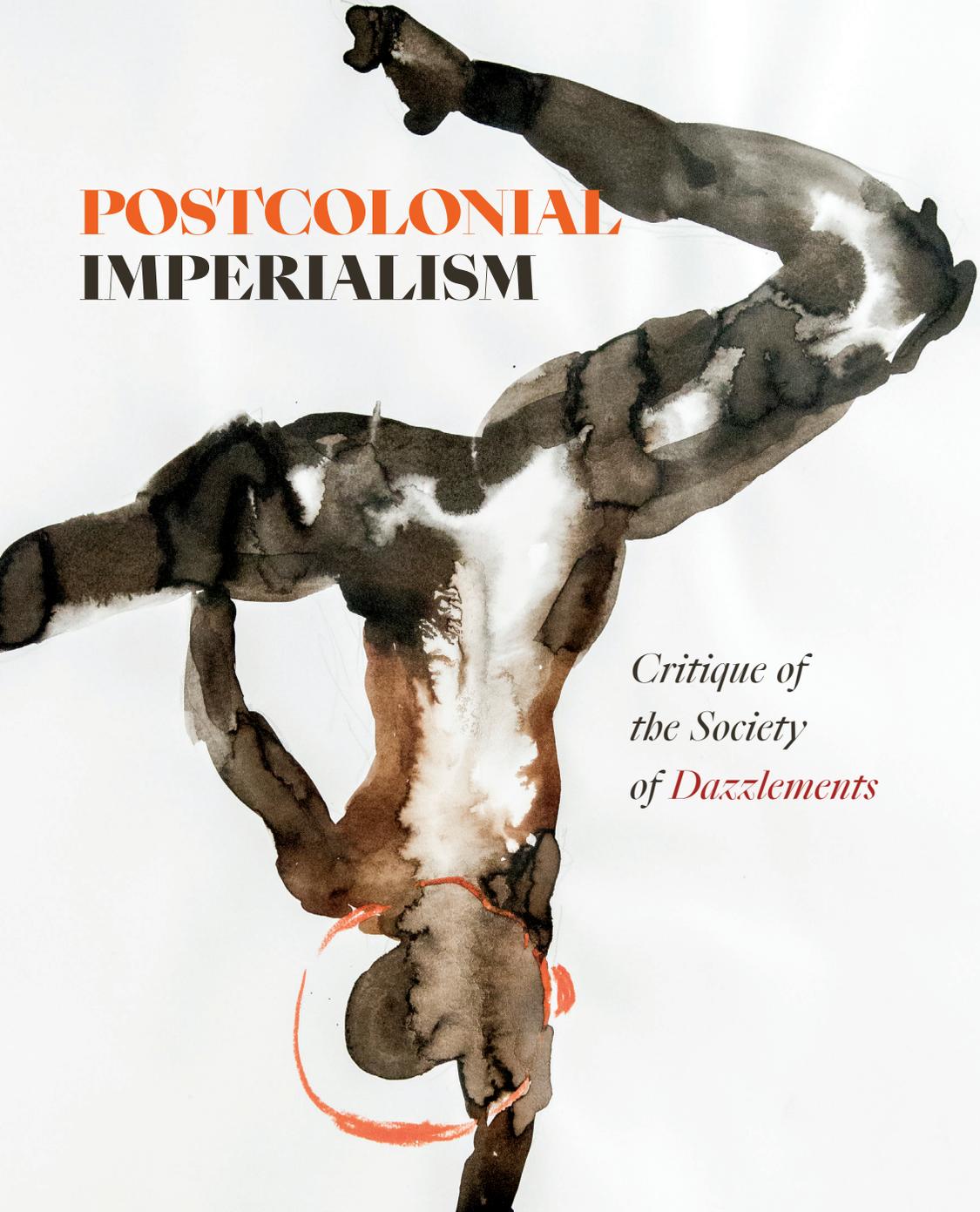


TRANSLATED BY  
CHERYL SMEALL

JOSEPH TONDA

**POSTCOLONIAL  
IMPERIALISM**

*Critique of  
the Society  
of Dazzlements*



**POSTCOLONIAL  
IMPERIALISM**



THEORY IN FORMS Series Editors  
Nancy Rose Hunt, Achille Mbembe, and Todd Meyers

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# POSTCOLONIAL IMPERIALISM

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Critique of the  
Society of Dazzlements

JOSEPH TONDA

*Translated by Cheryl Smeall*

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Her cry—which, incidentally, Isookanga no longer heard—echoed in her innermost consciousness, exploding into an enormous spray of white light, of indescribable purity, which decomposed into innumerable sparks, resembling what might be redemption when seen in myriads of flakes shaped like stars, sparkling unto death.

—IN KOLI JEAN BOFANE, *Congo Inc.*

I believe, however, that if the conqueror is strengthened by new acquisitions, he also weakens himself through this same process especially when he is unable or unwilling to digest the inevitable biological and spiritual upheavals of his adventure. He weakens insofar as he opens up to the Other, whom he has nonetheless constructed as negative, and reduced to a non-human dimension, allowing him to believe that he will do with it just what suits his interests and pleasure. The conqueror forgets the obvious: the Other is dynamic, the Other, in the new contexts in which they are placed, becomes an “incurable” element of a visible and inner metamorphosis. The conqueror, in making their conquests (slavery, colonization . . .), is in a way the object of conquest. They expose themselves without measuring in advance the consequences of this exposure. They belatedly become aware of them, when a new, complex reality is in the process of imposing itself before their eyes, threatening them or at least what they consider to be their “purity.”

What lies beyond racism, then, is rage at the erection of the Other as a human being, which he or she has always been, and which must be taken into account. Whether we elaborate strategies to confine them to certain roles and territories, or push things to the point of eliminating them, they are there.

—SAMI TCHAK, *La couleur de l'écrivain*

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## Translator's Note

The job of the translator is to transform a text from one language into another in a way that the result is idiomatic in the target language while preserving the meaning, style, and tone of the original. Often this can be achieved by using terms and phrasing that are different from, but similar in meaning to, those used by the author. However, in a work like this one, where it is clear that every word was carefully chosen by the author for its precise meaning, and the unique style chosen to express the unique ideas it contains, to proceed in this way would result in an unfaithful rendition of the style of the original and the ideas developed therein.

A central theme of Joseph Tonda's *Postcolonial Imperialism: Critique of the Society of Dazzlements* is the interplay between light and darkness, and the results thereof. Thresholds are featured throughout (including in place of the word "chapter") as the point where this interplay takes place. In threshold 1, the "colonial encounter" is defined as follows: "The 'colonial encounter' is therefore this point of blindness, of not seeing, this threshold where transactions, transitions, and transgressions take place between the lights of civilization and the darkness of savagery: transactions, transitions, and transgressions that lead both imaginations to create, on the basis of the myths and unconscious of their respective cultures, the phantasmatic realities of the postcolonial world." Blindness, or the killing of the eyes, is caused by the interaction between light (brilliance, radiance, the sun, stars, lightning strikes) and darkness (shadows, phantoms, and specters, defined as the "visible-invisible": see threshold 7). But while darkness or Blackness/blackness can sometimes render things invisible, at other times, it has the opposite effect. As Tonda points out in threshold 6, "Very dark black shines, and therefore emits light, like a sun." In threshold 5, by dyeing her hair black, Pascaline "turned the radiance of bloneness into

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the sign of invisibility. Blackness thereby becomes visible.” Thresholds, “that liminal zone where light meets shadow, a zone of *transactions, transitions, and transgressions* between shadow and light, between myth and the unconscious” (threshold 1), are also identified as the cause of dazzlements (*éblouissements*), which are what this book is about.

As Tonda points out in the ending Critical Threshold, though dazzlement is not specifically named as such in social science works, it is present “within the concepts of blindness, fascination, seduction, deception, illumination, hallucination, and wonder familiar to analyses of *power* in several fields.” Given the centrality of *éblouissements* to this book, and the number of times they appear in it, a great deal of thought went into how to translate this word. I began by working backward from how Tonda defines *éblouissements*. In threshold 3, he states, “Dazzlements are, from the point of view that interests me, the paradigm of that which ‘disturbs the vision,’ which ‘makes one’s head spin’ (vertigo): the paradigm of blindness, fascination, seduction, wonder, and deception.” The interplay between light and darkness is also a key component of dazzlement: “There must therefore be an encounter between light and shadow in order for the transactions, transitions, and transgressions between the two to create the state of vision called dazzlement: a confusion, a mental and affective disturbance that induces transport; provokes trances, illuminations, and hallucinations; and causes wonder, in other words, that puts one outside oneself and activates magical thinking and its screen-images” (threshold 1).

The dictionary translation of *éblouissement* is “dazzlement.” As this word is not often used in English, I considered various synonyms of its root, *dazzle*. Some I decided against because of their strong association with the magical, such as *enchant, charm, and bewitch*. Others I considered—such as *blind, beguile, fascinate, seduce, and mesmerize*—refer only to parts of the definitions provided by Tonda. I considered *stun*, which fit with many of the components of the definitions, but rejected it because it causes auditory rather than visual disturbances and it has a negative connotation, as opposed to the positive connotation of *dazzle*. In the end, the only English word that encompasses all the meanings and connotations of *éblouissements* as employed in this book is indeed *dazzlements*.

For three key terms in this book, because their meanings are more varied in French than they are in English, I was unable to choose just one word to translate them. The first is *foudre*. Where the word appeared on its own, I translated it as “lightning.” However, a *coup de foudre* is both a lightning strike and love at first sight, and is translated in both ways, as appropriate. The closest approximation to the results of a *coup de foudre* in English would be “to be thunderstruck”;

however, as this refers to the effects caused by sound rather than light, I avoided using it wherever possible. The second term is *Noir/noir*. The straight translation would be *Black/black*. However, as *Noir* can mean both *Black* and *Blackness*, and *noir* can mean *black*, *dark*, and *darkness*, the elegance of the use of these words in the original could not be preserved in translation. The third term is *Nègre*, a word that can have many different meanings, depending on the context. Following the example of Laurent Dubois, the translator of Achille Mbembe's *Critique of Black Reason*, I translated this in most cases as *Black* (person/people/men/women) and as *Negro* in others. The exception is *nègres blancs/nègresses blanches*. Taking inspiration from the references in the text to "the specter of white people" and "the shadow of the white person," I translated these terms as "Black people whose imaginaries are haunted by white culture."

In a few cases, the connotations of a word used in the French original are not associated with the word's English equivalent. In order not to lose these connotations, I left these words untranslated. One such word is *canon*. A *canon* is cannon (as in the weapon), but when used to describe an attractive woman, it is also a knockout. When referring to *canons*, it is implied that the beauty of these *canons* is being weaponized and that this beauty has the same effect on the viewer as a sudden burst of light (see, for example, threshold 5). While "knockout" retains the image of violence, it does not retain the image of weaponry, or that of a flash of light. Another is the garment known as a DVD (*dos et ventre dehors*—back and belly out). While a DVD is akin to a halter top, "halter top" does not preserve the DVD's reference to technology.

When cited sources were available in an English-language version, I cited, or quoted directly from, these versions. In all other cases, the translations—and any errors they contain—are mine.

Throughout the translation, I endeavored to provide the closest approximation to the preciseness of language, and the particular style, chosen so carefully by Joseph Tonda. I hope that this translation conveys the brilliance not only of the ideas developed in the original but also of the language the author chose with which to express them.

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OPENING THRESHOLD

## The Dazzling Dark Powers of Postcolonial Imperialism

This book is a *critical essay* on the dazzlements of a little-known imperialism, postcolonial imperialism, whose agency can be seen, for example, in the dazzlements caused by screen-images of a “little girl” or a “green ball” seen by an initiate of Bwiti<sup>1</sup> looking at the sun’s “screen.”<sup>2</sup> More generally, they are the dazzlements caused by screen-images of Nicki Minaj (see thresholds 4 and 5 and the ending Critical Threshold), Osama Bin Laden, Johnny Mad Dog (legendary hero of the postcolonial Congolese and Central African wars—see threshold 1), Nafissatou Diallo, Dominique Strauss-Kahn (DSK), and Nicholas Sarkozy (see threshold 6), as well as sex bombs, SME-bodies (small- and medium-sized enterprise-bodies) from Libreville (see threshold 4), and the sex-bodies of other stars, figures, and things<sup>3</sup> of colonial and postcolonial empires visible on the material, symbolic, imaginary, or mental screens of neoliberal globalization. They are the images and screens, screen-images, but also images of images, that fascinate, seduce, amaze, possess, obsess, oppress, suppress, haunt, and ultimately

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*colonize* the imaginary or unconscious<sup>4</sup> of individuals and groups, not only in Africa but also in the Euro-American world and elsewhere.

The questions that serve as a common thread for the ideas developed in this book are the following: What is the *value* of the other—brother or sister, mother or father, fellow citizen or co-religionist, member of the same race, ethnic group,<sup>5</sup> or village—built on, and at the same time clash with and destroy, in the society of dazzlements? What did the French ethnic or national consciousness clash with during the screen dazzlements of the DSK/Nafissatou Diallo case in 2011? What was the power that possessed, obsessed, haunted, and colonized Sarkozy's psyche, transforming him into an obscene actor in his "Dakar address"? What is it that lies both above and at the heart of primary solidarities, that generates love, provokes hatred, ignites passions, consumes affections, and works to *deparent*? What is the power that replaces or merges with God, spirits, and ancestors, and whose dazzlements plunge the figure of the other, dominant or dominated, white or Black, or its own self, into the hell of abjection, darkness, and death? What is the power that possesses, obsesses, dazzles, and colonizes Hegel's mind, telling him:

They [Black people] do not have the consciousness that man is inherently free. Family love is weak or even nonexistent. The son sells his parents, his sisters, his wife, and his children. Contrary to any ethical consideration, slavery is widespread. Man has no value in himself. We cannot speak of contempt for death, but there exists among them a nonconsideration of life insofar as they have no ethical goal. Death means nothing to them. They die heedlessly.<sup>6</sup>

What is this power that is *black like dazzlement*,<sup>7</sup> that lies at the heart of obsessions with unlimited possession and high-speed consumption of material goods, women, and men? What is the relationship between postcolonial imperialism, the imperialism of dazzlements that is the name of this power, and postcolonial theory, from which it takes the term *postcolonial*? Is postcolonial imperialism synonymous with the imperialism of the postcolony?<sup>8</sup>

### Postcolonial Imperialism of Subjects Living Elsewhere at Home

Beyond the solar or technological dazzlements that transport<sup>9</sup> us and are visible even though they are "naturalized" and rendered almost invisible, the central idea here is that the truly dazzling and invisible power that lives, circulates, and

acts in the *darkness* or the *invisible*<sup>10</sup>—including in the darkness or invisible of the imaginary or the unconscious, in spectral form, in the uninterrupted flow of screen-images—is *value*, the “automaton subject,”<sup>11</sup> which “does not stalk about with a label describing what it is,”<sup>12</sup> in its perverse complicities with other dark or invisible powers belonging to ethnic, religious, national, and transnational cultural and symbolic repertoires.

One phenomenal form emblematic of these dazzling apparitions as screen-images, on the screens of popular but also religious imaginations (for example, on those of Pentecostal imaginations), is the figure of Mami Wata. Mami Wata is both postmodern and postcolonial, a white woman<sup>13</sup> who is half-human and half-animal<sup>14</sup> (and therefore trans-nature and sometimes transgender<sup>15</sup>), a purveyor of material wealth, prestige, and power, and therefore a “fetish-woman” and a “medication-woman,”<sup>16</sup> whose powers of possession belong to the imaginary of fetishism, where images and objects are endowed with subjectivity and agency. This phenomenal form of the apparition of value and “white animal power”<sup>17</sup>—which Pentecostals see as the “dark power” of an Abrahamic figure colonizing the unconscious or imaginary of white and Black people, namely the Devil—is endowed with agency and physical action over the bodies of the subjects it possesses, obsesses, oppresses, and suppresses. Her mode of operation is the violence of the imaginary. The violence of the imaginary is a violence exercised by individuals or groups on others or on themselves, under the command or orders of the forces of the unconscious that are embodied in the screen-images of supermodels, stars, pornographic sex-bodies, Mercedes-Benzes, and wealth in advertisements,<sup>18</sup> following the same register of the agency of divine or diabolic apparitions, genies, and the powers of witchcraft and fetishism. The violence of the imaginary is exerted as much on the rich as on the poor, on white people as on Black people, insofar as its principle is the awareness shared by all of the agentive power of the imaginary figures that administer it.

In Gabon, for example, the violence of the imaginary of “detached human parts”—that is, human organs harvested from live patients<sup>19</sup> and then “worked” by specialists in the “occult”<sup>20</sup> or magic and consumed by individuals for the purposes of conquering and conserving power, acquiring material goods or money—is a violence fueled by the awareness that crosses social classes of the agency of penises, ears, clitorises, eyes, hands, and so on, over the social destiny of subjects. This book relates physical experiences of the violence of the imaginary of dark powers colonized by value that possesses, obsesses, oppresses, and suppresses white people in Libreville. The telling of these experiences explicitly reveals the agency of *money*, the phenomenal or fetishized form of value, in its

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perverse complicities with the dark power of the abject, of decay or excrement, a power linked to witchcraft and/or sexual bewitchments carried out by the Gabonese women and men who *possess* them (see threshold 4).

However, the violence of the imaginary that operates in the present day through the screen dazzlements of postcolonial imperialism is not confined to formerly colonized societies. As Raymond Williams points out, when it comes to advertising, capitalist societies, such as those of the United States, France, and Great Britain, are “functionally very close to the magic systems of primitive societies that coexist rather strangely with a highly developed scientific technology.”<sup>21</sup> A simple way of defining postcolonial imperialism, in a first approximation, is to conceive of it as an invisible or dark imperialism (with darkness as a paradigm of invisibility, the invisible, or magic) exercised by “the magic systems of primitive societies” in the imaginaries of subjects belonging to capitalist societies. These imaginaries constitute *possessions* or *colonial territories* of these “systems,” which we cannot or do not want to see because of the power of the dazzlements of scientific technologies.<sup>22</sup> Capitalist societies are societies governed by the power of *value*, which, according to Marx, “enters as a subject”<sup>23</sup> or as an “automatic subject.”<sup>24</sup> In this approximation, postcolonial imperialism is an imperialism that combines, within advanced or less advanced capitalist societies, the dazzlements of “primitive” and “modern” magics, to constitute the unconscious of subjects as colonies of its dark or invisible power.

The guiding critical idea of this book is that the luminaries of colonial modernity have been colonized from within, under the power of value and its metonym, the Devil, by the dazzling historically fabricated specter of the Black person.<sup>25</sup> Postcolonial studies, centered on “hybridity” and “ambiguity,” challenging the “binary thought” that is the thought of the Same, has not crossed the theoretical threshold that would have enabled those in this field to see *the invasive imperialist and colonizing presence of the Black spectral power introduced into white psychic intimacy by value from the time of the slave trade*. Hybridity theorists, dazzled by the Enlightenment episteme they deconstructed and the presence of which they *retrace* in the postcolony,<sup>26</sup> have remained blind to the reality of dark colonialism carried by value into the imaginary or unconscious of white people, and saw as a priority only the specter of the white person colonizing Black bodies and imaginaries.

Or, if some have crossed this threshold, its dazzlements have not allowed them to see a constitutive power of postcolonial imperialism in the Black people produced by value. They have viewed them above all as the radical Other of the Euro-American, following in the footsteps of Frantz Fanon<sup>27</sup> and Edward

Said.<sup>28</sup> Ashis Nandy,<sup>29</sup> for example, who argues that colonization is alienating or degrading for both the colonized and the colonizer, not least because it is part of the process of “decivilization,” as Aimé Césaire put it, and who criticizes Fanon for failing to see that “the inescapable penalty of wickedness is simply to be the sort of person one is,”<sup>30</sup> failed to see the colonization of the psyche of British colonizers by the feminized Indian. This spectral colonialism, which originates in the British psyche through Adam Smith’s “invisible hand,” became extravagant in India due to the dazzlements of the “dark continent” of Indian femininity.<sup>31</sup>

To borrow a metaphor from the 1960s, the theories and thoughts that make up postcolonialism have been dazzled by the luminaries who produced the “cold” light of electricity, which was supposed to deconstruct dark African powers in order to build development, modernization, progress, and civilization in independence, even if today’s reality is one of postcolonial nostalgia and melancholy.<sup>32</sup> No social class, no race, no gender is spared the power of this dark imperialism, whose unlimited expansion is achieved by the apparatus of the dazzlements of value and its dark powers.

And yet, in *Discourse on Colonialism*, Césaire set the stage for the colonization of the white psyche by value when he inscribed colonialist logic in the “law of progressive dehumanization”<sup>33</sup> that condemned the bourgeoisie to occupy the place of the ferocious beast: a beast driven by the “evil power of gold and the hoarding up of money,”<sup>34</sup> a beast with the body of “the iron man forged by capitalist society.”<sup>35</sup> For Césaire, the dark demon of colonialism appeared in the guise of gold, the materialization of value, and therefore the demon of all racism, and hence of class racism.

However, in *Heart of Darkness*, Joseph Conrad, alias Marlow, put us on the right track early on by showing that, by sinking deep into the darkness, he was actually sinking into the darkness of his racial unconscious, occupied, colonized, and tormented by the Devil of value. Deep in the forest and up the Congo River, in this hell of the Independent State of Congo, he set out to *find* not only his “conscience” but also his phantom, his mirror image or spectral double living under the white figure of Kurtz, possessed by both the dark spirits of value locked in ivory and by the dark dazzlements of a lush and hostile natural environment.<sup>36</sup> In the subjective screen of his malaria-driven delirium, he encounters his “dear aunt” (his conscience) who says to him: “Weren’t you supposed to go to Africa to help these people extricate themselves from their prehistory?” Marlow/Conrad replies, “Oh, I’m just a sailor.” So his aunt continues: “So what? When you realize that it’s all hypocrisy, that colonization is in no way a philanthropic enterprise or a desire to push back the frontiers of

ignorance, disease, tyranny. . . . Once you've admitted that it's all about adventurers and pirates, wholesale spices and merchants, what do you do?"<sup>37</sup>

About Kurtz, his racial mirror image, Marlow/Conrad says: "Kurtz discoursed. A voice! A voice! It rang deep to the very last. It survived his strength to hide in the magnificent folds of eloquence the barren darkness of his heart. Oh he struggled, he struggled. The wastes of his weary brain were haunted by shadowy images now—images of wealth and fame revolving obsequiously round his unextinguishable gift of noble and lofty expression."<sup>38</sup> Kurtz was colonized and thus possessed by "the barren darkness of his heart" and by "spectral images—of wealth, of glory." The "barren darkness of his heart" was the color of the Black people who haunted him, while the "spectral images—of wealth, of glory" were the color of the ivory that obsessed him. The dazzling complex formed by the perverse complicities between the two colors constitutes the dark colonizing power of postcolonial imperialism, of which Kurtz's psyche is a *territory or possession*. He is in the image of Mami Wata, screen-image, phenomenal form of value, or the Beast, foundation of racism, locus of race and blind spot of *postcolonial theory*.

Indeed, summing up the postcolonial conception of racism, Achille Mbembe argues that "postcolonial thought . . . shows that there is, in European colonial humanism, something that must be called unconscious self-hatred. Racism in general, and colonial racism in particular, is the transfer of this self-hatred onto the other."<sup>39</sup>

If we accept this thesis, racism, whether colonial or postcolonial, is unconscious self-hatred transferred onto the other, who then becomes the Other, the Real, the "impossible Thing, the 'inhuman partner,' the Other with whom no symmetrical dialogue, mediated by the Symbolic Order, is possible."<sup>40</sup> In anthropological or sociological terms, then, a "racist society" is one colonized or possessed by self-hatred. When this society is a capitalist one with "Judeo-Christian roots," self-hatred can only be inhabited by value and the Devil, the Beast,<sup>41</sup> the colonizing powers of the Judeo-Christian unconscious. The question then arises: When *transferred* onto the Other, self-hatred, inhabited by the Devil and value, objectified and transformed into the Other, the monstrous, does it not return, according to the sociological law of "feedback,"<sup>42</sup> *charged* with its *dark object*, its historical demon, the Black person, to colonize the unconscious of which it is "part" or from which it originated?

What interests me is the transubstantiation undergone by self-hatred, which in reality becomes the unthought-of and unthinkable Other, the abject, the excremental, the dark imperialist power, the power of the Beast or Thing that possesses, obsesses, haunts, oppresses, suppresses, illuminates, and dazzles like

Satan, the angel of light, the unconscious of colonial and postcolonial humanism. This is the common blind spot of postcolonial theory and its critics.

To put it in Césaire's terms, my position is that the secret of the "self-hatred" of the "iron man forged" by "capitalist society" lies in the colonization of its unconscious by value transubstantiated in the Other, the Thing. This position implies that there is an unthought-of and unthinkable dark colonialism whose territory or possession is the "bourgeois" unconscious. This dark colonialism, the colonialism of the monkey or the "degenerate devil,"<sup>43</sup> the figure of the Beast and therefore of money, is the colonialism of the abject or the excremental (see threshold 2) in the age of neoliberal capitalism.

This position is different from that of Achille Mbembe, who, in his most recent work,<sup>44</sup> highlights the negritude of the world under the iron grip of neoliberal globalization, one of the characteristics of which is to render immense quantities of labor power obsolete throughout the world. He expresses this with his characteristic power of words and sense of formula:

The Negro is a creation of capitalism: initially, it defined this "object-man," "commodity-man," who appeared with the slave trade, and enabled the rise of early capitalism. But in the age of neo-liberalism, the Negro is freed from the concept of race. And abandonment and indifference towards whole swathes of humanity became the paroxysmal forms of capitalist exploitation, simply because the production of wealth became detached from real needs. It no longer serves to provide work and reduce unemployment, and has long since ceased to provide the basis for new redistribution procedures. As a result of the financialization of the economy, wealth has become abstract, and no longer has such need for workers or slaves.<sup>45</sup>

As I have just suggested, my attention is focused on dark colonial imperialism, constituted by the perverse complicity of dark values and powers, of which experiences of oppression, obsession, haunting, fascination, seduction, amazement, and dazzlement are the subject of popular narratives in the terms of the unsurpassable colonizing power of the abject, of the "Thing," of rot and therefore of money and death (see threshold 2), in the lives of the powerful and the subaltern alike, regardless of race. This dark colonialism, unsurpassable in capitalist society, the society of dazzlements, is that to which the diabolically divine dazzlements of value, in its perverse complicities with the "native" powers it turns into "heritages" representative of national or racial cultural identities, blind the powerful, that is, the white people (see threshold 7).

Therefore, this study is not a study of the postcolonial subject geographically situated in the unique space of the former colonies, the space of the

“postcolony.” It is a study of all those subjects who *live elsewhere at home* through the power of the dazzlements of the imperialism of screen-images of darkness and value (Nicki Minaj, Johnny Mad Dog, Osama Bin Laden, DSK, etc.), the colonizing power of their unconscious. The heuristic significance of the concepts of postcolonial imperialism and dazzlement lies in revealing the blind or blinding spots in the critical gazes of postcolonial theory, subaltern studies, and traditional Marxism.<sup>46</sup> These concepts situate my perspective alongside that of Mbembe, who, contrary to Fanon, for whom to “rise in humanity” is to put the colonist or oneself to death,<sup>47</sup> advocates for the death of death itself: “put death to death.”<sup>48</sup> Against Afro-pessimism, Africanism, Afrocentrism, subaltern studies, and postcolonial theory, all of which have in common an insistence on difference and otherness, Mbembe opposes the thought of the “similar” and therefore a “common human nature.”<sup>49</sup> What postcolonial imperialism and its apparatus of dazzlements bring to light is the unsurpassable dark colonialism (see the final threshold) whose territory, or possession, is the psyche of race and value, since the time of the slave trade and the colonial encounter recounted by Conrad.

### Critical Essay on the Thresholds of Postcolonial Imperialism

Let us go even further. This book is a critical essay on the thresholds of postcolonial imperialism, and thus on the dazzlements these thresholds produce, which open the doors to “another world,” the world of the imaginary, which is thought of in terms of its indiscernibility from the real world.<sup>50</sup> Normally, we speak of the “threshold of a door.” When one goes through a door from a brightly lit exterior to an unlit interior, crossing this threshold or *border* has the effect of producing dazzlement. The reverse is also true.

The space-time of the threshold, this border that is also a passage because it enables one to access another world, is therefore a critical space-time or passage. As F. D., my Bwiti-initiated European interlocutor from Libreville, put it, it can lead to a “journey of stupefaction and blindness” on the screen, where images are used as a means of “manipulation” and “enslavement” because we are led to “want the impossible, to be swallowed by a vampire called television.” This is a very explicit way of expressing the imperialist colonialism of the screen and therefore of screen-images. Nowadays, the world of initiatory dazzlements has the threshold separating it from that of the screen dazzlements of modern technology and is “swallowed by a vampire called television.” In fact, the world of the imaginary or symbolic screen dazzlements of initiation is very much present in the journeys offered by all technological screens, which enable

us to cross the thresholds of everyday reality and live elsewhere, in another world. The cover of Nadège Chabloz's book, which shows a Gabonese man filming two white and Black initiates in Gabon, is revealing in this respect.<sup>51</sup> The idea I am putting forth here is that the register in which the "swallowing" of those who operate a television considered to be a "vampire" takes place is not the register of metaphor without any real physical effect on bodies and imaginations. On the contrary, it is the register of the reality of the imperialist colonialism of value in its perverse complicities with the *dark power* of the images or "things" we see in the dazzlements caused by the sun or of screens.<sup>52</sup>

To put it differently, postcolonial imperialism is the power constituted by the dazzlements caused by the sun and by screens that lead to the crossing of thresholds or borders in a global context where, generally speaking, many people are inclined to "seek life elsewhere"<sup>53</sup> at their peril, manipulated and "vampirized" to the point of "wanting the impossible" and thus "becoming enslaved." This logic of wanting the impossible and becoming enslaved is the logic of neoliberalism, which never tires of insisting on the obligation to "sell oneself."<sup>54</sup> In Central Africa, this neoliberal obligation to "sell oneself" is not without the old idea of constituting the "white man" as a power to be conquered by seducing and possessing him, in order to turn him into a thing or an instrument of success. This is expressed in a historic phrase: "getting your white man."<sup>55</sup>

### Getting Your White Man

For young women in Libreville, "getting your white man" means fulfilling their reverie<sup>56</sup> of living elsewhere at home. To get their white man, they must first seek out the mystical means (i.e., fetishes or "medications" classified as spiritual) that are capable of helping them achieve this goal. Initiations in Bwiti temples and deliverances in charismatic Pentecostal churches are among these means. Next, for each of them, "getting their white man" means going on the hunt for their white man, on beaches, in supermarkets, in nightclubs, or in other places their prey is supposed to frequent. These "predatory" figures (the word is commonplace in the vocabulary of female students in Libreville) paint a picture of subjects who take the initiative, develop strategies, and evaluate the objectives to be achieved according to their resources, which are summed up in their sex-bodies, the exemplary manifestation of the desiring-machine.

In this situation, subalterns do not just speak but act in the spirit of reversing the domination inaugurated by the slave trade and colonization, the effects of which they are still suffering from. From this point of view, practices of dazzlement, sometimes supported by mirrored nightclub walls that allow

them to dance with their reflected image, are a powerful apparatus.<sup>57</sup> The most decisive factor, from the point of view of the “economic-sexual trade”<sup>58</sup> they aim to achieve, is the fact that the “white man,” whom they may fall in love with, whom they may “love” regardless of his age (some of their targets look like sickly old men), is, in the final analysis, a value-bearing body. In the Marxian sense, the “white man” is a body that bears the “automatic subject” of which money or commodities are, among others, “functional agents” (see the example of Nafissatou Diallo in threshold 6).

In this context, the young women on the hunt for white men in Libreville bear witness to this imperialism of possession of a being that is a source of money. The postcolonial character of this imperialism is justified by the fact that the power that *commands* all the agents of this imperialism is value in its perverse complicity with dark power (the spirits of initiations or fetishes) designed to dazzle, or to seduce, blind, fascinate, amaze, in short, to *colonize* white men. Threshold 4 shows how this colonization of transforming white bodies into obsessed, oppressed, suppressed, and haunted possessions is felt in the bodies of a white woman and a white man from Libreville.

The bodies of white people are identified with the magical power of money and thus viewed as objects to be conquered, possessed, or colonized, following the possession pattern of Mami Wata, a phenomenal figure of value and power who is both white and Black, as discussed above. The neoliberal logic of “selling oneself” that causes this also leads predatory Black women to deploy their dark powers on a transnational scale. The example of young Nigerian women in Italy is particularly interesting in this respect.

### Nigerian Dark Colonialism in Italy

The works of Simona Taliani<sup>59</sup> and Roberto Beneduce<sup>60</sup> show how capitalism, by entering into perverse complicities with dark Nigerian powers, has enabled these powers to cross the thresholds that are the lights of electric reason in Turin, to haunt, possess, obsess, oppress, and suppress Nigerian immigrant women in that city. At the same time, a reading of these works shows how the postcolonial imperialism of dark Nigerian power, in its perverse complicities with the power of capitalism, does not spare the Italian civil servants charged with caring for the “suffering bodies” of these immigrant women, by *sowing confusion* in their spirits. Taliani, for example, shows how what I call Nigerian postcolonial imperialism clouds the vision and minds of Italian civil servants, who see in the body of every suffering Nigerian woman a body possessed by a dark power of

multiple and uncertain denominations supposedly connected to “vodu”: *voodoo*, *woodoo*, *vodou*.<sup>61</sup>

As we can see, the enlightened Italian civil servants not only encounter the dark shadow of suffering African bodies but also produce it, notably in the designation of a shapeless dark phantasmatic power. This power is reminiscent of the Gabonese *Evus* who, from the very “beginning,” sowed trouble in the eyes of the woman seeking enlightenment on the mystery of her husband’s abundant hunting, and who met this power in the dark depths of the forest. This encounter with the Thing took place when the wife crossed three thresholds: the threshold that defines the prohibition her husband imposed on her against following him into the forest to see how he killed the animals that fed the village; the threshold that constitutes the unthinkable, the entry of the “Thing” into a woman’s sex-body, the formless thing here being synonymous with death; and the threshold that separates the forest, a dark place, from the village, a well-lit place, through the Thing coming out of the forest but crossing this threshold into the “dark continent” of female sexuality (Freud).

The crossing of these three thresholds, which in fact constitutes the repetition of the same act of transgression, led to the irruption of disorder and death in village humanity. Death would now colonize life through two fundamental “needs”: the need for knowledge carried by a subaltern whose body would be transformed into a sex-body (her whole body would recapitulate the sex organs that both carry death and give life), and the need for food, which is transformed into the “need” for death through sex. It seems to me that the life stories told by Nigerian immigrants reflect this colonization by dark power (of the dark forest, the “dark continent” of sexuality and the dark power of the *Evus*) of sex-bodies (these are Black prostitutes) and of the enlightened minds of Italian civil servants.

Thus, the power of postcolonial imperialism appears as an intangible power whose specter—by definition dazzling, that is, fascinating, deceptive, seductive, blinding in its metaphors, metamorphoses, figures, figurations, and abstractions—makes its subjects live elsewhere within themselves, in dreams, nightmares, myths, utopias, dystopias, heterotopias, in short, on thresholds and in the imaginary.<sup>62</sup>

### Return to the Imperialist Satan

As I have already argued, the dazzlements that constitute postcolonial imperialism follow the same logics as those that underlie episodes of the internal colonialism of the Devil in the Euro-American psyche, a colonialism of which

the witch-hunt<sup>63</sup> was the historical apparatus of its repression, not of a liberation from its hold.<sup>64</sup>

Indeed, *Satan the Heretic*<sup>65</sup> is the historical civilizing and colonialist power that was repressed in the West, which has taken on a new dynamic under the powerful impulse of capitalist *value* in the person of the Other constituted as a “human thing” that produces or reproduces value. The imaginaries of money in Central Africa are not mistaken in viewing money, the materialization or functional agent of value, as both the “God of this world” and the perverse accomplice of the witchcraft power of which the human body, and thus “labor force,” is the seat.<sup>66</sup> In this context, Satan, the intangible power metamorphosed into value and straddling the “labor force” possessed by the power of witchcraft, genies, spirits, and ancestors, and supported by magic and fetishes of all kinds, is the emblematic figure of postcolonial imperialism today, not only in the Euro-American world but also in Africa and Asia. This is because he is the angel of light whose aim, by definition, is to dazzle, to seduce, fascinate, amaze, subjugate, deceive, and blind us to what he is, in the way that its epigone, Marx’s value, dazzles, because, for Marx, “Value . . . does not stalk about with a label describing what it is. It is value, rather, that converts every product into a social hieroglyphic.”<sup>67</sup> Or similarly, in the way that, for Saint Augustine, libido controls genital organs, regardless of the will of human beings.<sup>68</sup>

From then on, the images, metamorphoses, figures, figurations, symbolizations, and abstractions of “energy,” “sex,” “brute force,” “savagery,” the “natural,” the “Beast,” the “animal,” “emotion,” and “rhythm” all became attributes of Satan at the service of capitalism. This makes civilizing or modernizing capitalism the metonym of Satan, his true “spirit,” which Max Weber had not clearly “seen,” dazzled as he was by his dark Enlightenment.

For example, Birgit Meyer highlights the fact that, despite the power of the Enlightenment, the Devil has not disappeared, as evidenced by his presence in “popular culture and advertising, horror films and heavy metal music, art and photography books and exhibitions on the Devil and Evil.”<sup>69</sup> An important point highlighted by Meyer in her analysis of Satan’s imperialist expansion in Africa is summed up by the terms she uses to describe this imperialism: It “incorporates,” “integrates,” or “reformulates” pagan gods into its universe, from missionary colonialism to the postcolonialism of Pentecostal charismatic missions. This “incorporation” even takes place in the political and economic spheres, the domains par excellence of the “world” in which the Other is “imagined as a foul agent of Evil, to be feared and even destroyed.”<sup>70</sup>

The idea I am suggesting here is that, in order to differentiate a heterotopic space of the Holy Spirit from a dystopic and evil space of Satan, these

“incorporations,” “integrations,” and “reformulations” of the Other (the pagan gods of Black people) participate in the contradictory logics characteristic of *hybridity* (which in the charismatic Pentecostal religious domain is not “seen” in a positive way), a central and positive theme of postcolonial thought.

Indeed, it seems to me that one of the blind or blinding points of this theory in its emphasis on hybridity (which rejects binary thinking, which has as its cultural foundation that which refers to the binary opposition of God and the Devil) is the following: by incorporating local pagan “forces” or “powers,” which are metonymically constructed as dark forces or powers, forces or powers of darkness,<sup>71</sup> that is, forces and powers of Blackness, the natural, the animal, and so forth, Satan, who is the structuring, or colonizing, dark power or force of the Euro-American identity and psyche, simultaneously incorporates into this psyche Blackness, its creation and incarnation, as the colonizing power in and of this psyche or civilizational unconscious.

From this point on, what I call postcolonial imperialism means precisely this invisible and globalized colonialism, unthought-of and unthinkable, of Satan and his figures, figurations, incarnations, and abstractions, including the Black African, his recapitulative historical incarnation since at least the invention of Race.<sup>72</sup>

### Colonialism of Race

Since its invention, it is not so much racism as Race that has been instituted as an instituting and sovereign intangible colonizing power. This means that it imposes its law on white people and Black people alike, both of these being its functional agents. The spirit of capitalism, value, in its transfiguration by and in race, is hybrid from this point of view. But hybridity, a positive theme or concept in postcolonial theory, here signifies discrimination, racism, and destruction, as one of its components is doomed to legitimate and legal destruction by the other in the name of racial purity, which is one of the most perverse lures of the spirit of capitalism. This is one of the blind spots of postcolonial thought, which insists on the positivity of hybridity while failing to emancipate itself from the colonialism of race carried by value, the automatic subject of capitalism.

Race, as just mentioned, is a creation of spirits possessed by value. This means, in metaphorical terms (although metaphors have real value here), that in race there is both the spectral *presence* of the “genes” of these spirits and of value. In the case of the Black and white races, which are by-products of Race, the former is assigned a diabolical value, identified with Satan, whose color it

carries, and the latter is assigned a divine value, identified with God and his spirits, whose color it carries as well. This color has nothing to do with biological or chromatic “reality,” since one can be Black while actually being white. This is how Rachel Dolezal, a white American, was able to pass for Black for ten years in her country, under the power of the dazzlements of religion and Race, namely racism. It follows that the respective value of each race is a transfiguration of the value that possesses the spirits who created Race, the God of racism. This means that the colorations of the races mask the reality of a genesis that implies the *presence*, in both races, of the power of value. To return to the biological metaphor, this means that in the Black race, as in the white race, there is the *presence* of the DNA of both the value and the white spirits that created Race, except that in the Black race, the DNA of the white spirits and the power of value that possesses them takes on the color of Satan and his demons.

We know that Satan is originally the angel of light and therefore a dazzling spirit. The black of the Black person therefore shines with the dark light of Satan, the colonizing power of the white psyche possessed by the value and creator of Race and races. As this imaginary, born of the slave trade, could not escape its ideological expression when it came to justifying colonization, it was transfigured in the eyes of its functional agents by portraying Black people as an “immature ‘child-like people’ with whom it was appropriate to be strict but fair.”<sup>73</sup> For example, in 1941, a member of the Kenya Legislative Council had this to say about this “child-like people”: “I always treat my natives as I treat children. I try to be gentle with them, to advise and direct them. But when kindness has no effect, one must do the same thing that is done in public schools, at home, or across the empire: use the cane.”<sup>74</sup> Whose offspring are the “child-like people”? The logic of colonial and postcolonial *paternalistic* discourses (such as the “Dakar address” studied in threshold 6) would have us believe that they are the illegitimate or shameful offspring of the people who grant themselves the right to colonize them, to civilize them. In any case, this paternalistic people, themselves colonized in their unconscious by the Devil and by value, claims the exclusivity of Humanity or Civilization into which the “child-like people” should be introduced through one of the Abrahamic religions, Christianity, of which the Devil is one of the deities.

However, the moral responsibility to civilize and thus humanize the child (or animal, in other versions) has not historically only taken the form of evangelization. It has also taken the form of education, medicalization, and work as a means of familiarizing people with value through money. In fact, one of the focal points of this humanization was the Christian mission<sup>75</sup> in the colonies, where missionaries did not hesitate to use the *sjambok*. The power of this

imaginary world, driven into the flesh with the *sjambok*, took possession of the body and unconscious of the Black people who were whipped with it, and the only way they could see their offsprings' or descendants' entry into civilization was through blows of the cane.<sup>76</sup> This is how the apparatus of slave and colonial torture was reinforced in postcolonial society by official state representatives and their postcolonial rebel competitors.

These considerations show that the Black person, a by-product of Race, a creation of minds colonized by value and possessed by the civilizing power of Satan, the fallen angel of light who has never left his possession, the white unconscious, is the shameful offspring of the white person who carries within them his spiritual DNA, which is awakened, stimulated, revived, and instrumentalized, for capitalist or religious purposes, by the apparatuses of postcolonial imperialism, and instrumentalized, for capitalist or religious ends, by the apparatuses of postcolonial imperialism, namely dazzlements, of which the churches of the charismatic Pentecostal movement are among the most effective experts.<sup>77</sup> The phantasmatic dynamic of this spiritual DNA, in the context of globalization, is reflected, for example, in the claims of Black pastor-prophets, whose identity I have already characterized in the Congolese investigations I undertook in the 1990s,<sup>78</sup> who want to evangelize “in return” a Europe or America they see as possessed by the spirits of materialism.<sup>79</sup> It is nothing more or less than the desperate, sentimentalist claim of illegitimate children to reawaken the paternal love they thought was expressed in colonial paternalism, the absence of which they experience today in the racism of their white “brothers in Christ” in the West.<sup>80</sup>

This reverie<sup>81</sup> of the reawakening of paternal love is intended to translate into the conversion of it into divine love, indifferent to race and ethnicity. In reality, the desperate quest for recognition of illegitimate sons or “natural children,” in every sense of the word, and the racism they encounter reflect the imperialist presence of the Black person, a by-product of Race and of diabolical, abject power, in the white pro-slavery unconscious of the slave trade and the colonial domination that created it under the command of value, which is reproduced in the era of globalization. All of this demonstrates that it is Race, the creation of minds possessed by value and civilized by the Devil, that is the instituting and sovereign intangible colonizing power of the white minds that created it and also of the Black minds whose flesh and unconscious were colonized by it through the cane.

Race, then, as the invention, the creation, of spirits possessed by value, has two faces, like Janus, the god of thresholds: the divine white face, and the diabolical Black face. However, each face contains the other or reflects it, and vice

versa. The face of the angel of light carries within it that of angels in general; in other words, Satan, the angel of light, is found in the representation of luminous skin, the skin of God, the silver skin of the white policeman. The face of darkness, wearing the hood, symbol of the Devil and Black skin, is that of the young Black man. It is therefore the fear of and fascination with the Devil within the social and racial psyche of the white man, the representative of the State, that drives the white policeman to kill the part of the shadow within him, that is, the part of the value incorporated into the Race that colonizes him. It is value, the automatic subject, that massacres. It is therefore the God Janus who kills. This makes the *apparatuses* of racialization, that is, the rationalization, civilization, modernization, and development that are medicine,<sup>82</sup> health,<sup>83</sup> hygiene, the economy,<sup>84</sup> school, beauty,<sup>85</sup> the state,<sup>86</sup> the city, science, technology, the body,<sup>87</sup> and religion, conceived as automatic domains or “fields,” powerful apparatuses of postcolonial imperialism.

Charismatic Pentecostalism, which is, from my point of view, the magic of capitalism<sup>88</sup> and, from this point of view, the *revealer* of postcolonial imperialism, in both the sense of the development of photographs and in the religious sense, makes no mistake about this, because it denounces these domains as domains of Satan, or, as I would put it, apparatuses of his unrecognized imperialism, because he relies on the specter of the dazzlements of the world’s Enlightenment in these domains.

Charismatic Pentecostalism is all the more the *revealer* of the postcolonial imperialism of value and its embodiments in that, when its functionaries work to integrate or incorporate the customary African “world” or the modern or postmodern world of the Euro-American Enlightenment into its perverse binarism, it cannot avoid constituting these “worlds” as powers that obsess, haunt, possess, oppress, and suppress the imaginaries and bodies of its subjects, in the same way that Satan obsesses, haunts, and possesses the same imaginaries and bodies of subjects who voluntarily subject themselves to the colonialism of the Holy Spirit. This double colonialism is characteristic of the postcolonial imperialism of Pentecostalism and thus of value, the central figure of the spirit of capitalism.

This perverse, and therefore diabolical, logic is apparent in “the claim of Charismatic Pentecostal churches to the power to call upon the Holy Spirit to descend and bless and protect people.”<sup>89</sup> The flip side of this claim is, according to Meyer, “the constant need to invoke a sense of imminent danger and destruction. As much as they seek to fight Satan, they also need him in order to claim power. This involves a rather captivating combination of rejection of evil in the name of morality and a voyeuristic fascination with all that is forbidden.”<sup>90</sup>

This “voyeuristic fascination” is the principle of the postcolonial imperialism of Blackness, the “materialization” of Satan and of value in the Euro-American unconscious since the slave trade.

### The Social Sciences: Agents of Postcolonial Imperialism

To take this argument even further, it must be said that the social sciences and humanities themselves are by their very nature postcolonial sciences, marked as they have been by hybridity and the colonialism of the intangible. Like postcolonial thought, the product of these fields, they have not been able to escape the dazzlements of the perverse logic of Satan’s colonizing power and thus of Blackness, the primitive, the natural, the body, sex, and so on, which are its figures, portrayals, incarnations, and abstractions. One need only point out how these have imported from the world of religion and magic the concepts of “force,” “power,” “charisma,” “mysticism,” “fetishism,” and “*mana*,” as well as the apparently rational concepts of “thing,” “habitus,” “symbolic violence,” “common sense,” “society,” “value,” and “work.”

The unconscious of the social sciences is not only colonized by philosophy.<sup>91</sup> It is also colonized by the intangible powers of religion and magic, just as it is colonized by the figures historically constituted by the colonial imaginary or the slave trade as figures of archaism, fetishism, primitivism, sex, savagery, unintelligence—in other words, the “exotic” Other, notably the Black person, producer of capitalist value. It is this reality that the weak concept of *hybridity* does not allow one to see, being itself the product of the dazzlements of value, primitivism, and the other figures, figurations, or abstractions of the civilizing Devil, that is, the colonizer of the Euro-American capitalist and scholarly unconscious.

It is therefore to highlight, to make visible and discernable, these blind and blinding spots of postcolonial imperialism that the concept or the heuristic metaphor of dazzlements is at the heart of the argumentative apparatus of postcolonial imperialism. What is more, if we accept that dazzlements refer to spectacle and that the latter is a critical concept of the social sciences (as I shall discuss), the developments that form this book insist that the *spectacle of dazzlements* constitutes an intensification or radicalization of the logics of spectacle highlighted in Guy Debord’s inaugural analysis of *The Society of the Spectacle*. It is an intensification or radicalization whose principle is to make abstractions more sensual or more discernable, more carnal or more material, without ever being able to be reduced to those “concretizations” that are, when analyzed, an apparatus of dazzlements, that is, an apparatus of blindness, in the age of neoliberal globalization.

In other words, highlighting these radicalizations or intensifications of abstractions serves to show how they work contradictorily to convert images into body-images, sex organs into sex-bodies, men into commodity-men, in other words into border-realities or boundary-forms, irreducibly sensible suprasensible, physical supraphysical, biological suprabiological, and so on, because they are invested with fantasies, representations, idealizations, and fascinations/repulsions. Their mode of existence is thus that of “border-individuals” such as prostitutes and housewives, who in colonial times were inseparable from practices of transgression or subversion<sup>92</sup> of the Manichean dichotomies constructed by imperialist authorities.<sup>93</sup> These racial dichotomies were thus put to the test by the colonizing power of “libido,” “energy,” and “labor power” embodied by the Black sex-body that had to be colonized, or possessed, because it was and still is the medium, the threshold, the means of attaining telluric, primitive, savage, and therefore dangerous sexual *jouissance*. That this sex-body was also the means by which to possess value through one’s work made it a source of colonial and postcolonial obsessions and hauntings. Colonizing the colonizer: This is the contradiction, and this is the blind spot of postcolonial deconstruction and its critics.

The aim of this book is therefore to highlight this “blunder” in critical views of postcolonial thought. By critical views of postcolonial thought, I mean both the critical power of postcolonial theory and that of its critical thought. Postcolonial theory did not cross the threshold beyond which the irreducible humanity of the Black person or subaltern also implied the powerful colonialism they exercised on the unconscious or imaginary that made them the human figure of the Devil or the animal, without regard for the fundamental contradiction that exists in conceiving an African devil and a human animal. It therefore remained for this thought to highlight the way in which images and imaginaries of the Black person have invaded, to the point of possessing, obsessing, oppressing, haunting, and consequently colonizing the Western imaginary or unconscious, an imaginary constitutive of the episteme offered to its deconstructionist critique. In short, it remained for it to see that the colonizing or civilizing Devil internal to Euro-American cultures and civilizations, in its Black incarnations, is reproduced in the dazzlements of the screens of neoliberal globalization, through Nicki Minaj, Beyoncé, Rihanna, and other Black sex-bodies constitutive of the dazzlements of the spectacle of neoliberal globalization.

As for the critique of postcolonial criticism, which argues, in one of its most provocative statements, that, contrary to what some believe, Africa occupies the Western unconscious or imagination and that relations between the West and Africa are in reality sexual relations marked by a “delicious fright,” justified

by the fact that Africa is a viral continent, a virus reservoir,<sup>94</sup> it remained for this critique to cross the threshold of postcolonial dazzlements to clearly formulate the idea of a postcolonial imperialism of the natural, the savage, the Black person in the imaginary or unconscious of self-proclaimed superior, healthy, civilized, cultured, divinized humanity. In short, it remained for the critical gaze of postcolonial thought to see the postcolonial character of the social sciences in general, that is, the colonialism of the primitive or Black intangible in its imaginary, and thus to highlight the impasses that the dazzlements of concepts render unthinkable.

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## Notes

### OPENING THRESHOLD

1. Bwiti is a Gabonese initiate cult. Among other publications on this cult, see Fernandez, *Bwiti*; Mary, *Le défi du syncrétisme*; Bonhomme, *Le miroir et le crâne*; and Chabloz, *Peaux blanches, racines noires*.

2. A forty-year-old European woman (F. D.) who is a doctoral student at the University of Lisbon and is currently married to a Gabonese man gave me an account of her initiation into Bwiti. From this account, I got the visions of the young girl and the green ball, which are the visions she had while looking at the sun in Libreville, February 20, 2015.

3. In threshold 7, the dazzlements caused by the sun in the water of a river are described, based on Mia Couto's fascinating novel *L'Accordeur de silences*.

4. Here, the concept of the unconscious is synonymous with the imaginary. See Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*, 261.

5. In colonial language, race was a synonym of ethnicity or tribe.

6. Hegel quoted in Chamayou, *Manhunts*, 167.

7. This expression is inspired by the title of a chapter, "Noir comme l'éblouissement" (Black like dazzlement), in Annie Le Brun's book *Les arcs-en-ciel du noir*, 121–27.

8. Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*.

9. The "journey" is a central theme in initiations, such as in the initiation to Bwiti, as recounted by F. D., who undertook her "journey" by looking into the sun. She began by detailing the conditions of this journey: In order to "look at the sun," her initiation father put "hallucinogenic" drops in her eyes, "drops that cause a lot of pain." However, after this painful sensation has passed, you "can open your eyes and look at the sun and you see things. In fact, you don't see the sun, but a brightness that is too strong. The sun is like a *closed door*, and with the drops, for the first time, you can look at it and go through it; it's as though something is closed that leads to *another world*. The drops allow you to open the door. And to begin the journey." Note that you "don't see the sun," just as you "don't see" a screen when images are projected on it.

10. *Darkness* as a synonym for the *invisible* can be understood in a number of ways, all of which revolve around the same pattern of thought: the pattern of the "visibility of

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minorities,” which does not exclusively concern Black people, but of which they are an incarnation. As Pap Ndiaye puts it, this question “is eminently problematic, because it could be argued that invisible groups can be visible, and that the purpose of racist and anti-Semitic processes has also been to ‘make visible’ invisibility, to try to flush it out while hiding behind the appearance of neutrality which points to a dubious origin. But in contemporary France, the visibility of physical appearance in making groups visible is clearer in the case of Black people and Arab-Berbers than in the case of groups like homosexuals or Jewish people” (Ivan Jablonka, “Les Noirs, une minorité française: Entretien avec Pap Ndiaye,” *La vie des idées*, January 20, 2009, <http://www.laviedesidees.fr/Les-Noirs-une-minorite-francaise.html>).

11. This concept is described in threshold 4.

12. Marx, *Capital*, 86.

13. Mami Wata also appears as having the traits of a woman who is half-white, half-Black.

14. Jewsiewicki, *Mami Wata*. On the relationship between this figure and the imaginations of India in Black Africa, see Rush, “Trans-Suds.” On this figure and her Gabonese transfiguration, see Bernault, “La chair et son secret.”

15. She appears in some Kinshasa paintings as Mobutu. This confirms her status as a postcolonial figure.

16. In the French spoken by Libreville’s working class, the word *medication* is synonymous with medication obtained from a pharmacy and with fetishes.

17. Mami Wata highlights the relationship between white power and animal power with the lower half of her body, which is that of a fish.

18. Brune, *De l'idéologie, aujourd'hui*, 92: “L’impérialisme des nantis ‘Je le veux. Je me l’offre’” (The imperialism of the wealthy: “I want it. I’m going to get it”).

19. Here is how a technician at the Centre National de Transfusion Sanguine (National Blood Transfusion Center) in Libreville, interviewed by doctoral student Tonda Mahéba, justifies these live harvestings: “I’ve already raised awareness, and this issue has come up. I’m not going to lie: We need to talk about it. I always tell them that I’m a woman who’s already been initiated [into Bwiti]. These politicians aren’t going to take the blood of someone who hasn’t cried out, who hasn’t suffered. It doesn’t make sense. I explain to them that if the person hasn’t suffered, I don’t see how they’re going to take that blood, because it has no energy! So, to say that these people refuel at the blood bank is false.”

20. The concept of “occult” that I adopt here is the one proposed by Comaroff and Comaroff, *Zombies et frontières à l’ère néolibérale*; as well as by Doering-Manteuffel, *L’occulte*.

21. Williams, “Publicité.” 87.

22. Screens are scientific technologies, but all scientific technologies are screens of the “magic systems” within capitalist societies, and therefore the “real” magic that is value.

23. Marx quoted in Jappe, *The Adventures of the Commodity*, 54.

24. Marx quoted in Jappe, *The Adventures of the Commodity*, 54.

25. Renombo and Mongui, *La fabrique du Noir imaginaire*. See, among the other contributions to this work, Gouaffo, “La fabrique imaginaire du ‘Nègre’ et ses usages médiatiques”; and Renombo, “L’insoutenable noirceur des Bleus.”

26. Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*.

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27. Fanon, *Oeuvres*; Fuss, “Interior Colonies.”
28. Said, *Orientalism*.
29. Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy*, 30–31.
30. Nandy borrows this phrase from Murdoch, *The Fire and the Sun*, 39.
31. The ambiguity of the feminine “temperament” of slaves but also of colonized people and women is highlighted by Elsa Dorlin when she writes: “If all women are by nature cold and damp, of a phlegmatic temperament, how can we classify prostitutes, reputed by theological tradition to be hot, virile and intemperate? Similarly, if slaves are supposed to be robust and vigorous, how can we not conclude that they are naturally superior to whites?” Dorlin, *La matrice de la race*, 13.
32. On this subject, see, for example, issue 135 of the journal *Politique africaine*, which has the title “Politique de la nostalgie.” Also, on this theme, Tall, *Le candomblé de Bahia*.
33. Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 68.
34. Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 66.
35. Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 66.
36. Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*.
37. Tirabosco and Perrissin, *Kongo*, 157.
38. Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 73.
39. Mbembe, “Qu’est-ce que la pensée postcoloniale?” 117.
40. Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?*, 163.
41. On the subject of money as the figure of the Beast, Étienne Balibar writes, “It is sought for its own sake, hoarded, regarded as the object of a universal need attended by fear and respect, desire and disgust (*auri sacra fames*: ‘the accursed thirst for gold,’ wrote the Latin poet Virgil in a famous line quoted by Marx, and in Revelation money is clearly identified with the Beast, i.e. with the devil).” Balibar, *The Philosophy of Marx*, 59.
42. This law is also known as a *feedback loop*. The work of Georg Simmel inaugurated the conceptualization of this term. Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, Analytical Part, chapter 3, sections 1 and 2.
43. Rey, *Dictionnaire amoureux du Diable*, 840.
44. Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*.
45. <http://www.liberation.fr/auteur/6919-maria-malagardis>.
46. For an in-depth critique of traditional Marxism, see Jappe, *The Adventures of the Commodity*.
47. Achille Mbembe, *De la postcolonie: Essai sur l’imagination politique dans l’Afrique contemporaine* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2000), xv.
48. Mbembe, *De la postcolonie*, xvi.
49. Mbembe, *De la postcolonie*, xi.
50. Here, I am following the definition of the imaginary provided by Gilles Deleuze: “The imaginary isn’t the unreal; it’s the indiscernibility of real and unreal.” Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972–1990*, 66.
51. Chabloz, *Peaux blanches, racines noires*.
52. As Birgit Meyer shows in “Images du mal ou images maléfiques,” images of the Devil in Nigerian and Ghanaian cinema are not unreal in the consciousness of the Gabonese or other Africans. I return to this later in this opening threshold.

53. Ayimpam, “Commerce transfrontalier.”

54. Guienne, “La vente de soi.”

55. I would like to thank Roberto Beneduce for reminding me of this formula, which is very current in Central Africa.

56. I use this term in the same sense as Gaston Bachelard, for whom “certain poetic reveries are hypothetical lives which enlarge our lives.” Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie*, 8.

57. Tonda, “Entre communautarisme et individualisme.” I use *apparatus* in the sense in which Giorgio Agamben understands the word, namely that an apparatus is “anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings. Not only, therefore, prisons, madhouses, the panopticon, schools, confession, factories, disciplines, juridical measures, and so forth (whose connection with power is in a certain sense evident), but also the pen, writing, literature, philosophy, agriculture, cigarettes, navigation, computers, cellular telephones and—why not—language itself, which is perhaps the most ancient of apparatuses—one in which thousands and thousands of years ago a primate inadvertently let himself be captured, probably without realizing the consequences that he was about to face.” Agamben, “*What Is an Apparatus?*” and *Other Essays*, 14.

58. Benquet and Trachman, “Actualité des échanges économicosexuels.”

59. Taliani, “Coercion, Fetishes and Suffering.”

60. Beneduce, “Traumatic Past and the Historical Imagination.”

61. Taliani, “Coercion, Fetishes and Suffering,” 589.

62. “The imaginary isn’t the unreal; it’s the indiscernibility of the real and the unreal.” Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972–1990*, 66.

63. It is not by chance that this hunt took the figure of the “witch” as the target object to be destroyed: The woman was the Devil’s internal incarnation, just as the Black person was and still is his “external” incarnation. Both thus embodied the Devil and produced logical contradictions within the unique system of domination that instituted them as products of two fundamental concepts of the Devil: Sex and Race. Elsa Dorlin’s *La matrice de la race* provides a partial foundation for what I have just said.

64. Certeau, *The Possession at Loudun*.

65. Boureau, *Satan the Heretic*.

66. Tonda, “Pentecôtisme et ‘contentieux matériel’ transnational.”

67. Marx, *Capital*, 86.

68. Agamben, in *Nudities*, writes, “*Libido* is the technical term in Augustine that defines the consequences of sin. On the basis of a passage from Paul . . . , *libido* is defined as a rebellion of the flesh and its desires against the spirit, an irremediable split between flesh (*caro*—*sarx*—is the term by which Paul expresses the subjection of man to sin) and will” (67–68).

69. Meyer, “Le Diable,” 10.

70. Meyer, “Le Diable,” 9.

71. Joseph Conrad’s novel *Heart of Darkness* is emblematic of this, as I will show it to be in this text.

72. Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, 70–74.

73. Bayart, “Hégémonie et coercition en Afrique subsaharienne,” 142.

74. Bayart, “Hégémonie et coercition en Afrique subsaharienne,” 142.

75. Bayart, “Les églises chrétiennes”; Bayart, “Fait missionnaire et politique du ventre.”

76. I refer again to Jean-François Bayart's article, "Les églises chrétiennes," which inspired me in writing this paragraph.
77. Mottier, *Une ethnographie des pentecôtismes africains en France*; Zomo, "Le pentecôtisme d'Afrique centrale (Gabon)."
78. Tonda, *La guérison divine en Afrique centrale*.
79. Mary and Fancello, "Introduction."
80. Démart, "Dieu ne comprend pas le lingala?"
81. Here, I use this term in the same sense as Bachelard in *The Poetics of Reverie*.
82. Fanon, *Oeuvres*; Dorlin, *La matrice de la race*.
83. Hours, "La santé unique."
84. Polanyi, *Great Transformation*.
85. Laurent, *Beautés imaginaires*.
86. Bayart, *L'État en Afrique*.
87. Blanchard et al., *Zoos humains et exhibitions coloniales*; Ndiaye, *La condition noire*, 89–109.
88. Tonda, "Pentecôtisme et 'contentieux matériel' transnational."
89. Meyer, "Le Diable," 10.
90. Meyer, "Le Diable," 10.
91. Desbrousses, "Le social objet de science."
92. An emblematic case of this "subversion" of postcolonial imperialism is embodied in the DSK/Nafissatou Diallo case, examined in this book.
93. Lauro, *Coloniaux, ménagères et prostituées*, 12–13.
94. Amselle, "L'Afrique," 46.

#### THRESHOLD 1. JOHNNY MAD DOG AND OSAMA BIN LADEN

1. A strange expression, *living legend* means here that the legend (i.e., the myth, the imaginary) takes on a body, becomes a real figment of the imagination, a living abstraction, a body-image, a body-language.
2. On the topic of war of fire, see Tonda, "Inflammable."
3. If, as Seloua Luste Boulbina argues, the colonies are a phantom reality, so too are the subjects of postcolonial imperialism. See Luste Boulbina, "Les colonies."
4. This sensitive experience of betrayal of a part of ourselves coalesced with the "outside" is an illustration, on an even more intimate scale, of the thesis developed by Peter Geschiere in *Witchcraft, Intimacy and Trust*.
5. On this theme of skin in the Black condition, see Sami Tchak's excellent novel *Filles de Mexico*.
6. Dongala, *Johnny Mad Dog*.
7. This film *Johnny Mad Dog* came out on November 26, 2008.
8. I would point out that, in the African popular imagination, these conceptual realities are experienced ontologically: They are living beings, whose agency, like emergence today, is evident.
9. Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*.
10. Godelier, *Au fondement des sociétés humaines*, 38.
11. Godelier, *Au fondement des sociétés humaines*, 39.