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# AFTER FANON

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## 'ON THE ROAD' WITH CHE AND JACK: MELANCHOLIA AND THE LEGACY OF COLONIAL RACIAL GEOGRAPHIES IN THE AMERICAS

María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo

The first question on the reader's mind might be *why* compare Ernesto 'Che' Guevara and Jack Kerouac? 1997 marked both the thirtieth anniversary of Guevara's execution and the fortieth anniversary of the publication of Kerouac's *On the Road*, and in part due to this historical coincidence, the popular media foisted the comparison upon us with the commercialisation of these two cultural icons.<sup>1</sup> On the back jacket of the long awaited English language publication of Guevara's *Motorcycle Diaries*, for example, the Washington Post reviewer calls Guevara 'A Latin James Dean or Jack Kerouac'.<sup>2</sup> Political gadfly Jorge Castañeda also makes the comparison in his biography of Guevara, *Compañero*, published to coincide with the anniversary of Che's death. In his chapter on Guevara's eight-month journey through South America, Castañeda writes:

Such a trip was the stuff of dreams for the youth of Che's world: the post-war, middle-class, college-educated Americas. It was a world of distances and adventure, and nearly half a century later it hasn't changed that much ...

Somewhere in the psyché of the sixties and the nineties, Guevara's saga became a road book, or road movie: Jack Kerouac in the Amazon, Easy Rider on the Andes.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the question, then, is not why compare these two cultural icons, but how is it that these two men have been popularly conjoined as the hemispheric representatives of the transhistorical 'psyche' of youth culture? How is it that '[s]omewhere in the psyche of the sixties and the nineties' we have reduced Ernesto 'Che' Guevara's life to a road novel? After all, besides having spent some time travelling on their respective continents in the late forties or early fifties, these two men - Kerouac and Guevara - do not have much in common.

It is not just the accident of marketing strategy, however, that brings Guevara and Kerouac - and specifically *Motorcycle Diaries* and *On The Road* - together for comparison. Rather I would suggest that these two texts converge in substantive ways, particularly in the relationship of their narratives to the colonial legacies and the racial geographies of the Americas. Together these two narratives offer us a road map not to personal liberation,

1. Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*, New York, Penguin, 1959. Henceforth *OTR* followed by page no. in the text.

2. Che Guevara, *The Motorcycle Diaries: A Journey around South America*, Ann Wright (trans), Aleida March de la Torre (ed), London, Verso, 1995. Henceforth *TMD* followed by page no. in the text.

3. Jorge G. Castañeda, *Compañero: The Life and Death of Che Guevara*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1997, p46.

as Castañeda suggests, but to colonial patterns of racialisation that persist long after the end of formal colonialism. Rather than converging with some generational 'psyche', both texts respond to colonial and racial geographies with melancholic narratives that fend off the loss of racial privilege with fantasies of racial assimilation.

4. Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', *General Psychological Theory*, Philip Rieff (ed), New York, Collier Books, 1963, p164, emphasis mine. Henceforth MM followed by page no. in the text.

Melancholia, according to Freud, is a condition of unresolved mourning in 'reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as fatherland, liberty, an ideal, and so on'.<sup>4</sup> Both Ernesto Guevara and Sal Paradise begin their narratives by informing the reader of a personal loss - Guevara has lost a close friend, Paradise his wife. Following Freud's analysis of melancholia, I suggest that for both of these narrators the loss of an abstraction 'has taken the place' of the loved person. Guevara's friend and Paradise's wife are lost objects standing in for the loss of an ideal that structures the course of their travels across South and North America respectively. Far from celebrating unencumbered freedom, these travel narratives offer brooding accounts of the quest to *recapture* a lost ideal of freedom by incorporating the evidence of its loss, the racial other, into the text. But each of their melancholic narratives of white freedom emerges from a distinct colonial project of racialisation and subalternisation in the Americas: Spanish and Anglo-British.

The colonial legacy of Anglo-American racialisation fully informs the representational terms in which Sal and Dean re-enact their conquest narrative in the US and in Mexico, while Guevara rehearses the colonial legacy of the Spanish racialisation in his representation of his jaunt through South America. Patricia Seed illuminates these colonial legacies by comparing the distinct colonial practices of European imperial powers as they took possession of the 'New World'. Her extensive examination of colonial records yields contrasting modes of racialisation for the indigenous subaltern. She finds that British and Anglo-American colonists highlighted peaceful negotiation and accommodation by native peoples:

[N]either the wars nor the considerable resistance of North American natives to the arrival of the European colonists are commonly narrated as the founding moment of English arrival in the New World. Rather the story told is that of peaceful acceptance, even the embrace of the newcomers who are invited to share and to participate metaphorically in the great abundance [of] the New World ... For the myth of a meeting of equals in a treaty process dominated the eighteenth century British imaginary of the colonial process - as well as the US, Canadian, and New Zealand national experience of consolidating national control. The cultural expectation of these encounters are negotiated meetings of formal politeness, ritualised turn-taking, and a result (the treaty) portrayed politically as a compromise of Anglo and aboriginal interests.<sup>5</sup>

5. Patricia Seed, 'The Requirement for Resistance: A Critical Comparative History of Contemporary Popular Expectations of Subalternity in the Americas', *Cross Genealogies and Subaltern Knowledges Conference*, unpublished reader compiled by Romance Studies Department, Duke University, Durham N.C., 1998, pp9-10.

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Seed finds that in contrast colonial Spain projected onto the racialised subaltern the dichotomised identity tropes of subordination and resistance. In effect, the Spanish *Requerimiento*<sup>6</sup> required resistance from its subjugated indigenous population as a sign of 'authentic' subaltern identity. Seed elaborates on the origins of this enduring 'requirement for resistance':

Thus the protocol for conquest [the *Requerimiento*] acknowledged only two possible responses from Americas' aboriginal peoples - submission or insubordination ... This dynamic, created at the start of Spanish colonialism, established the dichotomy submission/rebellion as the fundamental framework in which Spanish imperial power would recognize and deal with aboriginal peoples ... By establishing the opposite of obedience-as insurgence, the Requirement [*Requerimiento*] established resistance as proof-positive of opposition to imperial power and ... [as] one of the durable signals by which subalternity could be recognized for aboriginal groups within Hispanic society. Resistance or rebellion against authority signaled subalternity ... But such starkly extreme dichotomies create opposite understandings of submission as well [as rebellion]. For the implication of the Requirement's formulation is that *if there is not rebellion, then there can only be submission*. In this unequivocally dichotomous framework, compliance casts suspicion upon the conformist - *as a possible collaborator in the process of domination*.<sup>7</sup>

Whereas Anglo-American intellectual traditions privilege cooperation and exchange in aboriginal representation, in Latin American traditions 'the "requirement for resistance" ... [is] a major part of the unconscious process of identifying a group (particularly an aboriginal group) as subaltern'.<sup>8</sup> These contrasts are evident in Kerouac and Guevara's works. Where Kerouac sees only egalitarian relations of harmonious exchange with the indigenous population of the Americas, Guevara sees only abject relations of debilitating subordination.

#### 'EVERYTHING WAS DEAD': SAL'S EXIT FROM PARADISE IN *ON THE ROAD*

The era immediately following the end of World War II was triumphal for the United States. Yet in 1951 - at the height of this nationalist euphoria and of the post-war economic boom - Kerouac has his protagonist, Salvatore Paradiso, begin his narrative with:

I first met Dean not long after my wife and I split up. I had just gotten over a serious illness that I won't bother to talk about, except that it had something to do with the miserably weary split-up and my feeling that

6. The *Requerimiento* was the document Iberian colonisers read aloud to indigenous populations they encountered in the Americas. Written and read in Spanish, it asked the indigenous populations to submit to the Christian empire, in which case the empire would take care of them, their wives and children. However, it also insisted that indigenous peoples were free to resist, in which case the empire would wage a just and bloody war against them, their wives and their children.

7. Seed, 'The Requirements for Resistance', op. cit., pp4-5, emphasis mine.

8. *Ibid.*, p1.

everything was dead. With the coming of Dean Moriarty began the part of my life you could call my life on the road (*OTR* p3).

Sal's 'serious illness' shares the 'distinguishing mental features' Freud attributes to melancholia: 'a profoundly painful dejection, abrogation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity' (*MM* p165). Sal's indication that 'everything was dead' following the loss of his wife is a thinly veiled reference to a loss of sexual potency, metonymically signalling a withdrawal - a deadening - of libidinal drive from the outside world, an inhibition of all active involvement with it. Sal tells the reader that he is over this state of dejection before he meets Dean, and yet he chooses to begin the narrative of his yearlong adventures with Dean by recalling the illness.

The narrative voice here is chronologically retrospective, as all of the events to be conveyed by Sal have already transpired at the inception of his tale. Notably, what Sal does not tell us in this opening passage - indeed, what he withholds from us until the end of the novel - is that he has already lost Dean Moriarty as a love object when he begins to tell the story of their 'life on the road'. From Sal's retrospective position as narrator, then, the loss of his wife and his consequent illness at once reveals and conceals the experience of the loss of Dean.

Sal refuses to let go of his libidinal attachment to Dean though, and instead incorporates him into the tale of his own narrative becoming. The narrative is structured by Sal's repeated identification with a love object that continually disappoints and abandons him. This incorporation and identification, however, is layered and complex.<sup>9</sup> Sal repeatedly informs us that Dean has multiple wives, girlfriends, and offspring, while Sal is almost entirely incapable of consummating romantic relationships. Even in this first passage, juxtaposed as it is with Sal's impotency and his miserable weariness, the arrival of Dean brings Sal the promise of sexual renewal: 'with the coming of Dean Moriarty *began the part of my life* you could call my life on the road'. Thus for Sal, identification with Dean is, at first, a homosocial identification with ideal masculinity. The narrative couples this masculinity with another ideal, 'life on the road'. Indeed, the condition of (white) freedom - as represented by life on the road - is what enables this masculinity to operate.

Sal tells us Dean 'is the perfect guy for the road because he actually was born on the road, when his parents were passing through Salt Lake City in 1926, in a jalopy, on their way to Los Angeles' (*OTR* p3). 1926 has symbolic importance for the ideal of freedom in the United States. This is not only the year Route 66 was opened from Chicago to Los Angeles, it is also the year that Henry Ford lowered the price on the mass-produced 'Model T' to make it generally affordable. The 'roaring' twenties were characterised by enormous economic growth brought on by the proliferation of automobiles and the development of a system of cross-country highways in the 1910s and 1920s.<sup>10</sup> Dean's parents, on their way to L.A. in 1926, were thus participating in a second great wave of westward migration in the United

9. Freud construes melancholia so that when one suffers a loss 'the free[d] libido [is] withdrawn into the ego and not directed to another object. It [does] not find application there, however, in any one of several possible ways, but serve[s] to establish an identification of the ego with the abandoned object', 'Mourning and Melancholia', op. cit., pp165-6, p170.

10. See Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *New York, Chicago, Los Angeles: America's Global Cities*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

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States, brought on by automobile technology and its concomitant system of highways. As with the first wave, this second wave linked the ability to move west with the possibility of social mobility. Born on the road in 1926, Dean thus metonymically stands in for the second conquest of the American frontier.<sup>11</sup> As the lost object structuring an enduring attachment of narrative identification for Sal, Dean Moriarty simultaneously signals Freud's melancholic 'loss of a more ideal kind' (MM p166). For Sal, Dean stands in for the abstraction (white) freedom, and his loss stands in for the loss of this ideal.

Though Freud suggests that an ideal loss substitutes for the loss of a love object, and at times suggests simultaneity of loss, he nevertheless prioritises the 'real' loss of the loved person over the 'ideal' loss of the abstraction. I would like to reverse the priority, and suggest that we give more importance to the loss of the ideal, viewing the lost object as the concretisation of the lost ideal. In its idealised form for Sal, freedom is not simply westward expansion. Rather, as represented in Dean, freedom is a democratic principle of equality and inclusion, coupled with this recolonising of the American frontier:

... somehow, *in spite of our difference in character*, he reminded me of some long-lost brother; the sight of ... his straining muscular sweating neck made me remember my boyhood in those dye-dumps and swim-holes and riversides of Paterson and the Passaic. His dirty workclothes clung to him so gracefully ... in his excited way of speaking I heard again the voices of old companions and brothers under the bridge, among the motorcycles ... [and on] drowsy doorsteps of afternoon where boys played guitars while their older brothers worked in the mills. All my other current friends were 'intellectuals' ... But Dean's intelligence was every bit as formal and shining and complete, without the tedious intellectualness (*OTR* p10).

Dean enables a nostalgic elaboration of abstract democratic inclusion in the community of the nation. Sal lovingly identifies with Dean because he represents the common man in his graceful 'dirty workclothes'. He has a levelling effect on those around him with his organic intellectualism, rendering Sal's college buddies tedious and ineffectual. Most importantly, he recalls for Sal homoerotic scenes of fraternity around swimming holes, motorcycles, and mills. This fraternal community is articulated through difference: *with* their differences in character - their individuality - Sal and Dean nevertheless *resemble* each other as brothers - through equality. It is important that Sal recognises Dean as emblematic of democratic inclusion in his identification with him, for it is precisely on these presumed grounds of inclusion that freedom is lost as an 'American' ideal. The universal possibility of liberty becomes the lost ideal of white freedom.

In the United States, freedom has traditionally been spatially troped.

11. And yet, as we know from Dean's broken family, from his juvenile record, and from his failed search for a drunken father that abandoned him, the promise of this second migration goes unfulfilled.

The ideals of individual equality (difference *and* resemblance) and liberty (physical and social mobility) presumably spread across an 'American' landscape with the coming of Europeans. Yet the nineteenth-century elaboration of freedom, Manifest Destiny, explicitly excluded those who owned the land (Native Americans and Mexicans) and those who worked the land (African Americans and Asians) from the body politic. Dean is a twentieth-century re-working of this nineteenth-century mythos of this white freedom. He is a kinder, gentler representation of this manifest democratic principle - a principle in danger of being undone by its exclusions and internal contradictions. Dean is precisely an example of the attempt by cultural memory to negotiate 'the vexing problem' of race in the mid-twentieth century United States so well encapsulated by Anne Anlin Cheng:

Because the American history of exclusions, imperialism, and colonization runs so diametrically opposed to the equally and particularly American narrative of liberty and individualism, cultural memory in America poses a continually vexing problem: how to remember those transgressions without impeding the ethos of progress? How to bury the remnants of denigration and disgust created in the name of progress and the formation of an 'American identity'?<sup>12</sup>

12. Anne Anlin Cheng, 'The Melancholy of Race'. *The Kenyon Review* 19, 1, 50-51.

Perhaps more accurately, in light of Cheng's analysis, Dean is a manic, messianic attempt to re-write the already lost ideal of white freedom - that 'particularly American narrative of liberty and freedom' - as a cure for white melancholia precipitated by the memory of transgression. Sal describes Dean as an euphoric 'overburst of American joy', paradoxically old - 'long prophesied' - and 'new' precisely in his promise to fulfil an older principle of American (democratic) freedom - 'an ode from the Plains' (*OTR* p10).

Kerouac does not thematise the segregation and discrimination of the post-World War Two period in his novel, but Sal does transgress codes of segregation and discrimination in his frequently noted visits to communities of colour. Laden as it is with racial stereotyping, there are nevertheless moments of radical potentiality in the narrative - moments when the text appears to demand of liberalism the fulfilment of its promise of inclusion. Dean compels Sal to travel west through a 'beat' nation, a democratic chain of 'beat'<sup>13</sup> equivalence that Sal constructs in his encounters with college drop-outs, hustlers, derelicts, hobos, and, of course, laughing or singing Negroes, wild-buck or lazy Mexicans, stoic Indians, and poor or overworked Japs (*OTR* pp62, 177, 91, 93, 21,32,180). *With* their differences in character, these characters nevertheless *resemble* each other in beatness. Sal's identification with Dean, his documenting of Dean's democratic 'beatness', is then an attempt to re-script white freedom so that it might discursively include those historically left out of its practice in the United States.

The radical inclusion of Sal's beat vision, however, is necessarily dimmed by the reality of racial melancholia that also pervades the text. David L.

13. According to Ann Charters, the term 'beat' was doubly valenced for Kerouac. For the Columbia literati who formed the core of the Beat Generation, the term signified exhaustion, the view from the bottom, rejection by society. For Kerouac, 'beat' also resonated with the meaning of word's root: beatitude, beatific, thus signalling a new, transcendent vision of the world, a new set of values destined to bring happiness. See Ann Charters (ed), *The Portable Beat Reader*, New York, Penguin, 1992.

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Eng and Shinhee Han have suggested that 'the racialized subject endures in the United States as a melancholic national *object*, as a haunting presence to democratic ideals and idealizations that cannot quite "get over" these legislated proscriptions of loss'.<sup>14</sup> The racialised subjects that repeatedly appear in Sal's travel narrative melancholically haunt his 'democratic ideals and idealizations'. As lost objects, these racialised subjects signify a vexing chain of loss for Sal. On the one hand, their marginalised presence in the United States' landscape signifies their continued exclusion from (American) democracy and (white) freedom. On the other hand, by being lost to democracy and freedom, these racialised subjects also precipitate the loss of these twin ideals for Sal. These lost objects reveal Sal's white privilege to him, the privilege that historically facilitated the freedom he so deeply desires. Thus, Sal returns again and again to minority communities in his travels because racialised subjects necessarily haunt his melancholic attachment to white freedom in the post-war period. Sal is psychically compelled to travel amongst minority peoples, the 'vexing problem(s)' of white freedom, in order to incorporate them into the nation, to right the concept of white freedom by writing the racialised subject into his narrative beat nation. Sal remembers those transgressed by white freedom in order to recuperate its practice.

Parts One through Three of the novel chronicle Sal's three separate trips around the United States, each of which begins with Sal travelling from east to west in search of the elusive Dean and the idealised freedom he represents. Each trip reveals Sal to be obsessively drawn toward racialised subjects. He repeatedly returns to minority neighbourhoods and streets, recounting his efforts at fraternising with these lost objects haunting white freedom. Sal is not simply travelling through minority communities, he is also repeatedly and melancholically identifying with racialised subjects, as he has with Dean. At the close of Part One, Sal ends his first trip out west by spending fifteen days with a 'Mexican girl' Terry and her family, picking fruit and cotton in the San Joaquin valley. Sal picks cotton next to 'an old Negro couple', and he tells us "They picked cotton with the same God-blessed patience their grandfathers had practiced in ante-bellum Alabama; they moved right along their rows, bent and blue, and their bags increased. My back began to ache. But it was beautiful kneeling and hiding in that earth" (OTR p96).

Sal's stereotyping of this couple in their 'God-blessed patience' shows to what extent the racialised body haunts white freedom. The residue of slavery remains not only in the injured black bodies 'bent and blue', but also in the confusion over *which* soil Sal is hiding in, since 'that' earth references back to Alabama rather than California. Across the continent and across the span of 150 years, Sal is still hiding in, or sheltered by, slavery. Sal's (white) freedom to slum it out west exists under the shadow of slavery, his racial privilege enabled by its legacy. Yet his response is melancholic, somatic identification with the lost objects shadowing his white freedom: Sal's back aches though it is the black couple that works.

14. David L. Eng and Shinhee Han, 'Dialogue on Racial Melancholia', *Psychoanalytic Dialogue* 10, 4 (2000), 674.



While living in a tent with Terry and her son, amidst black, Mexican, and white farm workers, Sal tells us he 'forgot all about ... the bloody road' (OTR p97). Indeed, Sal forgets the road - that sedimented history of western expansion and its bloody consequences - in favour of the inclusive, multi-racial community he appears to have found at the end of it: 'I was a man of the earth, precisely as I had dreamed I would be, in Paterson. There was talk that Terry's husband was back in Sabinal and out for me; I was ready for him' (OTR p97). The mention of Paterson hearkens back to its earlier mention in association with the fraternal community he envisioned taking shape through Dean: a community based on the democratic principle of difference *and* resemblance, individualism and equality.

No sooner has Sal established this contented, multi-racial community of grape and cotton pickers for the reader, then it is overshadowed by a hate crime. Sal informs the reader that a group of 'Okies' tied a man to a tree one evening and 'beat him to a pulp with sticks' outside the camp. Sal does not tell us the beaten man's race, but as he continues it becomes obvious that the spectre of race haunts this idyllic community: 'From then on I carried a big stick with me in the tent in case they got the idea *we* Mexicans were fouling up *their* trailer camp' (OTR p97, emphasis mine). The 'we' and 'their' reveal the racialised divisions among the Okies, the Mexicans, and a third, unnamed group (Black or Asian-American) believed to be 'fouling up' the camp and thus deserving of a lynching. At any moment, a Mexican might become the beaten man - suffer his fate - vis-a-vis the white Okies. They, as the poor whites who exist in such dangerous proximity to the racialised subjects on the farm, must re-establish distance through asserting their (white) freedom to commit violence against these subjects.

The beaten, racialised body, then, once again threatens the loss of Sal's ideal of white freedom, as the constant reminder of the historic exclusions from even the beat version of this ideal. Sal once again responds with a melancholic identification: 'They thought I was a Mexican, of course; and in a way *I am*' (OTR p97, emphasis mine). First Sal substitutes for Terry's Mexican husband, and then believes the Okie farm workers mistake him for a Mexican. Whether or not he actually is mistaken for a Mexican, he is taken in by his own identification. Judith Butler suggests that

(Freud) makes room for the notion that melancholic identification may be a *prerequisite* for letting the object go ... for there is no final breaking of the attachment. There is, rather, the incorporation of the attachment *as* identification, where identification becomes a magical, a psychic form of preserving the object ... Giving up the object becomes possible only on the condition of a melancholic internalization or ... a melancholic *incorporation*.<sup>15</sup>

15. Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1997, p134.

Sal has incorporated his attachment to the beaten, racialised subject, magically becoming the (in)corporeal other. Sal uses the present tense 'I

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am' to describe his attachment, even though he is narrating these events from a chronological distance. In other words, he continues to *be* a Mexican though he has long since abandoned the Mexican Terry and her child. Sal cannot let go of the racialised body anymore than he can let go of the ideal of white freedom.

Sal has melancholically incorporated the lost ideal of white freedom *and* the racialised subject as lost object. His incorporation is enacted each time he finds himself dissatisfied with life in Paterson and takes to the road, literalising white freedom as westward expansion. Having incorporated the lost ideal of white freedom, he must also repeatedly enact his melancholic incorporation of the racialised subjects excluded from it. Sal colonises their experiences for his own narrative attempt to re-write the experience of white freedom as inclusive. Indeed, this sedimented structure (identification and incorporation) is the only place in which the ideal of white freedom (as democratic inclusion and westward expansion) can live. In it, Sal can narcissistically be all things at all times: the privileged white and the racially excluded.

This identification, however, is necessarily troubled by melancholic ambivalence toward *both* incorporated love-objects. Freud suggests that a primary reason for a melancholic attachment to a lost love-object may be feelings of unresolved ambivalence toward this love-object prior to its loss. In seeking to explain the self-deprecating feelings of melancholics, he concludes that with the incorporation of the attachment toward the love-object comes an internalisation of any conflicted feelings the melancholic may have had towards it: 'If the object-love, which cannot be given up, takes refuge in narcissistic identification, while the object itself is abandoned, then hate is expended upon this new substitute-object, railing at it, depreciating it, making it suffer and deriving sadistic gratification for its suffering' (MM p128).

Sal begins Part Three, the narrative of his third cross-country trip, with a description of just such internalised self-deprecating feelings, revealing his deep-seated ambivalence toward both white freedom and the racialised other. In the spring of 1949 he travels directly from Paterson to Denver on his G.I. money, intending to settle there permanently: 'I saw myself in Middle America, a patriarch' (OTR p179). After a few days spent loading boxcars, one evening Sal takes a walk through Denver's 'colored section':

... wishing I were a Negro, feeling that the best the white world had offered was not enough ecstasy for me, not enough life, joy, kicks, darkness, music, not enough night ... I wished I were a Denver Mexican, or even a poor overworked Jap, *anything but what I was so drearily, a 'white man' disillusioned.* All my life I'd had *white ambitions*; that was why I'd abandoned a good woman like Terry in the San Joaquin Valley ... I was only myself, Sal Paradise ... wishing I could exchange worlds with the happy, true-hearted, ecstatic Negroes of America. (OTR p180, emphasis mine)

Sal then passes a softball game, stops to watch it, and continues in this self-berating tone:

The strange young heroes of all kinds, white, colored, Mexican, pure Indian were on the field, performing with heart-breaking seriousness ... Never in my life as an athlete had I ever permitted myself to perform like this in front of families and girl friends and kids of the neighborhood ... always it had been college, *big-time, soberfaced*; no boyish, human joy like this ... The young pitcher looked just like Dean ... It was a Denver Night; all I did was die ... There was excitement and the air was filled with the vibration of really joyous life that knows nothing of disappointment and 'white sorrows' and all that ... How I died! (OTR p181, emphasis mine)

Kerouac critics are so concerned with denouncing or defending his patronising representations in this passage that they have failed to analyse the depth of Sal's self-loathing desire to be something other than himself – "white man" disillusioned'.<sup>16</sup> In this self-loathing, we can locate a genuine ambivalence about the ideal of white freedom. Precisely those who are excluded from it – the coloured folk who share more 'life, joy, kicks', provoke this ambivalence. At this moment, Sal is interested in abandoning his white privilege, 'I wish I were ...' marking another moment of radical possibility in Kerouac's text. Kerouac offers a damning critique of fifties masculinity by having his character desire to abandon his own identification with the privileges of whiteness in favour of an identification in solidarity with the subjection of the racialised.

And yet once again, Sal's racial melancholia quickly impedes his own radical critique. Sal's ambivalence toward white freedom here arises not simply from his recognition of its core violence. True to the nineteenth-century colonial fantasy that underwrites Sal's westward adventures, he is also 'disillusioned' by white freedom because this privilege is burdened by responsibility of governing ('white ambitions') and of civilising ('white sorrows') the American frontier. The coloured man, and even the heretofore celebrated common (white) man, 'knows nothing of disappointment' because he is protected from aspiration by the 'big-time, sober-faced' Middle American patriarch and his white man's burden. White freedom is not quite free enough.

Perversely, in these passages the racialised subject's unfreedom becomes true freedom in light of white freedom's burden of bringing and preserving civilisation. Sal's characterisation of these coloured folk expresses a simultaneous attraction *and* revulsion in his adamant proclamations of desire *and* distance: 'I wish I were'/'I was only myself'. And yet his white subjectivity nonetheless encompasses them, as their access to a primitive vibration of joy marks them as an original chapter in a history of hyper-civilisation that has long surpassed them. He cannot be these coloured folk, because he

16. See Norman Podhoretz, 'The Know-Nothing Bohemians', *Partisan Review* 25 (1958), who condemns Kerouac for the ante-bellum rhetoric of southern plantation owners (305-18). See also Omar Swartz, *The View from On the Road: The Rhetorical Vision of Jack Kerouac*, Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1999, who argues that Kerouac's representations of blacks were simply a true account of the pre-Civil Rights African Americans (86-89); and Robert Holton, *On the Road: Kerouac's Ragged American Journey*, New York, Twayne Publishers, 1999, who argues that Kerouac's racial identification with blacks in this passage actually leads to whites' political identification with the Civil Rights movement (9).

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cannot go back in time to an earlier stage of his own development. That kind of regression of subjectivity would surely equal death, and it is in these terms that his desire for these racialised subjects is expressed: 'all I did was die' and 'How I died!' Thus, in his railing against himself for failing to be other than himself, Sal Paradise rails against his interiorised love-objects for being only what they are: white freedom is not free enough; it is curtailed by the racialised subject who is too free, requiring supervision.

True to the biblical implication of his Italian given name, however, Salvatore Paradiso must try to save the paradise of white freedom from the encumbrance of race at least one more time.<sup>17</sup> Sal wants to restore the lost object of white freedom to an anti-deluvian state of pure freedom, untarnished by the racialised legacy of its colonial violations. His three attempts to do so in his travels around the United States fail, as the American landscape is simply too saturated by this legacy marring white freedom. Symptomatic of his frustration about the inescapable nature of this saturated American past, Sal expresses dismay with the lack of land on his first trip west 'Here I was at the end of America - no more land - and now there was nowhere to go but back' and upon his return from his final trip 'there was no more land, just the Atlantic Ocean' (OTR pp78, 246). Since he cannot seem to free white freedom from its legacy, while in the United States, Sal logically, inevitably, turns to Mexico. His efforts to escape his melancholia, to unburden white freedom, have pushed him and Dean, 'half dead', ever further southward towards the Texas border town of Laredo, representing a psychic border, as well, between white melancholia and its racial other: 'Laredo was a sinister town that morning ... We felt awful and sad. But everything changed when we crossed the mysterious bridge ... Just across the street Mexico began. We looked with wonder. To our amazement it looked exactly like Mexico' (OTR pp276, 274, emphasis mine).

Freud sees in the oscillation between melancholia and mania the ego fending off the loss of the love-object, as both disorders 'wrestl[e] with the same "complex"' (MM p175). Sal exchanges an exaggerated sense of desolation (awful, sad, half-dead) for an exaggerated sense of euphoria (wonder, amazement) in a last attempt to stave off the loss of white freedom. He is oddly filled with euphoria on finding exactly what he was expecting - Mexico tautologically 'look[s] exactly like Mexico' - because it affords him the opportunity to relieve his sense of the loss of white freedom by reliving it in a country of 'great, grave Indians' (OTR p280).

Concurring with Patricia Seed's account of Anglo-American colonisation, the first thing that Sal and Dean do in Mexico is engage in friendly negotiations, as equals, with some accommodating Indians. Sal cannot get enough 'life, joy, kicks' from white freedom in the United States, but, like the Dutch buying Manhattan for twenty-four dollars, Sal and Dean get plenty of drugs and women on the cheap. In the first town they visit, they negotiate with an enthusiastically helpful, young Indian named Victor for these two items. Victor invites them to his own house, where his mother - like a

17. Even Sal's insistence, throughout the text, on using a translated, anglicised version of his given name, Sal Paradise, registers his desire to purge whiteness of its history of racialisation, as the history of racialising Italians gets erased in favour of the de-ethnicised white universal he wants to represent.

character from a post-modern Plymouth rock - 'promptly ... went to the garden in back and began gathering dry fronds of marijuana that had been pulled off the plants and left to dry in the desert sun' (OTR p282). Sal and Dean reproduce the myth of white freedom as equality and exchange, framing their interactions with the natives in the same terms that presumably framed frontier interactions between British colonisers and native Americans, complete with the 'formal politeness' and 'ritualised turn-taking' that would have accompanied treaty negotiations. Like the proverbial peace pipe, Sal and Dean pass the joint they roll to Victor. They offer to buy him a whore at the brothel he takes them to. And just prior to leaving, Dean is 'strolling arm in arm with good Victor and chatting volubly and pleasantly and even leaning excitedly toward him to make a point, and pounding his fist. Then they resumed the arm-in-arm position and strolled': together, the white man and the Indian engage in negotiation, compromise, exchange (OTR p292).

Similarly, in a later incident on the road headed toward Mexico City, Dean and Sal are hailed to stop by a group of young Indian girls selling some crystals. Again the encounter is framed in the terms of a fair exchange, sombre respect, and solicitous gratitude on the part of the Indians, though again Sal and Dean do not understand what the girls are saying. After informing the reader that he hadn't 'the slightest sexual thought about them', Sal continues,

One particularly soulful child gripped at Dean's sweaty arm. She *yammered in Indian*. 'Ah yes, ah yes, dear one', said Dean tenderly and *almost sadly*. He got out of the car and went fishing around in the battered trunk in the back - the same old tortured American trunk - and pulled out a wristwatch. He showed it to the child. She whimpered with glee. The others crowded around with amazement. Then Dean poked in the little girl's hand for 'the sweetest and purest and smallest crystal she has personally picked from the mountain for me'. He found one no bigger than a berry. And he handed her the wristwatch dangling. Their mouths rounded like the mouths of chorister children. The lucky little girl squeezed it to her ragged breastrobes. They stroked Dean and thanked him (OTR pp298-99, emphasis mine).

There are still some technological gadgets left in that tortured trunk of American (neo)colonialism with which to awe and seduce the natives, who will gracefully cede their precious resources to the colonisers. Even the gratitude of little girls is distinctly sexualised, with the girls' hands represented as open and stroking, willingly relinquishing their precious berries. Yet sadness lingers over the scene, signalling that something must inevitably go wrong with the exchange. And shortly after this scene Dean abandons a desperately sick Sal for the last time, in Mexico City. Whereas none of the Mexicans that Sal encounters in the US is identified as Indian,

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all the Mexicans he encounters in Mexico are Indian. Sal fails to see the overt differences among Mexican mestizos and Indians because it is only by indianising all of Mexico that he can re-create this mythical past. Only a nation of Indians provides his white freedom with the opportunity to 'go colonial'.

Many critics insist that, true to his name, Salvatore offers the reader a rebirth, a renewal of American individualism with his non-conformist, counter-cultural vision of Paradiso. I would like to offer a more melancholic interpretation. Sal mentions his full Italian name only once in the narrative, while repeatedly referring to himself as Sal Paradise: the first name hispanicised, the last anglicised. In Spanish, together they offer an imperative: leave paradise! The melancholic identification with the lost object of white freedom makes it impossible for him to ever leave the colonial myth entirely behind, and thus we leave the novel with the distinct impression that he will incessantly, fruitlessly pursue this myth, as he pursues Dean, suspended in an identificatory loss:

So in America when the sun goes down and I sit on the old broken-down river pier watching the long, long skies over New Jersey and sense all that raw land that rolls in one unbelievable huge bulge over to the West Coast, and all that road going ... I think of Dean Moriarty, I even think of Old Dean Moriarty the father we never found, *I think of Dean Moriarty* (OTR pp309-10).

#### LATIN AMERICA'S LOST OBJECTS: CHE GUEVARA AND THE INDIAN

On January 4, 1952, Ernesto Guevara and Alberto Granado commenced their nine month journey through South America on a Norton 500 cc motorcycle nicknamed *La Poderosa II*.<sup>18</sup> Guevara and Granado, a medical student and a biochemistry student, travelled together through Argentina, Chile, Peru, Colombia, and Venezuela. Whereas Sal and Dean search for beats to articulate a new vision of white freedom, Guevara and Granado presumably search for leper colonies to provide them with a diagnostic of leprosy treatment in the Americas. While this scientific purpose was clearly only a pretext for their general meandering, it lent the entire trip a certain diagnostic function for Guevara. Unlike Sal, Guevara constantly historicises, contextualises, analyses and draws conclusions from what he encounters. While Sal fetishises impoverished racialised subjects as the condition of possibility for his white freedom, Guevara denounces the poverty he saw and condemns the racial caste system he witnesses.

While it resembles Sal's narrative structurally, in tone and style Guevara's narrative appears at first to be a textbook example of successful mourning rather than unresolved melancholia. Whatever loss Guevara experiences - the loss of Alberto, of his girlfriend, even of the motorcycle - he indefatigably

18. David Sandison, *Che Guevara*, New York, St. Martin's Griffin Press, 1997, p20.

surmounts. Yet, precisely at the height of Guevara's journey, during his passage through Peru, an episodic melancholia sets in, revealing the loss situated at the heart of white freedom for twentieth-century Latin American nationalists.

More than a year after the end of his trip, Guevara transcribed his journey's notes. He prefaces the diary with a three-paragraph introduction, acknowledging not only a chronological distance separating Guevara-the-adventurer and Guevara-the-editor, but also a psychic distance between the two. From the second paragraph:

... [M]y mouth says what my eye told it. Was our view too narrow, too biased, too hasty, were our conclusions too rigid? Maybe so, but this is how the typewriter interprets the disparate impulses which made you press the keys, and those fleeting impulses are *dead*. Besides, no one is answerable to them. *The person who wrote these notes died the day he stepped back on Argentine soil.* The person who is reorganising and polishing them, me, is no longer me, at least I'm not the me I was. Wandering around our 'America with a capital A' has changed me more than I thought (TMD p11-12, emphasis mine).

Guevara acknowledges the mediated nature of memory with his typewriter metaphor. Guevara-the-editor is, like a typewriter, 'interpret[ing]' the disparate, now dead impulses of a third person 'you' - the notes taken during the journey by Guevara-the-adventurer. It is significant that he characterises this mediation twice as a death.

Though the passage begins with two Guevaras - the mouth and the eye render 'our view', 'our conclusions' - in the end there is only one Che, 'I'm not the me I was'. As in *On the Road*, the narrative voice of the *Motorcycle Diaries* begins by chronicling a personal loss, 'The person who wrote these notes died the day he stepped back on Argentine soil'. Che Guevara has lost the younger version of himself entirely, killed by 'America with a capital A'. Yet Guevara does not appear particularly perturbed by this dramatic loss of self. There is no unresolved grief, no withdrawal, no physical manifestations of weariness, as with Sal. On the contrary, his casual description of two lives 'running parallel for a while' suggests a philosophical understanding of their inevitable separation (TMD p11). Guevara characterises both his loss of self and eventual loss of his friend Granado as part of a natural maturation process, of a self-critical distancing from the aspirations of youth - 'I'm not the me I was'. No lingering lost objects haunt the first half of Guevara's travel narrative, as he documents his and Granado's adventures through Argentina and Chile.

The journal entries documenting Guevara's travels through Chile are noteworthy for the contrast they record between his reactions to this predominantly white and mestizo southern cone country, and his subsequent reactions to the predominantly indigenous and mestizo Andean country of

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Peru. The Chile section, filled with entries on his and Alberto's drunken escapades, also contains incongruous entries that read more like economic and political treatises than a diary. The final Chilean entry, titled 'Chile, In Retrospect', is the most notable instance. In it Guevara-the-editor interrupts the journal:

When I jotted these notes down, in the heat of my early enthusiasm and first impressions, what I wrote included a few wild inaccuracies and was generally not in the approved spirit of scientific inquiry. Anyway I don't think I should express my current ideas about Chile now, more than a year after I made the notes; I'd rather do a *précis* of what I wrote then (*TMD* p69).

As editor, Guevara suggests that his commitment to 'scientific' accuracy makes it necessary for him - for the first and only time - to make an explicit change to an original journal entry. In this 'retrospective' entry, Guevara does not reflect on any sites seen or people encountered. Instead, this rather formal '*précis*' compares Chile's and Argentina's health care systems, sanitation, and standard of living, analyses the political prospects of the various presidential candidates, and assesses the country's mineral and agricultural resources. To achieve true prosperity, he concludes, Chile will need to 'get its tiresome Yankee friend off its back' (*TMD* p71). These Chilean entries indicate Guevara's nascent historical materialism. And yet his 'spirit of scientific inquiry' takes a very peculiar turn once Guevara finds himself amongst the indigenous populations of Peru and Colombia.

As Guevara leaves behind the Chilean mines and the mestizo working classes for the Inca ruins and indigenous peoples of Peru, he exchanges his historical materialism for a melancholia that alternates with mania, and positivist diagnoses that alternate with colonial fantasy. Guevara titles the first journal entry on Peru 'Tarata, The New World', making an explicit comparison between his and Granado's journey of discovery through the Andes and the Spanish conquistadors' arrival. After a hot day and an excruciatingly cold night in the mountains, Alberto and Ernesto walk dejectedly along a road where various lorries have already passed them by, when 'we stopped to rest, noting the silhouette of an approaching lorry with indifference; as usual it was carrying a cargo of human livestock ... to our surprise the lorry stopped' (*TMD* p75).

The 'human livestock' in the lorry that Guevara notes with 'indifference' are Aymará Indians. Once Alberto and Ernesto board the lorry, Alberto attempts to engage the Indians in conversation, but fails because 'their Spanish was very poor. The lorry continued climbing through a landscape of utter desolation where only a few straggling thorn bushes gave any semblance of life' (*TMD* p75). At this moment in the narrative the 'desolation' of the outer landscape metaphorically mirrors Guevara's inner landscape, as he and Granado, tired and 'straggling' through their journey, are figured



as but the semblance of life against the dumb and lifeless 'cargo' in the lorry.

Immediately following this, however, in a scene almost identical to the Laredo scene in *On The Road*, where the 'half dead' Sal and Dean cross the bridge into Mexico, the lorry ascends onto a mountain plateau,

[T]he view was wonderful; we gazed, enchanted, at the landscape spreading out before us and wanted to know the names and explanations for everything we saw. The Aymarás barely understood us but the little information they gave in their jumbled Spanish added to the impact of the surroundings. We were in an enchanted valley where time had stopped several centuries ago ... The irrigation channels - which the Incas built for the benefit of their subjects flowed down the valley, forming a thousand waterfalls and criss-crossing the road as it spiralled down the mountainside ... The various crops grown by the Indians, neatly cultivated on terraces, opened up a whole new range of botanical science to us: *oca quinua, canihua, rocoto*, maize. People dressed like the Indians sharing our lorry now appeared in their natural habitat ... in short, so many typical sights, the town [Tarata] conjures up the days before the Spanish Conquest (*TMD* pp75-77).

Guevara's obsessive description lasts for nearly three pages and indicates his entry into a manic state. Like Sal and Dean, revived back to life by the awe-inspiring timelessness of Mexico, Ernesto and Alberto oscillate from melancholic indifference and desolation to manic euphoria when they behold this land 'where time had stopped'. And once again, as in Sal's narrative, the presence of Indians is central in inducing this colonial enchantment: the Aymarás' 'jumbled Spanish', their indigenous garb, and indigenous agriculture all 'added to the impact of the surroundings'. And again, it is 'so many *typical* sights' that incongruously produce wonder, suggesting that Guevara, like Sal, finds only what he is already looking for. Sal, to live out his colonial fantasy, is looking for 'great, grave Indians' anxious to make a deal. Guevara's colonial fantasy, however, produces a very different representation of the Indians he seeks.

Guevara's description immediately and dramatically shifts its terms: 'But the people are not the same proud race that time after time rose up against Inca rule and forced them to maintain a permanent army on their borders; these people who watch us walk through the town streets are a defeated race. They look at us meekly, almost fearfully, completely indifferent to the outside world. Some give the impression that they go on living simply because it's a habit they can't give up' (*TMD* p77). His representation of the Aymarás returns us to the non-communicative 'human livestock' he first encountered in the lorry. Despite the fact that the Aymarás' agriculture 'opened up a whole new range of botanical science' for our two explorers, these people 'go on living simply because it's a habit'. And though the Aymarás use the irrigation technology of the Inca centuries after the demise

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It is Guevara's melancholic identification with these indigenous people that creates this shift. When he describes 'these people *who watch us* walk through the town streets', he claims to be seeing through their eyes. Without any awareness of his own omniscient claim, he identifies with their watching him 'meekly, almost fearfully'. I would suggest that in this moment of unmediated identification, Guevara displaces onto these 'defeated' and 'indifferent' Indians his own melancholic withdrawal of libidinal investment from the outside world. The question before us - what is the loss that precipitates this melancholia in Guevara once he enters Peru? And why does he displace his melancholia onto the indigenous subjects, representing them in these dejected terms throughout his Andean journey?

To understand the legacy of racialisation conditioning Guevara's representation, it is once again helpful to return to Seed's plumbing of the colonial record. Guevara, already a member of the intellectual left, can only recognise indigenous survivors of the conquest within the subordinate terms of the Spanish colonial dichotomy, regardless of the 'evidence' to the contrary. Indeed, the Aymarás' survival is, paradoxically, the very evidence of their submission, for only those willing to submit to the Spanish Crown were spared the punishment of persecution and death. Guevara's Andean entries consistently describe the living Indians he encounters in the dehumanising terms of absolute submission, as 'the smelly, flea-ridden human cargo giving off a heady but warm stench' (*TMD* p77), or as 'trott[ing] along in a single file like a string of llamas' (*TMD* p78). Though he may at times express sympathy for the racial prejudice suffered by these Indians (*TMD* pp81, 102), in Guevara's eyes, 450 years of continual submission have reduced them to beasts of burden, 'collaborators' in their own domination.

Importantly, he repeatedly characterises their submission as melancholic. The Indians trot at a 'weary steady pace' (*TMD* p78). They offer 'barely more than monosyllabic replies to questions from outsiders' (*TMD* p85). When Guevara encounters an educated Indian teacher willing to engage with the outside world, the teacher nevertheless speaks with 'deep despondency ... of the Indian's present condition' (*TMD* p81). Just as racialised subjects become the melancholic objects haunting the lost democratic ideal of white freedom in Kerouac's *On The Road*, these living Indians become the melancholic objects haunting a loss in Guevara's *Motorcycle Diaries*. Living Indians are the melancholic remains of the great and noble pre-Colombian warrior that resisted the colonising Spaniards unto death. We have finally arrived at the lost object in Ernesto 'Che' Guevara's 'New World': great, grave, *dead* indians.

In his representation of submissive living Indians and resistive dead ones, Guevara is accessing the idealised terms of colonial subalternity - absolute resistance or absolute submission - through the mediation of nineteenth-century Latin American independence. In the first half of the nineteenth-

19. For a detailed history of *indigenismo* and *mestizaje*, as well as of the role the figure of the Indian played in Latin American nation building, see Héctor Díaz-Polanco, *Indigenous People in Latin America: The Quest for Self-Determination*, Lucía Rayas (trans), Latin American Perspectives Series, Vol. 18, Boulder, Westview Press, 1997. See also Carlos Durand-Alcántara, *Derechos indios en México: derechos pendientes*, Chapingo, Universidad Autónoma Chapingo, 1994.

century, Creole élites from Tierra del Fuego to the Rio Nueces sought independence from Spain. They re-valued the figure of the resistive Indian warrior, to legitimate their own nationalist struggles, and claimed a direct lineage from those original inhabitants of the Americas who refused to submit to the Spanish armies. Idealised Inca and Aztec warrior ancestors presumably struggled against Spain in defence of a *patria* constructed retroactively by these élites.<sup>19</sup> This early articulation of *mestizaje* provided an aboriginal nationalist origin story for these European descendants. Through it, élites claimed an Indian lineage while distancing themselves from contemporary nineteenth-century Indians. The figure of the resistive Inca or Aztec warrior, then, is central to the formation of liberal national culture in Latin America.

Upon arriving in Cuzco, Guevara embarks on a colonial fantasy enabled by this model of nineteenth-century Creole *mestizaje*. This privileges identification with the conquering warrior and coloniser - equally lost objects - while it disdains identification with the colonised present. Guevara thus begins his first entry on Cuzco, entitled 'The Navel Of The World': 'there are two or three different Cuzcos, or rather, two or three ways in which the city can be evoked' (*TMD* p87). Predictably, Guevara evokes the Cuzco of the mighty Incas first, describing it as a sacred place designated by the Inca god Viracocha to be 'the permanent home for his chosen people who had abandoned their nomadic existence to come as conquerors to their promised land. Nostrils flaring in their zeal for new horizons, they saw their formidable empire grow and their eyes looked beyond the feeble barrier of the surrounding mountains' (*TMD* p87).

Once again, Guevara identifies with the indigenous subjects by seeing what they saw, seeing through conquering eyes that 'looked beyond the feeble barrier'. This time, however, his identification is marked by a manic 'zeal' and 'flaring nostrils'. He furthers this euphoric identification, describing how the Inca Cuzco 'invites you to turn warrior and, club in hand, defend the freedom and the life of the Inca' (*TMD* p88). There is another Cuzco, demanding an equally euphoric identification: 'a vibrant city which bears witness to the formidable courage of the soldiers who conquered this region in the name of Spain ... This Cuzco invites you to don armor and, astride a sturdy powerful steed, cleave a path through the defenceless flesh of a flock of naked indians' (*TMD* p88). Guevara identifies fully with the Inca warrior *and* the Spanish soldier, without pausing to notice the incongruity between the free Indian with 'club in hand' and the conquered Indians reduced to 'defenseless flesh'. The *mestizaje* that enables such contradictory, manic identifications also enables Guevara's reaction to the third, contemporary Cuzco.

The narrow streets of contemporary Cuzco are filled with 'native people in their traditional costume' (*TMD* p88), but this Cuzco does not invite euphoric identification. Instead it 'invites you to become a *reluctant* tourist, to *glance* at things superficially and enjoy yourself under the beauty of a leaden wintry sky' (*TMD* p88). The descriptions of the first two Cuzcos

reverberate with the third Cuzco, but tourists are not looking at their eyes. Indian-filled streets thus it is *his* reluctance to look at 'super-

Guevara's comments on pages, as he details the military adventures of victory at each. Once again, he returns to Picchu, he tries to find an important thing about the powerful indigenous conquering civilization of the North American people they have been unaware of the [Inca ancestors]. They can grasp the situation.

Yet again, in the lost 'power' of North America refers to himself. Presumably Guevara's reaction to the mixture of cultures. I would suggest that the spirit as only slightly related through an unimaginable contemporary American 'semi-civilization' their very existence unto death. In total subordination and degradation of

For the remainder of his entries on his Indian encounters, a melancholic tone. Their 'primitive' sex or age, they are drawn into 'veritable' with [their petty

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reverberate with a passion signalling Guevara's manic identification. In the third Cuzco, however, identification with the living Indians is resisted, as tourists are now invited only to 'glance' at them rather than see through their eyes. Indeed, the tourists' gaze is directed upward, away from the Indian-filled streets, toward an oddly 'leaden' sky. But Guevara is the tourist, thus it is *his* reluctant colonial gaze that is repelled by what he can only bare to look at 'superficially' - living, modern Indians.

Guevara's colonial fantasy continues through four entries and many pages, as he describes the fortresses surrounding Cuzco. He ruminates on the military advantages of every aspect, and coldly calculates the possibilities of victory at each site. He theorises on the nuances of Inca military genius. Once again, he fully identifies with the Incas' conquering spirit. At Machu Picchu, he triumphantly concludes, 'The undeniable thing, the most important thing, is that we have before us a pure expression of the most powerful indigenous race in the Americas, untouched by contact with the conquering civilization' (TMD p95). In the next defeated breath, he derides the North American tourists who visit the fortress for imagining 'the fallen people they have seen on their journey in among these once-living walls, unaware of the moral distance separating them [contemporary Indians from Inca ancestors], since only the semi-indigenous spirit of the South American can grasp the subtle differences' (TMD pp95-96).

Yet again, melancholic living Indians haunt his manic identification with the lost 'powerful indigenous race', for it is Guevara who projects onto the North American tourists his own wrongful imaginings, even as implicitly he refers to himself as the 'semi-indigenous spirit' not subject to them. Presumably Guevara's use of 'semi-indigenous spirit of South America' refers to the mixture of Spanish and Indian blood in him that conditions his vision. I would suggest we read this 'semi' in another way as well. He recognises his spirit as only *semi*-indigenous precisely because, for Guevara, he is only related through *mestizaje* to the resistive side of indigenous identity. It is unimaginable to him that he would also be related to its degenerate contemporary counterpart. Colonial racialisation underlies the Latin American 'semi-indigenous' national imaginary: contemporary Indians, by their very existence, are living proof of their ancestors' failure to have resisted unto death. In the absence of total resistance, as Seed suggests, there is total subordination, a congenital subordination that has led to such complete degradation of the modern Indian for Guevara.

For the remainder of the *Motorcycle Diaries*, almost exclusively devoted to entries on his journey through Peru, he continues to associate the living Indians he encounters with beasts and bestiality on the one hand, and with a melancholic disposition toward this degraded condition on the other. Their 'primitive idea' of 'modesty and hygiene means that, regardless of sex or age, they do their business by the side of the road', turning woman into 'veritable warehouses of human excrement, since they wipe the kids with [their petticoats] whenever they have a bowel movement' (TMD p101).

A 'laconic Quechua-speaking guide' takes Granado and Guevara to visit a leper colony, where the deplorable sanitary conditions Guevara describes are 'bearable only to the fatalist, resigned nature of the Peruvian mountain indians' (*TMD* pp107-8). And in the most intriguing of all passages, Guevara unquestioningly recounts, in clinical detail, a local myth about Indians in Peru's Amazon region having sex with dolphins: 'It is apparently a river dolphin which has, among other strange characteristics, genitals like a woman's, so the indians use it as a substitute, but they have to kill the animal when they've finished coitus because a contraction in the genital area stops the penis coming out' (*TMD* p125). His 'spirit of scientific inquiry' has taken a peculiar turn. Guevara's burgeoning historical materialism is reduced to social Darwinism. He glances superficially at the Indians, yet with a diagnostic positivism that determines an absence of humanity. Guevara's melancholic ambivalence towards indigenous people - repulsed by the living, enthralled by the dead - is symptomatic of both the Spanish colonial subalternisation of the Indian and liberal nationalism's racialisation of mestizaje.

As in Kerouac, I would suggest that the lost object for Guevara only stands in for a loss of a more ideal kind. While Guevara was travelling around Latin America in the early 1950s, United States neo-colonialism was at its height in the region. Guevara recognises this when he acknowledges that, regardless of Chile's resources, the 'Yankee friend' decides its fate. And during the early 1950s it was becoming evident that import substitution policies implemented by countries like Argentina, Chile, and Peru had failed. These policies generated phenomenal industrialisation and economic growth during World War II and the late forties; by the 1950s, they had increased trade imbalances while failing to decrease poverty.<sup>20</sup> Guevara is repeatedly startled by this poverty, commenting on it in every country he visits.

I would argue that it is the ideal of liberal nationalism that has disappointed Che Guevara. Latin American independence movements of the nineteenth-century associated the ideal of liberal nationalism with the political sovereignty of the Inca. Guevara echoes this association in his representation of the Inca as the 'most powerful indigenous race in the Americas, untouched by contact with the conquering civilization'. And it is the nineteenth-century deployment of mestizaje in the interest of nationalism that still allows the twentieth-century Guevara - born in the one American country with almost no indigenous ancestry - to identify nevertheless with the original Inca representatives of this ideal through his 'semi-indigenous spirit'.

But this ideal of national sovereignty is as lost as the lost objects set up to represent it. By 1951, over a century after successful independence movements created the nations we now collectively call Latin America, nationalism had nevertheless failed to bring about either political sovereignty or economic independence. The recognition of the failure of liberal nationalism in Latin America will eventually drive Guevara to become a

20. John Ward, *Latin America: Development and Conflict since 1945*, New York, Routledge, 1997.

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revolutionary. In this initial trip through 'America with a capital A', though, he discovers for the first time the depth of this failure. In response, a manic identification with the lost Inca warriors overtakes Guevara as he visits Cuzco and Machu Picchu, while melancholic living Indians - pale shadows of Inca ancestors, caught in a 'primitive barbarism' - haunt this identification, reminding him of the modernity that never arrived in Latin America.

Both Kerouac's *On the Road* and Guevara's *Motorcycle Diaries* may well break from the normative tyranny, the banal conventionality, of 'middle' America in the 1950s. The protagonists in these texts, however, also replicate Anglo and Spanish colonial conquest narratives in the Americas as they hit the road in search of freedom. In these two narratives, Kerouac and Guevara share the practice of appropriating representational terms of racialised subjects from distinct colonial discourses of subalternisation in the Americas. Their texts demonstrate how these distinct colonial discourses - British and Spanish - are re-worked in the nineteenth-century articulations of white freedom in the United States, for Kerouac, and liberal nationalism in Latin America, for Guevara. Young Guevara and Kerouac's Sal also share a profound sense of loss over these two ideals.

But the shared practice of representational appropriation does not make the textual politics of the two narratives the same. Nor does the melancholia shared by the two protagonists lead to similar outcomes. I have suggested that Kerouac appropriates the terms of British and Anglo North American colonial subalternisation in order to re-capture white freedom, and ultimately produces the literary extension of United States neo-colonialism in the 'post-colonial' era. The geography of racialisation Kerouac re-produces through Sal's travels among beat United States minorities and even beater Mexicans enables the narrative of progress that has always underwritten United States expansion in the Americas.

But Guevara's racial geography ultimately fails him - he is unable to access any narrative of progress through it. Instead, Guevara's mestizaje corresponds to a nineteenth-century ideal of liberal nationalism that is as unsuccessful in challenging United States neo-colonialism as the Incas were in challenging Spain. The Guevara of *The Motorcycle Diaries* will soon give up this ideal of liberal nationalism in favour of Marxist internationalism. I am not suggesting, though, that Guevara simply 'got over' his melancholia for the lost ideal of nationalism, with its political sovereignty and economic independence. Rather, I would like to conclude by suggesting that Guevara's Che and Kerouac's Sal put their melancholia, with its incorporative identifications, to very different productive uses.

By the end of *On The Road*, Sal is still sitting on the dock of the bay waiting for Dean to walk over the western horizon. Mirroring his character's melancholic suspension at the end of *On The Road*, Kerouac, a prolific writer, nevertheless wrote the *same* travel narrative over and over again, in novel after novel, forever in search of a lost white freedom. At the end of *The Motorcycle Diaries*, Guevara appended an 'Afterthought' to his journal entries,

apparently written after Guevara arrived back home. In this afterthought, he informs the reader of a 'revelation' he had during his journey. The revelation is brought on by a conversation he has with a man somewhere along the way. This man, identified as only a European exile, explains to Che the inevitability of history, concluding 'The future belongs to the people and gradually or suddenly they will take power, here and all over the world' (TMD p150).

Significantly, Guevara does not mention where 'here' is, he refuses to specify the country in which this conversation presumably took place. This anonymous man elaborates, insisting that the people 'can only learn by their own mistakes, and these will be very serious and will cost many innocent lives' as 'revolution is impersonal' (TMD p150). Reflecting on this conversation, Guevara concludes his motorcycle diaries with the following:

I now knew ... I knew that when the great guiding spirit cleaves humanity into two antagonistic halves, I will be with the people. And I know it because I see it imprinted on the night that I, the eclectic dissector of doctrines and psychoanalyst of dogmas, howling like a man possessed, will assail the barricades and trenches, will stain my weapon with blood and, consumed with rage, will slaughter any enemy I lay hands on. And then, as if *an immense weariness were consuming my recent exhilaration*, I see myself being sacrificed to the authentic revolution, the great leveller of individual will, pronouncing the exemplary *mea culpa* (TMD p152, emphasis mine).

At the close of his journal, Guevara predicts his life, a revolutionary life fulfilled *through* his melancholic identifications, not in spite of them. He also predicts his death, a death many of us still mourn. The challenge for those of us who mourn him is: what might we produce from his remains?

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