

## THE MISSIONARY GENE IN THE KENYAN POLITY Representations of Contemporary Kenya in the British Media

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Africa and the heart of darkness; how did the two get so terribly entwined? . . . Some would say, some do say, it is because of their skin colour; a non-sequitur if ever there was one. Some would say, 'give them time'; perhaps, but many of them have already had plenty. . . . [President Daniel arap] Moi [of Kenya], indeed, is almost the picture of the stock savage, who marks differences by sending groups of thugs (of which he has an ample supply) to beat up any remaining dissident. Very recently, that great man Richard Leakey, who not only tells the truth about Moi, but [also] stands against him with whatever scrap of real elections that remain, was, with his team, ferociously attacked by Moi's brutes with an iron bar, heedless of the fact that Dr. Leakey is confined to a wheelchair having lost both his legs.

—Bernard Levin, "Darkness and Devils"<sup>1</sup>

Why, having lost both his kidneys . . . and then both his legs below the knee in a plane crash, doesn't Dr. Leakey pull up a safari chair and enjoy the view of his eyrie overlooking the Rift Valley? Having been the much admired head of Kenya Wildlife Services and credited with saving Kenya's elephants from extinction, he could make a handsome living, and enjoy celebrity, on the American lecture circuit . . . "Perhaps it is the missionary gene that brought my family here three generations ago. I do not think that sitting back and being quiet is in my blood" he says.<sup>2</sup>

A little over a year ago, a group of Kenyan activists in Nairobi launched a new party in the political opposition, Safina. Without specifically proscribing this party, the Kenyan government has withheld formal recognition over the past year claiming that the party's application for registration was receiving active processing. Safina has dominated and radically altered the Kenyan political landscape, notwithstanding its indeterminate legal status and its untested popular appeal. This apparent inconsistency belies a number of other anomalies. The new party does not, on the face of it, seem to represent a radical shift in the constitution of opposition politics in Kenya. Indeed, its manifesto and constitution appear to merely restate many of the same values espoused by preexisting opposition parties: a commitment to democracy, human rights, economic liberalization, privatization, progress and development.

Specifically, Safina reiterates the long-standing call that foreign aid (on which the survival of the Kenyan economy is dependent) be made conditional on the adoption by President Moi of a form of government satisfactory to the West.

Why then did events surrounding Safina come to dramatically define the Kenyan polity in representations in the British press as well as in domestic political debates? Why did the party seem to enjoy considerable credibility in the eyes of the British press when it belatedly repeated the same familiar charges against the Kanu government?<sup>3</sup> Why did Safina's call for economic intervention against the Kanu government seem to enjoy a more sympathetic hearing in the British Foreign Office when similar calls by others in the political opposition (including such founding members of Safina as Gitobu Imanyara and Paul Muite) had previously gone unheeded?<sup>4</sup> Why did the party seem to provoke hysteria and paranoia within the ranks of the Kanu government for repeating statements which, when made by others in the previous three years, had passed off fairly innocuously? Perhaps because the launching of Safina marked what was perceived as the first moment in post-colonial Kenya when an ethnically fragmented political opposition had been legitimated by the presence of two white Kenyans (as they have been repeatedly and insistently characterized by the British media) in senior appointments? Perhaps because the presence of these two white Kenyans ensured the very extensive attention and unprecedented respectability the party has commanded?

It is instructive that, while consistently "darkening" the Kenyan landscape with repeated revelations of bad governance, widespread suffering, endemic corruption and an innate, if unrealized, capacity for mass violence, the British media has almost entirely reduced its coverage of Safina to laudatory and inflationary profiles of Richard Leakey (and to a lesser extent Robert Shaw), the white "saviour" who, in the words of one commentator, is "the man who would be Kenya."<sup>5</sup> I am suggesting that the deployment of elaborate mechanisms of racialized and racializing surveillance by the British media has had a profound effect on the (re)production of knowledges in Britain (and elsewhere) about Kenya. I am also suggesting that these mechanisms of surveillance have (re)produced, with various post-colonial modifications, the racialized processes of domination and marginalization first enacted during the colonial settlement of Kenya.

This essay examines the aftermath of colonial encounter in Kenya both within its internal frontiers and in its often fraught relations with Western governments (particularly Britain, its former colonial power). I am interested in the processes of colonial subjectification currently being authorized about Kenya in the West by representations in the British media. I seek to explore the ways in which the Safina saga has resulted in enhanced surveillance and the (re)production of normalized and antithetical knowledges of both the "colonized" and the "colonizer" in Kenya. I am specifically interested in the mechanisms through which race is contested and effaced as a politically relevant category at the precise instant when highly racialized discourses are being asymmetrically mapped onto the Kenyan landscape. I specifically explore the processes through which colonialism is conflated with territoriality, and subsequently consigned to the distant and inconsequential past at the precise moment when, on the one hand, the ethical imperative for economic imperialism is being

repeated, and, on the other hand, the devastating effects of colonial encounter continue to consign black Kenyan masses to extreme deprivation and "indebtedness."

My attempts at understanding British representations of the intractable conflicts occurring in post-colonial Kenya are informed by Homi K. Bhabha's assertions regarding the paradoxical notion of "fixity," and the discursive efficacy of racial stereotypes in colonial discourse. In his essay, "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism," Bhabha states:

An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness. Fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation; it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and demonic [sic] repetition. Likewise the stereotype, which is its major discursive strategy, is a form of knowledge that vacillates between what is always 'in place', already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated . . . as if the essential duplicity of the Asiatic or the bestial sexual license of the African that needs no proof, can never really, in discourse, be proved.<sup>6</sup>

Drawing on Bhabha's arguments above, as well as on his admonition that "the point of intervention [in colonial discourse] should shift from the recognition of images as positive or negative, to an understanding of the processes of subjectification made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourse," this paper focuses on "Kenyan colonial stereotypes" as highly ambivalent modes of knowledge and power. My attempt at charting the function of ambivalence in colonial discourse avoids, following Bhabha's suggestion, both deterministic or functionalist modes of conceiving the relationship between discourse and politics, and dogmatic and moralistic definitions of oppression and discrimination. In his argument:

To judge the stereotyped image on the basis of a prior political normativity is to dismiss it, not to displace it, which is only possible by engaging with its *effectivity*; with the repertoire of power and resistance, domination and dependence that constructs colonial identification subject (both colonizer and colonized). . . . In order to understand the productivity of colonial power it is crucial to construct its regime of truth, not to subject its representations to a normalizing judgment.<sup>7</sup>

My concern in this paper, therefore, is not to protest "misrepresentations," but rather to trace the reenactment of the primal scene of colonial encounter that pits the heroic, long-suffering white "missionary" against the evil "witch doctor" in a pitched battle for the African soul.<sup>8</sup>

I investigate the regimes of "Kenyan truths" produced by representations of Kenya in the British media. These, I argue, enable the familiar but anxiously repeated

reproduction of the Kenyan president as a stock savage and of the Kenyan landscape as the heart of darkness (ethnic, corrupt, destitute, violent or at any rate potentially violent). I also investigate the antithetical reproduction of the familiar but nevertheless anxiously repeated image of the white man as the civilized benevolent saviour—Leakey, the great white man who, motivated (in his own words) by three generations of missionary zeal, sacrifices life and limb to rescue Kenya; first its elephants and then its people. This equation of black Kenyans and animals is made repeatedly in press reports that celebrate Leakey's saving of Kenyan elephants from extinction. It is as if without Leakey's political intervention black Kenyans are doomed to (self)extinction, much like the elephants were before Leakey's intervention. Leakey participates in this objectification of black Kenyans. In an interview with Sam Kiley, he is asked to explain what prompted him to enter the "brutal world of Kenyan politics, where less troublesome opposition figures have been tortured, or die in inexplicable car crashes."<sup>9</sup> He replies: "There is very little point in getting involved in any kind of conservation if the political and economic environment is not right. One's hard work to save animals will come to nothing if the human population is suffering under mismanagement and corruption."<sup>10</sup> In Leakey's imagination, it would seem, Kenyan people have as little agency or capacity for self-determination as Kenyan elephants.

Despite the objectification that reduces black Kenyans to the same status as elephants, all the major players (including British journalists) in the Safina saga have consistently sought to disavow the political valence of race and colonialism in contemporary Kenya even as they grapple within and are constrained by highly racialized discourses and institutions. The political discourse has become so racialized that Kenyans who are neither black nor white (including sizable communities of Asian descent) have been reduced to invisibility. While repeatedly affirming their own anti-racist credentials and commitments, all the actors in this political drama have concurrently charged everyone else with racism and sought to exploit racial considerations for perceived political advantage. In the wake of this strategic "racial confusion," an elaboration of race as a theoretical concept may help to disclose the philosophical underpinnings that authorize the racist discourses and racist subjectifications contradictorily and discontinuously at work in British representations of contemporary Kenya. This analysis seems particularly crucial since, as Bhabha argues, colonial discourses turn on the simultaneous recognition and disavowal of difference—racial, sexual, cultural. I find Kwame Anthony Appiah's attempts to define race useful in this connection although he does not relate his definitions directly to the post-colonial condition. My analysis of the concept of race in the post-colonial context tries to blend Bhabha's thoughts on colonial discourses and Appiah's thoughts on the concept of race.

In "Racisms" Appiah avers that there are at least three distinct doctrines that express the theoretical content of racism: *racialism*, *intrinsic racism*, and *extrinsic racism*.<sup>11</sup> Appiah defines racialism as the belief "that there are heritable characteristics, possessed by members of our species, that allow us to divide them into a small set of races, in such a way that all the members of these races share certain traits and tendencies with each other that they do not share with members of any of other race."<sup>12</sup> These distinct characteristics constitute "racial essences." Appiah contends that

racialism (which he argues is a false concept) need not be dangerous even if it assigns races moral and intellectual dispositions, as long as such assignment is impartial.

The second doctrine that expresses the theoretical content of racism in Appiah's model is extrinsic racism. Appiah defines extrinsic racists as people who "make moral distinctions between members of different races because they believe that the racial essence entails certain morally relevant qualities."<sup>13</sup> He goes on to explain that "the basis for the extrinsic racists' discrimination between people is their belief that members of different races differ in respects that warrant the differential treatment, respects—such as honesty, courage or intelligence—that are uncontroversially held (at least in most contemporary cultures) to be an acceptable basis for treating people differently."<sup>14</sup> The final doctrine in Appiah's model is intrinsic racism. Intrinsic racists, in his definition, "are people who believe that each race has a different moral status, quite independent of the moral characteristics entailed by its racial essence."<sup>15</sup>

It is my contention that post-colonial Kenya manifests, to some extent, all three doctrines of racism discussed by Appiah. Racism seems *instrumental* in rendering coherent all the interactions and intractable conflicts in representations of the Kenyan polity. Racism underpins the entire process of colonial subjectification: the systematic racialization of discourses, institutions and peoples; the stereotypical processes of homogenization and marginalization; the intensification of surveillance and (re)production of normalized knowledges; and the racist exclusions simultaneously authorized and effaced. The repeated and insistent identification of Leakey and Shaw in British newspapers as *white* Kenyans; the repeated (but sometimes implicit) identification of Leakey's often unnamed and objectified political associates as young *black* lawyers/human rights advocates; the always already known classification of Moi as a stock savage; the systematic exclusion of *brown* Kenyans from the current political drama: all these processes derive from and in turn re-inscribe racialism. Races, under a racist conception of Kenya, are foundational modes of identification that contest and transcend all other modes of differentiation including nationality, geographical proximity, disparate history and ethnicity. It is as a mode of primary identification that racialism is discursively transformed into both intrinsic and extrinsic racism.

Not only have British media accounts insisted on unambiguously racializing all the actors in Kenyan politics—this would "merely" constitute racialism—but the racialized subjects have also been consistently assigned discriminatory and hierarchical value and visibility. Leakey and Shaw have received disproportionate attention from the British media—intrinsic racism has rendered them visible for British consumption. Despite being only the interim secretary general of the party, Leakey has, for instance, been variously described as its "leader," "founder," "international spokesman," and "hero." Safina has been described as if it were little more than "Leakey's party," "Leakey's brainchild," "Leakey's property."<sup>16</sup> While Leakey and Shaw have attracted extensive attention and hyperbolic admiration, the official head of the party (its interim chairman), Muturi Kigano, has hardly been mentioned by name and rank, much less profiled. Other founding members, such as Njeri Kaberere, the party's interim treasurer, have either been ignored altogether or objectified and fetishized as

the (often unnamed) "young brilliant black Kenyans" in (subordinate) alliance with Leakey and Shaw.

In an attempt to explain the disproportionate attention that Leakey has received, Shaw, in an interview with *The Sunday Telegraph*, remarks "He's [Leakey] arguably better-known than Moi and [is] the most famous Kenyan abroad. *This may be a racist thing, but it's partly because he is white.*"<sup>17</sup> This remark is framed by Shaw's anxiously repeated assertion that race and colonialism are no longer relevant in Kenyan politics since most Kenyans were born after political independence. Shaw reenacts the simultaneous recognition and disavowal of racial and cultural difference on which, according to Bhabha, stereotypical colonial discourses turn. The indissoluble bonds of affinity that seem to compel the British press to profile Kenya's white population in ways not replicated in their representations of the other "races" likewise constitute, in my view, intrinsic racism. On account of their perceived membership in an essentialist white race, the lives and fears of the settler population are deemed worthy of detailed and sympathetic scrutiny while those of the "racial others" are either erased or objectified. I classify this racism as "intrinsic" not merely because it is apparently made independent of any ethical considerations, but, more strikingly, because white Kenyans are, at one level, portrayed as wanting on moral grounds—sexually licentious, unabashedly misogynistic and extravagantly lavish. (Later in my essay, I will examine the processes of psychical displacement and projection that permit the circulation, from the colonial periphery, of these "negative" images of whiteness.)

Shortly after launching the party, a number of Safina officials were physically assaulted during separate visits to Nakuru and Mombasa, two of the four largest towns in Kenya. Reporting these incidents, British media focused almost exclusively on the beatings and injuries suffered by Richard Leakey and (in the Nakuru incident) by Louise Turnbridge, a British journalist in Kenya, at the hands of "Moi's thugs." The coverage of the Nakuru incident was significant because it marked a rare subjectification of a white journalist. Through a strategic process of subjectification, justified by physical violence and injury, a white journalist momentarily and self-consciously lost all claims to objectivity and transparency, and was represented as the innocent victim of brutal violence in "dark" Africa. In my view, intrinsic racism allows a general attack on party officials to be reported extensively as if it had been a specific attack on white people. As if independent of assessments of individual moral worth, intrinsic racism allows "beaten bodies" to be allotted discriminatory value. Individuated "beaten white bodies" receive extended and graphic coverage; objectified "beaten black bodies" are summarily ignored or referred to in passing remarks as the "other" (unnamed) victims. Intrinsic racism enables one commentator to protest not that certain racialized victims were being consistently "undervalued" or effaced but rather that "the outrage ["Leakey's savage whipping"] was strangely under-reported in the British press."<sup>18</sup>

Such is the compelling momentum of intrinsic racism that diplomatic missions and human rights groups in Nairobi reportedly deplore "the beating of Richard Leakey."<sup>19</sup> Such is the compelling momentum of intrinsic racism that, when three unnamed suspects are arraigned in court, they are reportedly charged with "assaulting oppo-

sition politician Richard Leakey and two journalists,<sup>20</sup> in one account, and “attacking Richard Leakey and other Safina members,”<sup>21</sup> in another. No mention is made of black politicians in one report; they remain nameless and objectified in the other. Although I am contending above that the reporting of the attack on Safina officials constituted intrinsic racism, this kind of reporting also produces extrinsic racism by “darkening” the Kenyan landscape with images of black brutality and violence while simultaneously securing white moral superiority and innocence.

But perhaps the clearest illustration of intrinsic racism is the way in which British press reports have constructed an utterly false binary opposition in race relations in Kenya and discursively authorized (with the active complicity of all Kenyan politicians) the complete erasure of other races, specifically brown Kenyans. On the face of it, the racist exclusion that has literally wiped out this group from the political discourse in Kenya does not seem to be motivated by any moral judgements; to that extent it constitutes, in Appiah’s definition, intrinsic racism. The mere ‘fact’ of brownness has conspired to produce at this political moment the apparently unchallenged condition of invisibility and erasure. The current erasure of brown Kenyans is particularly significant considering the fact that, at various points in the country’s political history, a section of the black political leadership have denounced “Kenyan Indians” (a slippage meant to embody all Kenyans of Asian descent) as unpatriotic, unscrupulous and greedy. Such denunciations acquire currency by eliding enduring white privilege in contemporary Kenya.

The reporting of the Safina story—the Leakey story—would perhaps be a more accurate description—in the British press surpasses intrinsic racism since it includes, beyond preferential treatment, hierarchical moral evaluations on the basis of race. Extrinsic racism, I suggest, normalizes the stereotypical production of (the black) Moi as a stock savage and (the white) Leakey as saviour. Both of these images repeat familiar colonial stereotypes. The same qualities that produce tyranny and dictatorship in Moi, reportedly produce purposefulness, decisiveness, bravery, and an “iron will” in Leakey. By virtue of his whiteness, Leakey is anxiously assigned an unimpeachable and well-known integrity, an unrelenting and well-known valour, a well-known moral superiority and a well-known messianic greatness. By virtue of his whiteness, Leakey is conferred with credibility and neutrality in a political system reportedly built around tribal blocks. No always already ethnic black Kenyan (not even the “young brilliant black pro-democracy advocates and human rights lawyers”), and no brown Kenyan, could offer such a neutral and credible presence. Leakey and all other white Kenyans, because they belong to the white race, are above the ethnic rivalries that have “darkened” the Kenyan polity and hindered its march towards progress. In Shaw’s words (in the interview cited above), “*The whites here have a certain neutrality.*”

It is crucial to note the cost at which Leakey’s integrity is defended and Moi’s lack of integrity presumed. A British journalist, Christina Lamb, appears to be at pains to protect Leakey’s honour as she reports on the announcement by the Kenyan government that it was launching a probe of the financial affairs of the Kenya Wildlife Services during Leakey’s tenure. She repeatedly scorns the claims by Joseph Kamotho, a minister in the Moi government, that Leakey had been dishonest. She

charges, among other things, that no evidence is offered to substantiate that claim. She then invokes the authority of World Bank officials to reclaim Leakey’s already known unimpeachable integrity. The World Bank audited the books of the KWS; had Leakey embezzled any funds, they would have known. Rather tellingly her piece is titled “Angry Moi Drags Leakey Through the Mud.” In sharp contrast to this presumption of Leakey’s innocence, *The Guardian* appears to invite its readers to presume the guilt of the three men accused of “assaulting the Kenyan opposition politician, Richard Leakey.”<sup>22</sup> After being told that all three men had denied the charge, we are pointedly invited to note that “one [of the three men] wore a badge showing President Daniel arap Moi and another wore the ruling Kanu party emblem [sic].”<sup>23</sup> In other accounts of these incidents—for example, the one included in my opening epigraph—it was reported that Leakey had been brutally attacked by “Moi’s thugs/brutes,” who, reportedly, are in ample supply. A certain presumption of black guilt pervades these reports. Impelled by extrinsic racism, imperial eyes seem strategically to shed their much-valorized objectivity and transparency.

Appiah’s model helps crystallize the various racisms that pervade and render coherent the Kenyan political landscape. However, to the extent that his model does not specifically address the post-colonial context and in fact appears to disregard questions of materiality, many of his assumptions and conclusions seem unsustainable. I am bothered by his reductive and ultimately dismissive definition of race as an exclusively biological category. Critiquing this definition, David Goldberg declares, correctly in my view, that a reduction of race to a false and therefore morally irrelevant biological category is both conceptually and empirically erroneous because it elides the possibility of race as a historical and/or cultural mode of identification.<sup>24</sup> I am also bothered by Appiah’s tendency (a tendency that Goldberg ascribes to the typical and disempowering assumptions of liberal ideology) to minimize the pervasiveness of racism.<sup>25</sup> The reduction of race to a biological fact and the minimization of the magnitude and material effects of racism seem to warrant Appiah’s all too easy dismissal of the devastating and inescapable materiality of race especially in the aftermath of colonial encounter.

Furthermore, I dispute Appiah’s invocation of a totalizing binary between private and public lives, an invocation that licenses his acknowledgement of the materiality and moral relevance of the family and his simultaneous rejection of the materiality and moral relevance of race.<sup>26</sup> Probably the most unsettling aspect of Appiah’s theoretical formulations is their dependency on a persistent conflation of rationality with a universal and self-evident morality, and a valorization of rationality as the site for effective anti-racist contestation: “The right tactic with racism, if you really want to oppose it, is to object to it rationally in the form in which it stands the best chance of meeting objections.”<sup>27</sup> As Goldberg amply demonstrates, rationality is not necessarily compatible with morality (indeed, it often is not), where rationality is defined as the securing and safeguarding of individual self-interest.<sup>28</sup> I concur with Goldberg’s argument that systemic racism is often rational. Accordingly, valorization of rationality in anti-racist resistance risks futility and counterproductiveness. It is mistaken and, indeed, is reactionary to dismiss racism, as Appiah does, as the expressions of an irrational or ill-formed fringe.

I suggest that the concept of race in representations of the Kenyan polity in the British press exceed biological definitions of race and therefore demand an understanding of cultural and historical modes of racial identification. In excess of the significations of biologized bodies, blackness, brownness and whiteness then represent differentiated and discriminatory ways of experiencing Kenya's colonial encounter. Kenyan races are (re)produced by institutions and discourses that differentially bestow privilege in select instances and produce deprivation and "indebtedness" in others. Many of the racist expressions that pervade the Kenyan political economy are rational. I argue that the decision by the founding members of Safina to nominate two white men (Leakey and Shaw) for senior appointment in the party's hierarchy, and specifically their decision to nominate Leakey—"the white man above ethnicity"—to read the party's inaugural statement were rational decisions intended to exploit racialized discourses for political advantage. I contend that Leakey and Shaw's presence and prominence in Safina was a rational choice made by political activists in the Kenyan opposition calculated to ensure, for this party in preference to rival movements in the political opposition, incomparable visibility and legitimacy in the West.

Not co-incidentally, since Leakey's entry into politics, leaders of the preexisting opposition parties have been snubbed by the British press or objectified without differentiation as "ethnic," "ineffectual" or otherwise compromised. I argue that Leakey's appointment as the coordinator of a fledgling alliance of opposition parties, in the wake of Safina's international profile, was a rational choice intended to take advantage of highly racialized dominant discourses. I argue, finally, that the inflamed and inflated rhetoric employed by the Kanu government to respond to Safina (rhetoric that isolated Leakey for condemnation as a racist, neocolonialist, atheist, etc.) was only partially, if at all, a series of irrational and hysterical outbursts. It is apparent to me that these vitriolic speeches were primarily designed to entrench Moi's domestic authority by exposing and further inciting racialized international reaction. Moi's repeated and deliberately outrageous charges against Leakey thus represented, in my view, substantially rational calculations and machinations.

Kenya today is like France just before Napoleon Bonaparte took power almost two centuries ago. The people are exhausted and fearful of their leader's terror, suspicious of each other, scared of rampant crime and despondent of their children's future. The country needs a superman [sic]: a resolute leader who will restore legality, transparency and direction to government and administration. He [sic] will be somebody who will command the respect and trust of the vast majority. Right now only one man fits this bill: Dr. Richard Leakey. An African (and Kenyan), albeit a white one, Leakey understands the 'African mind.' Africans need strong and inspired leadership, not the ruthless tyrannies that have been known under various dictators—Mobutu, Bokassa, Amin, Moi. Dr. Leakey is headstrong, decisive and purposeful. His iron will, personal authority and moral commitment will command and inspire respect, instilling discipline and a work ethic in a society that has for the past 15 years been led by

an increasingly erratic, confused and indecisive despot. Dr. Leakey's party, Safina, is a clarion call for deliverance from the rising tidal waves of corruption, exploitation and bloodshed that Moism has bestowed on an erstwhile promised land.<sup>29</sup>

My study has so far focused on the philosophical presuppositions that continue to actuate racialized discourses and stereotypical subjectification in post-colonial Kenya. There are, however, important historical antecedents that also authorize the stereotypical (re)production of the white man (the missionary is invariably gendered as male) as saviour and the black leader as stock savage. Indeed, the present production of juxtaposed and antithetically evaluated knowledges of Moi and Leakey re-enact the primal scene of colonial contact—the white missionary hero and the evil black leader. Tracing the genealogy of the myth of the "Dark Continent," Patrick Brantlinger examines the ambivalences and ambiguities that caused the campaign for the abolition of slavery to paradoxically contain and broadcast the seeds of Empire.<sup>30</sup> He argues that through a series of projections and displacements—a Foucauldian "transvaluation of values"—the anti-slavery movement shifted responsibility for the slave trade from Europeans to Africans.

Slavery, in addition to graphic reports of widespread cannibalism, barbarism, paganism and general backwardness, conspired, in Brantlinger's formulation, to "darken" the African landscape and produce an undifferentiated view of Africa that "demanded [European] imperialization on moral, religious and scientific grounds."<sup>31</sup> Territorial conquest was therefore undertaken as a missionary project to christianize and civilize the African and to put a stop to indiscriminate atrocity. "Darkening" the African landscape authorized European intervention and regulation by securing white moral superiority and innocence, and by generating one true path to human progress and one true religion (Christianity).

Making allowances for various post-colonial modifications, Brantlinger's thesis continues to describe the Kenyan colonial encounter: a "Foucauldian transvaluation of values" is being (re)enacted one hundred years later. The mode of imperialization may have shifted from territoriality and violent invasion to indebtedness and economic violence, but the ethical imperative for intervention and regulation is articulated in much the same terms. The rationale for imperialization is still predicated on social darwinist notions of progress. The processes of imperialization still involve the institution of Eurocentric disciplinary practices. The mechanisms for surveillance and regulation though lately disguised are, if anything, more intense and more elaborate. The "darkening" of the African landscape continues without respite. Just as the anti-slavery movement "darkened" the African landscape in ways that produced European innocence and philanthropy, the British press, through lurid accounts of Kenyan political and economic backwardness, have produced innocent white subjects—Leakey and Shaw as well as Western governments—compelled to intervene to save black Kenyans from the stock savage—Moi.

The innocence and moral superiority of the white subject is attested to by the calls that "economic aid" for Kenya be made conditional on "good governance." The

West—and specifically Britain—possesses not guilt and responsibility for discursively and institutionally “darkening” the Kenyan landscape through imperial invasion, but rather the innocence and moral imperative needed to continue long drawn out and fraught attempts to save Kenya from its relative backwardness. This innocence has been secured by a series of displacements and projections that assign responsibility for the poor state of the Kenyan nation not to colonial hegemony but to enduring black incompetence and/or incorrigibility. Colonialism, after all, is not a factor in contemporary Kenya, as Shaw reminds us, even as he repeats and accentuates Leakey’s (and his own) white neutrality, even as he concurrently masks Leakey’s (and his own) enduring white privilege. Most Kenyans, he says, discursively eliding empire and ideology, were born after colonialism. For the West not to intervene in post-colonial Kenya, several commentators complain, would amount to a moral failing and a loss of innocence.<sup>32</sup> These arguments feature an uncanny reproduction of the discourses that first impelled the European territorial conquest of Africa—the scramble to christianize and civilize “dark and savage” Africa—over a hundred years ago.

In colonial discourse, that the colonial project in Africa produced extreme deprivation and “indebtedness,” instead of good Christian government and social progress, marks not the indefensibility of past and continuing European intervention and regulation, not the non-suitability of Eurocentric governmentality, not even the contestation of British pedigree, but rather the enduring testament of African backwardness and incorrigibility. This, I suggest, is a transvaluation of values comparable to the displacement, as Brantlinger traces it, of culpability for slavery from Europeans to Africans. Within “darkened” representations of the Kenyan polity (as a site of multiple discursive substitutions and erasures) “fixed” racial stereotypes (always already known but nevertheless anxiously repeated) proliferate. Is Leakey, as he has been constructed by representations in the British media and as he has represented himself, then the post-colonial reincarnation and anxious repetition of David Livingstone, the legendary Christian missionary? Is Moi, “the stock savage,” then the reincarnation of the evil witch doctor against whom the white missionary must wage a pitched battle for the African soul? Is the battle for the Kenyan soul, in representations that juxtapose and antithetically evaluate Moi and Leakey, then a literal as much as a metaphorical reenactment of the primal scene of colonial encounter?

A peculiarly post-colonial transvaluation of values in this “late” reenactment of the primal scene of colonial encounter concerns religion. Christianity was foundational in propelling and rationalizing the colonial conquest of Africa. In an apparent post-colonial inversion, Leakey, “the white missionary hero,” is now famously and unashamedly atheist. The Kenyans whom he would rescue from darkness are, stereotypically, God-fearing Christians; “half of the country,” one commentator, rather casually but familiarly states, “goes to church on every Sunday.” This transvaluation of religious values does not, to my mind, represent a potentially emancipatory discursive fissure in imperial ideology but rather imprints on the process of imperialization the logic for its own perpetuation and continuity. Which is to say that, in order to escape self-contradiction and self-containment, social darwinist discourses must

perpetually produce knowledges of the colonizer at consistently higher states of progress than those of the colonized. Having successfully inculcated the fear of the Lord on the black Kenyan masses, the post-colonial saviour/missionary, it would seem, can only retain regulatory and disciplinary privilege by exceeding religious dogma.

A central feature in the structure of the colonial stereotype that, according to Bhabha, confers on this stereotype a certain transhistorical potency and persistence, is its deeply ambivalent character: “. . . it is the force of ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures; informs its strategies of individuation and marginalization; produces that effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must always be in excess of what can be empirically proved or logically constructed.”<sup>33</sup> The same processes of split subjectification (the same ambivalences) that were generated during the moment of the first colonial encounter and that pitted the good, or at any rate redeemable, native against the bad and utterly incorrigible native, continue in the post-colonial phase of imperialism. Graphic images of a “dark” and perilous Kenyan landscape are juxtaposed with “bright” and hopeful images of Kenya as a land with some promise for pacification and progress. Lurid images of savage Kenyans who would brutally assault a cripple (as one account reports) are juxtaposed with images of elegant Kenyans acclaiming and adulating Leakey.

Brantlinger emphasizes the manner in which, in the discourses of colonialism, the imperial project records either the silence or the alleged allegiance of the colonized. British media accounts of the Safina saga confirm this claim. All these accounts, as previously stated, silence all races in Kenya other than white and black through systematic erasure. These reports subject black Kenyans, through surveillance and regulation, to a regime of objectification, silence and/or alleged acquiescence. No attempt is made to give “them” a voice in accounts that either indiscriminately “darken” black moral worth or objectify the black Kenyan soul as the site/prize of/for the battle between Leakey and Moi. Reading these accounts one may be forgiven, perhaps, for asking the (naive and in)appropriate question: where are the “real” people in this country? As if to answer that question an article by David Orr (presumably a British journalist) and Ochieng Sino (a black Kenyan journalist) features extensive interviews with black Kenyans in Nairobi.<sup>34</sup> The article features lengthy direct quotations and, in a unique process of subjectification, refers to its interviewees by name, age and occupation. Designed, in a general sense, to investigate whether race and colonialism were still factors in Kenyan politics, and, in a strict sense, to establish Leakey’s presidential potential, this article ends with the apparently astounding claim that “Leakey and Safina” command a fifty percent approval rating. The construction “Leakey and Safina” highlights the proprietary relationship imagined between Leakey and “his” party.

My interest is not to dispute the survey on empirical and logical grounds with the view to protesting misrepresentations and positing the “real” diverse Kenyan voices. I wish, instead, to stress the means through which authoritative statistical discourses and indigenous voices are strategically introduced to authenticate what is already known, already securely in place. I will point out, though, that the survey is based on

a false racial binary and therefore seems to answer in the affirmative the general question it purports to investigate. Months prior to this survey (the article was written in the last week of October, 1995), Leakey's heroism, honesty, and bravery as well as his transethnic appeal and political neutrality, had been established and reiterated, celebrated and anxiously repeated. Long before this survey, the masks of racism had been adorned and the discourse had been racialized. Imperial eyes had long penetrated and mapped out the landscape and its inhabitants.

It is instructive that Leakey's approval rating is fifty percent. As readers have been told repeatedly, anxiously, Moi won the last (seriously flawed) election with only thirty-six percent of an ethnically fragmented popular vote. Significantly more Kenyans are reported to support Leakey than Moi. It is also instructive that, though half the respondents did not embrace the prospect of Leakey's presidency, the article features a far greater representation of the voices of those who do. Moreover, the structure of the article is such that all the "positive voices"—those supportive of Leakey—are foregrounded while "negative voices" are relegated to the later paragraphs. As a final explanatory strategy, the author(itative) black Kenyan journalist, Ochieng Sino, loses his erstwhile journalistic transparency towards the end of the article. He is named as a Kenyan and interviewed by his white co-author: a process that repeats the strategic subjectification of blacks by whites, the black journalist is strategically brought into representation by his white counterpart. Sino explains to Orr that "educated" black Kenyan men seemed more accepting of Leakey than women and the "uneducated" did. Considering the pervasive maleness of the construction of the political space in Kenya, this conflation of women and the uneducated does not appear coincidental. The inference seems to be that the women, in their skepticism about Leakey, were as ill-informed and ill-advised as the "uneducated." It is suggested, in this explanation, that the acquisition of formal education increases Leakey's appeal; an evolutionary and a gendered logic underwrites Sino's explanation.

Generalized moments in African post-colonial history, as they have been constructed by Western representation, have also assured, I suggest, the persisting efficacy of the specific Kenyan colonial stereotypes I am exploring here. The fact that much of the African landscape has and continues to be generally "darkened" with little distinction or differentiation in the Western imagination seems to lend contemporary believability to specific "Kenyan stereotypes." Bhabha's analysis of the structure of the stereotype reveals that the particular and specific efficacy of one stereotype depends on the generation of a chain of other stereotypes. It seems to me that images of potential anarchy in Kenya acquire currency alongside lurid images of a generalized African anarchy—"ethnic clashes" in Rwanda, "warlords" in Somalia, "intractable civil war" in Sudan, "barbarity" in Nigeria, etc. Similarly, representations of Moi as a stock savage gain currency alongside the generalized impression of African presidential savagery. In Bernard Levin's chronicle (cited above) such typical African "devils" include Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Sani Abacha of Nigeria and Moi of Kenya. In Milton Gatabaki's comment (cited above) the African "brutes" include Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, Jean Bedal Bokassa, formerly of the Central African Republic, Idi Amin Dada, formerly of Uganda and Moi of Kenya. My aim is not to

disturb these "negative images" as such. I seek, instead, to emphasize the casualness and familiarity with which past and present "African savages" are repeatedly introduced, without analysis or differentiation, to reinforce each other's already known savagery.

In addition to the general history of post-colonial Africa, the stereotypical and antithetical representation of Moi and Leakey, seem to attain further currency in Kenya's peculiar colonial history, particularly the history of violent anti-colonial struggle. I am suggesting that the Mau Mau Rebellion is the quintessential moment in colonial contest in Kenya.<sup>35</sup> I am suggesting that the effects of the discourses and stereotypes generated by the Mau Mau Rebellion are prominently at play in contemporary British representations of Kenya. Claims regarding the potential for anarchy and violence in the country—particularly reports of the savage beating of a white hero by masses of black brutes—are discursively made plausible by overdetermined stereotypical representations of black Kenyans as potentially murderous. My reading suggests, further, that such stereotypical knowledges help to explain the timely emergence of Richard Leakey, an eminent scientist and a non-ethnic white man, as a hero with a missionary legacy and a missionary project to rescue Kenyans.

My argument has been that a certain white supremacy continues to discursively racialize, define and delimit representations of Kenya in the West. In closing, I would like to briefly meditate on issues of white subjectivity and ambivalence. It would be an over-simplification to suggest that colonial logic is singular and linear. In spite of the many laudatory statements in praise of Leakey, whiteness is not always associated with goodness in the colonial periphery. British media accounts represent "negative images" of whiteness in Kenya. These images, however negative, still add to the over-representation of whiteness in British accounts of Kenya. These "negative" images include reports on the excesses of good living and sexual promiscuity, as well as hints of local white involvement and implication in the Moi government.<sup>36</sup> How then do these "negative images" not invalidate or substantially qualify my arguments? How then do these "negative images" not undermine and contain white supremacist colonialist logic? Appiah's model for racist expression would suggest that these examples of the distinction between "racial membership" and "moral worth" ought to be sufficient to *rationaly* invalidate extrinsic racism unless such racism was not, in the first place, based on rational determinations, but rather derived from "cognitive incapacity."<sup>37</sup> Do all the media reports about Kenya—which at points document "negative" white behaviour, but in general persist in the (re)production and normalization of white privilege, brown erasure and black stereotype—display a collective cognitive incapacity?

A sustained, irrational cognitive incapacity would seem an insufficient explanation in my analysis of the Kenyan polity. Rational, if masked, self-interest and anxieties seem to be at stake here. I think it is more productive to shift the focus, as Bhabha urges, from the identification of images as "positive" or "negative" to a recognition of the processes of subjectification—for both the colonized and the colonizer—made plausible by stereotypical discourse. Such a paradigmatic reconfiguration sanctions an exploration of white subjectivity in the colonial periphery as a somewhat tenuous product stricken with deep ambivalences and anxieties. The

natural superiority of whiteness cannot in discourse really be proved and demands therefore demonic repetition. A minimum of two levels of ambivalence can, to my mind, be articulated. First, in a process not unlike the Lacanian mirror stage, there is an internal split between the white self and its own other, a process that at once facilitates and negates coherent white subjectivity. It seems to me that, as a result of the series of displacements and projections inherent in the internal split between the white subject and its own other, white subjects in the colonial periphery (Kenya's "happy valley," most famously) are depicted as extravagant and sexually promiscuous. These displacements disclose a certain "lack" at the heart of whiteness internal to itself that is then projected as white "excess" in the colonial margin.

Second, there is the coextensive split between the white subject, as the Ideal Subject, and the racial others external to the white self. This process, not to be mistaken with the first order of subjectification, involves a separable series of displacements and projections. Savagery, cannibalism, barbarity and ethnic violence (as opposed to "mere" excess) are projected and displaced from the Ideal White Subject, onto, in this case, the African, specifically, the Kenyan. Yet, the displacement is never quite complete; nor can it ever be. Hence the anxious and incessant repetitions that characterize colonial stereotypes. Brantlinger has pointed out that having so "darkened" the African landscape, the white missionary/explorer/settler could not exist far beyond the terrifying prospect of degeneracy. In my opinion, the refusal by the British media to engage in any depth with white complicity in Moi's "savage" government betrays the psychic terror of degeneracy. Leakey's entry into opposition politics does not mark the first time a white person has been involved in post-independence Kenyan politics. Leakey's brother, Philip Leakey, is a former member of the Moi cabinet. Basil Criticos serves as junior minister in the Moi government today.

Against this background, it is clear that the attention that Richard Leakey attracts belies certain interests and deep anxieties. It is curious that Criticos, for all his whiteness, has, to my knowledge, not once been mentioned in British media accounts of Kenyan politics. Philip Leakey is represented foremost as Richard Leakey's younger brother and only secondarily as a former cabinet minister in the Moi government. Why this refusal to engage whiteness in the service of Moi? Why is there an apparent refusal to engage Richard Leakey's lengthy association with Moi prior to the launching of Safina? What anxiety impels Chris McGreal, for instance, to declare "after years of fighting off Kenya's corrupted political system from the sidelines, the renowned paleontologist and conservationist Richard Leakey . . . has stepped into the centre of the arena"?<sup>38</sup> My paper has argued that, in spite of elaborate surveillance, the knowledges produced about Kenya are repetitions of familiar stereotypes. Why is there a reluctance to analyze the Kenyan polity critically? Is this reluctance a self-interested and rational refusal to confront the terrifying prospect of degeneracy? Is there, I wonder, a fear that close scrutiny will reveal unmistakable white faces staring back from the Kenyan "heart of darkness"?

## NOTES

- To Stephen Slemon, Heather Zwicker and all the other members of the "Colonial and Postcolonial Stereotypes Seminar" conducted at the University of Alberta between September 1995 and April 1996. To Debbie Thompson, Jacob Speaks, Lamia Karin and Andrew Iraska.
- Bernard Levin, "Darkness and Devils," *The Times* 8 September 1995. Some of the factual claims that provided the immediate context for this essay have been overtaken by events while the essay was in press. Late last year, the Kenya government finally registered Safina as an opposition party (after a two and a half year delay). As well, in the run-up to the presidential elections conducted in Kenya late last year the figure of Richard Leakey—a white man—as saviour was to some degree supplanted in British (and American) media accounts by the figure of Charity Ngilu—a black woman—as saviour. My current research examines the implications of this gendered and racialized displacement and partial substitution. Suffice it to say that the claims made in this paper concerning the instrumentality of race in the representation of Kenya in the West remain completely valid in the immediate context of the time period the paper addresses (1995–1996) as well as in the context of present day representations of Kenya politics.
  - Sam Kiley, "Corruption and Poverty Killing Thousands of Species," *The Times* 22 January 1996.
  - For the purposes of this paper and because of ease of access my use of the term "British press/media" is restricted to the print media. This paper confines itself to the discourses generated in the British press in the immediate wake of the formation of Safina and does not address the long drawn-out and on-going struggle for democratic reform in Kenya. Needless to say, the arguments that follow are in no way intended to question the legitimacy of that struggle.
  - Baroness Lynda Chalker, the British Overseas Development Minister, announced the freezing of economic aid to Kenya on 28 July 1995: "I will not make any further announcement until I am satisfied not only by political reform but also economic reform and human rights." (see *The Times* 29 July 1995). This announcement came shortly after a meeting she had with Leakey.
  - Chris McGreal, "The Second Front: The Man Who Would Be Kenya," *The Guardian* 20 July 1995.
  - Homi K. Bhabha, "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism," *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 66.
  - Ibid.*, p. 67 (my ellipsis). I emphasize that my paper does not attempt to offer a comprehensive catalogue of the inaccuracies of representations of Kenya in the British press; the sheer volume of the material involved precludes such a project (a project of highly limited value). Nor is this an objective and disinterested critique of the performance of the British press; my position as a Kenyan living in the West delimits that unlikely prospect.
  - For an exploration of this primal scene of colonial encounter see Jan Nederveen Pieterse, "In the Dark Continent," *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 64–75.
  - Kiley, "Corruption and Poverty."
  - Ibid.*
  - Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Racisms," *Anatomy of Racism*, ed. David Theo Goldberg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 3–17.
  - Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.
  - Ibid.*, p. 5.
  - Ibid.*
  - Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.
  - See, for example, Fiametta Rocco, "Leakey's Bold Challenge Stirs Assassination Fears," *The Independent* 14 May 1995; Raymond Whitaker, "Kenya's Saviour or White Mischief-Maker?" *The Independent* 17 May 1995; Michela Wrong, "Kenya Tests the Limits of Foreign Goodwill," *Financial Times* 30 May 1995; Inigo Gilmore, "Leakey Refuses to be Silenced by Murder Plot Fears," *The Times* 14 August 1995; and Christina Lamb, "Moi Panics as Leakey Woos Kenyan Masses," *Sunday Times* 16 July 1995.
  - Robert Shaw, qtd in Adrian Hartley, "Wind of Change Puts Whites' Good Life at Risk," *The Sunday Telegraph* 9 July 1995 (my emphasis).
  - Richard Dawkins, "All Our Yesterdays," *Sunday Times* 31 December 1995.
  - See, for examples of the reporting of these attacks on Safina officials, "Leakey Beating," *The Independent* 12 August 1995; Michael Binyon, "Britain Acts Over Beating of Leakey," *The Times* 11 August 1995; Christina Lamb, "Angry Moi Drags Leakey Through the Mud," *Sunday Times* 20 August 1995 (see particularly her interview with Maina Kiai, the director of the Kenya Human Rights Commission); Greg Barrow, "Leakey Beaten Up as Police Look On," *The*

- Guardian* 11 August 1996; Michela Wrong, "Kenya's Wildlife Expert Whipped," *Financial Times* 11 August 1995; Manoah Esipisu, "Leakey Attacked by Kenyan Youths," *The Independent* 11 August 1995; and Scott Straus, "Leakey Harassed by Mob in Mombasa," *The Times* 15 January 1996.
20. [No Author], "Leakey Court Case," *The Guardian* 23 September 1995.
  21. Michela Wrong, "Ruling in Kenya Trial May Stoke Foreign Tensions," *Financial Times* 25 September 1995.
  22. "Leakey Court Case," p. 54.
  23. *Ibid.*
  24. David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993), 71–75.
  25. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
  26. Appiah, "Racisms," pp 14–15.
  27. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
  28. Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, p. 11.
  29. Milton Gatabaki, "Leakey's the One," *The Independent* 22 July 1995, 16.
  30. Patrick Brantlinger, "The Genealogy of the Myth of the 'Dark Continent,'" *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), 16.
  31. *Ibid.*
  32. See, for example, Michela Wrong, "Kenya Tests the Limits of Foreign Donors," *Financial Times* 30 May 1995; Anonymous, "Ark of Hope," *The Times* 26 July 1995; and Anonymous, "Just An Autocrat," *The Times* 4 August 1995.
  33. Bhabha, "The Other Question," p. 66.
  34. David Orr and Ochieng Sino, "Could a White Man Lead Kenya?" *The Independent* 22 October 1995.
  35. A peasant revolt, the Mau Mau Rebellion was crushed by the British colonial army. Official as well as "relatively autonomous" British accounts generally continue to record this incident in Kenya's colonial history as the eruption of indigenous terrorism and not as a rejection of colonial occupation. Despite the fact that the Rebellion involved relatively few white casualties and numerous, mostly civilian, black casualties, it had the discursive effect of "darkening" the Kenyan landscape and providing a strategy for the criminalization of an entire nation. It enabled, in representation, a re-enactment of the split subjectification of the black Kenyans, pitting the "good Kenyan" (redeemable, compliant, grateful for the benefits of progress under white rule) against the "bad Kenyan" (incorrigible, violent and ungrateful); and the "good Kenyan ethnicities" against the "bad one(s)"—the murderous Kikuyu. Concurrently, the Mau Mau Rebellion—to the extent that Mau Mau was constructed as highly pervasive, secretive and duplicitous and, accordingly, all black Kenyans (even "the good ones") were constructed as potential Mau Maus—provided an opportunity for the reification of the moral superiority of the white colonial power and a justification for enhanced surveillance and regulation achieved through the institution of a state of emergency. The Mau Mau Rebellion provided, for colonial discourses, the graphic and terrifying testimony of native savagery that enabled a re-articulation of the ethical imperative for continued and enhanced colonial intervention.
  36. See particularly, Raymond Whitaker, "Kenya Saviour or White Mischief-Maker"; and Adrian Hartley, "Wind of Change Puts Whites' Good Life At Risk," for ambivalent representations of whites in Kenya.
  37. Appiah, "Racisms," p. 5.
  38. Chris McGreal, "The Man Who Would Be Kenya."