

Beyond Binarisms

*Edited by Eduardo F. Coutinho and
Pina Coco*



Crossings and Contaminations:
Studies in Comparative Literature



Crossings and Contaminations: *Studies in Comparative Literature*

The present volume contains a selection of texts on crossings and contaminations in Comparative Literature, the issue of Human, In-Human and Post-Human and the impact of globalization. The first essays propose a discussion of the limits and possibilities of artistic production in the contemporary scene, taking into account the social, political, economic and cultural changes brought about by the process of globalization. And the texts which follow these revolve around the nature of the body and of the human, both before and after genetic technology surpasses the opposition between human and in-human and the hybrid post-human raises the possibility of a new subjectivity, inhabited by cyborgs and androids. In both cases, the discussion is focused on the sphere of literature and the other forms of aesthetic expression. Finally, the last essays discuss how the reordering of the political, economic and cultural powers driven by techno-science surpasses the traditional sense of time and space and lends a sense of unreality to everyday life, due to the intense mediation of technological “imagery”.

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FOREWORD

Having appeared as a counterpoint to the studies of national literatures or of literatures produced in a single language, Comparative Literature, since its constitution as an academic discipline, bears the notion of cross-culturality as a fundamental trait, be it as a reaction to national and linguistic borders, be it in interdisciplinary terms as an opposition to the limits established between fields of knowledge. Not only has this cross-cultural character assured the discipline a broader scope in relation to other disciplines dedicated to the study of literature but has conferred also a sense of inadequacy towards the compartmentalization of knowledge which has characterized educational institutions in the West since the Enlightenment. However, for a long period, first as a consequence of the habit of comparing two or more national literatures or two or more literary productions in different languages, and later due to the influence of the formalist theoretic currents of the mid-twentieth century, Comparative Literature has been dominated by a kind of binary perspective that has considerably limited its scope.

More recently, however, in the era of post-modern *Weltanschauung* and influenced by the diverse currents of thought that have dominated the world in the second half of the twentieth century, Comparative Literature Studies have undergone significant transformations, evolving from the binary, homogeneous perspective it had acquired, based on a search for universals, to a historically located perspective. The gaze which guided traditional comparativism has been descentered and comparatists have explicitly assumed their locus of enunciation. The aura which involved the literary object has been questioned and other types of literary and aesthetic expressions so far excluded from the mainstream of comparativism have come to be taken into account. The traditional axes of comparative studies have become permeable to other voices, coming from previously neglected places and from groups whose production was considered secondary or irrelevant. The result is that the binary schema which for so long prevailed within the core of comparative studies has been reevaluated and its excludent character has often been replaced by an inclusive view that has come to consider alternative forms of expression and to recognize their differences.

The texts included in this book were originally presented at the XVIIIth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association (the ICLA/AILC) held at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro from July 29 to August 4, 2007. This Congress – the first of the Association in its fifty three years of existence

to take place at a Latin American university – was planned as a forum of debate for these questions. Its main goal was to rethink the role of comparativism at the beginning of the XXIst century and to investigate the conflicts the discipline has had to face and the paths it has been following in its diverse forms. With this in view, the Congress was composed of seven sections, all of them dealing with different aspects of the discipline's transformation, that have come to constitute significant areas of study – the roots and routes of comparativism, critical discourses and the role of the intellectual, Comparative Literature's crossings and contaminations, the human, the in-human and the post-human in our present days, the conceptualization of "identity" as a fluid and multifaceted notion, the updated views of "translation," and the questions of "nation" and "sexuality" as instances of power relations – and we have complemented them with three symposia which signal this Congress venue, both in its local and continental scale, and in its dialectics with the process of globalization. To all these sections, ten expressive workshops were added, all related to the general theme of the Congress and proposed by different members of the Association.

The present volume contains a selection of texts, mostly of them coming from the sections "Crossings and Contaminations" and "Human, In-Human, Post-Human" and form the Symposium "Globalization.com". These texts were gathered in this volume due to their thematic approximation, and were organized, as much as possible, into thematic blocks, ranging from the more general to the more specific. Thus, the first essays propose a discussion of the limits and possibilities of artistic production in the contemporary scene, taking into account the social, political, economic and cultural changes brought about by the process of globalization guided by transnational capital and its logic based on the laws of the market. And the texts which follow these revolve around the nature of the body and of the human, both before and after genetic technology surpasses the opposition between human and in-human and the hybrid post-human raises the possibility of a new subjectivity, inhabited by cyborgs and androids, inquiring: dehumanization of the human or humanization of the machine? In both cases, the discussion is focused on the sphere of literature and the other forms of aesthetic expression, be it in one of these fields alone or in relation to one another. Finally, the last essays discuss how the reordering of the political, economic and cultural powers driven by technoscience surpass the traditional sense of time and space on the one hand and on the other lends a sense of unreality to everyday life, due to the intense mediation of technological "imagery".

With the purpose of contributing to provide the reader with a view of some of the major problems that have been holding the attention of comparatists in the last few years within the sphere of the International Comparative Literature Association, we offer this book, the second of a series composed of three volumes which, together, form a sample of what was discussed during the week in which the

XVIIIth Congress of the Association was held in Rio de Janeiro. In order to maintain the flavor of the texts' writing and based on the idea that language diversity is one of the main traits of Comparative Literature, since the times of its configuration and consolidation as an academic discipline, we have chosen to publish these texts in their original versions. Thus, there are texts in English and French – the two official languages of the Association –, and also in Portuguese and Spanish, the former the language of the country that has been the Congress venue, and the latter the language of its neighboring countries in the Latin American continent.

The editor is grateful to the members of the Conference Organizing Committee – Pina Coco, Ângela Maria Dias, Beatriz Resende, Sonia Torres, Edson Rosa da Silva and João Cezar de Castro Rocha –, and particularly to Mônica Amim and Ana Viola, who played an indispensable role both during the Congress organization and in the preparation of this book.

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TARZAN AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE NAME OF “AFRICA”

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The publication of *Tarzan of the Apes* – which inaugurates the series of products today gathered under the tradename of “Tarzan” by Edgar Rice Burroughs Inc. – took place in serial form in 1912 in *The All-Story*, a pulp magazine – a low-cost publishing format which was part of the process of massification of readership, by means of commercially popular literary forms. Among the pulp fictions, there was a predominance of adventure stories and narratives of fantasy and science-fiction. *Tarzan of the Apes* and the following Tarzan novels fed on these genres, articulating such “genre memories” (Mikhail Bakhtin’s term) with representations of “Africa”, that are largely based on colonial discourses and imperial signifying practices.

Tarzan of the Apes was put together and republished in paperback in 1914. In 1918, the story of the ape-man was adapted for the first time into film. Following this, a series of refractions – at least 24 novels by Burroughs and works by other authors, besides comic books, newspaper strips, radio shows, films, TV serials, among other products – enhanced the movement of multimidiatic dissemination of Tarzan, constituting the character as a worldwide phenomenon. From the United States of America and several countries in Europe to countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa, the trademark of “Tarzan” extended its commerce, the name of “Tarzan” demarcated multiple itineraries. Throughout its itineraries, the name of ‘Tarzan’ has been attached to particularly powerful ways of imaging and imagining “Africa”.

Centered in the USA, the apparatus which produces the multimidiatic refractions of Tarzan constitutes flows of imagetic resources (visual and aural), which remain available to the construction of imagined geographies (Said, 1978) from different perspectives. As a machine, this apparatus, characterized by an occidentalist centering, circumscribes the name of “Africa”, delimiting a field of possibilities for signifying africanity that is invested with global visibility – *the occidentalist name-in-closure of “Africa”* (Ribeiro, 2005).

To approach Tarzan means taking into account private property under capitalism: “Tarzan” is a trademark or tradename of the corporation, created in 1923 by Burroughs to capitalize the incomes of what he wrote. The economy of

capital seeks to contain the name of “Tarzan”, today, under the register of a corporation, framing the character as imperial subject.

To interrogate the name of “Africa” and the name of “Tarzan”, to question the imperial landscapes and the imagetics of “Tarzan” which inhabit and control the writing of some “Africa”, producing an occidentalist and eurocentered form of africanist imagination, that seeks to contain and to frame the name of “Africa” under the register of the imperial subject, involves thinking the dissemination of its traces beyond the capitalizing containment of “Tarzan” as trademark and the name-in-closure of “Africa”, by means of the invention of some imaginative overflow. This essay inhabits the passage from an understanding of the name-in-closure of “Africa”, in filmic narratives of “Tarzan”¹ – pointing out its belonging, its *pertencimento* to occidentalism, understood as an imaginative regime which produces the West as subject in opposition to fixed images of ‘its’ others (the East, Africa, the primitive, the savage and so on) – to an open thought of dissemination, suggesting its tense belonging, its *pertensimento* to occidentalism as a constitutive ambivalence.² It’s important to keep in mind the movement from *pertencimento* to *pertensimento*: keeping the words in Portuguese (for translatability is itself at stake when it comes to the transcultural movements of imagination and imaginary figures, such as Tarzan), I am trying to mark the *différance* (Derrida, 1972) with a silent “s”. In the path which leads from noticing the belonging of Tarzan to a western genealogy to suggesting the tense and nervous belonging of Tarzan to a transcultural history, what is at stake is the passage between the topics, the common places, the versions of a performatively produced imaginary and the tropics, the movements, the diversions

¹ Within the universe that ranges from Tarzan’s pulp-fiction inauguration to the multimidiatic refractions which rework the character, my argument will be restricted, here, to these films (although I will not address any of them directly): *Tarzan of the Apes* (1918); *The Son of Tarzan* (1920); *The Adventures of Tarzan* (1921); *Tarzan and the Golden Lion* (1927); *Tarzan the Tiger* (1929); *Tarzan, the Ape Man* (1932); *Tarzan the Fearless* (1933); *Tarzan and His Mate* (1934); *The New Adventures of Tarzan* (1935); *Tarzan Escapes* (1936); *Tarzan’s Revenge* (1938); *Tarzan and the Green Goddess* (1938); *Tarzan Finds a Son!* (1939); *Tarzan’s Secret Treasure* (1941); *Tarzan’s New York Adventure* (1942); *Tarzan Triumphs* (1943); *Tarzan’s Desert Mystery* (1943); *Tarzan and the Amazons* (1945); *Tarzan and the Leopard Woman* (1946); *Tarzan and the Huntress* (1947); *Tarzan and the Mermaids* (1948); *Tarzan’s Magic Fountain* (1949); *Tarzan and the Slave Girl* (1950); *Tarzan’s Peril* (1951); *Tarzan’s Savage Fury* (1952); *Tarzan and the She-Devil* (1953); *Tarzan’s Hidden Jungle* (1955); *Tarzan and the Lost Safari* (1957); *Tarzan’s Fight for Life* (1958); *Tarzan and the Trappers* (1958); *Tarzan’s Greatest Adventure* (1959); *Tarzan, the Ape Man* (1959); *Tarzan, the Magnificent* (1960); *Tarzan Goes to India* (1962); *Tarzan’s Three Challenges* (1963); *Tarzan and the Valley of Gold* (1966); *Tarzan and the Great River* (1967); *Tarzan and the Jungle Boy* (1968); *Tarzan’s Deadly Silence* (1970); *Tarzan, the Ape Man* (1981); *Greystoke, the Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes* (1984); *Tarzan in Manhattan* (1989); *Tarzan and the Lost City* (1998).

² As it comes to this thought of dissemination, I will directly address *Moi, un noir* (1959), by Jean Rouch, but it is remarkable that the film has, in my argument, a sort of allegorical status, working as a window or a crystal through which to read the dissemination of Tarzan.

of an iterative process of imagination, which opens up the question of the future, as a question of the ethics of alterity beyond identity politics.³

The genealogy of Tarzan refers to what can be called the culture of colonialism (Thomas, 1994) and to the historical formation of urban-industrial modernity, centered around the USA, and the history of the constitution of the West as a cultural forum, in the three senses attributed to the word “forum” by Homi Bhabha (1994): a place of public exhibition and discussion, a place of judgment and a place of market.

The imperial coloniality of modernity and of the USA, conditions the possibility of emergence of the fictions and frictions of Tarzan. As a structure of domination, coloniality is part of the definition of modernity by means of a dialectics which works in economic, political, cultural, experiential and imaginative terms. The Tarzan narratives are part of the imaginative dialectics of modernity and coloniality, reinscribing in its fantasy worlds the experiential, cultural, political and economic terms at stake in the colonial/modern world-system (Mignolo, 2000). Contained and framed within this dialectics, Tarzan emerges as the protagonist of adventure narratives and jungle melodramas, which articulate representations of race, gender, social class, nationality, landscape and animality.⁴

In the context of an urban way of life which is haunted by an anxiety regarding the question of the destruction of experience, an urban way of life excited and numbed by the excess of cultural elements whose overwhelming availability deepens the feeling of the impossibility of experiencing them, the Tarzan narratives, as adventures, are ideologically constructed and sold as a sort of “last refuge” of experience, assuming, as Giorgio Agamben argues (2005: 39) regarding adventure, that the way towards experience passes through the extraordinary and the exotic. The exotic and exofonous elements of adventure constitute an ideological reserve of experience: a supplement to modernity as the anxious space-time of the destruction of experience. This supplementarity inhabits the movement of primitivism towards alterity.

Furthermore, the fantasy which embeds the worlds of Tarzan also articulates extraordinary and extemporaneous signs commonly related to science fiction, with the invention of lost civilizations, lost cities (like Atlantis) and lost races (Barnard, 2006): worlds outside time and worlds of another time, inscribed under the name of “Africa”, as part of its imagined geography.

³ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak states in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* her interest in “not presenting the ethics of alterity as a politics of identity” (1999, p. x).

⁴ The argument of this essay and these questions of race, gender, social class, nationality, landscape and animality (which are not directly approached here) are the subject of a deeper discussion in my current ongoing research project. In my Master's dissertation, I am further developing these and other questions. Write me at marcelo_rsr@yahoo.com for additional information.

To the exotic and exofonous, the extraordinary and the extemporaneous, the Tarzan narratives always articulate signs of contemporary life and present historical heritages. The colonization of Africa, as an ongoing process, is a usual background for the narratives. There are also trips made by Tarzan to other contexts as diverse as Guatemala, India, Mexico, Brazil and Thailand, besides confrontations with “civilization” in Paris, New York and London, for instance.

The interweaving of the exotic and exofonous (the fantasy of adventure), the extemporaneous and extraordinary (the fantasy of science fiction), and the contemporary and the present historical heritages, constitutes the Tarzan narratives as oblique commentaries on the condition of modernity – inscribed as civilization and opposed to savagery – and on coloniality as its constitutive structure – based in hierarchical representations of race, gender, social class, nationality, landscape and animality. And further than commenting, they also project alternative possibilities.

As Mariana Torgovnick (1990) argues, rather than being escapist fantasies, the Tarzan narratives are attempts “to imagine the primitive as a source of empowerment – as a locus *for* making things anew” (45). Torgovnick argues that: “In this use of the primitive for social commentary and the projection of alternative possibilities, the Tarzan novels are not just an epiphenomenon of primitivism. They are in many ways the best place to begin to understand what modernity had at stake in its encounters with the primitive” (Torgovnick, 1990: 45-6).

The signs of the present also frame the exoticism of the adventures, with elements of another popular genre of the mass cultural industries: melodrama, understood as an important genre in the process of narrativization of cinema. Many times, Tarzan and Jane (or occasionally other women) stand for the (white, bourgeois, heterosexual, western) romantic couple which symbolizes Good. With or without his heterosexual counterpart, Tarzan is the powerful leader of a world apart, in the middle of the “African jungle”, whose order constitutes the *telos* which is intended to give the narratives their right of closure and their end.

As melodramatic adventures which comment on the condition of modernity and project other possibilities, the Tarzan narratives work as supplements in the very core of the dialectics between modernity and coloniality, disturbing it and ambivalently suggesting the opening of its closure. If adventure appears as a supplement to modern anxieties surrounding the destruction of experience, melodrama supplements morality in capitalism, drawing an excessively obvious line separating Good from Evil, and defining a teleological narrative structure. As supplements, adventure and melodrama do not “compensate” a lack and center a totality, but add an excess into a gap, give something else, something other, in the place of the object of anxiety, opening up the possibility of an effect of decentering.

Upon the background of melodramatic adventure, other cultural forms variably take shape as they are being appropriated by the movement of

narrativization. Nevertheless, they remain to a certain degree opaque in relationship to this movement. Splitting narrative closure (which is henceforth never accomplished), these cultural forms open up the possibility of separating the name of “Tarzan” from the circle of interests, which contain it: from the occidentalism which commands its figuration and the name-in-closure of “Africa” which sustains it; from the economy which accredits the register of its trademark and the closure which determines the character as imperial subject; from the narrative teleology which marks the tradename of “Tarzan”.

It is possible to track down the “genre memories” which inhabit these cultural forms, lending to the melodramatic adventures of Tarzan part of their popularity: urban forms of entertainment characteristic of colonial modernity, like the zoo – translated in film with location footage of animal life, addressed to the spectator beyond the narrative frame – the human zoo – in scenes which introduce the natives, their rituals and their myths, their “superstitions” and their “magic”, by means of a sort of stereotyped ethnography –, the museums of ethnographic and archaeological collections – in scenes emphasizing the world of objects, from fetish statues to worthy commodities, and architecture – and the circus – particularly with Cheetah, the chimp which accompanies Tarzan in many of the films, presenting comic shows which are not fully narrativized under the teleological scheme.

In the very movement of them being appropriated to the interests of the teleological narrative line, the genre memories of these cultural forms take away from the stories the closure of their circle, creating breaches and fractures whose disrupting force can spread upon the whole series of multimidiatic refractions of Tarzan. The ultimate possible consequence of such a disrupting force, can be hindering the economy of the trademark that contains the name of “Tarzan” within an imperial frame in its global itineraries, disturbing the belonging of Tarzan to the fictions of occidentalism and inventing, deepening the frictions of a tense belonging (*pertensimento*).

*

The process of globalization – as a condition of the glocal dissemination of the filmic Tarzan narratives, that is, their global projection through various and irregular local networks – involves a constant but mediated mo(ve)ment across cultural contexts. If the genealogy of Tarzan relates to colonialism’s culture and to modernity, the history of the glocal dissemination of Tarzan’s imaginary figure constitutes the historical heritage of colonialism. This is however an ambivalent heritage, opened to uncountable expropriations and (re)appropriations across its transcultural itineraries. Glocality – the global projection of the films, as products contrived in specific localities of the colonial/modern world-system and their recurrent reinscription in different symbolic and cultural localities – implies a *mo(ve)ment of transcontextuality*, an interminable imaginative work, which imposes the necessity of taking into account both the fact that each film belongs to a specific context of

production and the fact of the iterability which disseminates them across other contexts (of reception). Methodologically, this means working with a notion of context which is multiple and heterogeneous and whose originary dissemination – there is no absolute or primordial context, but movement across contexts – suggests another kind of analytic horizon: *the graphic of transtextuality*, rather than the logic of contextualization.

A double scene which registers the glocal circulation and the irreducible political conflict surrounding the name of “Tarzan” is narrated by Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967): “Attend showings of a Tarzan film in the Antilles and in Europe. In the Antilles, the young Negro identifies himself de facto with Tarzan against the Negroes. This is much more difficult for him in a European theatre, for the rest of the audience, which is white, automatically identifies him with the savages on the screen.” (Fanon, 1967: 152-153)

Each film presupposes and at the same time tries to produce spectatorial positions from which it intends to be read, addressing the spectator in multiple ways and trying to guide his or her reading. Generally speaking, what is at stake in the reading of narrative films is the work of the mandate or injunction of spectatoriality as a textual operation. If spectatorship refers to the question of reception studies and to the logic of contextualization, dealing with specific spectators in particular contexts, spectatoriality refers to the question of the inscription of spectatorial positions in the fabric of the film and the graphic of transtextuality. The spectatorial injunction works to produce a suture, between the identification with the apparatus and the identification with characters on the screen (or, as Christian Metz would have it, between primary and secondary identification).

As Fanon’s attention to the “audience” and to different contexts of reception suggests, the spectatorial injunction takes place in dynamic spaces of struggle and negotiation. Fanon allows us to notice how spectatoriality works in the Tarzan films: the identification “with Tarzan against the Negroes” seeks to command the reading.

Race discloses itself as a privileged focus of identification and negotiation in the work of spectatoriality, commanding, generally speaking, the inscription of other axes of identification. The very name of “Tarzan” capitalizes a reference to whiteness: its meaning in the language of anthropoid apes imagined by Burroughs, in the 1912 book, is “white skin”: *tar* stands for “white” and *zan* stands for “skin”. Analyzing the films with this in mind, it is possible to notice the iterative production of a suture between the identification with the apparatus, which precedes any reading and the identification with Tarzan as “white skin”.

But at the same time Fanon gives us a clue to how this whole scheme is disrupted, by a disturbance of whiteness as presupposed spectatorial position: in a geopolitical spacing, a displacement from the Antilles to Europe, upon the stage of the “young Negro” and his double consciousness as both Tarzan, “white skin”,

and “Negro”, savage, otherized in a crossroad of looks and gazes. Fanon seems to imply that the “white skin” of the name of “Tarzan” can only be appropriated as a mask by someone with a “black skin”: *Black Skin, White Masks*.

Moving from *Tarzan of the Apes* and its multimidiatic refractions to Tarzan’s transcultural histories, it is remarkable that, in *Moi, un noir*, a 1959 film produced in a regime of collaboration between Jean Rouch, whose signature marks the final work, and some of the Africans portrayed, the name of “Tarzan” is written under erasure. Following this movement from Burroughs’ to Jean Rouch’s signature and beyond, it is possible to read a dissemination of the tradename of “Tarzan”: both its widespread circulation in the networks of capitalist entertainment and, at the same time, its incipient, if incomplete, dissolution and decomposition, in f(r)ictions which belong to the networks of capitalism in a nervous, tense way.

Gregory Ulmer (1985) suggests that the “decomposition of the name” (63-64), moving from the proper name to the common names which constitute it, is one of the forms of writing which make up what he calls an “applied grammatology”. I suggest that it is possible to read a disseminating decomposition of the name of “Tarzan”, through the erasure under which it is written in *Moi, un noir*. The film portrays Nigerians who migrated to Abidjan, capital of Ivory Coast, searching for work and trying to make a living. But it is not a conventional documentary: the characters adopt pseudonyms such as Edward J. Robinson, Eddie Constantine and Tarzan; the images shot by Rouch accompanying them through their daily activities in a week, are supplemented by the multiple voices of Rouch and the actors, which variably reconstitute the dialogues, narrate the events and comment on their significance, in what came to be called “le commentaire improvisé à l’image” (Rouch, 1994). The name of “Tarzan” is adopted by a cab driver, but it is the main commentator, Edward J. Robinson, who imitates the famous cry of the ape-man, in a very ambivalent mimicry (Bhabha, 1994).

From Burroughs to *Moi un Noir* – and this is not a chronological passage – Tarzan somehow goes black, in a tricky game, following the decomposition of his proper name into common names. “*Tarzan*” always already writes itself under erasure, moving from “white skin” to something dark, black, to *tar*⁵ – *zany*⁶: madly, foolishly, it becomes possible to say “*Tarzan, un noir*”, “*white skin, a black man*”.

The identification with Tarzan, discloses its core ambivalence: it implies both a subjection to the white man as privileged subject on the screen – the identification “with Tarzan against the Negroes” of which speaks Fanon, reiterating the subjective

⁵ In the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, *tar* is defined as: “*n* [L] black substance, hard when cold, thick and sticky when warm, obtained from coal, etc. used to preserve timber (eg in fences and posts), making roads, etc.”.

⁶ On the meaning of *zany*, one reads: “*n* (*pl* – *nies*) (formerly) character in comedies, etc. (mod use) half-witted person; foolish joker. *o adj* foolish; mad”.

split between the “black skin” and the “white masks” – and a subjection of the white man as subverted subject in the movement of opening the frame of the reading – the identification with Tarzan as a figure of the *other*, suggesting the possibility of disturbing the racializing hierarchical distinction between whiteness and blackness, which is presupposed by the injunction of spectatoriality at stake in the Tarzan films, as a whole and the possibility of blurring the distinction between skin and mask which commands the racial epidermic scheme as analyzed by Fanon.

From the creative principle of “anthropologie partagée” – which implies the collaboration between the filmmaker and/or anthropologist and his or her subjects of research as the adequate method for the production of a dialogical and transculturally grounded knowledge – to “le commentaire improvisé ‘à l’image” – which reflects and refracts the crisis and the critique enacted and documented in the visual images – and including the themes approached in its narrative and *mise-en-scène* – for instance: urban life in Abidjan and the urbanization of West Africa; the cultural role of fantasy and imagination (at stake in the adoption of the pseudonyms) – *Moi, un Noir* figures the possibility of disseminating and decentering the name of “Tarzan” and the deconstruction of the name-in-closure of “Africa” which the Tarzan narratives both presuppose and produce. Nevertheless, there are limits that have to be taken into account: the sharing of anthropology happens under Rouch’s signature; the themes are approached mainly from a masculinist point of view, which calls for interrogation.

The figuration of the deconstruction of the name-in-closure of “Africa” through the erasure of the name of “Tarzan” in *Moi, un Noir*, doesn’t come as a disturbance from outside. Its strange familiarity and its uncanny mo(ve)ment is prefigured, as potency and possibility, in the structure of the Tarzan narratives as a whole – in the supplement which melodramatic adventure adds as an excess into the dialectic between modernity and coloniality – and, singularly, in the Tarzan films – in the holes which the zoo, the human zoo, the circus and the museum open up in the very fabric of the films, for such cultural forms remain to some degree opaque to the particular teleological and melodramatic narrativization, intended in this kind of cinema and hinder the narrative closure which would guarantee the full accomplishment of the spectatorial injunction.

These cultural forms do not lead to narrative closure, because they end up referring back to the “cinema of attractions” (Gunning, 1989; Charney and Schwartz, 1995). Throughout the twentieth-century, cinema (or at least Western cinema) has been characterized by a tension between two opposed but not incompatible principles: the principle of narrativization (particularly powerful when it comes to classic cinema and, specifically, melodramatic adventures such as the Tarzan films) and the principle of collection (which inhabits the filmic articulation of the zoo, the human zoo, the circus and the museum). As I read them, the Tarzan films involve a teleological narrative – the melodramatic adventure under the spectatorial injunction

of identification “with Tarzan against the Negroes” – and a collection of references to the universe of the cinema of attractions – the urban cultural forms of entertainment, mentioned above, which hinder the full closure of that teleological narrative and the work of the spectatorial injunction, opening up the possibility of decentering Tarzan. The space opened between the images of the Tarzan films and full narrativization by these remains of the cinema of attractions is the space of the disseminating decomposition of the name of “Tarzan” which makes possible, in *Moi, un Noir* and beyond, to write “Tarzan” under erasure and to deepen its *pertensimento*, to make even more tense its belonging.

With this disturbance in different levels of the injunction of spectatoriality, the readability of Tarzan fictions becomes blurred. *White skin, black masks: the ambivalence of “Tarzan” can blur the politics of (racial) identity*. Tarzan fictions become *fxictions*: the grafting of the letter “r” into the word “fiction” marks at the same time the decomposition of the name of “Tarzan” as tradename or trademark (®) and the disturbance of its fictions. The writing of *pertensimento* with an “s” marks the silent but impressive *differance* between fiction and friction, between “Tarzan” as trademark and “Tarzan” as mark opened in its iterability.

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· The constellation of meanings and the imperial landscapes, which surround the name of “Africa” in the Tarzan narratives, belong to the *political economy of the name of “Africa”*: the process of circulation of the name of “Africa” across different cultural and historical landscapes, tracing multiple global itineraries which in many ways connect diversified cultural and historical locations.

· But the dissemination of “Tarzan”, whose possibility I tried to suggest here, can lead to a break, with the ambivalence of imperial landscapes, of the economic circle. As W. J. T. Mitchell (2002) argues: “Landscape might be seen more profitably as something like the “dreamwork” of imperialism, unfolding its own movement in time and space from a central point of origin and folding back on itself to disclose both utopian fantasies of the perfected imperial prospect and fractured images of unresolved ambivalence and unsuppressed resistance” (Mitchell, 2002: 10).

The ambivalence of Tarzan, as part of the dreamwork of imperialism, is the ambivalence of the imperial landscape. If, as Jean Baudrillard argues in *Pour une critique de l'économie politique du signe* (1972), the ambivalence disturbs and splits the sign/value and puts an end to the political economy of the sign, the ambivalence of Tarzan may put an end to the regime of the political economy of the name of “Africa” as it is known nowadays, which I call the name-in-closure of “Africa”. Tarzan belongs to this political economy, but it is possible to make this belonging interestingly tense. The ambivalence of Tarzan, Tarzan’s tense belonging, the *pertensimento* of Tarzan to the *oikos*, can come and can give itself as a break of the *nomos*, a disturbance of the law of the name-in-closure of “Africa”.

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