African slaves (and for that matter, the colonized natives, enslaved or not) being savages, inciting and deserving all the cruelty and horrific punitive measures imaginable. Although it is seldom acknowledged by the colonizer, colonial histories, especially those of Haiti, nevertheless testify to what Michael Taussig calls "the mimicry by the colonizer of the savagery imputed to the savage" (66). If the slave is perceived as inhuman, then it (she/he) is also calling our humanity into question, bringing the alleged humans—master or slave, colonizer or colonized -- to the limit between human and inhuman. Apart from the ambiguity, if not inconsistency, in Aristotle's conception of the slave as less than the human who is defined by her/his capacity of engaging in the political, the semantic elasticity of the term "slave" in post-Bastille discourse to a certain extent reflects the uncertain, oscillating status of the slave as both human and inhuman in the eyes of the "ordinary," legitimate members of the French society at this historical juncture. Indeed, how would one, imbued in the noble rhetoric of *liberté* and *égalité*, rationalize the brutality inflicted on the slaves if one does not, even if unwittingly, think of them as less or other than human? It should be clear by now that the slave, being a constitutively excluded element like *homo sacer*, emerges as a liminal figure who occupies a threshold of indistinction between human and inhuman. What is peculiar in the cases we have examined is that such radical otherness, rather than reinforcing the dividing lines between inside and outside (us and them), appears or turns out to be foregrounding an "internal limit" or "inclusive exclusion" which disintegrates the socio-political system from within and results in the liminal sphere of indistinction. Before closing, I elaborate on one of the

aforementioned dualities that eventually become indistinguishable -- bare life and political life -- by examining the implications of "bare life" for the black slaves under colonial slavery.

As pointed out above, the life the slave led under colonial slavery was barely a life -- in fact, the slave herself/himself was barely a life, but a living dead, coming alive only when she/he determined to embody, as Toussaint did, the radical antagonism stalking the ostensibly well-maintained colonial machine. The slave figure therefore can be reduced to the slave's black body, signifying nothing more than bestiality and sheer corporeal existence, that is, bare life in its strictest sense. Conceived in terms of its functionality instead of constitutive character, the slave's body is secured in its proper place, as a property, within the confines of the private sphere which modern regime of power champions by asserting its separateness from the political realm—a move that, as indicated above, effects the de facto indistinction of bare life and political life. The black body, as an exemplification par excellence for bare life, was thereby rendered a spectacle, as in *Indiana*, in its inclusion in and subjugation by (or exclusion from) the dominant political order. In the US context, as Michael Eric Dyson contends, this legacy of the black body as spectacle survived the abolition and extended into the middle of the twentieth century, in the form of "severely limited publicly acceptable forms of displaying black physical prowess," for example, "the exclusion of black bodies from white sports" (66; How the US mainstream society accommodates this spectacle now that the black body has to some degree become the mainstream in entertainment industry, "the industry of spectacle," is an issue that has to be left to another article). It seems that what remains certain is the phenomenon that bare life's subjection to political life is concealed precisely by its exposure as a separate sphere, a spectacle, a founding exception that has to be disavowed and neutralized, excluded and included.

As Hardt and Negri argue, colonial slavery can be "perfectly compatible with capitalist production" (122), although it appears that the capitalist ideology of freedom "must be antithetical to slave labor" (121). "There is no contradiction here," Hardt and Negri conclude wryly, "slave labor in the colonies made capitalism in Europe possible, and European capital had no interest in giving it up" (122). What makes the two "perfectly compatible" is, in fact, nothing more than the logic of exception I have elaborated on -- that is, compatible until its constitutive contradiction is brought to the fore by the radical antagonism that is internal or inherent to it. It is in this sense that one can say, echoing Fanon, that in the broader context of colonial slavery that founded the Western model democratic state (and by extension, the liberal-democratic world order), the black slave, as a constitutively excluded element, is "rooted at the core of a universe from which he must be extricated." For what the slave foregrounds is the internal limit that would penetrate each element of the order, dissolving each previously constituted identity and limit, including "the human," likely the last straw one would clutch to before drowning into a maelstrom of monstrosity, even though s/he has to be posited as a radical outside. Steeped in the French culture as well as Western civilization in general, and personally involved in the revolutionary upheavals of anticolonial movements of his time, Fanon is confronted with a radical antagonism invoked by the figure of the black body, which not only allows for the tropological indeterminacy and displacements of the term but also highlights the inherent inconsistency of white humanism allegedly underlying European colonial expansionism. "What, then, is human and what is not human?" To this ensuing question, implied throughout *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon's answer, fittingly, points to an internal limit with no positivized content, except for a posited radical outside: "*The Negro is not. Anymore than the white man*" (231; my emphasis).

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