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To Speak or Not to Speak? : Postcolonial Readings of Silence in Racine's Theatre

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Postcolonial Readings of Silence in Racine's Theatre

By

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Abstract

To Speak or Not to Speak? :
Postcolonial Readings of Silence in Racine's Theatre
By Domenica Newell-Amato

This dissertation examines silence in Racine's theatre not only as an inability of the characters to express themselves, but as a subtle and complex account of negotiating cultural difference and interdependency. Coinciding with the inception of the French colonial system and its emergent discourses on cultural and racial differences (such as Louis XIV's edict of 1685 that denies rights to the African slaves in the French Antilles), Racine's theatre explores the troubled encounter between Western self and Oriental or African other. I argue that the Western self is afflicted by a loss of speech in the face of cultural alterity. Subsisting at the margins of Western imperial power and discourse, the silencing of Oriental or African characters marks the difficulty of entering classical representation as a culturally delineated space. However, the difficulty of achieving representation leads the cultural other to find alternative assertions of agency. Engendered as an unstable composite that is constructed across the borders of onstage and offstage, of speech and silence, and of self and other, identity ceases to reinforce Classical values. Just as the marginalized other destabilizes the Western imperial perspective, the muting of the culturally dominant self further signals the failure of hegemonic discourse. It is thus at the height of French seventeenth century classicism that Racine paves the way to postcolonial discourse on otherness through his use of silence. Engaging with questions of subaltern speech and cultural difference, my analysis is informed by the postcolonial writings of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Edouard Glissant, and Homi Bhabha. I conclude by showing that Racine's explorations of silence inaugurate and provide a critical legacy for understanding the destabilization and muting of the voice in the postcolonial theatre of Marguerite Duras and Maryse Condé.

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

In a pivotal work on silence in French theatre entitled *L'Envers du théâtre: Dramaturgie du silence de l'âge classique à Materlinck,* Arnaud Rykner raises a fundamental question:

> Pourquoi la question du silence ne se pose-t-elle pas clairement à l'âge classique, et *a fortiori* dans le cadre du théâtre, lieu emblématique de ce même âge autant que du silence (puisqu'il est le lieu où ce dernier peut *s'entendre*) ? (61-62)

Indeed, in a period that gives rise to an official authority, namely the Académie Française, which closely monitors the usage and vocabulary of the French language, one finds that language in the Classical period takes a sharp turn from the Baroque's celebration of the ambiguous detours of words and signs to the regimentation of spelling, grammar and vocabulary. According to Foucault, language in the Classical period obtains the power to "donner des signes adéquats à toutes les représentations quelles qu'elles soient et d'établir entre elles tous les liens possibles. Dans la mesure où le langage peut représenter toutes les représentations, il est de plein droit l'élément de l'universel" (99-100). In granting language the notion of transparency and purity, this period also strives to imbue the theatrical form with this same power of lucidity and mastery. Known for its strict adherence to the classical unities, to the rules of *vraisemblance* and *bienséance*, Classical theatre sanctifies dialogue as its support. According to Rykner, this period largely avoids formalizing silence precisely because "il

n'est pas possible de le valoriser que si l'on accepte de faire intervenir une faille dans l'omnipotence du discours" (62).

In Furetière's *Dictionnaire universel*, published in 1690, one finds several classical definitions of silence: It is a "terme relatif, opposé à bruit, cris, et tumulte" ; "la discrétion qui fait qu'on retient des paroles qu'on n'ose ou qu'on ne veut pas prononcer" ; "un empêchement de parler ou d'agir" ; "aussi une souffrance, un manque de réclamer, ou de se plaindre, de s'opposer à quelque chose". It is interesting that silence is defined in the Classical period by such terms as *opposé*, *discrétion*, *retient*, *n'ose pas*, *ne veut pas prononcer*, *un empêchement*, *souffrance*, *un manque*. Indeed, words themselves seem to struggle with this definition, and offer only their best oppositional and negating signifiers. Such expressions as '*retient*' or '*ne veut pas prononcer*' suggest the resistance of the subject to speak; he or she may retain words because of self-imposed or exterior pressures. The term *empêchement* may take on political, and more specifically, colonial connotations, designating obstacles which silence an individual, group, or situation. Furthermore, the conflation of speaking and acting that occurs in the definition of silence as '*un empêchement de parler ou d'agir*' implies that silence may be a problem not only at the verbal level, but also at the bodily one.

Although Furetière's definition of silence depicts a lack of verbal representation, silence in the theatre of Jean Racine can be seen as a form of representation unto itself. Although it is impermissible to remain silent on the Classical stage[1], silence is

[1] Regarding the general esthetic of the Classical period which excludes all positive manifestations of silence, Rykner points to the silence that nonetheless is present in Racinian theatre : "En effet, s'il est désormais avéré que le silence ne peut être une donnée formelle du théâtre classique, il n'en est pas moins vrai qu'il peut se voir ici ou là l'enjeu explicite du dialogue ; s'il est interdit de se taire sur scène, il est

nonetheless present in the theme of aphasia that often afflicts the characters of Racine's tragedies and in the silence that is used as a mask or as a form of deception. A strange reversal indeed, for "la parole a une importance capitale dans un théâtre où il y a peu d'action factuelle" (Rohou 115). It is our objective to study silence more specifically in the theatrical space in which the cultural other is constructed and inescapably moderated in order to discover ways in which the problem of silence figures the problem of self and other, of self-estrangement, and of cultural alterity. In what manner does the portrayal of the African or the Oriental character in Racine's tragedies intimate a concern for problems of speech and of power? In what ways do representations of silence and of otherness resist or conform to Orientalist reductions of the cultural other? Whereas the question of silence in Racine's theatre has been seen as a psychological manifestation of characters' difficulty to speak their emotion, the question of silence reflects a bigger crisis – that of cultural and social forms of alienation. Might the exclusion of certain characters from speech in Racine's tragedies allow us to perceive a nascent discourse of coloniality?

In our study of Racine's *Bérénice*, *Bajazet*, and *Phèdre*, we will consider Racine's attention to the problems – and the injustices – in cross-cultural representation. Representation begins to reflect the limitations of French culture itself as Racine points to the difficulty of the Oriental or African character ever felicitously entering the (French) field of representation. Intercultural relations take on the form of colonial paradigms in these tragedies, for the cultural other subsists outside the sphere of Western imperial power and discourse. If Racine casts the cultural other beyond representation, it is to

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toujours permis de parler de ce silence, ou, mieux, de tenter de vider la parole de son contenu pour faire entendre au-delà d'elle une autre voix" (119).

subvert power and agency. Indeed, the cultural other emerges from the position of silence, discovering expression at the borders of representation. We will find that the Western or French self is also afflicted by silence in the encounter of self and other. Yet here, silence seems to indicate a slippage or loss of imperial identity rather than its reaffirmation. Within intercultural and colonial relations, the representation of silence is thus ripe for a thought-provoking postcolonial reading of Racine's work. Silence is not 'silent,' for the character's body signifies through its disorder, its fainting, or its substitution (for instance, in cases of ventriloquism). Indeed, the analysis of the body in relation to silence in Racine's theatre reveals that one can in fact find voice above or despite social or political subjugations. At times the victim of an imperial or an orientalist system of representation, the cultural other struggles to find expression, echoing the struggle of silence against its own definition as a 'negation' of language. Just as silence embraces alternate forms of representation, the emerging voice of the marginalized engenders alternate perspectives with regard to the culturally dominant discourses of the imperial West.

Although Racine makes no explicit reference to French colonial discourses which were circulating at this time[2], his explorations of silence through oppressive paradigms of

[2] Racine displays a consciousness of racial difference that may be influenced by the circulation of colonial discourses at the time. For instance, just three years after the production of *Bajazet* (1672), King Louis XIV passed a decree in 1685 called the *Code Noir* or *Edict Regarding the Government and the Administration of the French Islands of America, and the Discipline and the Commerce of Blacks and Slaves in the Said Countries*, which outlines in detail the limitations and ordained punishments that masters are to impose upon African slaves in the newly acquired French Caribbean islands. However, political considerations of slavery had already begun before this date: "Twenty years earlier, Colbert had formed the Compagnie des Indes, which sent French slavers into Africa, shipped Africans to the Americas, and returned to France with coffee, sugar, and tobacco" (Dayan 285). In fact, the first African slaves arrived in the French Antillean colonies as early as the 1630s (Peabody 114). Furthermore, Racine may very well have been familiar with the four-volume work penned by Jean-Baptiste Du Tertre, for the *Histoire générale des Antilles habitués par les François* was published in Paris from 1667 to 1671. As an example of seventeenth-century colonial discourse, we note the dehumanization of the 'Negroes' as discussed by Du Tertre (in the second volume) when he states: "The Brazilians and Arawaks that the French inhabitants buy

hegemony are remarkable (for example, as seen in the despotic[3] Oriental harem in *Bajazet* or in the imperial center of Rome in *Bérénice*). The juncture of these two problematics (and thematics) – that is, of silence and cultural alterity – in the Racinian universe has not yet been put in direct relation, though many scholarly voices lead us to this crossing. An analysis of silence and alterity in Racine's theatre will uncover an implicit reflection upon Frenchness and representation during the Classical period. The fragility of representation can be seen through resolutely unsuccessful attempts to subordinate the cultural other in Racine's tragedies, for silence affects both parties in the various conflicts between self and other. To be sure, worldviews are neither single nor subsumed in Racine's theatre.

Conquests of foreign lands formed the backdrop not only of French political interests in Racine's day, but also became the new vogue for readers, eager to peer into unknown worlds[4]. Yet as the French moved into different territories, the notion of French identity itself became an all-consuming question as it appropriated the cultural other through the language and practice of conquest, while confusing otherness with

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to serve them are truly slaves, since they have lost their liberty, and their masters can dispose of them as they please, but they suffer almost nothing of the fatigue and labour of this distressing condition; the Negroes alone bear all the suffering. And as if the blackness of their bodies were the symbol of their misfortune, one treats them as slaves, feeds them as one wishes, drives them work like beasts, and one way or another extracts from them all the service of which they are capable" (Hughes 328). Further on, Du Tertre speaks of the African coasts of Guinea, Angola, Senegal, and Cape Verde, stating: "I do not know what this nation has done, but it is enough to be black to be captured, sold, and enlisted into a grievous, lifelong slavery" (Hughes 329).

[3] Oriental monarchy raises the issue of an inferred hegemony between Eastern and Western political institutions in the early modern period. "What we have in these images of the Oriental monarchs is essentially a taxonomy of difference, difference between an 'eastern' body, and a 'western' (European/Christian) mind, between body (pleasure) and spirit (reality principle), between, eventually, effeminacy, thus the feminine, and martial vigor, and thus masculinity. If we were to contrast the oriental despot with the 'Absolute' Sovereign as we see the concept developed in the mid-to-late sixteenth century, we could reduce, schematically the opposition the west establishes between itself and its other" (Greenberg "Racine's *Bérénice*" 76).

[4] "On commence à connaître l'Amérique et l'Asie, grâce aux récits des explorateurs, des colons, des missionnaires. Cela, dès les premières années du siècle et surtout à partir de 1660" (Mathé 78).

myth or drowning it altogether in silence. In this study, we will look at Racine's varied depictions of the Orient and of Africa as an appropriated and silenced object of desire[5] in order to elucidate his highly complex account of colonial relations – as well as the sites of its resistance to national ideology. In this way, we will read Racine as a precursor of the postcolonial critics that challenge the oppositions that France established as it built and maintained its empire – to the detriment of the representation and liberty of the cultural other. In his preface to a collection of works inspired by the 1999 colloquium entitled *Jean Racine et l'Orient,* Alain Viala reminds us that it is tempting and legitimate to see in Racine's works questions surrounding the ethics of love, of interior politics, or of religion in his time, but "à scruter les images qui s'y offrent de l'Orient, on voit surgir des questions qui touchent à l'ailleurs, à l'extérieur, à l'altérité. [….] Du coup, ce théâtre devient, par les confrontations réitérées entre Orient et Occident qu'il met en scène […], un espace d'affrontements du Soi et de l'Autrui" ("Preface" 8). In what ways is the conflict of self and other marked in Racine's theatre? Is this conflict an interior battle that is experienced by the character or might it reflect a broader world-view that exceeds the boundaries of the French self?

Indeed, to take account of the historical context of the seventeenth century in which the French absolutist monarchy was founding colonies in West Africa, in the New World, in India, and in the Indian Ocean is to consider the role of silence, of self, and of other in Racine's œuvre in a new and different light. Furthermore, the questions of silence, speech, and cultural otherness that occur in this preliminary and timely staging of the other introduce the subaltern speech that will later emblematize problems of

[5] For instance, *Iphigénie* begins with Agamemnon's evocation of Asia as a Greek object of desire and of conquest: "[Ulysse] me représenta l'honneur et la patrie, / Tout ce peuple, ces rois à mes ordres soumis, / Et l'empire d'Asie à la Grèce promis" (v. 74-6).

colonialism. Levi-Strauss poses the question, "Si ce n'est pas le consentement qui fonde la supériorité occidentale, n'est-ce pas alors cette plus grande énergie dont elle dispose et qui lui a précisément permis de forcer le consentement ?" (54). The silencing of the cultural other can be a means to force the inferiority of their position with regard to the conqueror. Yet the ambivalence of imperial discourse becomes all the more evident in our analysis of Racine's theatre, for the presence (and absence) of the cultural other disturbs the unity of Classical representation. It is by framing the limits of cultural perspective that Racine challenges those limits. Indeed, "In a number of Racine's later tragedies an Asian character plays the role of refuser: not the role of someone who loses out according to a particular scale of value, but a proponent of a different scale of value" (Goodkin "Orientalism" 73)[6].

If in the early part of the seventeenth century France would establish its presence and power in various parts of the world – such as Quebec, Guyana, Senegal, the Caribbean, and Madagascar – then they would need to practice forms of role-playing and national identity at home[7]. Longino cites this century as the period in which France begins to formalize their cultural and political relations to the cultural other on the

[6] Goodkin cites the following examples: "Andromaque resists not only Pyrrhus, but also the entire hierarchy of power within which the European characters operate. The Asian other in *Bérénice* […] is Antiochus. The Cornelian stance of Bérénice and Titus at the end of the play is deflated by the last word of the drama, 'Hélas,' [….] In *Bajazet*, [….] Atalide and Bajazet, the Asian characters, revolt against Roxane's desire for monolithic power. Even Eriphile, actually a Greek but socialized as a Trojan, clearly embodies a tragic revolt against Iphigénie's epic vision of all-encompassing heroic value and affirmation" ("Orientalism" 73).

[7] As Longino states, "the physical site of the Orient was envisaged, indeed appropriated, as the space of performance. Here the literal and figurative senses of the term 'theatre' – the military and the performative – collapse into each other. [….] While the Orient was a stage with the Ottoman 'Other' featured as center attraction, it was at the same time a highly participatory space where the French were confronted with and forced to negotiate their own identity as potential 'Other' as well. It was the space of the performative encounter. It was commonly held, without reflection, that off-stage theatrics played an integral, even necessary, role in Franco-Ottoman contacts, and in the way France related to the space of the Other" (23). In regard to France's relations with the Ottomans, Longino further asserts that "it is the very notion of theatricality that enabled the French to penetrate that world" (24). More broadly speaking, "Interactions take place which are self-consciously enacted, as if on stage" (28).

Classical stage. Experimenting with strategies of exchange and domination, the French consequently set the stage for the colonialization that would become more fully manifest in the centuries to come:

> At this time, France needed new but sanctioned stories from which to invent and legitimate new behavior[….] Such profound systemic change called for and came out of a consensual narrative, and the process of shaping the nation's story became a significant function of the theatre. Plays served as the ideal vehicle for nurturing a coherent early colonial mentality (Longino 2-3).

Theatre in the Classical period became the showcase for imagined encounters with the other as well as for imagined 'images' of the French self. The questions of self-identity and of cultural alterity that found articulation in the theatre of Corneille, Racine, and Molière were driven and further reinforced by the political self-interest which the French were beginning to enact on the American and African colonial 'stages'[8].

Indeed, colonialism was a stage that Europe established and pushed into new territories so that 'inferior' audiences could appropriate their model of civilization: Should the colonized not perform labor on that stage, should they not act the role that was scripted for them, then they fell unanimously to the wayside of legitimacy and representation. Indeed, in Racine's *Alexandre le Grand*[9], Porus warns Taxile that there can be no middle ground in relation to this great imperial arm of Alexandre: "Si l'on n'est son esclave, on est son ennemi" (v. 184). Eager to meet his enemy and to defend the land of India and its people from subjugation, Porus declares: "Je le trouvais trop lent à traverser l'Asie" (v. 242). Indeed, the imperial trek of Alexandre across Asia is underscored by the very structure of the play – that is, in the delay of Alexandre's

[8] The complexity of Racine's portrayal of the cultural other is in sharp contrast to Molière's farcical and grotesque representation of the Oriental other in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*.

[9] Goodkin describes the backdrop of Racine's first tragedy as such: "This play, Racine's first to be set in Asia, takes place in India during Alexander's wars of conquest. All of the drama's main characters, with the exception of Alexandre himself, are Asian" ("Orientalism" 67).

entrance within the play: Alexandre does not appear on stage until Act III[10]. The stage is thus presented from the start as a highly politicized and colonial site, divided amongst the imperial elite and the marginalized other.

Edward Said calls attention to the fact that Orientalism, a system of occasions for making statements about the Orient, operates "as representations usually do, for a purpose, according to a tendency, in a specific historical, intellectual, and even economical setting" (273). Furthermore:

> Representations are formations, or as Roland Barthes has said of all the operations of language, they are deformations. The Orient as a representation in Europe is formed—or deformed—out of a more and more specific sensitivity towards a geographical region called "the East." (273)

Is the cultural other in Racine's theatre formed or deformed? We will play close attention to both the formations and deformations inherent to the processes of representation that color the Western treatment of the other[11]. It is to be understood that if the Orient[12] was not geographically set apart from and exterior to the West, Orientalism could not exist. Moreover, the cultural imaginary of the Orient relies neither on a pure fantasy of the Orient nor on any 'real' Orient, but depends upon the Westerner who, having inherited or assumed some previous knowledge of the Orient, then "makes the Orient speak" (Said 20). The limited Western perspective of the actual Orient (or Africa) leads to a hemming in of those 'other' spaces and people when represented in the West;

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[10] "This is one of the latest onstage entrances of any neoclassical protagonist" (Goodkin "Orientalism" 68).
[11] It is through the metacommentary within Racine's theatre that we may peer into the layers of representation in order to perceive Racine's own interpretations of Western perceptions of the other.
[12] What was the Orient in the seventeenth century? As Said elucidates in *The World, the Text, and the Critic*: "Throughout the classical period of European culture Turkey was the Orient, Islam its most redoubtable and aggressive representative. This was not all, though. The Orient and Islam also stood for the ultimate alienation from and opposition to Europe, the European tradition of Christian Latinity, as well as to the putative authority of ecclesia, humanistic learning, and cultural community. For centuries Turkey and Islam hung over Europe like a gigantic composite monster, seeming to threaten Europe with destruction" (6).

this containing of that which is not the self is nuanced by Western desires[13] for unambiguous representation and for cultural domination. Yet the processes of Orientalism – with its limitations of essence and of the 'real' – are also applicable to the Western character in Racine's theatre, thus revealing *Western* systems (and failures) of *self*-containment. As a system of representations, Orientalism is based on the silence of the Oriental, for "if the Orient could represent itself, it would; since it cannot, the representation does the job, for the West, and *faute de mieux,* for the poor Orient" (21). What then of the silence of the Western characters who strive for cultural homogeneity?

As the ethnologue Jean Pouillon asserts, if the discovery of alterity "remet en question l'idée qu'on se fait de soi et de sa propre culture, c'est précisément parce qu'elle nous fait sortir du cercle restreint de nos semblables" (89). Alterity is not dissolved in Racine's work; at times, it stands on its own as an effect of characters' speech or silence, marking a difference that resists ready assimilation or representation. In *Bérénice*, Titus is never audience to Antiochus' discourse on the desolation of Palestine following Roman conquest; this is to emphasize that a (hi)story that is articulated by the Oriental male cannot be heard by the West. If voice establishes the self as "an inside capable of recognizing and being recognized by an outside" (Connor 6), then the refusal to hear a character is a refusal to recognize that individual's (hi)story: As Montaigne says, "La parole est moitié à celui qui parle, moitié à celui qui l'écoute" (III.13). Yet Antiochus speaks in Racine's theatre, setting the tone for the tragedy as he appears in the first four scenes of the tragedy (and in fourteen scenes throughout). Thus, if the story of an Oriental male is silenced, it is not, however, without marking the impotence of the

[13] Colonial desire consists not only of political implications, but also of sexual ones. Within the concealed ambivalence of colonial discourse, Robert C. Young locates the "sexual economy of desire in fantasies of race, and of race in fantasies of desire" (90).

Western ability to hear the other. In this way, deficiency shifts to the West, for the contents of what it does not hear – as well as the fact of its deafness – is nonetheless posited and staged before French audiences.

If, according to Barnett, the Racinian tragic is the "prescriptive resultant of a *non*-transparent, polyvalent operation of fusion and depolarization, geared to produce and sustain an *idiolect of measured distortion* and a *dialectic of disorientation*" (*Detour* 71), one perceives this above all in Racine's presentation of imperial hegemonies. Such hegemonies are consistently undermined by the voices of the displaced or enslaved characters that become all the more unique given the tragic context from which they nonetheless speak: Mithridate, "Sans parents, sans amis, désolée et craintive, / Reine longtemps de nom, mais en effet captive" (v. 135-36); Andromaque, "Maîtresse de l'Asie" (v. 199), says, "Étrangère… que dis-je? Esclave dans l'Epire" (v. 689); and Esther, who describes the position of the "filles de Sion" (v. 102) in relation to her own, "Jeunes et tendres fleurs par le sort agitées / Sous le ciel étranger comme moi transplantées" (v. 103-4). Yet the captive women mentioned here emerge triumphant, signaling that the marginalized furnish their voice along with their identity: Monime will be united with Xipharès; Andromaque will rule the city in which she was once captive, "Aux ordres d'Andromaque ici tout est soumis; / Ils la traitent en reine" (v. 1631-32); and Esther's persecution is reversed, "Le fier Assuérus couronne sa Captive, / Et le Persan superbe est aux pieds d'une Juive" (v. 27-8). Thus, within his exploration of silence Racine reaches for those that are dispossessed of land and power to attest to a voice that exceeds subordinated representation. Often, positions of hegemony are reversed: The tragic heroes that lay claim to a hierarchal scale of value fall prey to that system and

those that are subjected to an imperial system birth an identity that exceeds the bounds of (a now failed) hegemony. Thus, Racine's characters are "truly beings in progress" (Racevskis 17). Identity is attested to in the "painful nuances of becoming" (17) rather than being presented (or taken for granted) by any automatic or transparent instantiation of self-identity.

We will be concerned with the ways in which cultural alterity influences political and geographic exclusions of characters and the ways in which this 'exile' is reflected theatrically. For instance, Orcan the African nowhere appears or speaks onstage in Racine's *Bérénice*. We will focus on discursive and representational repression as a site of identity slippage as well as a possible site for alternate means of signification. Silence is of importance for it is often through vocalization that identity is sought or asserted[14]. Colonial discourse seeks to deny the cultural other access to speech in order to formalize its own superiority and to *s'entendre parler*. Yet in Racinian theatre, it is not simply the marginalized cultural other that is subjected to silence, but the culturally dominant experience the onslaught of silence as well. If, as Greenberg states, French absolutism "finds its most succinct emblem in the myth of Narcissus and Echo" ("Absolute Fantasies" 42), this is because the stately image of France was constructed through a regulated or theorized representation[15]; however, it was also circumscribed by its propagated borders just as Narcissus was. The exclusionary gesture of othering can be

[14] Connor elaborates on the identity effects of the voice in his study on ventriloquism, stating: "If, when I speak, I seem, to you, and to myself as well, to be more intimately and uninterruptedly *there* than at other times, if the voice provides me with acoustic persistence, this is not because I am extruding or depositing myself with my voice in the air [….] It is my voicing of my self, as the renewed and persisting action of producing myself as a vocal agent, as a producer of signs and sounds, that asserts this continuity and substance. [….] Listen, says a voice: some being is giving voice" (Connor 3-4).

[15] As Greenberg rightly asserts, seventeenth-century France "presents us with an almost classic scenario of the interrelation of political (e.g. social, sexual, esthetic) power and representation, most spectacularly in the person and persona of Louis XIV. [….] In his self-representation, Louis was the most 'theoretical' of monarchs: his persona was both a theory and a theater of kingship" ("Introduction" 313).

viewed as France's defensive strategy[16], for in the early modern thrust to establish and to preserve French identity, it attempted to root out the menace of alterity: "Absolutism must garb itself in a self-enclosed narcissism from which the desiring body (as Other) disappears" (42). What Narcissus does not consciously hear in Echo's discourse is the small amount of difference that she instills in order to make his words and his desire her own; if he rejects Echo it is because, at a certain level, he is discomforted by the otherness – that is, the decentralization – of his own speech within her repetition of it. Narcissus refuses to recognize the desire and hybridity of his own discourse when it is echoed back to him. Discursive hybridity is a dangerous event, for it marks the blurring of the lines of demarcation between self and other. We may regard the allegory of France as Narcissus in terms of the impulse of French Classicism to silence the discourse of the cultural other and to block cultural mixture and blurring. As indicated by Poli, the Classical definition of 'estranger'[17] in Furetière's *Dictionnaire universel* testifies to the desire for a French identity that is culturally homogeneous: "Aucun estranger n'est nommé de manière spécifique, son altérité ne sert que de révélateur pour le Français, lui permettant de se définir, malgré les pièces disparates dont il se compose, de façon unitaire" (26). Thus, the French self-image is solidified – in appearance – by an insistence upon the alterity of the foreigner. Indeed, a barrier to otherness can only be

[16] The absorption of the barbarian 'other' into its civilization was a dilemma confronted by all colonial empires, but "particularly troublesome for seventeenth century France" (Melzer "Assimilationist Politics" 153). Melzer explains: "In any colonial relationship, the colonizer is bound to absorb some elements from the colonized. It is not uncommon for some colonists to 'go native.' However, the possibility of a reverse influence in 17th century France was greater than for its European rivals since it chose assimilation as its colonizing strategy [as per the Amerindians in Canada]. This meant that the possibility of a reverse influence was built into its foundation, thus creating the conditions for a much deeper level of influence. Precisely for this reason, a discourse for denying the reverse influence was also built into France's colonial ideology" (153).

[17] "A quoi songe […] Furetière quand il doit parler d' 'estrangers' ? D'abord, au fait que 'les estrangers ne peuvent tenir offices, benefices, ni fermes en France'' ensuite, en bon robin, que 'les estrangers mourans en France donnent lieu au droit d'aubeine (*sic*) ; enfin, que les Français traitent fort humainement les estrangers'" (Poli 26).

illusory. Racine thus traces France's anxiety surrounding self-definition – and intensifies that anxiety through a question that becomes increasingly irresolvable: To speak or not to speak? Neither silence nor speech offers any refuge from the dangers of entanglement.

Who is speaking? This is indeed the question at the heart of Racinian tragedy. In *Bérénice*, distinctions between self and other are subject to breakdown when the Roman emperor dislocates his own voice by asking the Oriental king to speak for him. Ambivalence must be ruled out when posing this question in order for the unity of culture to be promoted (against another) – and yet ambivalence abounds in Racine's literary landscapes. Indeed, it is through the problematization of voice that Racine alludes to the fragile condition of French cultural homogeneity: If his characters "aspire to make themselves both the founders and the products of an affirming narrative discourse, or of a lineage purer and more admirable than the one to which they actually belong" (Riggs 41), then the characters of an Oriental or African background will magnify, albeit in a cloaked manner, the limits of Eurocentric ambitions, knowledge, and mastery. If Orcan the African does not appear onstage in *Bajazet* it is to blur the divisions not only between onstage/ offstage (what is and what is not represented), but also between self and other. Through multiple explorations of theatre-within-theatre, Racine exposes the theatrical stage as the narrowing of perspective with regard to the cultural other. Racine privileges silence (as well as the detours and mishaps of communication), thus stretching the canvas of representation beyond its own frame. Otherness opens up as notions regarding the transparency or the containment of the self falter. Whereas Absolutist representation fences off alterity, Racine subverts the "Absolutist *mise-en-scène*"[18], to use Greenberg's

[18] "If we consider seventeenth-century Absolutism as it was perfected in France during the reigns of Louis XIII and XIV as the first form of a modern totalitarian state which would have at its center, according to G.

phrase, by adopting the cultural other as the focal point of a drama that is played out in language.

The colonial thought that emerged in France during the Classical period contrasts greatly with the postcolonial perspective of identity that is laid out by Racine. This contrast signals a contradiction within French coloniality itself, for the centripetal force of nation and identity during colonial expansion was disturbed by the centrifugal act of claiming other territories and peoples as one's own:

> France's expansionism gave rise to a fundamental contradiction: how can the state grow into an empire, how can it incorporate the barbarian 'other' and yet maintain its identity and purity? Expansionism potentially threatens purity and unity, for if France is to grow, it must necessarily include different peoples and cultures, thus becoming a hybrid state. But how can France create a unity in the face of a political situation which undermines it by continually introducing cultural differences? (Melzer "Incest" 436).

Interestingly enough, these anxieties concerning mixing with the cultural other surface in relation to the purity of the French language. Penned as early as 1634, Nicholas Faret's *Projet pour l'Académie francaise* is concerned with the contamination of French language: "Il est plus nécessaire que jamais d'avoir soin de mettre et entretenir [notre langage] dans sa pureté de peur qu'il ne vienne à se dépraver par la communication des autres langues avec qui nos conquetes nous obligeront de meler" (Qtd. in Melzer "Incest" 436).

Balandier, 'la soumission de tous et de tout à l'Etat,' where 'la fonction unifiante du pouvoir est portée à son plus haut degré [et] le mythe de l'unité […] devient le scénario régissant la théâtralisation politique,' then we can begin to understand why the tragedy of *Bérénice*, as an allegorical representation of an Absolutist 'mise-en-scène,' necessarily fixes its characters in those tropes [of] melancholia and its other, narcissism. [….] It is the repression of difference that allies narcissism so seductively with political totalitarianism" (Greenberg "Racine's *Bérénice*" 81). It is our argument that if Racine depicts an Absolutist 'mise-en-scène,' it is in order to topple the hegemonies of power by allowing the voice of the marginalized to emerge over and against the narcissism of the culturally dominant.

If *translatio imperii*[19] informs the political background for the majority of Racine's tragedies, it is not presented through rousing, idealistic or ideological speeches, but through "profoundly self-analyzing, self-doubting *tirades* and *monologues*" (Gaines 4). Racine thus allows the absolute, pure, and unified subject to stutter and to unravel despite seventeenth-century trends of consolidating identity. Indeed, identity finds little recourse to the omnipotence of *logos* in Racine's theatre. As Greenberg asserts: "Language bears none but itself – and that, only provisionally; it does not, it cannot unveil, or even poeticize, but its own dissonant presence, the absolute, unmitigated otherness of self with which it is so inextricably invested" ("Inbound" 163). Discourses of self-doubt and moments of aphasia reveal the sovereign subject to be uncertain of his/her identity when confronted by cultural hybridity or alterity. If the relation between character and discourse is at times inverted such that language speaks the character[20], then silence also begins to speak the character when he or she is oppressed from without.

We will consider the self in terms of the Western or French (and thus white) heterosexual male, for the Classical notion of mimesis is a "male system of representation" (Shepherd and Wallis 214), geared as it is towards the "male and the traditional" (216). By contrast, the cultural other operates outside of the collective deciphering of the historico-political signs[21] that constitute representational identity in France (Lyotard 120). The other is thus the Oriental, the Eastern, or the Turk, the African

[19] "*Translatio imperii*, in the sense of a transfer of hegemony or new world order, is a literary topos with ancient roots in the Classical tradition. [….] It is not surprising that *translatio imperii* should reappear at the time of Louis XIV, when the Sun King was deliberately fashioning a new literary and political mythology around his own rule" (Gaines 4). Furthermore, as Woshinsky asserts: "Thus on a historical level, Louis XIV attempted to emulate and surpass the older colonial powers, by means including the extensive exportation of slaves from l'Ile de Gorée to sugar plantations in the French Antilles" (169).
[20] Phèdre is ensnared by "that language which speaks her" (Barnett "Inbound" 164).
[21] "The modern notion of culture is born in the public access to the signs of historico-political identity and their collective deciphering" (Lyotard 120).

– and it is also associated with the woman[22]. While attempting to control the image of the other – and to relegate it to a distant space – this does not mean that the French self ever stops asking the question "Qui suis-je?" – a question that resounds within Racine's universe. As Greenberg states:

> This question takes us to the heart of each character's tragic dilemma at the same time that it reflects the larger sociohistorical situation of the nascent absolutist subject. In this sense we must understand Racinian tragedy as in essence a tragedy of origins, a tragedy that reflects the impossible quest of a subject that is subjugated to both the imperatives of the absolute, imperatives s/he be one, integral, a unified subject, and the contrasting claims of the material body that tell him/her that s/he is not one by two, not two but many. It is in the impossible desire to resolve their dilemma that the Racinian heroes and their audience are drawn on a labyrinthine journey to the origin: an origin that always entices because it holds out the prospect of recouping an initial (lost) unity, but that also, in its elusiveness, proves to be chaotic, fragmenting, multiple. ("Absolute Fantasies"43)

The frequent encounters of self and other in Racine's tragedies lead us to believe that France's (unattainable) desire to substitute unity for multiplicity plays out at the (inter)cultural level. Indeed, Racine seems to insert his own commentary on this desire as the notion of homogeneity is repeatedly undermined in *Bérénice*, *Bajazet*, and *Phèdre*.

With *Bérénice* (1670), Racine effectuates muting effects within the representation of the Palestinian Queen and of Antiochus, the Oriental King, in order to illustrate the emergence of the voices of the marginalized as a disturbance of the Western self (Titus). Thus, in Chapter One, "Ventriloquizing One's Good-bye; Echoes of Conquest in Racine's *Bérénice*," we will examine the ways in which silence paradoxically and parasitically supersedes the power of the word and becomes the driving force of what little action there is, causing misinterpretations that then spurn irrepressible interpretations and uncontainable courses of action. Careful attention will be given to Racine's insistence upon the loss of speech rather than its omnipotence, for he exposes

[22] Women are seen as "caught up into a system of representation which is controlled by men, where the woman finds it difficult to escape from an image that is thrust upon her. Within the image she has no identity of her own and is simply assimilated to male representations" (Shepherd and Wallis 214).

the problematic of dominating and silencing the other by undermining the speech and the *logos* of the Western self[23]. Indeed, Racine stages the mediation between cultures in a surprising way, for Titus commands Antiochus to speak his own lines[24], yet the meaning of those lines is entirely derailed due to the fact that one *cannot* speak for another; thus the *lack* or the split in the speaking subject is revealed in the very moment that he speaks *for* another. We will thus perceive the ways in which Racine's representations of silence dispaly the deformations that underlie processes of Orientalism, for his portrayal of the Oriental characters, Bérénice and Antiochus, does not occur without causing one to rethink representation. Within the displaced speech and the imposed silence that these foreigners experience in Rome, the Western center and model of colonial empire, one perceives disorderly and fragmented bodies, aphasic episodes, tears, and sighs as subliminal sites of resistance to imperial hegemonies.

In Chapter Two, "The Hushed Harem in Racine's *Bajazet*," we will examine the Oriental setting of the harem in Constantinople in light of the limited access that the French audience has to the real referent of the Orient. In our analysis of the prefaces to *Bajazet* (1672), we will observe the curious fluidity of borders between self and other that is marked by the geography of the setting – a fluidity[25] which is highly suggestive in a

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[23] In *L'Envers du théâtre*, Rykner asserts that the originality of Racine's theatre is the fact that the spoken word does not triumph as it does in Cornelian theatre. Whereas Corneille frames, even crowns, the fullness of the verb because of its unquestioned capacity to call forth and produce action, Racine allows the ambiguities of both speech and silence to play out. In relation to this comparison between Corneille and Racine, it is quite poignant, and perhaps even deliberate on Racine's part, that he specifically confounds the speech of Titus, a character who, of all of Racine's characters, is described as the "closest to the Cornelian Hero" (Defaux 216).

[24] According to the Law of Romanness "which is a law of exclusion" (Greenberg "Racine's *Bérénice*" 84), Titus cannot marry a foreign Queen and must send the beloved Bérénice back to the Orient. This is the message that he asks Antiochus to deliver for him as he has fallen silent at each attempt to tell her this himself.

[25] As Sinclair rightly notes, "'The Orient' is recognized by Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, among others, as *a heterogeneous and fluid space*, and *as a discursively constructed object* that provides the focus for Western readings and re-readings" (47; my emphasis).

drama that was criticized for depicting "French courtiers got up as Turks" (Qtd. in Campbell 92). If Racine writes this tragedy based on the contemporary stories that are brought back to France from French Ambassadors to the Levant, it is not without highlighting the problems of representing the Oriental other within a series of *mises en abyme* that commence within the opening lines of the play. Indeed, the opening of the stage curtain mirrors the opening of the sociopolitical space of the harem, as Osmin says to Acomat: "Et depuis quand, Seigneur, entre-t-on dans ces lieux, / Dont l'accès était même interdit à nos yeux ?" (v. 3-4). Furthermore, the staging of the cultural imaginary of the harem is replete with references to the muted slaves within its walls. Questions of political and social power are reflected through layered impositions of silence which necessitate the theatricalization of Bajazet's discourse as well as the fragmentation of his body. As a theatrical zone of muting effects and diffractions of otherness, the Orientalized stage becomes a site of failed communication. The plot to deceive Roxana long enough for Bajazet to usurp power fails, ultimately marking within theatre the very failure of theatre. What this theatrical breakdown reveals is the diminishing effects of difference that are inevitably wrapped up in the problem of ever faithfully representing the cultural other. Indeed, the representation of cultural alterity in *Bajazet* is rooted in a look that is exterior to the Orient and is thus repeatedly underscored by silence.

In Chapter Three, "Offstage Monsters in Racine's *Bajazet*," we will consider the offstage position of the African character as a means of depicting the bounds of cultural *bienséance* in order to contest them. Orcan – a character who is "né sous le ciel brûlant des plus noirs Africains" (v. 1104) – appears nowhere onstage, though he is a significant player in the events of the tragedy. Furthermore, this character's absence

leads to an exaggeration of what is different about him, for he is said to have a "visage odieux" (v. 1124) and to be a "monstre" (v. 1696)[26]. In what ways does Orcan's monstrosity disturb representation[27] and reveal otherness to be unrepresentable? If Orcan is described through theatrical narrative, he is silenced within discourse even as his own speech is repeated. In this way, cultural alterity seems to be continually diffracted: Oriental characters appear onstage, yet the African other remains offstage. Is he in fact more 'other' than the Oriental characters since he represents a relatively unexplored continent at this time? The blackness of his skin is accentuated[28] in Racine's vocabulary, yet this characteristic is not framed by an essentialist discourse. Rather, Orcan's dark skin is said to result from the burning effects of the African sun. In this way, Racine blurs the divisions that were historically in place with regard to racial categories by attributing blackness to the accidental or environmental. This blurring is doubled by the inversion of the importance of stage positions – for the *hors scène* that represents the culturally unknown haunts the affirmation (of French culture) to which Classical French theatre aspires.

In Chapter Four, "The Silence of the Labyrinth in Racine's *Phèdre*," we will focus on Hippolyte's desire for a unified construction of the self. In order to construct his image, he will attempt to censor a term within the pairs of opposition that construct the

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[26] According to Morel, the monster is: "Prodige, chose incroyable, digne d'être montrée (*mostrare*), tel qu'on en trouvait dans les *mirabilia*, le monstre représente un paradoxe vivant, une contradiction dans les termes, l'équivalent biologique de ce que la rhétorique nomme *adunaton* ou *impossibilium* (coexistence d'éléments exclusifs l'un de l'autre)" (3).

[27] Indeed, Dill speaks of monstrosity as a figure for the anxiety surrounding French opera during the first half of the eighteenth century, stating: "Individual thinkers struggled with less-than-pure, monstrous forms of knowledge, whether as social constructs, contingent devices, agencies for power, or threats of failure" (Dill 434). One might consider the figure of the monster to already be threatening social and cultural constructs in seventeenth-century French theatre.

[28] African skin is not whitened in Racine's account of the African as was the case in the literary or fictional depictions of Africans that precede *Bajazet*.

monstrous. Like Phèdre, he is a cultural hybrid and is coded throughout the tragedy in terms of his foreign mother, the Eastern Amazon. His approach to hybridity differs from that of Phèdre[29], who is aware of the contradictory terms of her ancestry. However, Hippolyte does not accept what is composite – as indicated by his attraction to Aricie, an heir to the throne of Athens by the purity and legitimacy of her bloodline. We will examine the ways in which the hybridity with which his body is marked motivates his silences. He refuses to embody the inconvenience of his foreignness; thus it is that *Phèdre* (1677) culminates with the eschewing of Hippolyte from the stage. The silent and the other are pushed to the edge of representation, revealing once again that what resists representation is what most powerfully affects it. Rather than effacing or subsuming the fact of difference, Racine allows alterity to be posited on the French Classical stage through a delicate balance of representational silences and speech. In this way, Racine lends a unique power of opacity to the marginalized through the very fact of their non-representability. Here, I am not thinking of opacity in terms of ignorance of the other or in terms of racism, but of a respectful opacity, as outlined by Edouard Glissant: "Non pas seulement consentir au droit de la différence mais, plus avant, au droit de l'opacité, qui n'est pas l'enferment dans une autarcie impénétrable, mais la subsistance dans une singularité non réductible" (204). Indeed, the analysis of silence of the Racinian (off)stage brings new reflections to postcolonial discourse and to contemporary discussions on cultural otherness and hybridity. Racine allows us to look at alterity through the imperial lens that constructs it – and yet upon closer look, we are able to hear the voices of the cultural other emerge there in the silence of cross-cultural perceptions.

[29] According to Ubersfeld, Phèdre is "a double being, familiar and strange, part Cretan, part Greek, the offspring of Minor and Pasiphae, just as Hippolyte, the son of the Amazon and the Athenian hero, is a double being" ("The Space of *Phèdre*" 203).

CHAPTER 1

VENTRILOQUIZING ONE'S GOOD-BYE; ECHOES OF CONQUEST IN RACINE'S *BÉRÉNICE*

Although silence can be thought of as a gap in discourse or as a lack of language, one must not assume that it lacks signification. If, according to Furetière's dictionary of 1690, silence means that "*on retient des paroles*," this retaining also means that one *contains* words, or signifiers. Gaps in discourse are not vacuous; rather, they inspire multiple echoes of interpretation. Meaning unfolds with different angles and perspectives as the silence brushes up against the different gestures and words that leave room for it. Oftentimes, to interpret silence is to examine all clues surrounding it, as if silence was a crime that one anxiously wants to solve, as if the stage and the text were the scene of a crime that one must comb for a lead.

Racine's *Bérénice* (1670) is tragic not because of a character's death, but because Bérénice, the Queen of Palestine, brought to Rome by Titus, the next emperor of Rome and her lover, can now only contemplate his silence from afar after five years of blissful love. The effect of Titus' long and unexplained muteness is apparent from the first Act as Bérénice ponders its somber quality:

> Il n'avait plus pour moi cette ardeur assidue
> Lorsqu'il passait les jours attaché sur ma vue.
> Muet, chargé de soins, et les larmes aux yeux,
> Il ne me laissait plus que de tristes adieux. (v. 155-58)

It is perhaps due to the ambiguity and troubling nature of his silence that, as noted by Jacques Lassalle, 600 out of the 1506 verses that compose this tragedy are in the interrogative form. As Maskell states: "Even a simple question intensifies the interaction between characters and focuses the attention of the audience on what is being said" (153). However, one discovers that Bérénice's questions emphasize precisely that which is *not* being said. Bérénice probes the ambiguities that surround her as far as she can – "Qu'ai-je fait? Que veut-il? Et que dit ce silence?" (v. 627) – pondering the plausible causes of Titus' offensive silence. Silence attracts one's analysis when one realizes, as Bérénice does, that silence is not without motivation.

Indeed, one learns that the voice of Rome, as represented by Titus' confidant and as feared by Titus himself, is bidding for the expulsion of his beloved Queen of Palestine. Confronted with this implicit order, Titus is conflicted:

> Enfin j'ai ce matin rappelé ma constance:
> Il faut la voir, Paulin, et *rompre le silence*.
> J'attends Antiochus pour lui recommander
> Ce dépôt précieux que je ne puis garder :
> Jusques dans l'Orient je veux qu'il la ramène.
> Demain Rome avec lui verra partir la reine.
> Elle en sera bientôt instruite par ma voix,
> Et *je vais lui parler pour la dernière fois*. (v. 483-88; my emphasis)

Titus speaks as if his decision is fixed, yet the return of his former lover to the Orient is not so easy to proclaim and it is the difficulty of 'breaking the silence' that forms the very basis of this tragedy; indeed, 'la dernière fois' that Titus will speak to Bérénice is deferred until the *dernière scène*. Whereas silence is open, vast in its possibilities of signification, speech is reserved in this tragedy until the final Act where Titus will cut the East from the West. However, the protracted mitigation of the lover's silence in *Bérénice* becomes an exploration of a complex interdependency between East and West.

In the Shadows of Rome

The spectator does not see Titus until Act II. This delay signals a fissure in Roman supremacy for Titus, the locus of the Empire's power, hesitates to come forth. He will not allow himself to speak for he cannot manifest himself in all his glory, confused as he is: "Être *confondu,* c'est cesser de parler, c'est être découvert" (Barthes 66). One senses a lingering sense of shame in his ability to speak; he prefers to spare himself the trouble of explaining a decision that will no doubt seem untimely – and thus cruel – to Bérénice. Once he is Emperor and able to marry her, once all obstacles to their love are gone, the next step would seem clear, at least to her: "Titus m'aime; il peut tout: il n'a plus qu'à parler" (v. 298). If all he has to do is speak, then why does he not do so? It is not enough that Bérénice's confidant reminds her that "L'hymen chez les Romains n'admet qu'une Romaine; / Rome hait tous les rois, et Bérénice est reine" (v. 295-96), nor that, as Antiochus is forced to explain to her in Titus' stead, "Mais enfin que lui sert de vous aimer encore? / Une reine est suspecte à l'empire romain" (v. 900-01). Through the mouth of her servant and of Antiochus, Bérénice is reminded that Roman law forbids the Emperor to marry either a non-Roman or a Queen (as we shall see further on in our analysis); and she is both.

Interestingly, Defaux calls attention to the fact that Titus' love for Bérénice is grounded in its forbiddance – as Titus himself divulges, "Les obstacles semblaient renouveler ma flamme" (v. 1095). Yet as responsible Emperor, this forbidden attraction cannot last:

> For five years, as the Queen points out to him, he has known that his love was impossible, forbidden, guilty, and condemned. To love Bérénice, during the reign of Vespasian, was openly to rock the boat, to rebel against the authority of the Father,

> against his Law. (233)

Furthermore, Defaux links the forbidden quality of Titus' desire to the "unspeakable" part of Titus. He explains that what Titus hides within himself is what the text barely whispers to the reader, that is, "The fear of Bérénice, the completely carnal fear of possession doubled by the entirely irrational and visceral fear of the forbidden [l'interdit]. It is the fact that, since the death of his father Vespasian, Titus can suddenly do anything, that he has only to speak" (232). And while Defaux's analysis sheds light on the link between Titus' ambivalence towards Bérénice and his silence, it is in our interest to take account of what Defaux does not: What makes her forbidden?

From the outset, the problematic of the lover's silence in *Bérénice* is framed by Titus' newfound status as Roman Emperor and Bérénice's unchangeable status as Queen of Palestine. Brahimi elucidates this problematic, stating:

> Le titre d'impératrice au sens romain est incompatible avec celui de reine au sens oriental – une reine qui n'a pas besoin pour l'être d'être la femme d'un roi. Il apparaît qu'en Orient, les femmes peuvent exercer la réalité du pouvoir, alors qu'à Rome elles ne le peuvent pas. [….] Aussi [le pouvoir romain] se défend férocement contre la contamination qui pourrait constituer, du fait des conquêtes romaines, le contact avec le monde oriental où existent des rémanences du pouvoir féminin. L'empire au sens romain ne doit souffrir d'aucune confusion avec d'autres sortes de pouvoir. Tout est fait dans le jeu des balancements, des associations et des oppositions, pour que les mots Rome et Reine s'excluent mutuellement, tandis que les mots Rome et Empire s'accolent l'un à l'autre jusqu'à la synonymie. (110)

The only order that is recognized in Rome is an imperial one. Imperial ideology is undermined by Bérénice, for she "exemplifies all that is strange to Roman values, and all that is xenophobic in them. The ability of Titus to marry her stems from both her rank and her nationality" (Parish 91). At the center of the Roman Empire, Bérénice's presence is obtrusive, signaling a threat to Titus' political stability. Indeed, his relationship causes him to waver in his capacity to hear Rome speak.

Thus, Bérénice's marginalization is emphasized politically and emotionally due to the backdrop of Rome[30] within the tragedy. Tobin elaborates on the role of the setting, stating: "Les lieux jouent un rôle significatif: ils s'inscrivent parmi les personnages invisibles importants – parmi les 'absences présentes' – dont Racine enrichit l'univers de ses pièces" ("La Poétique" 246). In fact, with its present absence, Rome is a discursively constructed object as much as the Orient is. As we shall see, the consequences of this type of construction are considerable as Rome loses absoluteness. Is the voice of Rome not put into question through Titus' dramatic shifts in his resolution to send Bérénice away? Indeed, Titus traces the question of voice from his own (in)ability to say good-bye to the question of Rome's silence:

> Pourrai-je dire enfin : 'Je ne veux plus vous voir' ?
> Je viens percer un cœur que j'adore, qui m'aime.
> Et pourquoi le percer ? Qui l'ordonne ? Moi-même.
> Car enfin *Rome a-t-elle expliqué ses souhaits* ?
> *L'entendons-nous crier* autour de ce palais ?
> Vois-je l'état penchant au bord du précipice ?
> Ne le puis-je sauver que par ce sacrifice ?
> *Tout se tait* ; et moi seul, trop prompt à me troubler,
> J'avance des malheurs que je puis reculer. (v. 998-1006; my emphasis)

Considering the possibility of Rome's silence, Titus molds the imperial city into a sympathetic ear that would soften its laws upon further consideration of Bérénice's virtues. At the next moment, however, he switches registers. No longer emotional, he summons his logical side. This shift allows him not only to hear the voice of Rome, but to understand it ('entendre') as it suddenly grows loud and persistent.

> Et qui sait si, sensible aux vertus de la reine,
> Rome ne voudra point l'avouer pour Romaine ?
> Rome peut par son choix justifier le mien.
> Non, non, encore un coup, ne précipitons rien.
> Que Rome avec ses lois mette dans la balance

[30] "It was, above all, Rome which provided the ideologues of the colonial system of Spain, Britain, and France with the language and political models they required, for the *Imperium romanum* has always had a unique place in the political imagination of Western Europe" (Pagden 11).

> Tant de pleurs, tant d'amour, tant de persévérance :
> Rome sera pour nous... Titus, ouvre les yeux !
> Quel air respires-tu ? N'es-tu pas dans ces lieux
> Où la haine des rois, avec le lait sucée,
> Par crainte ou par amour ne peut être effacée ?
> Rome jugea ta reine en condamnant ses rois.
> *N'as-tu pas en naissant entendu cette voix* ?
> *Et n'as-tu pas encore ouï la renommée*
> *T'annoncer ton devoir jusque dans ton armée* ?
> Et lorsque Bérénice arriva sur tes pas,
> Ce que Rome en jugeoit, *ne l'entendis-tu pas* ?
> Faut-il donc tant de fois te le faire redire ? (v. 1007-23; my emphasis)

The question is: Was Rome speaking all along? In the end, this seems to be Titus' conclusion, thus revealing that the ability to hear and to understand depends upon one's relation to the speaker. His imperial duty causes him to recognize the voice of Rome, revealing that hearing depends upon the perspective or position from which the individual is listening.

For Bérénice, the voice of Rome is not one that greeted her at birth – nor is it a voice that speaks to her of renown or of military might. It is one of cruelty. Politically, Bérénice represents a land that was conquered by Titus and by his father Vespasian; the return to the Orient is imposed upon her by Rome, creating an insuperable obstacle to her happiness. She thus exclaims to Titus in the final Act:

> Ingrat, que je demeure,
> Et pourquoi? Pour entendre un peuple injurieux
> Qui fait de mon malheur retentir tous ces lieux?
> Ne l'entendez-vous pas cette cruelle joie,
> Tandis que dans les pleurs moi seule je me noie ? (v. 1324-28)

If her power is relegated to the erotic, it is also circumvented there. Roman law and Roman fear of political contamination are so unbending with regard to the person of Bérénice that Titus will refer to Rome as a senseless crowd. He responds to Bérénice's complaints of Rome's perverse pleasure in her departure, asking her: "Ecoutez-vous, Madame, une foule insensée?" (v. 1331). The voice of Rome is heard through a plurality of prisms, for it appears to be silent at one moment and to cry out at the next; it is jealous

or dutiful, cruel or ludicrous, depending on the context in which it is heard. It is thus a site of slippage.

Due to the obstacle of the law, Bérénice cannot progress from an Oriental Queen to an Empress and thus her power is fixed solely in the erotic. Barthes comments, "C'est donc essentiellement à Bérénice et à elle seule qu'appartient ici le pouvoir érotique. Toutefois ce pouvoir, contrairement au dessin habituel de la tragédie racinienne, n'est pas doublé d'un pouvoir politique : les deux pouvoirs sont disjoints" (94-95). However, Bérénice's erotic power acts ambivalently for it proves to not be as powerful as it is impotent. If her only power is situated in the erotic, then Bérénice's failure to seduce Titus (that is, to lead him away from his prescribed path of Roman imperial duty) reveals in fact a lack of power of any kind. In the final Act, Bérénice offers herself to Titus as a simple concubine if she cannot marry him: "Ah Seigneur! S'il est vrai, pourquoi nous séparer? / Je ne vous parle point d'un heureux hymenée. / Rome à ne vous plus voir m'a-t-elle condamnée ? / Pourquoi m'enviez-vous l'air que vous respirez ?" (v. 1126-29). From a perspective that would follow the lines of (Paulin's) reductive thinking, the erotic could be said to mark a servitude to pleasure as a slavish aspect of her personality:

> The slave is unexpectedly defined as a consumer rather than a producer because, in the final analysis, a slave is always a slave of pleasure. He [or she] is a slave only for his [or her] pleasure, and through his pleasure. If he [or she] suffers, it is only because of the deeply pathological nature of pleasure, which demands that, in order to enjoy pleasure, one must consent and abandon oneself to it, suffer oneself to enjoy it. (Hollier and Rodarmor 6)

Yet this moment seems to mark her despair at losing the man she loves rather than an attachment to or an insistence upon her own prowess. Her recourse to the erotic seems to be a last resort, an exception rather than the rule. Without a complementary (political) power, the erotic power of Bérénice is figured as a lack since it does not ensure her

happiness with Titus. Her erotic power is both dismissible and dismissed (although it will be overemphasized and disdained by Paulin).

Devoid of political power in Rome, the Oriental Queen cannot solidify her status next to Titus. If the supremacy of the Roman Empire depends upon well-guarded distinctions between the conquered Orient and the Roman conqueror, then Titus will separate himself from Bérénice. What's more, this cut is subtly inscribed as an impotence of the erotic mastery of the Oriental woman and the erotic drive of the Roman man, for Titus' separation from Bérénice can be considered to be an undermining of masculine desire as well of Oriental and feminine seduction. The geopolitical chiasmus that separates Titus and Bérénice is one that, should it collapse, would cause the Imperial project to fold. What folds in its place is the erotic. The erotic becomes a waste product of their relation, for it not gained by Titus even if it is lost by Bérénice. Indeed, any potential fruit or offspring of their erotic relations is declared to be illegitimate from the very start, as we shall see in Paulin's discourse.

The rupture between the two lovers seems to suggest Bérénice's lack of phallic (or political) *and* erotic power. However, this lack can be considered to be a redemptive quality of Bérénice for it distinguishes her from the staunch debasement that Cléopâtre's reputation suffers for having entertained Julius Caesar and for having successfully detained Marc Antoine in the Orient. Nonethless, the differences between Bérénice and Cléopâtre [31], perceptible to the spectator, do not prevent Paulin from conflating Bérénice with the erotic[32] image of Cléopâtre in the advice he gives to Titus. In a rather Orientalist

[31] One difference between Cléopâtre and Bérénice is that Cléopâtre restrained Roman Emperors from their geographical site of power, whereas Bérénice follows Titus to Rome.

[32] Cléopâtre is inscribed in the erotic. Paulin insists upon this fact by asserting that Jules burned for her and that Antoine was found at her knees.

discourse, Paulin introduces a slippage from Bérénice to Cléopâtre. The unfair transposition of the one Oriental woman onto the other is followed by Paulin's contrast between past Roman Emperors – a contrast which hinges on the question: To embrace or to eschew the Oriental female?

> Elle a mille vertus. Mais, seigneur, elle est reine.
> Rome, par une loi qui ne se peut changer,
> N'admet avec son sang aucun sang étranger,
> Et ne reconnaît point les fruits illégitimes
> Qui naissent d'un hymen contraire à ses maximes. [….]
> Jules, qui le premier la soumit à ses armes,
> Qui fit taire les lois dans le bruit des alarmes,
> Brûla pour Cléopâtre, et, sans se déclarer,
> Seule dans l'Orient la laissa soupirer.
> Antoine, qui l'aima jusqu'à l'idolâtrie,
> Oublia dans son sein sa gloire et sa patrie,
> Sans oser toutefois se nommer son époux.
> Rome l'alla chercher jusques à ses genoux,
> Et ne désarma point sa fureur vengeresse,
> Qu'elle n'eût accablé l'amant et la maîtresse.
> Depuis ce temps, seigneur, Caligula, Néron,
> Monstres dont à regret je cite ici le nom,
> Et qui ne conservant que la figure d'homme,
> Foulèrent à leurs pieds toutes les lois de Rome,
> Ont craint cette loi seule, et n'ont point à nos yeux
> Allumé le flambeau d'un hymen odieux. (v. 376-80 ; v. 387-402)

Paulin presents a predisposed lesson and choice for Titus: To imitate the Roman Emperors who loved the Oriental other (Jules and Antoine) or to emulate the two monstrous tyrants (Caligula and Néron) who knew to stay away? Paulin begins by nearly passing over Bérénice's virtues, which, from his perspective, are irrelevant in the face of Roman history. In his discourse, the 'sein' of the Oriental woman becomes a scene of idolatry and forgetting – 'Antoine qui l'aima jusqu'à l'idolatrie, / Oublia dans son sein sa gloire et sa patrie'. Rome becomes an abandoned altar as Antoine sits at the knees of Cléopâtre. The Oriental woman opposes 'gloire' and 'patrie' as she is erotized through references to the body – 'son sein' and 'ses genoux' – which allude to Antoine's enraptured state of submission to her physical being. Rome, the seat of the Empire, is

personified and feminized as an 'elle' – a jealous woman who nurses and exacts 'sa fureur vengeresse' upon the lover who betrayed her (as well as upon his mistress Cléopâtre)[33]. According to Paulin, Rome is justified in her instinctual need to remember this betrayal and to consider any alignment of a Roman Emperor with a foreign woman as a 'hymen odieux'. The Oriental woman is a painful evocation of a former wound.

In addition to Paulin's conflation of Bérénice and Cléopâtre, Paulin attempts to deter Titus from marrying the Oriental Queen by bracketing his advisory discourse with inscriptions of monstrosity. As we shall discover in Chapters 3 and 4, monstrosity connotes hybridity in the seventeenth century[34]. For Aristotle, monstrosity is related to excess and deficiency[35], but it also intimates a mixing of unlike things – for instance, of the human and the non-human. For Paulin, this monstrous composite would in fact be the unification of Titus and Bérénice. A child born of a Roman and a foreign woman is 'illégitime' because of the strong opposition between Roman and foreign blood that would be combined in their child. This radicalized opposition means that an offspring of Titus and Bérénice would be an interethnic monster: As Ahmed states, "The legitimacy of authority relates directly to the genetic parents who must be of Roman blood. All foreign traces are a source of illegitimation" (288). Paulin's allusions to the monstrous mixing of Roman Emperor and Oriental woman is further illustrated when he closes his discourse by referring to Caligula and Néron, 'monstres dont à regret je cite le nom'. If

[33] In Racine's *Mithridate* (1673), Rome is personnified as the seducer of Pharnace, the son of the great Roman enemy, Mithridate. Rome sways Pharnace from his allegience to his father's legacy through bribery : Speaking of Pharnace, Xipharès says, "Je verrai sans regret tomber entre ses mains / Tout ce que lui promet l'amitié des Romains" (v. 21-22) ; "Pharnace dès longtemps tout Romain dans le cœur / Attend tout maintenant de Rome, et du vainqueur" (v. 25-26).

[34] Borrowing from Aristotelian notions, Furetière gave examples of the *monstre* as a hybrid creature. For example, "Un enfant qui a deux têtes, quatre pieds" and "un animal qui a plus ou moins de parties qu'à l'ordinaire". Aristotle will have also cited monsters as "the child [who] has the head of a ram or a bull" and "a calf [who] has the head of a child or a sheep that of an ox" (IV.3).

[35] As Aristotle states, "Both deficiency and excess are monstrous" (IV.4).

they are monsters due to their violence, if they are human only in their physical appearance, if they bypass Roman laws, they at least respected the importance of the Roman law by which the Emperor is forbidden to marry a non-Roman. Thus, if Paulin regretfully speaks the names of these monsters, it is to insinuate that the mixing of Roman and non-Roman blood is more monstrous than the tyrants who, regardless of their cruelty or other faults, are imitable in that they valued Roman homogeneity. Indeed, it seems that the ambitions of cultural purity that surround the regulation of cultural homogeneity slip into degradations of the self.

While dramatizing the threat that Oriental political power poses to its conqueror, this tragedy reveals the effects of contaminated representations that is traceable in Paulin's Orientalist depiction of Bérénice. Paulin, the confidant of Titus, situates Bérénice in a lineage of Oriental Queens who allowed their political power to be contaminated through their royal bed. Her status as Oriental Queen threatens to contaminate Roman power by mere association – or sexual reproduction – and thus the impulse to quarantine her. Casting Bérénice in a dismissive and unfavorable light, Paulin alludes to her incompatibility with Titus in an unfashionably derogatory way as he remarks the bed practices of past Oriental Queens:

> Et vous croiriez pouvoir, sans blesser nos regards,
> Faire entrer une reine au lit de nos césars,
> Tandis que l'Orient dans le lit de ses reines
> Voit passer un esclave au sortir de nos chaînes ?
> C'est ce que les Romains pensent de votre amour (v. 409-13)

In this comment, a fear of the contamination of imperial political power is translated by a widespread ('c'est ce que les Romains pensent') fear of a debased Oriental feminine power. It is as if Bérénice carries an infectious impurity, not only because of the possible tinge of Roman slavery in her blood, but also because, as Paulin says, Oriental Queens do

not safeguard their royal integrity and invite barely freed slaves into their bed. Roman self-image would be wounded ('blesser nos regards') in seeing their Emperor espouse such an unruly heritage. Agency is not attributed to the two Queens who married Félix, but to the Orient itself, which seems to oversee and permit this practice ('l'Orient… voit'). This displacement of agency is striking because Bérénice is further divested of subjectivity and individuality as Paulin inscribes her in a dismissive and inaccurate representation of the Orient. By metonymy, Bérénice appears as an unstable icon in Rome's eyes – the Orient itself being unstable insofar as it mixes class strata (royalty and slavery) that, according to Roman practice, should be fixed in opposition to one another. Paulin directs his discourse in such a way as to equate the Orient with the Roman slave. The pejorative association that Paulin attributes to Bérénice is a representation that would deform even Titus' status, for it seems that the Emperor would also take on the image of Roman slave were he to invite Bérénice to share his imperial bed. The robbing of Bérénice's individuality and the discounting of her virtues are a perfect illustration of the way in which the claims to power already program representation to subsume and to undermine the essence of the other.

Brahimi astutely remarks the pejorative twist that Paulin unduly attributes to the cultural alterity of Bérénice:

> On dira que dans la bouche de ces Occidentaux que sont Titus et Paulin, le mot Orient implique une idée d'éloignement et d'altérité, qui de la part du second peut aller jusqu'à des connotations péjoratives. Lorsqu'il dit par exemple que Jules, alias Jules César, après avoir brûlé pour Cléopâtre, *Seule dans l'Orient la laissa soupirer* (v. 390), il est clair qu'il éprouve une sorte de jubilation à l'idée qu'elle fut ainsi reléguée dans les bas-fonds du monde connu. La connotation est encore plus défavorable lorsque, faisant allusion au mariage de l'affranchi Félix avec deux reines orientales, il parle d'un Orient qui *dans le lit de ses reines / voit passer un esclave au sortir de nos chaînes* (v. 411-12). (108)

Rome demands the departure of Bérénice not because of who she is or what she has done – as Bérénice asks Titus "Quel crime, quelle offense a pu les animer? / Hélas! et qu'ai-je

fait que de vous trop aimer?" (v. 1317-18) – but because of a Roman law which ultimately opposes the Emperor from those he has conquered. When reinforced by Paulin's voicing of Roman opinion, this law is translated as a Western fear of the Oriental woman's potential to blur lines of power, status, and race. For Titus, this fear becomes a paranoia regarding what others will say:

> Rome avec ces lois qui défendent jalousement la pureté de son sang, est une instance toute désignée pour autoriser l'abandon de Bérénice. Pourtant Titus ne parvient même pas à donner à cette instance une apparence héroïque ; il délibère sur une peur, non sur un devoir : Rome n'est pour lui qu'une opinion publique qui le terrifie ; sans cesse il évoque en tremblant le *qu'en dira-t-on ?* anonyme. La cour même est une personnalité trop précise pour le menacer vraiment ; il tire sa peur – et par conséquent sa justification – d'une sorte de *on* aussi général que possible. (Barthes 98)

In a tragedy where "Rome, par une loi qui ne se peut changer, / N'admet avec son sang aucun sang étranger" (v. 377-78), the fear of the contamination of what is Roman and what is Oriental, of what is the same and what is other becomes the crux of Titus' issue and fearful deliberations in letting go of Bérénice. This fear is surreptitiously played out at the discursive level in another instance where a particular ambiguity in the text, as pointed out by Brahimi, reveals furtive interdependence rather than a simple opposition between Rome and the Orient. "Lorsque Titus, au vers 471, évoque le *cruel sacrifice* qu'il est résolu d'accomplir, on a bien l'impression qu'il pense surtout à Bérénice comme victime, mais enfin cela pourrait être lui-même aussi bien" (Brahimi 111). Although one is certain that Bérénice is the victim, Titus' speech allows for an ambiguity[36]. Furthermore, it is uncertain as to who requires this unnamed sacrifice: Titus or Rome?

[36] As Sinclair states, "Yet if Western identity is partially constructed through a negotiation of difference, the necessary re-negotiations produced by the recognition of ambiguities in the definition of the foreign Other can only produce instability and slippage" (51).

Silence and the Body of a Protest

The handing down of the Empire from Vespasian to Titus evokes a certain notion of continuity regarding the Western subject. Thus, with the death of his father, Titus will propagate a myth of the perpetual and absolute subject by confiding in Paulin a love that is now reduced to a pleasant error:

> J'aimais, je soupirais dans une paix profonde :
> Un autre était chargé de l'empire du monde ;
> Maître de mon destin, libre dans mes soupirs,
> Je ne rendais qu'à moi compte de mes désirs.
> Mais à peine le ciel eut rappelé mon père,
> Dès que ma triste main eut fermé sa paupière,
> De mon aimable erreur je fus désabusé (v. 455-61)

Titus speaks of his love for Bérénice in the past imperfect tense while also suppressing her name as the object of his desire. In the place where the name of Bérénice could be evoked – as in 'j'aimais Bérénice' – he refers again to his own agency: 'J'aimais, je soupirais'. It is as if his love had no object other than the pleasure he took from it. He also takes recourse to a series of possessive adjectives in which one can trace the evolution of his (as yet unannounced) separation from Bérénice: For instance when he speaks of 'mes soupirs' and 'mes désirs', she is present – however only in terms of (and in the shadow of) his desire. Then, when the duties of his deceased father – 'mon père' – fall upon him, his love is relegated to 'mon aimable erreur'. The 'aimable' in reference to his 'erreur' refers to the enjoyment that he took in loving a forbidden woman. This discourse of love attempts to unhinge the present from the past and to relegate Bérénice to anonymous obscurity. Thus, the successful continuity of the Roman Empire depends upon a set of discursive strategies in which Titus (dutifully) silences his love for the Oriental Queen and asks her to silence her love for him in return:

> Rappelez bien plutôt ce cœur, qui tant de fois
> M'a fait de mon devoir reconnaître la voix.
> Il en est temps. Forcer votre amour à se taire
> Et d'un œil que la gloire et la raison éclaire,
> Contemplez mon devoir dans toute sa rigueur. (v. 1049-53)

If her name is usurped in his discourse of love, it is because their separation must first be effectuated in the linguistic realm. Maskell raises the question of the entwined initials of the lovers' names that decorate the setting: "The private room is decorated with *chiffres*, that is, ciphers or entwined initials. The Louvre had the entwined initials H and D carved in stone to signify the love of King Henri II of France for his mistress, Diane de Poitiers. Racine's Titus evidently followed this custom" (26). Bérénice refers to these initials when she reproaches Titus, stating:

> Je ne vois rien ici dont je ne sois blessée.
> Tout cet appartement préparé par vos soins,
> Ces lieux, de mon amour si longtemps les témoins,
> Qui semblaient pour jamais me répondre du vôtre,
> Ces chiffres, où nos noms enlacés l'un dans l'autre,
> A mes tristes regards viennent partout s'offrir,
> Sont autant d'imposteurs que je ne puis souffrir. (v. 1320-26)

Because the symbols of the décor testify to Bérénice's union with Titus and to her former welcome within the palace, it is striking (both for Bérénice and for the spectator) that Titus hollows these symbols either through a perturbing silence or a speech which progressively wanders from the unity that they represent. Titus will try to undo the intertwining of these initials: As Maskell states: "Throughout *Bérénice* these ciphers are the visual representation of the liaison between Titus and Bérénice, which all Titus' speeches aim to break" (26-27). If their names were once symbolically impressed one upon the other, the inscription of their coupling will progressively unravel due to a silence which will relegates spoken promises to a distant past. In the silence that Titus imposes on Bérénice, he denies her both the ability to address him as well as access to the space in which he lives. His silence effectuates a kind of violence against her

subjectivity; this violence emerges in the symbolic rupture that causes the initials to become a set of hollow signifiers, that is, a pair of painful 'imposteurs' of a once signifying union. The silence of this tragedy is the effacing of an engraved love and the retracting of promises once spoken. The split of their names is thus extended beyond the decoration to the geopolitical world: "The rupture between Titus and Bérénice is prolonged in geographical space and in time, by the opposition between Rome and the Orient. Rome is the present; the Orient is the future and separation" (27).

In a fascinating way, the symbolic unraveling of their initials comes to be represented on Bérénice's body. Rather than fixing her disheveled appearance, she prefers to leave her veils and her hair undone. The refusal to 'fix' her image is a means of making herself heard; in this way, Titus may at least see the effects of his actions. In giving her body to be read through its display of chaos, Bérénice uses her body as an instrument through which she may amplify her muted voice.

> At the start of Act IV Bérénice makes an entrance characterized by the disorder of the rich costume. Phénice alludes to these visible signs of distress: 'Let me arrange these veils which are detached, and these stray hairs which hide your eyes' (*Bér.* IV. ii. 969). Bérénice is not sorry to let her distraught appearance plead with Titus in her favour, yet the splendour of her royal finery is no compensation for her emotional anguish: 'Let him see what he has wrought, Phénice. What use, alas, are these vain ornaments to me?' (*Bér.* IV. ii. 973). (Maskell 51)

Thus, Bérénice's need for a supplemental language leaves its trace on her body. She chooses to appear before Titus in all her disorder. This choice, this *dérangement*[37] or *désordre*, attests to the power of the feminine to visibly inscribe meaning upon her body and to thus say with her body that which would not otherwise be heard[38]. Her refusal of quotidian norms codes her physical body with the disorderly in order to expose and to

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[37] "Un excès, un *dérangement* est possible du côté du féminin" (Irigaray 76; my emphasis)

[38] In Racine's *Mithridate* (1673), Mithridate is also able to read Monime's trouble through her silence and her body: "Vous demeurez muette, et loin de me parler, / Je vois malgré vos soins vos pleurs prêts à couler" (v. 581-82).

subvert the repression to which she has been subjected. The preeminence of the setting of Rome is amplified by the discourse of Paulin only to be subverted by the emerging of the marginalized voice of Bérénice as it emerges in the coding of her body[39]: In *Bérénice*, Rome

> exemplifies 'gloire', the pagan virtues, the service of the state placed above personal fulfillment, the aristocratic code, and so on. In the case of this play, therefore, the city in which the action is situated is not only persistently evoked, its values are fundamental to the thematics of the play (yet at the same time challenged by two of its three protagonists [Bérénice and Antiochus]). (Parish 75)

Parish further describes the challenge that Bérénice poses to the ideological values of Rome as such:

> The setting of *Bérénice* in Rome proposes a conflict between subject and place or even more narrowly between title and location. It is a play in which we find a foregrounded opponent to Roman values active in a context whose apparent ideological and imaginative fixity is increasingly placed into question. […] *Bérénice* leaves us more uncertain of the significance of the particular place in which the drama has occurred in post-dramatic time, an uncertainty finally encapsulated in the departures of the wandering figure of Antiochus, and of the culturally dominant and formative figure of the queen. (92)

Bérénice allows the battle between the Orient and Rome to signify through the disorder of her body, there where their alliance once figured. If Bérénice now proclaims her anguish through a chaotic coding of her body, she also negates its opulence as a reason for her presence there, as she says to Titus: "La grandeur des Romains, la pourpre des Césars, / N'ont point, vous le savez, attiré mes regards. / J'aimais, seigneur, j'aimais, je voulais être aimée" (v. 1477-79). Here, Bérénice underscores the crucial fact that she loved (twice stating 'j'aimais') in order to assert the reciprocity of adoration that she merits. She opposes the importance of the grandeur of Rome by elevating the respect of her own person – 'je voulais être aimée'. In this way, she "empties [Rome] of feeling and points to its emotional bankruptcy" (Parish 92).

[39] As we shall see, the duality of self and cultural other within Paulin's discourse is also undermined by the shattering of Titus' voice.

A Bad Actor or the Difficulty of Fitting the Role

Whereas Bérénice is free to assert her emotional turmoil, Titus denies the difficulty that he experiences in fitting the imperial role. Although Titus claims to be disillusioned now that he takes his father's place as Emperor, his mastery over his destiny and identity seems to grow more and more elusive. In what he proposes will be "un plus noble théâtre" (v. 356), he appears incapable of being himself in the new, imposed 'role' of Emperor. Like Bérénice, he struggles with how Rome casts him, constantly vacillating between two roles: "Ah, Rome! Ah, Bérénice! Ah, prince malheureux! / Pourquoi suis-je empereur? Pourquoi suis-je amoureux?" (v. 1221-22). As Defaux says: "Titus is no longer Titus, he no longer belongs to himself. He is now, or at least he attempts to be, what his role – his function – demands that he be. Scrupulously mimetic, he abounds in sublime sentences" (216-217). In this new theatre, he must speak according to the will of the Empire. In this very notion of *speaking according to*, Racine seems to cite the practice of theatre itself, a practice of performing the words of another. Titus is eager to learn the thoughts of Rome from Paulin, so that he may speak according to them:

> Je ne prends point pour juge une cour idolâtre,
> Paulin : je me propose *un plus noble théâtre* ;
> Et sans prêter l'oreille à la voix des flatteurs,
> Je veux par votre bouche entendre tous les coeurs.
> Vous me l'avez promis. Le respect et la crainte
> Ferment autour de moi le passage à la plainte ; [….]
> Parlez donc. Que faut-il que Bérénice espère ?
> Rome lui sera-t-elle indulgente ou sévère ? (v. 355-60; v. 367-68)

It is in ceding to the will of Rome – as elucidated by Paulin, "N'en doutez point, seigneur: soit raison, soit caprice, / Rome ne l'attend point pour son impératrice" (v. 371-72) – that Titus decides to silence his passion and to speak in its stead the will of Rome. If Titus teeters in this new theatre, is it not because in it, he relies upon Paulin (who

represents the voice of Rome) in order to find his own voice? Or perhaps to lose his own voice, for however constant Titus tries to be in this role[40], it is a role that unravels as he tries to speak it. And this unraveling of speech – along with the unraveling of Titus and Bérénice's initials – is the very material of the play: Titus' silence signifies his desire for Bérénice and his resistance of that desire. Lost in ambivalence, Titus becomes deeply estranged from himself.

When Titus faces Bérénice in order to break the silence ('rompre le silence' v. 484), he cannot do so, but rather it is the silence that takes the upper hand. As Rykner states, "Le vers finit par éclater en morceaux, littéralement pulvérisé sous la pression du silence, et le personnage fuit, dépossédé de toute parole" (146). In this scene, silence breaks through discourse in the shattering of Titus's speech, in his sighing, in the ellipses, and in the stammered words that disperse the alexandrine verse in fragments:

TITUS.

Non, Madame. Jamais, puisqu'il faut vous parler,
Mon cœur de plus de feux ne se sentit brûler.
Mais...

BÉRÉNICE.

Achevez.

TITUS.

Hélas !

BÉRÉNICE.

Parlez.

TITUS.

Rome... l'Empire...

[40] "Titus, of all of Racine's characters, is the one who, in his words and acts, in the way in which he explains the conflict that torments him and *which he intends to resolve without forfeiture*, comes closest to the Cornelian Hero, the archetype that haunts Corneille's theatrical and theoretical writing. The theatre that Titus would like is precisely Cornelian theatre, a 'more noble' theatre (*Bérénice*, I, 356) than the one in which the other Racinian heroes appear" (Defaux 216; my emphasis).

BÉRÉNICE.

Hé bien ?

TITUS.

Sortons, Paulin : je ne lui puis rien dire. (v. 621-24)

The drama is heightened in this tragedy at the very moment in which there is a faltering of words, a paralysis of the tongue, that is, at the moment when the support of theatre itself quivers (along with the Emperor) with the forbearance from speech. When Titus attempts to speak with Bérénice, he becomes nearly paralyzed when speaking or "aphasique" as Roland Barthes says: "C'est-à-dire que, d'un même mouvement, il se dérobe et s'excuse". Despite his status as Western male and imperial ruler, Titus is impotent when confronted by Bérénice. In the West-meets-East dichotomy, Titus is an unlikely character of silence, and thus the reasons for his loss of speech and consequent exit from the scene beg one's attention.

Titus' silence seems to be driven by the dread of the way he will sound and appear when he tells Bérénice that she must depart. As Defaux states:

> Titus doubly evades Bérénice: first in "escaping" her "justified fury" (I.961), that is, in putting off as long as possible the final confrontation, the moment when he will finally have to say to her, "depart"; second, in exposing her to the bewildering spectacle of a man whose behavior, at once monstrous and incomprehensible, also escapes any explanation. (222-23)

Whether overcome by the fear of revealing his own shame or monstrosity, whether oppressed by silence or secretly taking refuge in it, Titus in no way demonstrates a mastery over the use of silence, asking Paulin instead, "Hélas! Quel mot puis-je lui dire?" (v. 1239). Contrary to Racine's *Britannicus* where Néron intentionally manipulates others with a silence that is as powerful as speech[41], Titus lends to less active aspects of

[41] As Rykner says of *Britannicus*: "*Le silence se contente de devenir une arme quasi rhétorique*. Dans *Bérénice*, au contraire, Racine tend à briser le cadre en question: il valorise le silence tout en lui redonnant

silence – that is, "faiblesse et 'inefficacité' dramatique" (Rykner 138), and "passivité" (144). Even after twenty attempts and eight days, Titus cannot utter the words to Bérénice:

> Vingt fois, depuis huit jours,
> J'ai voulu devant elle en ouvrir le discours ;
> Et, dès le premier mot, ma langue embarrassée
> Dans ma bouche vingt fois a demeuré glacée. (v. 473-76)

His tongue is confused and frozen. He is inflicted by silence at a physical level. If in *Britannicus* Néron also experiences "l'aphasie amoureuse" (Rykner 139) in the presence of Junie, he will soon learn to master that silence in order use it against her[42]. In *Bérénice*, however, Titus is overwhelmed by the difficulty of speaking when in the presence of the Oriental Queen. Thus, silence signifies in these two plays differs entirely at the point of cultural alterity: Where cultural alterity does not disturb or prescribe the relations between characters (as in *Britannicus*), silence as disengagement is likely to be an active choice. In cross-cultural encounters (as in *Bérénice*), a more passive silence emerges. Here, structures of hegemony are in place and thus, more often than not, individuals follow pre-established and delimited modes of inclusion/exclusion with regard to the cultural other. Titus, as conqueror and Emperor, is forbidden by law to marry a non-Roman; his relations to Bérénice have thus already been scripted for him. He need only limit his emotions to the role at hand. The prescription of power in intercultural relations is felt in this tragedy at the level of communication (or the lack thereof).

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la passivité qui le définissait au sein du dialogue traditionnel" (144). At no point does Titus use silence as a rhetorical device.

[42] Rykner underscores the extent to which Néron controls and threatens Britannicus' lover, Junie, with an imposing silence: "Vous n'aurez point pour moi de langages secrets; / J'entendrai des regards que vous croirez muets" (v. 681-82). Néron forces Junie into an oppressive silence, where she must learn like him to cleverly manipulate silence, to "faire du silence sous le silence" (141). As she explains to the more naïve Britannicus: "Il fallait me taire et vous sauver" (v. 998) and "Quel tourment de se taire en voyant ce qu'on aime!" (v. 1003).

Ventriloquisms of an Estranged Identity

In his estrangement from himself, Titus tries to give his speech to another. Afraid that his self-image is in danger of cracking should his speech falter once again, unable to withhold any longer the decree that Bérénice must leave, Titus decides to take a detour in order to communicate this message to her. Although he can only excuse his silence by explaining himself, he is incapable of producing that explanation as he is overwhelmed with muteness when in her presence. Overcome by the pain of turning away the woman to whom he is nonetheless attached, he urges Antiochus to speak to Bérénice for him. His imperial desire progresses from a wish ('je veux'), to a command ('voyez-la'), to an objective necessity ('il faut'), a progression which in the end leaves no room for Antiochus' protests: "Et je veux seulement *emprunter votre voix*" (v. 694; my emphasis) ; "Voyez-la *de ma part*" (v. 701; my emphasis) ; "Prince, il faut que *pour moi* vous lui parliez encore" (v. 703; my emphasis). Titus outlines for Antiochus a scene which he has scripted for Bérénice and for Titus, despite his blatant absence to that scene:

> Ma bouche et mes regards, muets depuis huit jours,
> L'auront pu préparer à ce triste discours :
> Et même en ce moment, inquiète, empressée,
> Elle veut qu'à ses yeux j'explique ma pensée.
> D'un amant interdit, soulagez le tourment :
> Epargnez à mon cœur cet éclaircissement.
> Allez, expliquez-lui mon trouble et mon silence ;
> Surtout, qu'elle me laisse éviter sa présence :
> Soyez le seul témoin de ses pleurs et des miens
> Portez-lui mes adieux, et recevez les siens. (v. 737-46)

Titus' assumption that one can in fact speak for another signals a *mise en abyme* structure wherein the operation of theatre is staged. This theatrical operation necessitates that the actor (here Antiochus) master a discourse that is not his own and that he perform those lines in the absence of he who scripted them. Theatre is dependent upon the ability of the

actor's body and language to construe an alternate or 'other' self when one plays a role. Titus asks Antiochus to play his role; one sees at this precise moment that the 'Western' self – which is in the process of being fixed, defined, and stabilized in Classical representation – is in fact not self-sufficient.

Whereas Bérénice speaks through her body, Titus refuses to speak from his own, seeking instead a detour through Antiochus' body. If theatre is "précisément le lieu où peut être vu, analysé, compris le rapport de la parole au geste et à l'acte" (Ubersfeld *Lire le théâtre* 147), it is because the body is a support for one's discourse. The body is the site from which the voice emerges. Yet it is at times an unstable support, for it may change color, twitch, jerk, faint, or sigh and thus modify, even contradict, the content of one's speech. The contradictory power of the body highlights an even deeper split between word and body that is endemic to the theatrical tradition; namely, the strange phenomenon that when the actor speaks, he or she is always speaking the words of an-other. According to Ubersfeld, there is an inherent doubling in speech and split in the speaking subject that is latently present in all theatre:

> Tout discours au théâtre a deux sujets de l'énonciation, le personnage et le je-écrivant (comme il a deux récepteurs, l'Autre et le public). Cette loi du double sujet de l'énonciation est un élément capitale du texte de théâtre : c'est là que se situe la faille inévitable, qui sépare le personnage de son discours et l'empêche d'être constitué en sujet véritable de sa parole. Chaque fois qu'un personnage parle, il ne parle pas seul et l'auteur parle en même temps par sa bouche ; *de là un dialogisme constitutif du texte de théâtre*. (142)

Furthermore, in the French courtly life in the seventeenth century, this theatrical split between the actor and discourse emerged as a privileged trope which figures the theatrical dimension of the social sphere. When Courtine speaks of the courtly life in the Classical period, stating that "observation des apparences accentue la distance entre personnage public et moi intime" (185), he refers to the split in the courtly subject. Thus,

a split enables the individual to 'play a role' in society. What's more, "Une pensée et une pratique du *détachement de soi* qui font du paradoxe du comédien, cette distanciation qui sépare l'acteur de son personnage" (186) becomes a way of being for the courtesan, making Versailles an uninterrupted play. The courtesan learns to "*se traiter comme un autre,* de haut, de loin" (187). This self-detachment or 'othering' involves a silencing of the private self; from this silence, one may then speak as another. Whether one is aware of this effect or not, high concern with the protection of one's borders and the retention of one's words can produce self-detachment. One's speech and expression then become the means by which one simulates and dissimulates, playing a role as one does onstage.

Thus, in the scene in which Titus asks Antiochus to speak for him to Bérénice, he is relegating Antiochus to a role that he, the emperor, does not want. Indeed, the decision to discontinue his relations with Bérénice is an instance in which Titus chooses to detach from himself: As Titus states, "Il fallait, cher Paulin, renoncer à moi-même" (v. 464). The notion of estrangement from self goes hand in hand with a loss of speech that, in the case of Titus, is imposed from within and results in the deferring of speech to Antiochus, the Oriental other. Yet in the case of Antiochus, who is commanded to take up the speech of Titus, the failure of speech is imposed from without as Titus and Bérénice ask him to lay aside his own intentionality in speech and to repeat, *hélas,* the words of Titus.

In conceding to Titus' wishes, Antiochus' speech is relegated to a mere echo, an echo of Titus words, first by Titus, and then by Bérénice who wants to know: "Que vous a dit Titus?" (v. 880). Antiochus clings to some hope of refuge in silence, responding with a plea – "Au nom des dieux, Madame…" (v. 880) – a plea that Bérénice cannot hear, for troubled as she is by Titus' silence, she demands that he speak: "Quoi? Vous

craignez si peu de me désobéir?" (v. 881). The trouble that Antiochus feels in delivering Titus' heartbreaking message cannot be assuaged. Here, he is caught in a double bind: He keeps silent in order to not invoke her hatred, yet, in her exasperated attempt to know Titus' state of mind, she threatens him with her wrath should he refuse to speak—"ou soyez de ma haine assuré pour jamais" (v. 886). Antiochus reluctantly leaves his refuge of silence and, knowing the trouble it will bring both to her and to himself, he warns her as delicately as he can of the effect that his (or Titus') words will have on her :

> Madame, après cela, je ne puis plus me taire.
> Hé bien, vous le vouliez, il faut vous satisfaire.
> Mais ne vous flattez point : je vais vous annoncer
> Peut-être des malheurs où vous n'osez penser.
> Je connais votre cœur : vous devez vous attendre
> Que je le vais frapper par l'endroit le plus tendre. (v. 887-92)

Despite his warnings, his silences, and his hesitation, he cannot control the impact of the words that he will speak for Titus. The wounding and utter shock of his announcement rings in her response: "Nous séparer? Qui? Moi? Titus de Bérénice !" (v. 903).

Antiochus speaks not as subject, but as proxy. His attempt to remain the subject of his speech is made manifest in his silence, that is, in his momentary resistance to speak for Titus. Insofar as he *is* subject of his speech, Antiochus can hardly finish making the difficult announcement. Thus, at the very moment in which the separation of Bérénice from Titus is announced there is a trailing off in his discourse:

> ANTIOCHUS.
> Titus m'a commandé…
> BÉRÉNICE.
> Quoi ?
> ANTIOCHUS.
> De vous déclarer
> Qu'à jamais l'un de l'autre il faut vous séparer. (v. 893-94)

The ellipsis alludes to the heavy imposition and burden of Titus' command, causing Antiochus to cower before the words he will speak. One might ask, *who* is speaking to Bérénice here? The trouble of speaking attests to a division in the speaking subject. However, rather than perceiving Antiochus as an 'other' Titus as she did when he professed his love for her, Bérénice now chooses to mistake Antiochus's words for his own. She locates Antiochus' full intentions in the message that he gives, a message that he had tried to thwart just seconds before. She does not perceive the presence of a 'je-écrivant' (which in this *mise en abyme* would be Titus) in his discourse and she thus attributes to Antiochus all intentionality, stating: "Vous le souhaitez trop pour me persuader. / Non, je ne vous crois point. Mais quoi qu'il en puisse être, / Pour jamais à mes yeux gardez-vous de paraître" (v. 915-16). Antiochus suffers the accusations of Bérénice because he had mistakenly hoped to speak for Titus while still being able to divest that speech of his own trace or personality.

The Reversal of Fortune and Discourse: The Orientalization of the West

Yet in the semi-failure of Antiochus' self-representation, the representation of the West is also implicated. Not only is Titus situated in a powerless context by his dependency upon another to speak for him, but this ventriloquization fails because Titus did not recognize that his friend was also his rival; Titus' lack of interpretation is figured as deafness to the Oriental other. What is revealed in the failure of Antiochus' delivery of Titus' message is that Titus is impotent not only to speak, but also to control the

destination of the words that he asks Antiochus to deliver. Once the representation of the West falls into the mouth of the Oriental other, the West cannot guarantee the meaning that will be produced. Here, Orientalist discourse distorts not the representation of the East through the mouth of the West, but the representation of the West through the mouth of the East. The representation of the West splinters with ambivalence as Antiochus speaks in the absence of Titus. Like Néron, Thésée, or Hippolyte, Titus demonstrates the Racinian hero's efforts to "create himself as a being without ambivalence, a creature of a single value, the supreme heroic gesture" (Goodkin *The Tragic Middle* 22), yet Titus takes a false step in this direction. His reliance upon Antiochus betrays the design of an absolute subject as the identity of the Roman Emperor is dispersed through the intermediary or interstitial voice of another. Ventriloquism proves to be unsuccessful as its game of imposture generates the absence of the speaker and the emptiness of the pre-programmed language. The ventriloquism of Titus-Antiochus theatricalizes the stakes of Racinian tragedy as "a struggle between opposites which cannot be mediated" (Goodkin 23). The voice of Antiochus, when orchestrated by Titus, becomes a risky source of ambivalence and thus serves as a ruling out of the division between cultural others.

Furthermore, if the words of Bérénice 'other' Antiochus as another Titus, they also foreshadow the 'othering' of Titus himself. As we have seen, Titus is echoed, doubled, and 'othered' by the notion of Antiochus as 'un autre lui-même', a notion that is made even more manifest in his request to 'borrow' the voice of Antiochus. The theatrical moment within this tragedy, the *mise en abyme* where Titus asks Antiochus to 'deliver his lines', is a striking scene of cultural othering for it is the West who asks the

East to speak for him[43]. Thus, a germ of (post)colonial criticism is present here in a complex rendering of the interdependency between East and West: Whereas Antiochus expresses a desire to flee from Titus[44], the West, and its assimilating shadow in which he and the Orient are engulfed, the Western self is shown to be curiously dependant upon an Oriental ambassador, requesting him to stay and to be his theatrical representative[45]. If Antiochus' self-representation is silenced by its Roman contextualization, then one perceives not a failure to speak on his part, but the limits of the Western ability to hear the Oriental other. In such a way, any so-called lack of the Orient is reversed – for in *Bérénice*, the Orient speaks whereas the West does not hear. The West is shown to be weak, handicapped as it is by its deafness to the friends, rivals, and representations of self and other that escape its imperious desire and reach.

The limits of the West are further insisted upon when one recognizes that Titus' silence impedes Bérénice's self-expression as well. By sending an emissary, Titus not only avoids speaking, but he also avoids *hearing* what Bérénice would say. This silencing is attested to by Bérénice who describes herself as 'without voice': "Est-il juste, seigneur, que seule en ce moment / Je demeure *sans voix* et sans ressentiment ? " (v. 561-62; my emphasis). Titus' notion that Antiochus could receive Bérénice's adieux for him is naïve at best. In Titus' attempts to withstand the challenges that she would pose to his untimely decision, he curtails them. What's more, in fumbling his own possession of speech, Titus dispossesses Bérénice of her voice. The inability to speak for

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[43] It is when Titus asks Antiochus to speak to Bérénice for him that he describes himself as *exilé*; Titus is *bani* with the language and the woman that he tries to give away. We shall return to a discussion of these verses (v. 751-754).

[44] "*Je fuis* Titus. *Je fuis* ce nom qui m'inquiète, / Ce nom qu'à tous moments votre bouche répète" (v. 275-76).

[45] "Quoi ? Prince, vous partiez ? Quelle raison subite / Presse votre départ, ou plutôt votre fuite ? [….] Vous-même, à mes regards qui vouliez vous soustraire, / Prince, plus que jamais vous m'êtes nécessaire" (v. 667-78 ; v. 683-84).

himself and the deliberate choice to give the burden of expression to another – that is, to Antiochus – depreciates the value of language as a means of both production and reception for Titus. He is no longer a participant in the economy of communication and he thus appears to be an Emperor who is both deaf and dumb.

Despite this visible weakness, Titus reveals an awareness of the messages potentially communicated despite the silence that he had wished to keep: As he himself remarks, his bodily signs (his silent mouth and looks) have alerted Bérénice to the prospect of a sad or tragic discourse. Thus, when the tragic question *to speak or not to speak?* arises, one finds that *not* speaking is not at all possible. Despite one's silence, the absence of words takes on expressions of its own. Unable to control either his silence or his speech, Titus seeks a *porte-parole* – that is, another body and voice to host and to convey his own words. And here the question *to speak or not to speak?* joins the Shakespearian question *to be or not to be?* For in relaying his speech to another, Titus suggests a lack in his identity – that is, the absence of his own body and voice. Insisting upon his own silence as if it was his only recourse to self-mastery, Titus loses self-identity. His dispossession of speech leads to a dispossession of the self – and thus the desperate move to substitute or supplement his voice. Indeed, it seems that there is a paradoxical link between the position of Titus as omnipotent ruler and the fragile, transferable position that his voice holds. Although the decision to send the Oriental Queen away cements his political power as righteous Roman Emperor, his identity is compromised in his decisions to disavow the other (by denying her the power of address), to disavow his own voice (by asking another to speak for him), and to detach his body and presence from his speech.

Staging/ Inverting Processes of Orientalism

How is it that Titus, as the Western, dominant, and patriarchal figure, loses power over his speech? Furthermore, how does this loss of speech produce a shifting, a slipping, or an 'othering', of his identity? Indeed, Titus forgets his sense of identity as if it were a role that he does not know how to play. Titus seems to wander onto the stage, looking for his self as if he had lost it, speaking of his identity as a self, a 'moi-même,' that is renounced, conflicted, despised, forgotten, missing, and estranged from its own being:

> Il fallait, cher Paulin, renoncer à *moi-même* (v. 464)
>
> Je viens percer un cœur que j'adore, qui m'aime.
> Et pourquoi le percer ? Qui l'ordonne ? *Moi-même*. (v. 999-1000)
>
> *Moi-même* je me hais. (v. 1209)
>
> Hélas ! quel mot puis-je lui dire ?
> *Moi-même* en ce moment sais-je si je respire ? (v. 1239-40)
>
> *Moi-même* à tous moments je me souviens à peine
> Si je suis empereur ou si je suis Romain. (v. 1380-81)
>
> Mon amour m'entraînait ; et je venais peut-être
> Pour me chercher *moi-même*, et pour me reconnaître. (v. 1395-96)

His unawareness, renouncement, and forgetting of his self is expressed in a language that he simply cannot master, try as he may to summon terms that would grant him some form of self-reflection: The reflexive pronouns seems to only accentuate his inability to gain self-possession. He searches for a prop for his identity, yet language eludes him – or betrays him – in this search, detached as it is from his body and presence due to his previous compulsion towards ventriloquism.

Furthermore, his self-estrangement parallels an estrangement from others. His loss of the self accentuates his unawareness of others for he fails to read into Antiochus'

hesitancy to speak (once again) with Bérénice. Instead of swearing his own love to Bérénice, he unknowingly (and rather ironically) asks his rival[46], Antiochus, "l'homme du silence" (Barthes 99) to speak for him:

> Ah ! Prince, jurez-lui que toujours trop fidèle,
> Gémissant dans ma cour, et *plus exilé qu'elle,*
> Portant jusqu'au tombeau le nom de son amant,
> Mon règne ne sera qu'un long *bannissement* (v. 751-54; my emphasis)

It is in the moment when he relegates his speech to Antiochus, the Oriental other that Titus describes himself as more exiled than she who is about to undergo real exile. Although Titus remains in Rome, he seems to be geographically or culturally displaced and orientalized due to his self-estrangement. He mirrors the banishment that Bérénice will experience in her return to the Orient by referring to his reign as 'un long banissement'. Thus, Titus is also feminized as he is orientalized. This seems to imply that the Orient is already feminized and distorted by the representations of the West. Having been fused together with the Oriental Queen, he finds himself managing their disjunction by borrowing words that apply to her as well as borrowing another man's voice – a curious phenomenon which emphasizes that Orientalism is a process by which the narrated subject/ object is divested of his or her own voice. What is more curious is that Racine allows Orientalism to be grafted onto the representation of the Westerner. Although Titus' attempt to avoid exchange with Bérénice seems to be a strategy of self-preservation (due to the influence of Paulin's Orientalist representation of Bérénice as a figure of political contamination), this strategy results rather ironically in his own (linguistic) self-estrangement.

[46] Antiochus reveals his ambivalent relation to Titus in the final Act : "Mais le pourriez-vous croire en ce moment fatal, / Qu'un ami si fidèle était votre rival ?" (v. 1441-42)

In the end, Titus' reliance upon Antiochus leads him to speak with Bérénice one last time. As Parish remarks, "Ce n'est que lorsque la décision aura été transmise par Antiochus que Titus pourra risquer de donner libre cours à ses émotions (ce qui remplit Paulin d'inquiétude)" (19). In his attempt to prepare himself for his last meeting with Bérénice, he rather surprisingly appropriates a value that the Westerner has imposed upon the cultural other. He seeks to 'other' himself and to be what he has not yet been – 'barbare', a term that signifies for the French audience of the Classical period both cruelty and the cultural other:

> Ton cœur te promet-il assez de cruauté ?
> Car enfin au combat qui pour toi se prépare
> C'est peu d'être constant, il faut être *barbare*. (v. 990-92)

In the seventeenth century, the term 'barbare' is imbued with an ambiguity that signifies either a *foreigner* who comes from a savage or cruel land or simply the quality of being cruel. Racine's usage of this term is not naïve with regard to the possible conflation of its meanings, as listed in Furetière's 1690 *Dictionnaire universel*:

> (I) Barbare: Estranger qui est d'un pays fort éloigné, sauvage, malpoli, cruel, et qui a des moeurs fort différentes des nôtres… Les Grecs appeloient Barbares tous ceux qui n'étoient pas de leur pays, et ce mot ne signifie en leur langue qu'estranger.
>
> (II) Barbare : signifie aussi seulement cruel, impitoyable, qui n'écoute point la pitié, ni la raison.

Thus, when Titus steels himself with 'cruauté' and says 'il faut être barbare' the adjective directs our attention to the definition of 'barbare' as simply 'cruel'. Later on, it is used as a noun when Titus refuses Paulin's accolade, stating, "Non, je suis un barbare" (v. 1212). In declaring himself to be 'barbaric' in the first example and 'a barbarian' or a foreigner in the second, Titus crosses a linguistic and cultural borderline of identity. He defers his identity to the Western perception of the other, not only as one who comes from afar, but as one who is savage, cruel, and who has morals that are 'fort différentes' from Western

values. If nearly 100 years previously Montaigne said "Chascun appelle *barbarie* ce qui n'est pas de son usage" (1.31), it is clear from Titus' appropriation of the image of the 'barbaric' other that he is 'other' to himself.

Along with its conflation of foreignness and savagery, the term 'barbare' echoes Titus' description of himself as more exiled than Bérénice. What is striking is that Racine includes such terms as 'exilé', 'banissement', and 'barbare' in the vocabulary of the Western conqueror. This reversal reveals that Racine was ahead of his time, aware as he was of the effects of representation upon the self and the cultural other. By situating Titus within an Orientalist and inverted dimension of representation, Racine anticipates postcolonial criticism, which according to Bhabha, "bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order" (245). It is through the lens of postcolonial criticism that colonial discourse necessarily undergoes analysis and it is through this lens that we find in Racine's *Bérénice* evidence of an "interdependence and entanglement between civilization and barbarism in the mutually defining opposition that is supposed to set them apart" (Young 32). Interestingly enough, the terms that the Westerner imposed upon the Easterner (such as 'barbare') rather suddenly and surreptitiously become a problematic for the identity of the Westerner himself, for as Young claims:

> Western culture has always been defined against the limits of others, and culture has always been thought through as a form of cultural difference. Culture and civilization have consistently been deployed as the defining characteristic of Western modernity – which by that very token inscribes its disavowed cultural other within itself. (93)

Although the tragedy of *Bérénice* is said to reflect "another world power's inability to embrace the ethnic Other" (Ahmed 287) and although Titus consequently "retreats from

otherness into sameness" (280), this tragedy reveals that the disavowed cultural other is nonetheless part and parcel of the Western self. This inbred alterity is manifested through the silence that strikes Titus when he must revoke his beloved Oriental Queen; his troubled speech articulates his complex relation to the other and to his 'other' self. For in describing himself as *exilé, bani*, and *barbare*, Titus situates himself in the discursive field of the Orient, "métaphore de l'exil" (Viala "Preface" 8), as it is famously depicted by Antiochus: "Dans l'Orient désert quel devint mon ennui! / Je demeurai longtemps errant dans Césarée" (v. 234-35).

Failures in Speech: Gaps in – or Occasions for – Representation?

Titus' impulse to hide behind silence signifies his desperation to conserve an image of himself that would be worthy in Rome's eyes, yet the silence that he considered to be a refuge turns on him, exposing instead a more "monstrous" (Defaux 223) spectacle. If in Racine's *Iphigénie* Eriphile hopes to borrow from the aura of silence a more noble quality, she will disparage the moment when she can no longer hide behind it:

> Je me flattais sans cesse
> Qu'un silence éternel cacherait ma faiblesse;
> Mais mon cœur trop pressé m'arrache ce discours,
> Et te parle une fois pour se taire toujours. (v. 477-80)

Here, silence is a mask that covers the private self that one wishes to hide; one cannot help but think here of the intrinsic theatricalilty of silence (and of society) if indeed it allows one to play a different role. Just as Eriphile 'others' her own heart, alluding to it as a physical force exterior to her body which tears her from the shield of silence, Titus'

floundering of speech seems to disturb his nobler sense of self. When at last he speaks with Bérénice, he depicts his heart as a force that eludes him. Here, his very self is torn – "Hélas ! que vous me déchirez !"(v. 1153) – and both his heart and his tears leak through the cracks of the borders of self and the silent mask that he had tried to maintain:

> Vous-même contre vous fortifiez *mon cœur* :
> Aidez-moi, s'il se peut, à vaincre sa faiblesse,
> À retenir des pleurs qui *m'échappent* sans cesse (v. 1054-56)
>
> Je sens bien que sans vous je ne saurais plus vivre,
> Que *mon cœur de moi-même est prêt à s'éloigner* (v. 1100-01)
>
> Que dis-je ? En ce moment *mon cœur, hors de lui-même,*
> *S'oublie,* et se souvient seulement qu'il vous aime. (v. 1135-36)

If Titus describes himself as exterior to himself, it is to signal an excess of emotion that he simply cannot manage within. The silence that overcomes his attempts to speak signals that which exceeds what he has hereto chosen for self-representation. Ironically, gaps or holes in discourse become occasions for representation as they stage the involuntary exteriorization or exile of the self.

Indeed, in Racinian theatre, silence shades "l'échec de la parole" (150) with what Rykner calls the destruction of "l'omnipotence du *logos*-roi" (151). Regarding the general esthetic of the Classical period which excludes all positive manifestations of silence, Rykner points to the silence that is nonetheless present in Racinian theatre:

> En effet, s'il est désormais avéré que le silence ne peut être une donnée formelle du théâtre classique, il n'en est pas moins vrai qu'il peut se voir ici ou là l'enjeu explicite du dialogue ; s'il est interdit de se taire sur scène, il est toujours permis de parler de ce silence, ou, mieux, de tenter de vider la parole de son contenu pour faire entendre au-delà d'elle une autre voix. (119)

Titus' silence invades both the themes and motivations of the dialogue in this tragedy, posing a threat not only to the construction of (imperial) power through speech, but posing an even larger threat to tragedy, or representation, itself:

> Dès que [le silence] est pris en compte par le dialogue, il provoque au coeur de ce dernier un glissement inévitable. Le cadre classique s'effrite de l'intérieur. Miné en son centre, il s'affaisse insensiblement en paraissant sauvegarder une périphérie inébranlable. (119)

A radical gesture at the time, Racine unveils theatre by allowing a masked silence[47] – "Le silence agit alors masqué" (Rykner 119) – to undermine its *raison d'être,* that is, to see actors speak. In this way, the seventeenth century spectator could reflect upon the mask of discursive self-mastery which constructs the Cornelian hero, for example, while discovering in Racine's *Bérénice* that roles of power or authority do not find reassurance in discourse[48]. Titus' silence is the source for much of the dialogue – thus it is generative in that it induces others to ponder it or to speak in his place – yet it also confronts the security that speech allows the speaking subject and thus, the surreptitious undermining of his agency. As the 'enjeu explicite du dialogue', silence is also the implicit *enjeu* of subjectivity – particularly in the case of the Roman Emperor. Barthes alludes to an illusion of power which is ever unstable in Racinian *logos* due to a precarious weaving of speech with silence: "[Racinian *logos*] est à la fois agitation des mots et fascination du silence, illusion de puissance et terreur de s'arrêter" (67). In his portrayal of the breakdown of Titus' speech, Racine reveals that roles of power are grounded in discourse – yet the origins of discourse are the illusion of theatre for one cannot be sure: *Who* is speaking?

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[47] "Les stratégies du silence sont nombreuses: du trop plein de langage au langage de la mauvaise foi, des subtilités de la mauvaise foi aux ruses du mensonge, l'éventail des possibilités est assez large. *Le silence agit alors masqué.* Il se produit au cœurs même de la parole sans toujours dire son nom" (Rykner 119; my emphasis)

[48] In Racine's *Athalie* (1691), the eponymous character is threatened by the idea that there may yet exist someone capable of dethroning her. She takes desperate recourse to (a commanding) discourse in order to reassert (the illusion of) her sovereignty: "Manquerait-on pour moi de complaisance? De ce refus bizarre où seraient les raisons? [….] Que Josabet, vous dis-je, ou Joad les amène. Je puis, quand je voudrai, parler en Souveraine" (v. 588-89; 591-92). Despite her discursive assertions, Athalie's power is undermined as she will ultimately be executed in the final Act.

Indeed, the question "Who is speaking?" is bound not only to questions of theatricality, but also to a growing awareness of cultural alterity, of colonization and imperial power, and of the potential of discourse to master representations of the self and of the cultural other on the world stage. What is of particular interest in our analysis of Titus' aphasia is the destruction of the authoritative *logos*[49] and its unmistakable pairing with the deconstruction of the self-control, power and speech of the Western ruler: At the same time that the omnipotent *logos* breaks down in the very imperial speech which 'should' manifest it, theatrical representation is itself threatened by this surreptitious silence – that is, by the loss of its authoritative discursive support. Thus, the question of the inclusion/exclusion of the other in *Bérénice*, a tragedy which takes its name rather notably from the Oriental female, sets it apart as a re-examination of the power of silence over the power of speech in theatre, which inevitably develops into broader, more culturally-oriented questions of identity in the Classical period. If silence exposes the operation of theatre itself – that is, the construction of identity through speech – then silence's contesting of theatrical representations might also expose the processes (and problems) of Orientalism. For instance, the sympathy that the spectator feels for the lovers at the moment of their separation offers an implicit critique of Paulin's Orientalist portrayal and his dismissal of Bérénice.

[49] According to Rykner's study, an authoritative *logos* had reigned in the works of Racine's predecessors, contemporaries, and competitors.

A Leak in Silence

> *How should I greet thee?*
> *With silence and tears.*
> Lord Byron, "When We Two Parted"

It is not without evoking many tears[50] that Racine gives the Oriental characters (both Antiochus and Bérénice) exit from the Western stage: In fact, in the preface to *Bérénice,* Racine speaks of having given the public "une tragédie qui a été honorée de tant de larmes, et dont la trentième représentation a été aussi suivie que la première" (33). Furthermore, the tears of the spectator mirror those of Titus[51], Bérénice, and Antiochus:

> Ce qui distingue Racine, bien plus que le recours au sang, aux duels ou même au sacrifice, communs à la tragédie d'avant ou d'après lui, c'est le choix des larmes, plus particulièrement dans *Bérénice.* On l'a vu, les rôles sont construits de manière à pousser au plus loin l'examen de soi, et c'est cet examen qui produit l'émotion : à mesure que le discours s'étend et que l'analyse de soi se poursuit pour chacun des trois rôles, il devient impossible à tout être, qu'il soit de papier, d'illusion ou qu'il soit spectateur, de résister au jaillissement larmoyant. [….] (Biet 132)

The emotional affect of this tearful spectacle stems from the difficulty of forever silencing all discourse with the beloved and of announcing the decision to do so. We find in *Bérénice* that tears perfectly echo silence, for according to Biet, tears are "la manifestation de ce qui échappe […] mais aussi de ce qui se donne comme trop fort pour n'être pas visible par soi et par les autres" (120). Tears are a silent, yet visible sign of an inward emotion; they are an outward manifestation of what one cannot retain. Similarly, the silence Titus wishes to keep in order to maintain the borders of self cannot fully cover over the emotions that motivate that silence. Emotions may escape muteness, the body becoming the signifier of what is hushed: As Courtine says, "L'homme demeure expressif, même dans le silence. Car lorsqu'il se tait, c'est alors son corps qui parle" (98). If the body can 'talk' despite one's silence, then Titus must remain out of sight, for

[50] "On nous dit en passant que *Bérénice* obtint un vif succès de larmes" (Barthes 152).
[51] As Bérénice exclaims to Titus, "Vous êtes empereur, seigneur, et vous pleurez!" (v. 1156).

the silence with which he would encase himself is nonetheless dependant upon a body (or a receptacle) which can leak:

> A l'origine de l'impératif de silence qui se répand au cours des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles et qui concerne la civilité et ses gestes, la conversation et les paroles, il y a donc bien un très ancien modèle du corps comme récipient hermétique, sans cesse menacé par le fait que les matières qu'il renferme puissent lui échapper. (221)

One must master one's discourse, even to the point of silencing it, and master one's body, even to the point of hiding it, in order to maintain the borders of self and resist the inquiry of the other. Such imperatives are dramatized in Titus' conduct. Titus avoids Bérénice, lest his silence involuntary signal through his expression what he wishes to repress rather than convey. Titus cannot fully deny his desire or his responsibility toward Bérénice. His resolve to dismiss the Oriental Queen is, with the help of Paulin, a fixed point in his mind, yet this point is actually more fluid than he had thought. His struggle is betrayed by his wish to repress his tears and in his inability to stop their outward flow. This powerlessness is attested to by Phénice, who upon seeing Titus, reports to Bérénice: "J'ai vu couler des pleurs qu'il voulait retenir" (v. 965). Titus' tears indicate an emotion that his silence tries to retain; yet silence gives movement to that which one tries to hide.

According to Courtine, speech and bodily expressions, along with the danger of their misapprehension, represent a crucial concern in the Classical period. If expression gives others a certain access to the self, then it follows that control of that access through silence emerges as a sign of one sense of self-mastery. Consistent with popular dictates in the seventeenth century, one must be "*le gardien des frontières de sons corps*, 'se contenir' à l'intérieur de soi-même" (220). Thus, it is in a move to establish the borders of the self that Titus takes refuge in a type of silence that was acknowledged in Racine's time, that is, a silence that is said to protect the self from dispossession: "Ces injonctions

au silence qui parcourent l'âge classique se fondent sur un idéal de conservation de soi qui voit dans la parole le risque d'une dépossession" (220). The title of this tragedy testifies to this potential dispossession as Titus has no place in it (whereas in Corneille's rival tragedy, debuting the very same week as that of Racine's, Titus is privileged by the inclusion of his name *and* its precedence: *Tite et Bérénice*). Moreover, in Racine's tragedy, the name of the Oriental Queen becomes the center catalyst and motor of *pathos*. The very name that Titus had tried to usurp in his discourse of love subversively recovers its force in the title.

Barthes refers to Racine's type of tragedy as one where speech and failure go hand in hand: "Le langage n'est jamais une preuve: le héros racinien ne peut jamais se prouver : on ne sait jamais qui parle à qui. La tragédie est seulement un échec qui se parle" (67). Rykner takes this notion of a Racinian "échec qui se parle" even further – "Ou plus exactement *échec de la parole* qui se parle, avant de retomber dans le silence. [….] Ses personnages ne parlent que pour révéler qu'ils sont voués à se taire. Leur dialogue n'est qu'un filtre que traverse le *logos* pour se dépouiller des derniers oripeaux d'un pouvoir illusoire" (150). How do the limitations of speech, as represented by Racine, dismantle the illusory power of *logos*? Furthermore, in a corpus where the dominant reference is to an Oriental character[52], how does this dismantling process of *logos* extend itself to the representation of the cultural other?

[52] "En effet, sur les 47 personnages protagonistes des tragédies raciniennes, 23 sont orientaux. Et sur l'ensemble des onze tragédies […] qui se situent en Orient, la référence orientale apparaît même comme une dominante" (Viala "Preface" 72).

Another Side of Conquest: Tales of Devastation and Ruin

At this juncture of early French colonialist expansion, the privileging of silence would seem to project a design to 'silence' the cultural other – a design that would become much more explicit in the colonial period Or might the privileging of silence in *Bérénice* pose a challenge to the growing, yet already prevalent Orientalist representations of the Eastern world? In *Bérénice*, silence is figured not only as a failure of language (as in Titus' failed attempts to speak), but also as a dismantling of Antiochus' and Bérénice's power to address. This denial of their power to address is echoed by Antiochus' references to Titus' siege of Jerusalem throughout the tragedy. In painting himself as "le premier au nombre des vaincus" (v. 198), Antiochus suggests a certain injustice that is inherent to colonial structures and that surfaces as Titus has him take on certain postures of speech that he would not otherwise take on. His discourse is coerced by the Imperial conqueror – or rather, by *his* conqueror.

In Racine's *Bérénice*, Antiochus is not borrowed from Antiquity, but rather, he is a character of Racine's invention: "Le rôle d'Antiochus est de pure imagination" (Forestier 1455). If Antiochus appears at first glance to be a "personnage d'exposition" (1464) insofar as he is to explain Titus' situation to Bérénice, his role swells with a quality of its own as he appears in fourteen scenes[53] and is granted 350 verses (1464). Forestier outlines a series of curiosities regarding Antiochus' role that are noteworthy:

> Cependant, si ce personnage se réduit à n'être qu'un rôle purement fonctionnel, il reste à comprendre pourquoi il reparaît au quatrième acte après l'explication décisive entre les deux amants, pourquoi Racine insiste sur le pathétique de sa propre situation […], et enfin pourquoi c'est à lui que revient d'exprimer le dernier soupir de la pièce. (1464)

[53] Titus appears in fifteen scenes, while Bérénice appears in eleven.

In order to respond to these questions, it is important to first remark the attention that is given to the Orient through Antiochus' discourse, beginning with the ways in which his own love story is cut short by Rome's colonial invasion of Palestine. In speaking nostalgically of the Orient to Bérénice, Antiochus washes the image of her birthplace with overtones of sadness and desertion:

> Si, dans ce haut degré de gloire et de puissance,
> Il vous souvient des lieux où vous prîtes naissance,
> Madame, il vous souvient que mon cœur en ces lieux
> Reçut le premier trait qui partit de vos yeux :
> J'aimai. J'obtins l'aveu d'Agrippa votre frère,
> Il vous parla pour moi. Peut-être sans colère
> Alliez-vous de mon cœur recevoir le tribut ;
> Titus, pour mon malheur, vint, vous vit et vous plut. (v. 187-94)

In his lamentation, Antiochus questions the ability of Bérénice to remember the Orient (and by extension, his love for her) in the midst of such Roman pomp and glory. Indeed, Titus' glorious Roman conquest of the Orient left it in ruins: "Enfin après un siège aussi cruel que lent, / Il dompta les mutins, reste pale et sanglant / Des flammes, de la faim, des fureurs intestines, / Et laissa leurs remparts cachés sous leurs ruines" (v.229-33). This imagery of Oriental ruins is interwoven with his feeling of devastation and desertion when Bérénice was brought back to Rome with other spoils of conquest, leaving Antiochus wandering alone in a desert of nostalgia:

> Rome vous vit, Madame arriver avec lui
> Dans l'orient désert quel devint mon ennui!
> Je demeurai longtemps errant dans Césarée,
> Lieux charmants où mon cœur vous avait adorée.
> Je vous redemandais à vos tristes états ;
> Je cherchais en pleurant les traces de vos pas.
> Mais enfin succombant à ma mélancolie,
> Mon désespoir tourna mes pas vers l'Italie.
> Le sort m'y réservait le dernier de ses coups. (v. 233-41)

Antiochus wanders the desert, deserted. As Longino states in reference to Antiochus' description: "The eastern lands thus depicted suggest a psychic scenery of desertion, of

sterility, of sadness, of abandonment, of nostalgia, of stasis, of ennui" (170). Furthermore, he depicts the Orient as a cradle of seduction, citing the seduction of Antiochus by Bérénice, that of Titus by Bérénice, and that of Bérénice by Titus. In reference to Julius Caesar's well-known proclamation – "Titus […] vint, vous vit et vous plut" – he employs a language of conquest that rather significantly interrupts his own love (hi)story. And in this formula, Antiochus depicts himself, the Oriental male, as twice conquered: First by the seductive Oriental woman, and then by her Western conqueror. Indeed, Antiochus retrospectively describes his falling in love with Bérénice as his subjugation: "Bérénice me plut. Que ne fait point un cœur / Pour plaire à ce qu'il aime, et gagner son vainqueur!" (v. 509-10).

Yet if Bérénice is stolen from Antiochus due to an initial moment in which Titus *sees* Bérénice – 'Titus vous vit' – he will also lose her to Rome who, in a similar way, also fixes an appropriating gaze upon the Oriental Queen – 'Rome vous vit'. Titus is conflated with the power and with the capturing gaze of Rome, an imperial model for centuries to come. However, in the language of conquest it is not only Bérénice who is a pleasing 'object', but Titus is as well. If Titus demonstrates agency in coming to the Orient ('Titus vint') and in seeing Bérénice ('vous vit'), he also pleases her ('vous plut'). Thus, Bérénice both attracts Titus and is attracted by him; he too becomes an object that is pleasing. This story is embedded in a language and in a story of conquest for both Titus and Bérénice – while Antiochus is situated outside of the circle of reciprocal booty. Eclipsed by Titus as lover to Bérénice – "Titus m'accable ici du poids de sa grandeur. / Tout disparaît dans Rome auprès de sa splendeur" (v. 793-94) – Antiochus ambles about in an Orient that has ceded its name, *Césarée*, to another Roman Emperor, Caesar

Augustus. The imperial project of Rome thus seems to overshadow the East at every turn, whether by conquering it, naming it, or making the heart of an Oriental Queen part of its pickings. Titus' invasion of the Orient leaves the King of Comagène tracing his beloved's faded footsteps of the Queen of Palestine with his tears. Rome, the colonial center (or *metropole*) now becomes the only possible detour to his cherished memories of Bérénice and to a possible closure of his love story. Witness to the crescendo of Bérénice's love for Titus, he resigns himself to a return to the Orient. This return will take place in the absence of his beloved Bérénice, yet not without Antiochus' return to his own story in order to resume a broken discourse and to contest an imposed silence by reclaiming the right to express his own experience.

It is after five years of silence, as imposed upon him by Bérénice, that Antiochus speaks of his love for her once again. However, Bérénice receives Antiochus as an '*autre*' Titus, declaring: "Cent fois je me suis fait une douceur extreme / D'entretenir *Titus dans un autre lui-même*" (v. 271-72; my emphasis). She does not hear Antiochus, but instead hears (through him) the echo of Titus. If, as Lassalle states, Antiochus is indeed "subalterne, simple confident […] quand il est l'amant original, légitime de Bérénice, le double en quelque sorte inverse de Titus," he is also "celui sans qui le couple perdrait tout ensemble son recours et son reflet". The double of Titus, Antiochus is doubly silenced, first by Bérénice and then by the name of Titus which effaces his own. Because of this doubling – or dubbing – and erasure, Antiochus falls into the position of an anonymous, however necessary support and supplement of the communication between Bérénice and Titus.

> [Antiochus] inaugure et il clôt l'action tragique. Mais il a une autre fonction plus cruciale : Antiochus, qui rompt son propre silence à l'égard de Bérénice, devient par la

> suite porte-parole de Titus. Il remplit de langage fonctionnel l'espace silencieux de l'acte central de la pièce, et permet ainsi à Titus de retrouver l'expressivité dans les deux derniers. En servant de porte-parole entre Titus et Bérénice, il agit (ou est censé agir) comme figure neutre, comme véhicule insensible. Pourtant cette neutralité, cette insensibilité n'existent que dans la perspective de Titus. (16)

Thus, it is only from the perspective of the Roman Emperor that Antiochus (as Oriental male) is pliable, whereas the spectator, removed from the dilemma that plagues Titus, can see that Antiochus, the conquered protagonist, is able to speak whereas Titus cannot. Antiochus himself fluctuates between impotence and eloquence of speech: He who declares himself "muet" (v. 157) and the "malheureux rival" (v. 224) of Titus is nonetheless he who utters the first and last word of this tragedy.

The importance of Antiochus' discourse is thus his insertion of an Oriental *hors-scène* into *Bérénice*; he allows his story of the Orient to emerge despite the triumphant and overshadowing accounts of Roman glory. In a tragedy where the textual ensemble appears to take place in a specifically Roman context, there is nonetheless "à côté de lui un ensemble textuel dont le référent est nécessairement hors-scène" (Ubersfeld *Lire le théâtre* 191). Thus, the unity of place is subtly disturbed due to the irruption or interruption of the Oriental referent: "Il y a alors dans le texte deux couches, l'une qui est destinée à être représentée scéniquement, l'autre qui ne renvoie qu'à un hors-scène imaginaire" (191). This doubling of space provides a deeper level of understanding of the disorder that Bérénice's presence in Rome creates. For if the insertion and removal of "un personage hors-scène (au statut d'exilé)" is coded *within* the Western scene, then that very intrusion "sème dans l'ordre de l'espace tragique le désordre et la désorganisation, indépendamment de ses 'qualités' ou de ses 'vertus'" (Ubersfeld 191).

The problem that Bérénice's potential marriage to Titus poses within the Roman *metropole* speaks of Rome's desire for a politically stabilized unity which

consequently guards against any intrusion of that geopolitical unity. The centrifugal force of Roman law and identity parallels the stringent ordering of the representation of the absolute subject in seventeenth century French theatre – as well as the 'désordre et désorganisation' that an *hors-scène* poses to that order. The delicacy of the classical unities – particularly, the unity of place – reveals in fact a concern for the unity and the centrality of the Western subject. Racine's emphasis upon the Oriental referent within *Bérénice* thus dramatizes the voice of the minority as powerful enough to contest that which seems to simultaneously engulf and expel it. Indeed, the cultural ambivalence of voice (as effectuated by the staging of ventriloquism) can be said to enlist the "construction of an absolutist desire for a coherent subject" (Greenberg "Absolute Fantasies" 52) while also demonstrating "the impossible grounding of the subject" (52). This double voice, which, according to Greenberg, is characteristic of all Racinian tragedy, is amplified in Racine's *Bérénice* in order to contest Rome's myths of a pure (and well-guarded) origin of cultural homoegeneity. Delicacies surrounding the representation of self and cultural other (within theatre and within Orientalism) are presented in terms that resist imperial hegemonies.

It is significant that this tragedy opens the curtain upon the Oriental male, Antiochus, who in delivering the first lines, directs the spectator's attention to the awe-inspiring pomp and glory of Titus – "Arrêtons un moment. La pompe de ces lieux, / Je le vois bien, Arsace, est nouvelle à tes yeux" (v. 1-2). The celebration of Titus' attributes finds additional expression in the words of Bérénice which then close the first Act:

> De cette nuit, Phénice, as-tu vu la splendeur?
> Tes yeux ne sont-ils pas tous pleins de sa grandeur ?
> Ces flambeaux, ce bûcher, cette nuit enflammée,
> Ces aigles, ces faisceaux, ce peuple, cette armée,
> Cette foule de rois, ces consuls, ce sénat,

> Qui tous de mon amant empruntaient leur éclat ;
> Cette pourpre, cet or, que rehaussait sa gloire,
> Et ces lauriers encore témoins de sa victoire (v. 301-08)

This scene of pomp demonstrates the seductive power of Titus' public image. The elevation of Titus' glory through Bérénice's rememorization of his symbols of power – *splendeur, grandeur, flambeaux, bûcher, nuit enflammée, aigles, faisceaux, peuple, armée, rois, consuls, sénat, éclat, pourpre, or, gloire, lauriers, victoire* – cannot help but imply the successful conquest of the Orient upon – or against – which the power of these symbols rest. This language is ambivalent as it can be interpreted as Bérénice's justification of Palestine's fall to such a powerful Emperor, further suggesting that her desire for Titus borders on the possibility of giving a positive twist to her scene of humiliation. Furthermore, this scene of pomp indicates the marginality of Antiochus. Antiochus provides a contrapuntal perspective of Titus' glory by referencing the devastation of conquest upon which that glory depends. The disadvantaged story of the Orient that he articulates provides a different point of view regarding Rome's pursuit of order, dominion and glory.

This marginality may be the source of Bérénice's inability to see Antiochus as an entity that exists independently of Titus. If she perceives Antiochus as merely another Titus, then his profession of love to her is relegated to being a failed attempt at self-expression. This failure may occur not so much because of Antiochus' inability to express himself, but because Bérénice has now, after five years in Rome with Titus, appropriated a more Roman frame of mind: As Paulin says, "Elle a même, dit-on, le cœur d'une Romaine" (v. 375). The silencing that Antiochus experiences when he professes his love to Bérénice is not so much a failure of his own speech as it is a failure to be heard by Romans in a Roman context of glory. Indeed, the attention that is given to

Roman magnificence figures a forgetting of the Orient as it is transformed into Roman territory. Thus, differences in culture, when coupled with a colonial history of conquest, present a divide that subtends what is spoken and what is heard. Most often, those who represent the conquered lose their voice (and power of self-representation) in the presence of the conquerors; subsequently, the conquered cannot make themselves heard. Bérénice cannot receive Antiochus' profession of love not because he fails to profess it, but because of the decontextualization that his speech undergoes in Rome and because of Bérénice's proximity to that power: As he wonders in the opening of the tragedy, "Dois-je croire qu'au rang où Titus la destine / Elle m'écoute mieux que dans la Palestine?" (v. 27-28).

Hearing the Sighs above the Clamor

The silencing that occurs across cultural lines of East and West is thus ambivalent at best. The representation of speech and silence in *Bérénice* cannot be separated from questions of Western self and Oriental other. The representation of silence thus has a double edge: At one level it keeps with the tradition of cultural homogeneity in silencing and exiling Bérénice, the Oriental woman who Paulin depicts as yet another prototype of Cleopatra[54]. Yet at a deeper level it reveals the impact of keeping with this Orientalist representation of the other – that is, estrangement from self, as displayed in the aphasia

[54] Through the Orientalist discourse of Paulin, Bérénice becomes a central taboo. Paulin's discourse is based on a series of historical or biological frames through which the outsider attempts to unveil the Oriental woman as another prototype of Cleopatra. In the snapshot he gives of Bérénice, he crops her image by narrating the history of Cleopatra and by pointing out the trace of slavery in Bérénice's bloodline.

that happens upon he who enforces cultural barriers. On the one hand, this tragedy marks the ending of a legendary love that once was a fluid passageway between cultural others. It is a tale of the freezing of those cultural others – or lovers – into two separate poles as the distance that separates East from West increases with Paulin's discourse. On the other hand, silence becomes the interstitial place where both West and East encounter muting effects. Silence resists binary terms because it does not operate in opposition to language nor does it silence only one term of a self-other dichotomy. The unspoken finds articulation in this tragedy through the fluid language of tears[55] there where ethnocentricism had cast discursive boundaries between culturally divided lovers. As such, this tragedy is at once imagined hybridity and interweaving of Western and Eastern (hi)stories as well as their undoing.

Over the possibility of multiculturalism, Titus opts for the collective cultural and political values of Rome. However, this choice (which reflects Rome's ethnocentric values) can be reread in terms of the wider significance of our postmodern condition which "lies in the awareness that the epistemological 'limits' of those ethnocentric ideas are also the enunciative boundaries of a range of other dissonant, even dissident histories and voices – women, the colonized, minority groups, the bearers of policed sexualities" (Bhabha 6). Due to the breakdown of logocentrism that is signified in Titus' aphasia and due to his appeal for Antiochus' voice, this tragedy presents a subtle resistance to imperialist discourse and its essentializations of 'dismissible' Oriental figures.

It is perhaps at the final moment of the tragedy that the full importance of the creation of Antiochus' role comes to light. It is thanks to his presence as *third* term that

[55] "An attentive listening constantly oscillates between plot and affect and results in sympathetic tears, thus reuniting in a cathartic gesture the most salient bodily features in Racinian tragedy – the voice that speaks, the ears that hear, and the eyes that weep" (Greenberg "Absolute Fantasies" 52).

binary structures are undone. For instance, in Bérénice's final goodbye to Titus and Antiochus, she states: "Adieu: servons tous trois d'exemple à l'univers / de l'amour la plus tendre et la plus malheureuse / dont il puisse garder l'histoire douloureuse" (v. 1514-16). Although a dismissed lover, the character of Antiochus becomes an indispensable support for this tragedy. Whereas Corneille's *Tite et Bérénice* presented two couples, Tite-Bérénice and Domitien-Domitia, Racine dismantles the general structure of dichotomy in *Bérénice* by offsetting any dual nature with the presence of a third protagonist, Antiochus. Along with Titus and Bérénice, Antiochus will also serve as an example of a tender and pitiable love despite the fact that love tends to exclude the third term; indeed, Antiochus is a remainder, but a privileged remainder. A triangular structure is established, at the base of which are two males, one Roman and one Oriental, and at the top of which is the Oriental female. This triangle suggests a natural competition between the Oriental and the Roman male, yet it favors Oriental representation over Western because of a 2:1 ratio. Antiochus further complicates and destabilizes duality at a linguistic level in the final lines of the play by refusing the comfortable pairing of verses. As Maskell states: "Nothing is more relaxing at the conclusion of a play than a comfortable couplet. Not so in *Bérénice*. Just as the heroine seems to be rounding everything off in her final speech, the last two syllables of the play are given to a different speaker, and Antiochus utters his metrically audacious *Hélas*" (131). Additionally, the dichotomy between speech and silence is undone with a word that connotes the utter loss of words; it is a passage of air, a sigh, *hélas*! Thus, the grand schemas that Racine traces (in his treatment of the relations between cultural others) is complicated at every turn with the symbolic intertwining of speech and silence.

An invocation for the world to embrace the tenderness and friendship that can be shared across boundaries of conqueror/conquered is one possible interpretation of the finale. Although these values can perhaps only be embraced in an ideal world rather than in Rome, the salutary effect and the veneration of these ideal values which once built a community between the three protagonists is not lost, "l'on ne cessera maintenant de les regretter" (Biet 134). One may also lament the unnecessary confusion that representations of the cultural other impose upon otherwise symbiotic relationships between cultural others. If protagonist and spectator alike mark this tragedy with their tears, it is not a cry of denunciation, but as Biet says:

> Il est communion, purgation et connaissance. Comment en effet ne pas voir que dans cette cérémonie partagée par tous dans l'enclos du théâtre, Racine propose une purgation des passions, non pas cathartique mais chrétienne ? [….] L'émotion et sa manifestation, les larmes, donnent une clef pour aborder la connaissance de soi, d'autrui et du monde. (136-37)

In these tears, an interstitial place is imagined, a place where the culturally divided lovers might be unified rather than separated. One cries over the loss of this imagined, multicultural space – this 'other scene' that functions much like the 'other scene' that Loraux describes in Greek tragedy, for even here in *Bérénice*, the call to listen to the shouts and murmurs of the protagonists

> tempts us beyond the spectacle and situates us in the 'other scene,' where the tragedy plays out scenarious unknown to the characters themselves and unknown even to the playwright. They are not, however, ignored by the audience, who react, as we have seen, with tears, the cathartic response of the body to the tragic voices it has heard before reverberating anew on its own inner stage. (Greenberg "Absolute Fantasies" 52)

This space, along with the love of Titus, is silenced with regret[56] by Racine, yet it is a constructive regret in that it makes possible the building of an imagined bridge between self and other despite the hegemonic impulse to formalize (Roman) imperial and colonial powers. This imagined space, though banished from the protagonists' reality, emerges

[56] Titus speaks of "un amour qui se tait à regret" (v. 450).

due to Racine's dismantling of the binary logic that divides the Orient and the West and forever cleaves Bérénice from Titus.

Some scholars have stressed the defeatedness of Bérénice, and consequently of the East[57], stating for example:

> [Bérénice and Antiochus], unlike the Roman emperor, cannot 'conquer' in the militaristic sense (in that sense they are impotent), but Bérénice firmly grasps the enduring nature of shame and guilt. Her abandonment by Titus, her humiliation, her proposed return to the East and to her own forgotten states and people, there to lick her wounds, promises a cyclical drama that will scarcely conclude with her departure. (Horowitz "East/West" 251)

However, we hope to have shown that if the silencing of Bérénice and Antiochus effectuates a dismissal of their subjectivity and of their presence, it is not without undermining Titus' own discourse and identity. Given the difficulty of the conquered Oriental other to achieve representational power in Rome (the heart of the Western model of colonialism), the sighs of the marginalized lovers rise above the clamor of the law that bids them to depart. Through a dramatization of silence, this tragedy intimates a concern for the emerging voice of the marginalized that combats or contradicts the imperial fear of contamination. Furthermore, the slippages of identity that Titus experiences undo the possibility of any clear opposition between East and West. Such slippages resist Orientalist discourses which essentialize the alterity of the Oriental world, often relegating it to the position of the conquerable and conquered. Racine inscribes within this tragedy a subtle critique of Orientalist representation by allowing voice to be transferred from the Western male to the Oriental male[58]. His invention of the character of Antiochus presents a *mise en abyme* of the mediation between East (Bérénice) and West (Titus); indeed, the role of Antiochus is key in revealing that mediation between

[57] Longino states: "The East left to its own devices, Antiochus and Bérénice to each other, spells impotence" (172).

[58] As well as by problematizing the duality of East and West that is proposed by Paulin, the voice of Rome

cultural others cannot escape its tendency towards many a *malentendu*. Indeed, love and loss hinge rather dramatically upon the gaps of representation that surround cultural alterity. In his dramatization of silence across cultural borders, Racine stirs empathy for those who are confronted with cultural opposition – and he does this through the story an Oriental woman whose name is imbued with the power to stand alone: Bérénice.

CHAPTER 2

THE HUSHED HAREM IN RACINE'S *BAJAZET*

Racinian drama poses the cultural other in terms of a cultural imaginary of the Orient and of Oriental characters. The majority of Racine's tragedies embrace the myth of the Orient[59], as evidenced by the Oriental setting for *Bajazet, Mithridate, Alexandre, Esther,* and *Athalie*[60], or by the Oriental object of desire in *Andromaque*, *Bérénice* and *Iphigénie*. While it is unusual for a Classical dramatist to depart from myth or Antiquity as a source for tragedy[61], it is relevant – and particularly so in relation to our study – that Racine's *Bajazet* is unique within his own œuvre due to its Oriental and contemporary subject. Notably, it is at the moment when Racine departs from the Classical tradition of borrowing from Antiquity that he inaugurates a study of cultural otherness in this *tragédie du sérail*, positing the Ottoman empire as a current source of fascination. Viala

[59] Edward Said speaks of the Orient's special place in Western experience, stating: "The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other" (1).

[60] Although the Oriental settings of *Esther* and *Athalie* are inspired by an interest in biblical texts, such a setting nonetheless gives rise to a moving account of silence and speech in contexts of religious persecution and subjection.

[61] André Blanc provides a condensed list of seventeenth-century works that were dedicated to the Oriental subject: In 1637, Mairet wrote *Le Grand et Dernier Soliman ou la Mort de Mustapha*; d'Alibray introduced *Soliman*; in 1641, Georges de Scudéry presented a play entitled *Ibrahim ou l'Illustra Bassa*; Desmares penned *Roxelane*, a tragic-comedy, in 1643; Tristan l'Hermite offered French audiences *Osman* in 1646; and Magnon's *Le Grand Tamerlan ou la mort de Bajazet* was shown in 1646 or 1647. Blanc adds: "En outre, une ambassade de la Sublime Porte avait été reçue par Louis XIV en 1670. La même année voyait la traduction de l'*Histoire de l'état présent de l'Empire ottoman* de Rycaut […] et surtout la célèbre turquerie du *Bourgeois gentilhomme*, commandée à Molière par Louis XIV" (189).

remarks the dichotomy between East and West, self and other, that gives shape to Racinian tragedy; he speaks of the "confrontations réitérées entre Orient et Occident" and the "espace d'affrontement du soi et de l'Autrui" ("Preface" 8), yet *Bajazet* is exceptional in that it is devoid of any Western character. The Orient is staged within the stifling atmosphere of the harem in Constantinople. Where then is the 'soi' in the *soi-autrui* confrontation?

With the disappearance of Roman or Greek sources, the Western self seems to fade from view. However, it reappears, rather surreptitiously, in the French perspective of the cultural other that can be traced within the prefaces (as well as the text and performance) of the tragedy. The prefaces give shape to the peephole through which the French consider the Orient and "make it speak"[62] (Said 20), thus presenting a specifically French perspective of the Orient. As the prefaces indicate, this perspective is not mediated by the order of Antiquity but is based on current news that French ambassadors report upon their return from the Orient. It is thus our objective to study the role of silence in the French construction – and inescapable mediation – of the cultural other. It is through such a study that one may observe various phenomenon and problems surrounding the mediation of the cultural other. It is likely that French audiences were contemplating a contemporary cultural counterpoint while viewing *Bajazet* in 1672[63]. How was this cultural counterpoint informed, constructed, or mediated? Furthermore, in

[62] According to Said, Orientalism occurs when the Westerner, having assumed some previous knowledge of the Orient, then "makes the Orient speak" (20).

[63] "If *Orientaux*, for Furetière, were defined by inhabiting the East 'à nostre égard', this definition also implies the concept of an Orient situated elsewhere in cultural, as well as geographical, terms. Indeed, such a use of the term *Orient* is intended for a readership who draw from the same cultural pool, and who have a shared conception of what constituted the *nous* to which Furetière implicitly refers" (Harrigan 17).

what ways does the failure of communication at the level of plot[64] speak to the metatextual level of the play? Indeed, silence seems to embody and to unify both levels of the play, signifying the ultimate concern and problematic of the (in)ability to say anything at all about the Orient. And thus, another pertinent question emerges: In what ways do Racine's representations of silence and of the Orient resist and/or conform to Orientalist reductions of the cultural other?

In our postcolonial reading of *Bajazet*, the French mediation of a cultural counterpoint indicates structures and paradigms that become more pronounced both during and in the aftermath of the French institution of colonialism. For instance, our exploration of cultural alterity as it seeps into theatrical representation in the early modern period will take as a *point de départ* a significant fact that is elucidated by the postcolonial critic Edward Said in his ground-breaking critique of the process of Orientalism in Western literature, namely: "The centuries-old designation of geographical space to the east of Europe as "Oriental" was partly political, partly doctrinal, and partly imaginative; it implied no necessary connection between actual experience of the Orient and knowledge of what is Oriental" (210). As Said points out, Orientalism references the 'cultural imaginary' since it does not imply a necessary connection between the actual experience of the Orient and the representation of the Orient. What may be forgotten in the dramatization of Oriental characters on the Classical stage is their mediation, that is, their inability to represent themselves: It is the French who, from a position which is exterior to the Orient, adjusts the frame through

[64] "The issue of communication in *Bajazet* is articulated in specific thematic declensions: the issue of honesty – truthful message of misinformation; of efficacy – the transmission or failure of the message; of the medium of the message – voice, body, or letter; and finally, of the reception of the message – skepticism, belief, credulity – all of these subject to interception and interpretation" (Longino 189).

which the Oriental is nonetheless perceived. Thus, even as Oriental characters speak in Racine's plays, there is no Oriental 'essence' that sustains that speech other than a purely imagined one. In fact, those that are said to represent Oriental characters are French actors speaking in perfect French[65]. According to Said, in order for the Oriental character to be represented in the West, the East is in fact *necessarily* absent to that speech, voiceless and mute. A fascinating parallel thus emerges as a premise that will gather support throughout this study: Theatre and Orientalism imitate one another as they draw upon the effects of silencing within a detached imaginary space.

The story that Racine chooses to dramatize in 1672 is that of Bajazet, an Ottoman prince who is perceived as a threat by his own brother, Amurat, the Sultan, who is off at war. Consequently, Bajazet is kept in Amurat's seraglio in Constantinople, a seraglio whose walls are likened to those of a prison. The harem has been left under the authority of the Sultan's preferred concubine, Roxane. Acomat, the Grand Vizir, has fallen out of favor with Arumat and has been plotting an insurgency wherein Arumat will be overthrown and Bajazet will be put in his place. He thus uses Roxane's love for Bajazet as a means to gain political support in the staging of the coup; she agrees to free Bajazet from subjugation and to crown him if Bajazet agrees to marry her in return. Bajazet's lack of compliance incites her to remind him of Amurat's orders to have him killed and to insist upon her power to extend or to end Bajazet's life. Bajazet is reluctant to cede to her desires because he and Atalide, both of Ottoman blood, are secretly in love. Whereas Bajazet is hesitant to placate Roxane in any provisional way, Atalide convinces Roxane of Bajazet's love and urges him to feign this love as it is his only means of survival. When at last he adheres to Atalide's plot, she falsely accuses Bajazet of infidelity. To

[65] In 1672, *Bajazet* was played by the troope of the Hôtel de Bourgogne.

reassure her, Bajazet writes a letter swearing his love to her. Upon discovering this letter, Roxane feels betrayed and orders his death. In the interim, Orcan, a messenger sent by Amurat, arrives at the seraglio, and under the orders of the Sultan, kills Roxane and Bajazet. When Atalide learns of her lover's inability to escape his forewarned death, the curtain closes on her suicide.

The Fluidity of (Geographical) Representation

In the first preface that Racine writes for *Bajazet*, which appears in the first edition of 1672, he demonstrates little need to justify the Oriental setting or tone of this tragedy. What is in question is the fact that the story has not yet been publicly recorded and thus the need for proof of authenticity through other, veritable sources. As Gross points out: "Since *Bajazet* is a tragedy about a contemporary subject, historical (that is, written) sources are obviously wanting" (146). While addressing this oddity of origination, Racine justifies his choice in story by the fact that it is "très véritable" (24). He cites M. le comte de Cézy, ambassador of France to Constantinople from 1618 to 1641, as the one who widely reported the particularities of Bajazet's death upon his return to France and underscores in particular that "il y a quantité de personnes à la cour qui se souviennent de les avoir entendu conter" (24). Racine also cites his conversations with Monsieur de la Haye, the successor of M. le comte de Cézy, as another source. It is interesting that Racine is careful to not simply rely on *ouï-dire*, or hearsay[66], as a support,

[66] In his essay entitled "Des Cannibales" (1580), Montaigne introduces a discussion of the Native Americans (a cultural other) by referencing hearsay as a source of contemporary information. This

but that he also claims to "ne rien avancer qui ne fût conforme à l'histoire des Turcs et à la nouvelle Relation de l'Empire Ottoman, que l'on a traduite de l'anglais" (24)[67]. What is of interest to this study is that his intention to "ne rien changer ni aux mœurs ni aux coutumes de la nation" (24) is nonetheless based on a Western perspective of the Turks, whether it be the recounted perspective of the two French ambassadors or the written perspective of the British. Of interest to our analysis of this tragedy is the unearthing of the ways in which the Orient is (already presented as) mediated by Racine.

Four years later, in 1676, Racine writes a second preface. Here, the quadrupling in its length signals already the problematic that Racine unavoidably encounters in representing the cultural other. The pressure he feels to verify the details of the story becomes more evident. First, Racine revamps his preface by inserting a brief history of the unstable reign of power in the Turkish empire as it concerns the Sultan Amurat and his four brothers: The janissaries murdered the Sultan Amurat's first brother; Amurat had the second brother killed at the beginning of his reign; Bajazet, "Prince de grande espérance" (25) was spared until Amurat's siege of Babylon; and the fourth brother was considered to be an imbecile and of little consequence to Amurat's power. In giving a

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technique of telling what one has heard is similar to Racine's reference to – and dependence upon – hearsay. Racine's reference to de la Haye and to de Cézy resonates with Montaigne's explication of his source, for both Racine and Montaigne will write about a cultural other with whom they have had little to no contact. Indeed, their study of the cultural other is based on secondary (and removed) contact. Thus, Montaigne begins his essay: "Cet homme que j'avoy, estoit homme simple et grossier, qui est une condition propre à rendre veritable tesmoignage : Car les fines gens remarquent bien plus curieusement, et plus de choses, mais ils les glosent : et pour faire valoir leur interpretation, et la persuader, ils ne se peuvent garder d'alterer un peu l'Histoire : Ils ne vous representent jamais les choses pures ; ils les inclinent et masquent selon le visage qu'ils leur ont veu : et pour donner credit à leur jugement, et vous y attirer, prestent volontiers de ce costé là à la matiere, l'allongent et l'amplifient. Ou il faut un homme tres-fidelle, ou si simple, qu'il n'ait pas dequoy bastir et donner de la vray-semblance à des inventions fauces ; et qui n'ait rien espousé. Le mien estoit tel : et outre cela il m'a faict voir à diverses fois plusieurs mattelots et marchans, qu'il avoit cogneuz en ce voyage. Ainsi je me contente de cette information, sans m'enquerir de ce que les Cosmographes en disent" (I.31).

[67] The *Present State of the Ottoman Empire* was originally published in English in 1666 by Sir Paul Ricaut. It was then translated into French by Pierre Briot in 1671.

history to the Sultan and to his brothers, Racine establishes the political background of *Bajazet* for French audiences who may be unfamiliar with Ottoman history, while also featuring the instability of Ottoman power. Furthermore, the political environment of the Ottoman empire is set apart from that of France where the execution of a leader was as yet unthinkable: From the seventeenth-century French perspective, "Un prince de sang, quoi qu'il fît, était intouchable" (Blanc 188).

In the second preface, it is no longer simply that M. le comte de Cézy spread the news of Bajazet's death, but Racine adds that "il vit même plusieurs fois Bajazet, à qui on permettait de se promener quelquefois à la pointe du Sérail, sur le canal de la mer Noire" (25-6). The geographical details of the Seraglio point and of the Bosporus, the canal of the Black Sea, are noteworthy in that they situate the Oriental prince along a busy cultural waterway[68]. The Seraglio point is a promontory overlooking the Marmara Sea (called the Propontide by the Greeks) which rather significantly allows the Black Sea (the East) to flow into the Mediterranean Sea (the West)[69]. The Bosporus served as the cultural

[68] Grelot describes his impressions of the Seraglio point and of these waters as he traveled from the Iles des Princes in the Marmara Sea to the city of Constantinople in his *Relation nouvelle d'un voyage à Constantinople en 1671*: "Au sortir de ces îles […] on commence à s'approcher de Constantinople que l'on voit à main gauche, et à en côtoyer les murs qui règnent depuis le château des sept tours jusques à la pointe du sérail, en suite de quoi la route du vaisseau doit être vers le Nord-Est pour doubler la pointe du sérail, afin d'éviter le courant continuel des eaux du Bosphore qui descendent avec impétuosité de la Mer Noire dans la Propontide, et qui jetteraient infailliblement le vaisseau sur Acropolis où est la pointe du sérail" (Qtd. in Pignot 76-77).

[69] If the accuracy of the representation of the Orient is in question in Racine's *Bajazet* (for, as we shall see, his contemporary critics raised this issue), it is significant that the surface waters of the Bosporus symbolize the difficulties of the West to penetrate natural barriers that protect the Eastern sea regions from infiltration from Western seas. "The main flow [of the Bosporus] is north-northeast to south-southeast, from the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara. […] Along projecting headlands the southward current is strong enough to hinder the passage of small craft northward" (Ullyott and Ilgaz 44). As seen in the previous footnote, Grelot refers to the violence of the "Courant continuel des eaux du Bosphore qui descendent avec impétuosité de la Mer Noire." On the other hand, it is said that boatmen and fishermen have long acknowledged a subsurface current called the *kanal* at the deeper levels of the Bosporus: The *kanal* "flows along the floor of the Bosporus from the Sea of Marmara toward the Black Sea—that is, in a direction opposite to that of the surface flow" (Ullyott and Ilgaz 44). The ambivalence of Eastern and Western directions of influence is reflected in what may be a current that is (almost imperceptibly) double. Since

crossroads of the early modern world and to this day it divides the city of Constantinople, with Asia on the Eastern side and Europe on the Western side. Thus, Bajazet walks the shared borders of the sea and harem as well as the joint frontier of East and West. The description of this promenade in the preface indicates a curious fluidity of cultural borders, first in revealing the permeable quality of the harem's walls (which opposes the rigidity of the prison-like walls in the tragedy's plot[70]) and second, in liquefying the boundary that separates Asia from Europe. The notion of frontier is itself diluted as the perpetual flux of the Bosporus waters both joins and separates Europe and Asia and as the city of Constantinople encompasses both sides of the equation. Thus, the undercurrent of this second preface is at once assimilation and estrangement of the Orient, a disorientating of distinctions, as if the tension between self and other within the French cultural imaginary is figured in the waterway which merges East and West. Remarkably, a political argument offered by Grosrichard supports this general metaphor of fluidity between the Orient and the West that is already present in Racine's preface:

> The security that Europe found for itself in the monstrosity of Asiatic despotism gives way to an increasingly insistent anxiety about the nature and future of the [French] monarchy [….] Thus, while the despotic Orient is indeed the Other held up for us to see, it is also the one that regards us, in every sense of that word. Ever since the envoy from the Sublime Porte visited Louis XIV in 1669, the gaze of the Oriental has haunted France and Paris. From the 'Turkish spy' to the 'Chinese spy', how many spying eyes have been imagined in order to strip us of our own secrets! [….] This gaze, which to me is other, knows more about me than I do myself. And when I attempt to go and look behind what I believe to be the point from which, over there in that other world, it looks at me, it is myself and our world that I find in the end. (23-25)

To better conceive of the constructed foreign cultural lens through which the French see *themselves*, one need only think of Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (1730), a work whose original subtitle "Dans le goût de *l'Espion dans les cours*" tipped its hat to a fictional

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Antiquity, the Bosporus has been an ambivalent figure as it has been considered either "as a boundary between Europe and Asia or as a channel connecting the Black Sea and the Mediterranean" (44).

[70] "Le sérail est un lieu clos; les personnages ne peuvent entrer en communication avec le monde extérieur. C'est surtout Bajazet qui devient la victime de cette réclusion" (Van der Starre 95).

account of a Turkish spy which was published as early as 1684[71]. Indeed, for Grosrichard, 'the fiction of Asiatic despotism' functioned as a horrifying and deeply attractive fantasy during the development of the French status as subjects[72] of desire and of politics in the Classical period (Dolar x).

Historically then, the construction of the cultural other functions much like a mirror which the French hold up for themselves. Interestingly, the merging of West and East is also alluded to in the setting of *Bajazet*, a setting which at first glance appears to be purely Oriental, although its geographical descriptions do not mark it as such. Surrounding this tragedy is a certain hybridization of this city's Eastern and Western heritage that is presented not only in the city's geography and waterway, but also in the history of its names – Byzantium, Constantinople[73] and Istanbul[74]. In *Bajazet*, the city is referred to as Byzance[75], a name that was attributed to the ancient city by the Greeks,

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[71] This voluminous work by Giovanni Paulo Marana is entitled: *L'espion dans les cours des princes chrétiens. Lettres ou mémoires d'un envoyé secret de la Porte dans les cours de l'Europe, où l'on voit les découvertes qu'il a faites dans toutes les cours, avec une dissertation curieuse de leurs forces, politique et religion.*

[72] It is primarily during the eighteenth century that "the basic social and political structures of modernity were laid down and elaborated, along with its basic forms of subjectivity" (Dolar xi).

[73] Constantinople is an "Eastern but Christian city" (Topping 25) and thus it represents sameness and difference. "Constantinople occupied a unique place in the Byzantine empire, for its foundation symbolized the beginning of the eastern Roman Christian empire. [….] This Orthodox Christian city represented continuity as it was the acknowledged heir to the pagan Greco-Roman civilization of antiquity and a center of exceptional political, economic, and cultural importance throughout the Middle Ages" (El-Cheikh 60-61).

[74] At different times the city was the capital of the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, the Latin Empire, and the Ottoman Empire.

[75] "Que ton retour tardait à mon impatience !
Et que d'un oeil content je te vois dans Byzance !" (v. 9-10).

"Mais comme vous savez, malgré ma diligence,
Un long chemin sépare et le camp et Byzance" (v. 25-6).

"Vous les verrez soumis rapporter dans Byzance
L'exemple d'une aveugle et basse obéissance" (v. 61-2).

"Déclarons-nous, madame, et rompons le silence.
Fermons-lui dès ce jour les portes de Byzance" (v. 225-26).

seven times throughout the play. Curiously, Constantinople (the official name of the city in the seventeenth century) and Istanbul (the name which was commonly used by the Turks long before the fall of the city in 1453) are nowhere evoked in the dialogue, although Racine refers to the setting as Constantinople in the prefaces and in his description of the scene [76]. In a study of the translation of *Bajazet* into the Arabic language in 1967, Mazawi and Martin remark that even the modern-day Arab spectator would understand the name of Byzance to be an anachronism:

> La licence poétique que prend Racine en se référant à Byzance ne pouvait guère constituer pour les traducteurs un décor vraisemblable convenant au sérail des Sultans ottomans. [….] Aussi ne peuvent-ils passer sous silence le fait que les Ottomans avaient établi leur empire à partir du XVe siècle sur les vestiges de la Byzance de l'Empire romain d'Orient. Ceci dénote un souci d'exactitude historique, sans doute lié au fait que les spectateurs arabes n'auraient simplement pas compris le texte racinien, et auraient cru à une erreur. (59)

The poetic license of Racine reveals the representation of the Orient in *Bajazet* to be a construction of a cultural perspective rather than a faithful representation of any real Oriental referent. What's more, the authors underscore a striking difference in the Arabic translation, further demonstrating that this Oriental story is colored by a French point of view: In the original text, Osmin speaks of Roxane whom the Sultan had chosen "Entre tant de beautés dont l'Europe et l'Asie / Dépeuplent leurs Etats et remplissent sa cour" (v. 98-99). Yet in the Arabic translation, the translators[77] are obliged to reverse the points of reference and to write 'l'Asie et l'Europe'. Mazawi and Martin perceptively conclude

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"[…] Amurat le dédaigne, et veut loin de Byzance
Transporter désormais son trône et sa présence" (v. 245-46).

"Les chefs de notre loi conspirent avec nous ;
Le vizir Acomat vous répond de Byzance" (v. 432-33).

"Byzance par mes soins presque entière assemblée
Interroge ses chefs, de leur crainte troublée" (v. 134-35).

[76] "La scène est à Constantinople, autrement dite Byzance, dans le sérail du Grand Seigneur" (29).

[77] Kalil Sharif El Din and Youssef Mohamed Rhida translated *Bajazet* into Arabic in 1967 (Edition: Dar Al- Kitab Al-Lubnani, Beyrouth).

that "Cette inversion témoigne du désir de *recentrer la pièce dans la perspective propre à un habitant de l'Orient, qui regarde de son centre vers l'Europe*. Le point de vue de la pièce, au sens propre et au sens figuré, a donc été modifié" (60; my emphasis). Given the dominant presence of the French perspective in Racine's *Bajazet*, one may ask in what ways and to what ends it overshadows or deforms representations of the Oriental other.

The Preamble to a Fictional Space

In the absence of an Oriental perspective, the French perspective of the Orient cannot help but create a blend of fact and fiction. As early as 1678, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, a French traveler and geographer, observed that the ability to say anything at all about the Oriental atmosphere of the sultan's harem was almost impossible given its inaccessibility – and thus a fictional view of the harem took the place of an accurate one. Yeazell further elaborates upon Tavernier's assertion:

> If distant places and peoples have always tempted human beings to fantastic projections of their own wishes and fears, then the blank space of the harem, sealed by definition from the eyes of Western men, only magnified the temptation. "Unless one wishes to compose a fiction," Tavernier wrote of the amorous secrets of the sultan's harem, "it is difficult to talk about them"; but for several hundred years, writers and artists managed to "talk" about the harem by doing just that. (1)

It seems that fiction is already established in the second preface when Racine states that the M. le compte de Cézy once saw Bajazet – a statement that is dubious at best. Whether invented or not, the inclusion of this detail permits another strategic phrase in which the character of the Oriental prince is rendered amiable and assimiable by the French reader/spectator: "M. le comte de Cézy disait que c'était un prince de bonne mine" (26). Bajazet's appearance is credited with an appealing aspect (at least, according

to the French ambassador) and his character is thus imagined as pleasing to the eye. Thus, with just a few short strokes, Racine supplements the authenticity of this story with an opinion – an opinion that borders on fiction as it cannot be substantiated by positive knowledge. The insertion of the Frenchman's opinion signals a need to help the reader accept the image of the Oriental man's foreign – yet good-natured and thus admissible – physique. It also signals a fictionalization of Bajazet's character even as Racine attempts to prove in his second preface that the subject of his play is very true. Van der Starre considers the assertion that the ambassador saw Bajazet to be nothing less than an invented account:

> Malheureusement, il ne semble pas que l'on puisse accepter sans réserve la déclaration de Racine. D'abord, elle ne fait pas partie du texte proprement dit. D'autre part, on sait que l'auteur a ajouté à la première *Préface*, très brève, un passage assez long, destiné à réfuter les reproches que lui avaient faits ses critiques et à prouver l'authenticité des faits qu'il raconte dans sa tragédie. Or, c'est ce besoin de se justifier qui rend un peu suspectes les affirmations de Racine. Ce compte de Cézy, qui aurait vu Bajazet, c'est presque trop beau pour être vrai. Quoi qu'il en soit, si l'on ne tient compte que du texte de la pièce, il est évident que Bajazet n'a jamais l'occasion de s'évader du palais pour se promener : le sérail est une prison dont il ne sort jamais. La phrase de Racine nous semble être en contradiction avec les données, avec l'atmosphère même de la pièce. (87)

The contradiction of the harem's depiction in the preface and in the plot allows us to hear echoes not only of Tavernier's assertion regarding fictions of the Sultan's harem, but also of Said's notion that Orientalism is predicated upon the absence of any real Oriental referent. Thus, the visual detail of the M. le compte de Cézy seeing the Oriental prince, the very element that was to further guarantee the authenticity of *Bajazet*, testifies instead to the semi-fictive aspects of representation – as Pavis asserts, "Dramatic space is the space of Fiction" (157). Indeed, in creating a scenario in which the protagonist of the play is a man who was seen by the French ambassador in the real world, the preface alludes to the dependency of theatrical production upon the actors' bodies. Yet in theatre, the actor's body is divested of the real; the spectator does not see the real Bajazet in the

flesh, but sees instead an actor who mimes a textual figure. As Uberfeld states in , "Il n'est pas possible dans le domaine du théâtre, d'échapper totalement à une *mimésis* qui vient déjà du fait que la réalité corporelle de l'acteur (comédien) est le mime du personnage-texte" (123)[78]. The inability to see this Oriental prince (as does the ambassador?) reflects the inexplicit command for the spectator to cede to both theatrical illusion and cultural imagination when viewing this tragedy. Theatricality calls attention to itself and to the fictional mediation of Oriental characters.

In drawing upon visualizations of the material aspects of Bajazet's character, Racine's second preface offers an extra scene – 'extra' because it is not included in the representation of the tragedy, nor is it entirely separate from it. The result is that before the tragedy even begins, the reader perceives Bajazet to be doubly passive: First, Bajazet is seen by the M. le comte de Cézy whereas Bajazet himself is not said to see him in return[79]. Second, his promenade outside the walls of the harem is said to depend upon the permission of others. Furthermore, the tragedy is framed by a scene that one must imagine through the eyes of the French ambassador in order to legitimate the story and thereby accept, one might say, the contract between spectator and spectacle. Yet in fact, the additional information presented in the second preface can only result from an exterior (and more specifically, French) look upon the Oriental man. This exterior look originates the cultural 'fiction' of this representation. While Racine bases his tragedy upon the interior position that the comte de Cézy once held in Constantinople as ambassador, the status of the French ambassador as foreign to the Oriental culture while

[78] Earlier on, Ubersfeld explains: "Même quand il s'agit du personnage classique, dont nul ne conteste l'«existence» au moins virtuelle, l'analyse qu'on en fait contribue à l'atomiser. Qu'on voie en lui *l'actant*, *l'acteur*, *le rôle*, on fait de lui, […] le lieu de *fonctions*, et non plus la copie-substance d'un être" (119).
[79] It is as if Bajazet is an actor who, unknowingly, has just walked onto a theatrical stage and as if the French ambassador happened to be sitting in the dark theatre room at that precise moment.

in that position is problematic. The exteriority of the ambassador's perspective is not without effect on the tragedy itself. As we shall see, it cannot be contained within the preface alone, but rather, it informs and frames the mediation of cultural otherness in the story.

Interestingly enough, Barthes attributes the ambiguous nature of this tragedy's closed space to its dependency upon an Exterior: "Ce lieu fermé n'est pourtant pas autarcique, il dépend d'un Extérieur. C'est cette ambiguïté en quelque sorte organique qui fonde tout *Bajazet*" (100). Barthes cites this 'Extérieur' as Amurat, the Sultan who has given Roxane all authority over the seraglio while absent at war – yet Roxane's authority is limited despite Amurat's absence for the Sultan remains "un regard invisible" (100) in the seraglio. If the founding ambiguity of *Bajazet* is its dependency upon an Exterior, it is important to connect this exteriority to the prefaces and to the perspective of the French ambassador that is given therein. As a figure that circulated within Constantinople as a cultural outsider, the French ambassador seems to guarantee the veracity of the story of Bajazet while he actually undermines it. Thus, the 'regard invisible' of Amurat can be likened to the metatextual 'regard invisible' of the French ambassador; in both cases, what is exterior to the harem manipulates or haunts the activity within its walls.

Distortions of the Peephole

The seventeenth-century French spectator has the sense of viewing the distant Oriental characters through a peep-hole: One may look without being seen. This peephole is crafted within the absence of any real Oriental nature of the characters. After all, *Bajazet* is a theatricalization of hearsay. Additionally, the theatrical genre insists upon the characters' mediation since actors speak the lines that are scripted for them. Ultimately, what is painted within this tragedy is the failure of accurately viewing – or rather of hearing – the Oriental speak. Indeed, in order to introduce an Oriental story that is relayed by a French ambassador and then relayed by Racine, the supplemental scene of spying upon Bajazet as he walks the seraglio point is, perhaps without coincidence, a fundamental irony; the Oriental nature of the tragedy is already compromised by the angle(s) from which it is told.

The exteriority that imbues the representation of the Orient with a lack of legitimacy can be further elucidated thanks to Gross' analysis. When Gross reads the preface and the opening of the play in conjunction with one another, he recognizes the limits of authority that Racine encounters, though for him the limits of authority are based on the absence of intertextuality or the lack of a written source for the tragedy. Gross locates this limiting of the authenticity in the plot itself, citing the outset of the play where Osmin announces the instability of the Sultan Amurat. This announcement causes Acomat to dangerously continue with plans of insurgency. Yet the news of the Sultan Amurat's political instability, received by word of mouth, turns out to be unsubstantiated. Thus Gross' claim that:

> The spring which activates the tragic action is therefore for all intents and purposes a misinformed account, a fiction. When, in light of this revelation, the preface is read retrospectively, the fact that Osmin's account turns out to be false has dire consequences for the tragedy: it points to the questionable authenticity of the very source of the play, a re-recounting of an eyewitness account. A sort of vicious circle of reading ensues: the events of the play question the professed authenticity of the preface, which in turn undermines the authority of the tragedy itself. (149)

If, as Gross argues, the prefaces to *Bajazet* undermine the authority of the tragedy itself, it is not simply because of the lack of intertextuality. One must take Gross' notion of the undermining of authority further and ask: What is the source of the lack of authority? How could a Classical French tragedy profess authority when depicting the Oriental other?

Ultimately, the prefaces' supplementation of the tragedy signals the fact that what is foreign must be introduced to the French imaginary landscape through a process of relay – namely, what the ambassador heard while in Constantinople, what he saw there, what he reported back, and what his personal impression of Bajazet's physique was. Yet this relaying from afar does not repair, but rather signals, the impossibility of assimilating or reconstituting the origin, the setting, or the cultural background of this story – thus the ridiculous notion of ever representing the Orient *as it is*. As Longino indicates:

> The second preface acts as a supplement to shore up the gaps of communication left by the play. The fact that two of them are needed attests to the inadequacy not of the first, the second, or even both, but to the inefficacy of any preface and ultimately of the play itself as a series of communication acts – indeed, of any attempt at communication. (195)

What must be recognized, however, is that the inefficacy of communication within the tragedy's storyline ultimately serves a purpose which is all its own – it alerts the meta-textual reader to the Orientalism which, as a fiction of the cultural other, inadvertently veils the gaps within the partiality of perspective that the ambassador reports. The ambassador brings home booty from the Orient in the form of stories that he uses like

currency to earn popularity and prestige among ever-curious French audiences[80]. Yet, any actual (or even fictional) referent of the Oriental other, when processed in a Western context, undergoes a partial translation so that a portion of it becomes lost in a gibberish which the original use of the Greek term 'barbarism' connoted, a term which the French employ to describe the Oriental other. In uncovering the exteriority of the ambassador's perspective upon which *Bajazet* is founded (as well as gesturing toward the failure of communication surrounding the play), the prefaces foreground a postcolonial notion about discourse as it pertains to cultural alterity, namely that "what is commonly circulated by it is not 'truth' but representations" (Said 21).

The insufficient perspective of the ambassador exemplifies the condition of theatrical discourse itself which rests on "un présupposé fundamental: *nous sommes au théâtre*" (Ubersfeld *Lire le théâtre* 258). Due to this theatrical premise, theatrical discourse is always divested of any real referent:

> Le discours de théâtre apparaît alors déconnecté du réel référentiel, accroché au seul référent scénique, 'débrayé' par rapport à l'efficacité de la vie réelle. [….] Le présupposé inscrit donc fortement tout le discours du scripteur dans le cadre de la communication théâtrale, avec son autonomie et sa déconnection du réel. (Ubersfeld *Lire le théâtre* 261)

This disconnection between theatrical representation and its referent is crucial in term of a possible link between theatre and Orientalization – especially when we consider Said's argument that the apparent veracity of a written statement about (or a representation of) the Orient "relies very little, and cannot instrumentally depend, on the Orient as such. On the contrary, the written statement is a presence to the reader by virtue of its having excluded, displaced, made supererogatory any such *real thing* as 'the Orient.' Thus all of

[80] "Lay travelers to the East brought back Classical artifacts, *curiosités*, and often stupendous wealth to homelands in which oriental fashions were *à la mode* and knowledge of the Orient was considered a valuable subject of learning" (Harrigan 11).

Orientalism stands forth and away from the Orient" (21-2). Theatrically, *Bajazet* is a stage that, as theatre, is necessarily disconnected from the real world, and culturally, it is an imaginary space/stage that is removed from the real Orient. Furthermore, this fundamental cut from the real that composed both theatre and Orientalism seems to be diffracted across the structure of the tragedy, for as Forestier remarks: "Avec une moyenne de 49 vers par scène, *Bajazet* apparaît comme la plus 'hachée' des tragédies de Racine" (1506).

Cultural distancing gives way to a strange transference of time and space in the second preface. Here, Racine responds to criticism, stating: "Quelques lecteurs pourront s'étonner qu'on ait osé mettre sur la scène une histoire si récente" (26). Naturally, the contemporary element of a tragedy would put into question the relationship that the spectator may expect to have with the protagonists upon the Classical stage. In reply, Racine prescribes geographical distance and cultural unfamiliarity as the remedy for such qualms:

> L'éloignement des pays répare en quelque sorte la trop grande proximité des temps. Car le peuple ne met guère de différence entre ce qui est, si j'ose ainsi parler, à mille ans de lui, et ce qui en est à mille lieues. C'est ce qui fait, par exemple, que les personnages turcs, quelques modernes qu'ils soient, ont de la dignité sur notre théâtre. On les regarde de bonne heure comme anciens. Ce sont des mœurs et des coutumes toutes différentes. Nous avons si peu de commerce avec les princes et les autres personnes qui vivent dans le Sérail, que nous les considérons, pour ainsi dire, comme des gens qui vivent dans un autre siècle que le nôtre. (26)

The bizarre confusion of space with time is supposed to excuse the modern framing of this story. As Longino points out: "In order to justify treating the contemporary and newsworthy story of Bajazet on the classical stage, Racine insisted here on the strangeness, the 'Otherness' of the culture he was dramatizing" (194). The cultural distancing of the setting grants an air of dignity to the Oriental characters which makes them assimiable as 'anciens' to the classical stage. However, it is worth remarking that

within the subtlety of Racine's explication one can discern that an insistence upon cultural alterity – 'ce sont des mœurs et des coutumes toutes différentes' – does not necessarily dismiss criticisms of the verisimilitude of the story, but rather anticipates them. For if the customs of the Oriental culture are completely different from those of the French, then these unfamiliar customs would be quite difficult to represent – and to critique – in the French staging of the harem. Thus, the lengths that Racine goes to in justifying the source of *Bajazet* point ironically to the inescapable difficulty of representing otherness.

For instance, a critique of *Bajazet* given by a contemporary of Racine, Donneau de Visé, founder of *Le Mercure Galant,* indicates the inability to construct the cultural other without projecting the self onto that construction. De Visé insisted that the characters in *Bajazet* "were really French courtiers got up as Turks" (Qtd. in Campbell 92). This criticism seems to imply that the cultural other is not at all 'other', but a makeshift representation of the French on what becomes an orientalized (French) stage. Rather than perceiving a Turkish character, spectators watched a distant self, or rather, a masked self. Madame de Sévigné[81], another contemporary of Racine, claims that the Oriental heroines are unrealistic, further claiming that Turkish customs are not well-observed in this play: "Les mœurs des Turcs y sont mal observées; ils ne font point tant de façons pour se marier" (Qtd. in Maison 214) [82]. Not only is it the failure of the

[81] Madame de Sévigné is a rather biased commentator insofar as she widely dismisses Racine in favor of Corneille.

[82] Madame de Sévigné, in her letter to Madame de Grignan, dated the 16th of March, 1672, writes: "Le personnage de Bajazet est glacé; les mœurs des Turcs y sont mal observées ; ils ne font point tant de façons pour se marier ; le dénouement n'est point bien préparé : on n'entre point dans les raisons de cette grande tuerie. Il y a pourtant des choses agréables, et rien de parfaitement beau, rien qui enlève, point de ces tirades de Corneille qui font frissonner. Ma fille gardons-nous bien de lui comparer Racine, sentons-en la différence. Il y a des endroit froids et faibles, et jamais il n'ira plus loin qu'*Alexandre* et qu'*Andromaque*. *Bajazet* est au-dessous, au sentiment de bien des gens, et au mien, si j'ose me citer" (Qtd. in Maison 214).

representation of the foreigner which is disparaged by Racine's critics, but more distinctively, it is the representation of the Oriental other as female which trespasses against the limits of the French perception of the other.

Culturally Ambiguous Heroines

Racine addresses the complaint of his depiction of Oriental women in the second preface; the fact that he does so suggests that strong criticisms had been made. He states: "Quelques gens ont dit que mes héroïnes étaient trop savantes en amour et trop délicates pour des femmes nées parmi des peuples qui passent ici pour barbares" (26). The excess – 'trop' – of the delicacy or refined nature of the Oriental women is critiqued in light of the barbarism that French audiences of the time generally applied to Oriental people. The pejorative sense of the word 'barbare' might strike our modern-day ear, but it is apparent that at the time in which this was written, the French perception of the Oriental other as 'barbare' was, in fact, the norm despite – or perhaps because of – its pejorative sense. What is interesting is that this stereotype, from which the Oriental women also had no refuge, persisted regardless of the faraway and guarded world of the harem in which she lived. One must note that this perception of the cultural other had taken shape during the Classical period despite the period's limited access to ascertainable knowledge of the Oriental world – and thus the limitations or embellishments of perspective upon which we insist. Yet again, for such criticisms of Racine's Oriental heroines to have been issued, a French perception of the feminine

cultural other must have already become standardized – despite the fact that, as Racine says, these are people with which the French have "si peu de commerce" (26).

What is particularly contested by critics of this tragedy is that the women do not reveal the barbaric quality of the Oriental other, but are set apart from it; the women seem to be *too* knowledgeable, delicate, or exquisite in the ways of love. It is clear from the reception of this tragedy that Orientalism was in vogue in the year of its production[83], for the critics stipulate the need for more differentiation between Westerners and the Oriental characters than Racine actually gives. Orientalism, or essentializations of the cultural other, were thus in demand. Oddly, and perhaps even incongruously, the only recourse Racine takes to combat the limited Western perspective of Oriental women is to project limitations onto *their* way of life in the East. In so doing, he depicts the restricted dimensions of the harem itself and alludes to the limitations placed upon their education and time. The problem is thus averted, or rather, displaced: It is no longer the French knowledge of the Oriental female that is limited, but it is the activities of the women of the harem that are limited. Furthermore, the conditions of the female life as described by Racine strategically lend credence to the delicacy of the Oriental heroines for which he is criticized:

> Mais sans parler de tout ce qu'on lit dans les relations des voyageurs, il me semble qu'*il suffit de dire que la scène est dans le Sérail*. En effet, y a-t-il une cour au monde où la jalousie et l'amour doivent être si bien connus que dans un lieu où tant de rivales sont *enfermées* ensemble, et où toutes ces femmes *n'ont point d'autre étude*, dans une éternelle oisiveté, que d'apprendre à plaire et à se faire aimer ? (26; my emphasis)

[83]"The [17th century] public was intrigued by travellers' tales of their adventures in strange lands inhabited by people who *seemed to live completely unlike Europeans* [….] Born from and in turn nourishing the image of the East and of its inhabitants, travel narratives were much more than simple geographical descriptions [….] From these narratives emerged a picture of the East which had to meet the twin requirements of faithful transcription and the interest of readership" (Harrigan 11; my emphasis). For commentaries on the reception of Racine's theatre, see *Le public de théâtre et son histoire* and *Histoire de la critique dramatique en France*. Both works are written by Maurice Descotes.

Racine covers over the gaps in knowledge of Oriental women by reducing their lives and desires to a set of conceptions that remains unjustified, proving that "in Orientalist writing, *discourses of cultural and sexual difference are powerfully mapped onto each other*" (Yegenoglu 46). One can see in the need to defend his portrayal of Oriental women that the hazards of representing cultural otherness are more poignant when cultural difference involves gender difference. The Oriental woman is doubly othered – first because of her culture and second, because of her gender. The desire to speak *for* her is evident in the criticisms to which Racine responds in the second preface and in the insufficient explanation that he proffers in declaring her world to be one of indolence, jealousy, and love.

If Racine is criticized for projecting the delicacy of French women onto his Oriental heroines, it is curious that Mathé denies this Western attribute of delicacy in Racine's portrayal of Oriental women, stating: "Les deux protagonistes ont la mentalité et le tempérament des Orientaux : Bajazet, indolent et fataliste, incapable de réagir, – Roxane, sensuelle, forcenée, *n'ayant ni la délicatesse, ni la fierté d'une femme d'Occident*" (81-2; my emphasis). Mathé points out the exotic quality of this tragedy of the seraglio, defending Racine against the critics (Corneille, Robinet, de Visé, Mme de Sévigné) who denied the tragedy any Oriental tone. Yet it is interesting that Mathé props his argument upon further essentializations of the sensuality of Oriental women. Indeed, the characteristics that are imposed upon the women of the harem, either by Racine, by his critics, or by Mathé, is what Yegenoglu would call 'the phallocentric discourse of femininity':

> The Orient, seen as the embodiment of sensuality, is always understood in feminine terms and accordingly its place in Western imagery has been constructed through the simultaneous gesture of racialization and feminization. [….] The process of

> Orientalization of the Orient is one that intermingles with its feminization. The interlocking of the representation of cultural and sexual difference is secured through mapping the discourse of Orientalism onto the phallocentric discourse of femininity. (73)

It thus seems that the excess of the otherness of Oriental women lacks expression in Western representation, save in Orientalist, phallocentric discourses that only *appear* to rescue the gaps in feminine or Oriental representation. The other as Oriental and female undergoes various distortions as she is processed by Western perspectives[84]. Furthermore, in *Bajazet*, Racine allows us to peer into the inconsistencies of (theatrical) representations of the other by portraying Oriental heroines as ambiguously Western. He thus reflects what Bhabha describes as "the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (122). This tendency to cast the cultural other into a recognizable portrait betrays a desire to contain the image of the other, as if the excess of otherness would otherwise eclipse the representation of the self (when in fact the opposite is the case). As evidenced by the criticism cited above, the temptation to compare and contrast Racine's Oriental heroines to French women exists not only because of the obvious lack in ascertainable knowledge of Oriental women, but also because the West is familiar with the regulatory control not only of the image of the other, but also of the image of the feminine.

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[84] In her study of the Oriental subject in French seventeenth century theatre, Requemora indicates a common trend in the portrayal of the Oriental women. Speaking of the practice of polygamy, which "decuple l'idée de toute-puissance inhérente à la tyrannie," Requemora states: "Face à cette coutume orientale, les femmes, pour conserver leur pouvoir et leur vie, ont à se comporter en femmes fortes, plus encore que les grandes héroïnes antiques. C'est sans doute pourquoi l'héroïne orientale est souvent une 'Amazone' : la Perside de Dalibray [*Soliman* 1637] est fille du « Roy de Perse conduisant contre les Scythes, sous un habillement de guerrier, une bonne partie de l'armée de son Pere » ; deux ans plus tard dans la pièce de Mairet [*Le Grand & dernier Soliman* 1639], elle change de nom en Despine mais devient explicitement 'Fille du Roy de Perse, Amazone & Amante de Mustapha', envoyée comme espionne à la cour ennemie" (139). What is important to note is that Oriental female characters undergo various emphases and modifications in French theatre. This process of assimilation and moderation testifies to the fact that the Oriental female cannot be represented as she *is* (that is, before the French spectator).

The Silent Prison: Metacommentary on Orientalist Representation

How is the Oriental harem depicted in Racine's *Bajazet*? According to the notes of Michel Laurent, the official decorator of the theatre of the Hôtel de Bourgogne in Racine's time, the set for *Bajazet* was "un salon à la turque" (Lancaster 112). Szuszkin comments upon the simplicity of décor in relation to what the cultural imaginary could have anticipated in theatrical representations of the Orient:

> Le poète […] semble avoir manifesté un refus significatif à bien dépeindre les appartements du palais de Byzance. Les trésors et les joyaux en profusion qu'on peut imaginer décorant le palais ottoman sont bel et bien absents du texte racinien. Qu'en est-il de l'éclat des dorures, de la profusion de couleurs, des voiles séparant les salles décorées avec raffinement ? Dans *Bajazet*, le sérail est plongé dans la pénombre. Racine évite soigneusement les topiques, les descriptions stéréotypées et clichées d'un palais oriental luxueux, décorés de pièces somptueuses, de mille richesses étonnantes, d'appartements remplis d'éclats d'or et de lumière. (72)

Indeed, the simplicity of Racine's décor is a refusal to bolster the French cultural imaginary of Oriental opulence and *volupté* which runs counter to the cruelty, obscurity and silence that reign in the harem such as Racine envisions it. Rather, the Oriental harem in *Bajazet* is recognized by its asphyxiating character: "La cruauté de l'action évoque le despotisme oriental [….] L'atmosphère est lourde, inquiétante, irrespirable comme il sied dans un sérail révolté en proie à mille intrigues" (Picard 543). This tragedy cannot be aligned with exotic projections of a single man's pleasure within a sea of multiple sensual rapports; rather, it is a prison in which communication fails and individual desires are cut short with the death that the absent Sultan proclaims (and exacts from afar) for those who rebel against his rule. As Racevskis describes the finale:

> This infernal tangle of passions, frustrations, and uneven power relations will result in a bloodbath that leaves few standing (and includes the deaths of Atalide, Bajazet, and Roxane) at the fall of the curtain, an end that in political terms sees only an increase in the power of Amurat […] Whereas Amurat succeeds, the other characters struggle and fail to achieve their desires in a claustrophobic, suffocating dramatic space. (116)

Exoticism is deprived of any fantasy of opulence in Racine's tragedy. Racine takes a certain distance from the Orient. He is neither a traveling merchant nor an ambassador to the Levant; as poet and dramatist, he cites the worth of the Orient in the exploration of the limited representation and language that the shadow of the Levant's cultural veil provides.

The boundaries of the space of the harem are constantly referenced by the characters who speak of the opening and the closing of the *portes* and of the enclosure of the *murs*. As Szuszkin surmises, "Le palais se matérialise en quelque sorte par les limites et les frontières de l'espace. [….] Le vague, l'absence de détails caractérisent en revanche un vide carcéral" (73). Indeed, one notes that the palace of the Sultan is often characterized by the walls and closed doors that imprison the people within:

> Souffrez que Bajazet voie enfin la lumière :
> des murs de ce palais ouvrez-lui la barrière. (v. 237-38)
>
> Cette foule de chefs, d'esclaves, de muets,
> peuple que dans ses murs renferme ce palais (v. 435-36)
>
> Songez-vous que je tiens les portes du palais,
> Que je puis vous l'ouvrir, ou fermer pour jamais (v. 507-08)

Furthermore, the striking absence of Oriental decoration coincides with a reduced economy of words; the penitentiary-like emptiness within the walls of the harem seems to be predicated upon an imposed silence. Roxane takes advantage of the structure of the harem in order to exact her power over the mouths of her servants:

> Et moi, vous le savez, je tiens sous ma puissance
> Cette foule de chefs, d'esclaves, de muets,
> Peuple que dans ses murs renferme ce palais
> Et dont à ma faveur les âmes asservies
> M'ont vendu dès longtemps leur silence et leurs vies. (v. 434-38)

Oppression finds a physical symbol in the walls of the harem and a verbal symbol in the silence that reigns therein. The harem becomes an "espace d'artifice et de marchandage.

Tout se négocie et s'achète. Les promesses s'achètent, les mots s'y corrompent, la parole n'a le poids et la valeur que d'un arbitraire" (Szuszkin 71). With the preoccupations surrounding the invisible eye of the Sultan, the forceful desires of Roxane, and the furtive plots of Acomat, the harem inspires silence and deception at every turn. Additionally, the absence of the Sultan and the lack of trustworthy communication make this a very precarious setting, tricking characters into thinking that power is unstable enough to be seized. It is a system in which every individual struggles to survive and to surreptitiously gain power, yet whether one is aware of the looming nature of one's own death (Bajazet) – or not (Roxane) – one's efforts to topple the system is fruitless. In the compressed atmosphere of the seraglio, the ability to speak a role and to embody that role is vital, becoming fatal if one cannot use speech and the body convincingly. In this tragedy, performance time ticks until all of the main characters are dead or have fled.

Let us examine the high pressure zone of the harem and the mode in which one enters it at the start of the tragedy. The limited access that the French have to the Oriental world seems to be both presented and removed in the opening dialogue of the first scene where the Grand Vizir, Acomat, whispers, one might imagine, to his confidant, Osmin:

> Viens, suis-moi. La Sultane en ce lieu se doit rendre.
> Je pourrai cependant te parler et t'entendre. (v. 1-2)

At the outset of this *tragédie du Sérail*, Acomat, a high-ranking minister, is unable to freely speak due to the Sultan's female proxy, 'La Sultane', and to 'ce lieu', the enclosed and forbidden quarters of the harem. The spectator learns that to entry to the harem was once punishable by death as Osmin responds:

> Et depuis quand, Seigneur, entre-t-on dans ces lieux,
> Dont l'accès était même interdit à nos yeux ?

Jadis une mort prompte eût suivi cette audace. (v. 3-5)

Death lingers at the door of the harem. The interdiction that formerly hung over the harem's entrance leaves its trace in the hushed nature of speech that the opening lines of the play illustrate. As Phillips states, "In *Bajazet* the previous inaccessibility of the harem to some of the characters we now see there clearly marks their speech out to be exceptional" (38).

In remarking the unusual accessibility to the harem within the first lines of the play, Racine establishes a *mise en abyme* which has a symbolic significance for the spectator. The opening of the stage curtain mirrors the spectator's act of peering into the inner recesses of the sociopolitical space of the harem, 'interdit à nos yeux'. The rare access to the harem as described by Osmin in the opening verses reflects the theatrical access that French audiences now have to an Oriental story and setting. Theatrical time mirrors performance time as the opening of the harem walls coincides perfectly with the opening of the *rideau*. As Szuszkin points out: "Les personnages sont en train d'entrer lorsque le rideau se lève. L'idée de franchissement de frontière est clairement énoncée" (70). Additionally, the notion of crossing a threshold is not only demonstrated by Acomat and Osmin, but it is felt by the spectator who adjusts his vision to a culturally foreign lens. This *mise en abyme* structure persists throughout the play until Orcan declares "Sortez de ce sacré palais" (v. 1685) before the curtain closes on the final Act, thereby reaffirming the boundaries which close the harem off from cultural outsiders, that is, from the French seventeenth-century spectators. Indeed, the harem is itself an element of theatre-within-theatre, for the theatrical stage (like the harem) is "limité, circonscit, il est une portion délimitée de l'espace" (Ubersfeld *Lire le théâtre* 155).

Thus, one begins to perceive the silence in which the story of *Bajazet* is embedded, due to the limitations of the French perspective that ensconce the foreign setting. Grosrichard describes the French mindset regarding the opening up of the seraglio as such:

> The opening up of the seraglio, with its violent or unnatural amours, its mutes and eunuchs, its blind princes and veiled sultanas – a space in which pleasure and death are experienced within a time made up only of disconnected moments without duration, a master who is ever absent and everywhere present, and above all that language of silence, absurd yet supremely effective, consisting of signs which refer only to themselves: this is the stripping bare (a nudity of dream or delirium) of what the whole century fears and, perhaps, secretly desires. (24)

The silence within the harem is thus symptomatic of a metatextual silence, one that looms over Western interpretations of the Orient. If one can locate within French Classical theatre a "manifestation of early modern Orientalism" (Longino 7), it is not without grounding in the language of Said[85], who, in giving concreteness to his notion of Orientalism, draws out its theatrical aspects:

> The idea of representation is a theatrical one: the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined. On this stage will appear figures whose role it is to represent the larger whole from which they emanate. The Orient then seems to be, not an unlimited extension beyond the familiar European world, but rather a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe. (63)

The limitations of speech, of power, and of movement that haunt the harem in *Bajazet* parallel the limiting of the Orient and of the whole East to a stage. At both levels of the tragedy, silence dims representations of the cultural other. Such limitations epitomize the production of the cultural other and magnify the inability of the Oriental other to speak (for him or herself) in Western representations. Thus, a suppressive silence creates and infiltrates the harem both dramatically and metatextually. If theatrical illusion "floats

[85] Although Said reaches as far back in history as Aeschylus's play *The Persians* as an example of Orientialism – a prime example because the "dramatic immediacy of representation in *The Persians* obscures the fact that the audience is watching a highly artificial enactment of what a non-Oriental has made into a symbol of the whole Orient" (21) – he begins his primary and in-depth analysis of Orientalism in the late eighteenth century.

between reality and fiction" (Maskell 40), then silence becomes theatrical illusion for it does not readily allow distinctions between reality and fiction or unsanctioned representations.

Unequal Playing Fields: Competing Dimensions of Silence

Within the harem walls, Atalide and Bajazet must silence the love that they secretly share. Interestingly, the love of this clandestine couple was born with the protective covering of silence. As Atalide recalls their adolescent history:

> Et quoique […] l'un de l'autre écartés,
> Conservant, sans nous voir, le désir de nous plaire,
> Nous avons su toujours nous aimer et nous taire. (v. 364-66)

The possibility of loving one another in complete silence may have been inspired by an informative passage in Ricaut's *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, a work which Racine claims (in the second preface) to have followed to the letter in his depiction of the Oriental character. While not commenting on Racine's tragedy, Grosrichard expounds upon Ricauts' conclusions and inadvertently describes the condition of the lovers in *Bajazet*, stating:

> We have seen that in this universe of silence and observance which is the seraglio, communication takes place in a language that is both universal and precise, made up of signs – looks and touches – which are codified and taught by the mutes. Since everyone is able to understand and speak it, it is dangerous for lovers. So they must modify the code, like those ichoglans who, 'to communicate their thoughts to one another in their bedroom, and to cheat the attention of the eunuchs who guard them, have invented a mute language and with the movement of their eyes, through certain actions made with the whole body and with the fingers, they tell one another everything that they have in their hearts'. (170-71)

The dimensions of the seraglio are summoned in this tragedy by fantastical silences. It is precisely because the seraglio intrigues the Westerner with its own culturally secret languages that it is, by nature, a theatrical zone of muting effects.

The harem is a tragic space *par excellence* as the silence that once nursed Bajazet and Atalide's love is chiseled away by the deceitful silence with which they are forced to now disguise their love. Deploring this difference, Bajazet urges Atalide to consider well the baseness of the marriage to Roxane with which his silent compliance would end:

> Quoi ! cet amour si tendre, et né dans notre enfance,
> Dont les feux avec nous ont crû dans le silence,
> Vos larmes que ma main pouvait seule arrêter,
> Mes serments redoublés de ne vous point quitter,
> Tout cela finirait par une perfidie ?
> J'épouserais, et qui (s'il faut que je le die) ?
> Une esclave attachée à ses seuls intérêts (v. 713-19)

Silence begins to acquire sinister connotations and thus, in a posture that is characteristic of his Ottoman blood and nobility, Bajazet bemoans the falsity that it requires of him. As he says to Atalide: "Croyez qu'il m'a fallu, dans ce moment cruel, / pour garder jusqu'au bout *un silence perfide*, / rappeler tout l'amour que j'ai pour Atalide" (v. 996-98; my emphasis). The type of silence that Bajazet must vigilantly keep requires a constant and ruthless effort on his part, for he disdains the deception with which he must act in order to live. If Atalide and Bajazet have learned from the inception of their love to treasure it quietly until the appropriate time of union, then Roxane is encroaching upon a secret that is well-fermented and sheltered by innocent silence[86]. The innocent silence of the lovers contrasts with the oppressive silence of the Sultana's (or Sultan's) harem. In romantic silence, lovers converse freely in the silent intimacy of their hearts and depict their

[86] "Many of Racine's plays are structured around a secret, which some characters try to conceal while others pursue the truth [….] In *Bajazet* Roxane does not discover that she is the victim of a conspiracy of concealment until Act III; then she is remorseless in her quest for truth" (Maskell 153).

mutual admiration with their bodies or with their eyes. Silence seems to allow lovers to undermine the constraints that are imposed upon their love – especially if the love in question bears a transgressive edge: As Xipharès says of his stepmother in *Mithridate*, "Cet amour s'est longtemps accru dans le silence" (v. 632). Political silence, however, implies the force of will that a powerful figure will impose upon an individual who happens to be cornered by unjust circumstances and obstacles. Roxane mutes all who are subject to her, whether she is aware of the effect of her tyranny on Bajazet's speech or not. The political silence and manipulative power that she exercises over the couple necessitates a modification of their more innocent silence, transforming their romantic silence into a silence that is complicit with deception.

The hushed figures of the harem – the "foule de chefs, d'esclaves, de muets" (v. 434) – propagate the sinister silence that marks this space. The slave Zaire feels that she must guard herself from speaking against the will of Roxane, lifting her timid voice before the Sultana only when dire necessity requires it: "Si, sans trop vous déplaire / Dans les justes transports, Madame, où je vous vois, / J'osais vous faire entendre une timide voix" (v. 1282-84). And later, when Atalide demands to know if Bajazet is still alive, another servant, Zatime, will reply "Il y va de ma vie, et je ne puis rien dire" (v. 1646). The general mode of survival seems to be that of a closed mouth, a lesson that Bajazet undertakes as well; he silences his true love for Atalide in order to pantomime a role for the Sultana. Yet, silence allows the protagonist of this tragedy no respite; the occasions for him to speak before Roxane are constraining moments that require him to perform. Unable to speak the truth – for it would precipitate Atalide's death and his own – Bajazet becomes befuddled in a theatrical performance for which he has no script, and

thus his apprenticeship of an oppressive silence is near complete as he suffers the anxiety of a script-less actor: Indeed, he inquires of Atalide, "Mais quels discours faut-il que je lui tienne?" (v. 786) and will exclaim in Roxane's presence, "O ciel! Que ne puis-je parler?" (v. 560).

The Sultana's Theatre

Roxane's relationship to political power mirrors her relationship to love and to its discursive detours. Her position as proxy to the Sultan mirrors her design to naively substitute Atalide for herself and to trust this other woman to probe Bajazet's heart: As Acomat informs Osmin: "Du prince en apparence [Atalide] reçoit les vœux ; / Mais elle les reçoit pour les rendre à Roxane, / Et veut bien sous son nom qu'il aime la Sultane" (v. 172-74). Her inclination to let Atalide speak both for herself and for Bajazet is explained by her hereto reliance upon substitution as a form of (political) power. Both cases prove to be disastrous. The power to act is divided between Roxane-Amurat and the power to speak is divided between Roxane-Atalide. Thus, Roxane's power is unhinged despite her insistence upon it. Bajazet is not fooled by her repeated affirmations of power, depicting her as "une esclave attachée à ses seuls intérêts" (v. 719), while Atalide also refers to her as an "Esclave barbare" (v. 1658).

Pretending to forget her true origins[87] as slave, Roxane also chooses to ignore the signs of Bajazet's disengagement: "Sur tout ce que j'ai vu fermons plutôt les yeux" (v. 1236); "Je veux tout ignorer" (v. 1250). Roxane seems to prefer Bajazet to stage his love

[87] "She is a slave – favored slave, but slave nonetheless" (Longino 203).

for her, even if her hope of a reciprocated love is but an illusion, appearing indignant at moments when Bajazet falters in the role in which he is cast: "Quoi! Ne pouvait-il pas feindre encore un moment?" (v. 1080). Gross expounds upon Roxane's exclamation, stating: "She takes pleasure in prolonging Bajazet's performance, even in the fact that he is merely 'faking it'" (Gross 157). If Bajazet is unwilling to put on a good show, her disappointments do not hinder her hope that the political power that she extends to him will sway him to give in to her scripted desires. She defers the death to which he is condemned by extending to Bajazet "the potential salvation of speech and performance – the *sine qua non* of theater" (156). While Roxane is naïve to believe in the supremacy of her power as Sultana – yet this, only as proxy – she is doubly deceived by the theatre of desire which she believes she directs.

It is noteworthy that the Sultana's status as a slave is the pure invention of Racine. From the original story as recounted by M. le compte de Cézy,

> [Racine] a retenu que le sultan a fait exécuter son frère après une victoire sur les Perses ; que Bajazet, prisonnier dans le sérail, était protégé par une sultane et engagé dans une relation amoureuse avec une de ses suivantes. Le reste est d'invention : la sultane passe du rang de mère d'Amurat à celui de première favorite […] et, par là, du statut de protectrice de Bajazet à celui d'amante. (Forestier 1497)

What is perhaps significant about this change is its conformity to a perception of the Oriental other as set forth by one of Racine's sources, namely "la nouvelle Relation de l'Empire Ottoman, que l'on a traduite de l'anglais" (24). In this text, Ricaut evokes the government of the Turks as such:

> When I consider further that among them there is so little reward for virtue, and so much impunity for vices, from which profit is rendered to the Prince; in what manner men are suddenly elevated by the flattery, the whim and the mere favour of the Sultan to the greatest, most notable and most honourable offices of the Empire, with neither birth, nor merit, nor any experiences of the affairs of the world. (Ricaut 2-3)

Rather than sticking to the facts of the story which would attribute merit and birth to the Sultana (as women of the Seraglio achieve power and status in giving the Sultan a son/successor), Racine depicts the Sultana as a favorite concubine and thus as a political leader of no merit, a mere slave who came to power by 'the whim and mere favour of the Sultan'. What is featured in this exchange of fiction for fact and of whim for merit is the monstrosity of Oriental despotism, its potential effect being the provocation of French fears surrounding the absolute power of monarchy, as embodied by Louis XIV.

Atalide feels strongly that Roxane must be persuaded of Bajazet's love, lest she decide to no longer protect him from Amurat's death order. Bajazet, however, clings to honesty as if it was a last vestige of his noble identity. His reluctance to internalize the theatrical ruse implies that theatre is dangerous for the preservation of self. Indeed, Bajazet experiences disempowerment not only in pretending to go along with Roxane's ideas and in having to play that role, but also at a theoretical and practical level, Bajazet undergoes a loss of command over his body. His silence (with regards to his love for Atalide and his disdain for Roxane) causes him to become increasingly aware of the independent nature of his own body when playing a role. He soon recognizes that he has neither the mastery nor the conviction to ensure that his body will not betray the lovers' plot before Roxane's eyes. As he says to Atalide:

> Et *ma bouche et mes yeux*, du mensonge ennemis,
> Peut-être dans le temps que je voudrais lui plaire
> Feraient par leur désordre un effet tout contraire. (v. 744-46; my emphasis)

Bajazet cannot summon his eyes and his mouth to speak in ways that he does not feel. His body threatens to act on its own, to betray his authentic feelings, and to speak *through* his silence. For Bajazet, this phenomenon is limited to a very specific moment in time; it is a performance time – 'dans le temps que je voudrais lui plaire' – in which he

is compelled to act, to silence, and to other himself before Roxane. His secret resistance to play a role makes him more of a disjointed marionette than an actor – the strings that are fatally attached to the Sultana's will are visible through his increasingly fragmented body, that is, through specific parts (his mouth and eyes) which seem to lack a whole.

Silence's Betrayal: The Breakdown of Body

Such an awareness casts light upon the disorderly nature of speech, silence, and the body as 'performance' in Racinian theatre: Speech does not always reveal, but conceals; silence does not always conceal, but through the intermediary of the body, it reveals: "Most theatrically of all, silence exposes a character more, in fact, than speech does. Speech at least affords the possibility of concealment, which may be unknown to others, whereas silence reveals the fact of concealment itself" (Philips 44). The very illusion of silence is its promise to conceal, whereas we find in Racinian tragedies such as *Bérénice* and *Bajazet* that silence is more likely to convey – or to betray[88] – the fact that something is being hidden. Thus, Bajazet discovers the illusion of silence, that is, its false refuge, and its dramatic productions of bodily 'désordre' and effects that are 'tout contraire[s]'. In 1715 D'Aubignac called for the disappearance of the personal self in performance. Thus, acting in the Classical period is an adoption of another self which necessitates the silencing of the personal self: "As D'Aubignac himself indicates, the ideal result is a total dispossession of the actor's own personality [….] To allow one's

[88] As Oreste says to Hermione in Racine's *Andromaque*: "L'amour n'est pas un feu qu'on renferme en une âme: / Tout nous *trahit*, la voix, le silence, les yeux" (v. 575; my emphasis).

own persona to penetrate the character is, in a very real sense, to betray the theatrical illusion" (McClure 211).

As the performative conduct of Bajazet and Atalide grows more doubtful, Roxane becomes privy to the body language and to the nonverbal signs that undermine their silence: "Ils ont beau se cacher, l'amour le plus discret / Laisse par quelque marque échapper son secret" (v. 1119-20). In its dependence upon the material voice and the physical body of the actor, theatrical representation allows for 'quelque marque' to be perceived. The body becomes an index of the non-said in theatre. Roxane will thus remove Atalide from the intermediary position and judge Bajazet's sincerity according to the nonverbal cues that accompany his discourse. Rather than Atalide, it is now the body of Bajazet which is to mediate between what he says and what Roxane can believe. As she declares to Atalide:

> Je ne vous presse point de vouloir aujourd'hui
> Me prêter votre voix pour m'expliquer à lui:
> Je veux que devant moi *sa bouche et son visage,*
> Me découvrent son coeur, sans me laisser d'ombrage ;
> Que lui-même, amené en secret dans ces lieux,
> Sans être préparé, se présente à mes yeux. (v. 327-32; my emphasis)

Like the spectator, Roxane seeks both verbal and non-verbal signs in order to decrypt the roles which Atalide and Bajazet enact before her, for in theatre:

> La représentation est constituée par un ensemble de signes verbaux et non verbaux ; le message verbal figurant à l'intérieur du système de la représentation avec sa matière de l'expression à lui, qui est acoustique (la voix), et comportant deux espèces de signes, les singes linguistiques, composant le *message* linguistique, les signes acoustiques proprement dits (voix, expression, rythme, hauteur, timbre). [….] A quoi s'ajoutent tous les codes grâce auxquels peuvent être décodés les signes non verbaux, les codes visuels, musicaux, la proxémique, etc. (Ubersfeld *Lire le théâtre* 30)

Thus, Roxane slowly discovers a discrepancy between Bajazet's performance and what Atalide had led her to believe: "Pourquoi faut-il au moins que, pour me consoler, / L'ingrat ne parle pas comme on le fait parler?" (v. 275-76). If Roxane ultimately lacks

faith in the integrity of Bajazet's discourse, it is because there is in fact a certain loss in Bajazet's physical integrity. His 'bouche', 'yeux', and 'visage' are independent entities insofar as they betray his theatrical ruse and emerge as radically separate and distinct parts of his body.

While Perovic focuses on a reading of Bajazet's body as the evidence of an "agent in two different realms – one in which he is still 'alive' and the other in which he is perceived to be already 'dead'" (442), she touches on an important aspect of Bajazet's body as a silence that allows for strange ventriloquisms:

> At once disordering language and causing it to speak, Bajazet's body allows people to keep on talking, supplementing his silence with their voices, with something that comes uncannily close to a type of ventriloquism or séance with the dead. Unable to manipulate either the corpse as an object or the irrevocable fact of Bajazet's death, language loses its transitive function, remaining in what Barthes calls 'a kind of exhausting tautology, the language of language'. One could very well imagine a performance of this play in which, besides the shrouded eye of the dead man, all that would be left on stage would be the female voices raised in grief and their tears vainly trying to move the mask back to life. (450)

Whereas Perovic insists that Bajazet's body rests on a split in dimension, one between the land of the living and the land of the dead, we will consider her conclusion that Bajazet's body provokes the supplementation of other voices to also result in the repeated theatricalization of his body. This theatricalization results in a paring down of his body to a series of independent body fragments – in reference to Bajazet, Roxane seems to only be able to read the mouth, the eyes, or the face rather than any integral ensemble of his body parts. Bajazet's body parts are detached from his own personality and intentions due to the voices of Roxane, Atalide, and Acomat that command him to split his identity and to perform according to – but as Atalide will insist, not completely adhering to – Roxane's wishes. In such a way, a liquefaction of speech occurs because of the ventriloquisms that proceed from his theatrically ineffective and mute role. In essence,

Bajazet loses the solid integrity that he wishes to keep and is instead interpreted through a polyvalent flux of muting effects and alternate meanings: "Chacune des trois dupes interprète la conduite de Bajazet selon l'optique qui est la sienne (amour, ambition, jalousie)" (Van der Starre 173). His speech is liquefied insofar as it takes on the shape of whatever wishes his interlocutor possesses[89].

Fragmentary Performances: Play-ful Interstices of Voice

Atalide plays a unique role in the ventriloquism of Bajazet: "Je l'ai pressé de feindre, et j'ai parlé pour lui" (v. 388). Doubting Bajazet's ability to withdraw his own will and personality from the roles that are demanded of him, she must constantly rescue his discourse via a detour of his own meaning: "Car enfin Bajazet ne sait point se cacher […] / Il faut qu'à tous moments, tremblante et secourable, / Je donne à ses discours un sens plus favorable" (v. 391; 393-94). Atalide rightfully fears that her performance as the intermediary between Bajazet and Roxane will not be matched by Bajazet's own performance. Her concern stems from her position as author of his lines and interceptor of their rippling effects – as Gross states: "By simply 'lending her name' to Roxane's and Bajazet's (fictitious) love, Atalide tries literally to write Bajazet's script; the trouble is that its acting out, its performance, does not coincide with the designs of the author"

[89] One such example of the ambiguity of reading Bajazet is elucidated by Jules Brody: "La réticence de Bajazet est, en mettant les choses au mieux, un signe ambigu, mais que, pour assurer la cohérence de sa vision des choses, Roxane tient absolument à lire en clair. Cherchant son confort là où elle le trouve, elle prend le mutisme de Bajazet comme ayant un sens neutre et donc potentiellement encourageant, alors que dans les faits il ne rompt le plus souvent ses silences que par des expression anodines de respect et d'allégeance" (194-95).

(151). Additionally, it is she who must unify the varying signs of his verbal and non-verbal language in order to save his life. As author of his script, Atalide reveals the operation of theatre, whereby the actor's discourse is itself a ventriloquism, split as it is by a double enunciation – double because the actor's lines are in fact scripted by another (the author). As Ubersfeld states, the character (here, Bajazet) speaks "en son nom de personnage, mais il parle parce que l'auteur le fait parler, lui enjoint de parler, de dire tels mots" (*Lire le théâtre* 146). Indeed, in the end, what condemns Bajazet to death and brings the tragedy to an end is "his inability or unwillingness to perform a pre-imposed text (his 'love' for Roxane, written by Atalide)" (Gross 156). In his desire to preserve the self, he does not fully internalize and assimilate the role, and in the end, he becomes a relatively inanimate site upon which others must throw their voices. Furthermore, with the cords of the mutes that are thrown around his neck at the tragedy's climax, he is throttled quite significantly at the area of his body that produces voice, his larynx, and thus, Bajazet is quite literally a victim of his inability to speak and his disdain for deception (or theatrical illusion). This disdain for theatrical performance reveals an underlying and very real fear of the betrayal of silence and of the body.

Whereas the spectator expects the blame of Bajazet's ultimate death to fall on she who had threatened his death throughout the tragedy, and who in the end, called for it, it is Atalide, the faithful beloved of Bajazet, who claims all responsibility:

> Enfin, c'en est donc fait; et par mes artifices,
> Mes injustes soupçons, mes funestes caprices,
> Je suis donc arrivée au douloureux moment
> Où je vois par mon crime expirer mon amant. (v. 1720-24)

One cannot be sure that Atalide is solely responsible for the death of her lover. After all, the doubling of the two female rivals has been in effect from the start of the play. The

unexpected intertwining of Roxane and Atalide was already foreshadowed in the desire, the body, and the voice that they shared from the start of the play. As Atalide says:

> Roxane, se livrant toute entière à ma foi,
> Du cœur de Bajazet se reposait sur moi,
> M'abandonnait le soin de tout ce qui le touche
> Le voyait par mes yeux, lui parlait par ma bouche;
> Et je croyais toucher au bienheureux moment
> Où j'allais par ses mains couronner mon amant.
> Le ciel s'est déclaré contre mon artifice. (v. 347-53)

Here, voice (her mouth) and body (her hands) – two highly theatrical elements – figure as prominent tools of mediation and of transference. Whereas Atalide is supposed to mediate for Roxane, new and unpredictable terms of mediation come into play as Atalide seems to take on the body of Roxane. Atalide imagines herself moving Roxane's hands to crown Bajazet – 'j'allais par ses mains couronner mon amant'. Similarly, Roxane is described as seeing Bajazet through Atalide's eyes – 'Roxane…le voyait par mes yeux' – and speaks to him through Atalide's voice – 'lui parlait par ma bouche'. One would assume that these two women would be represented as diametrically opposed to each other due to the rivalry that underlies their relationship. However, Atalide's position as proxy to the Sultana, that is, her role-playing, causes shifts in body and identity – and all the more so as they share similar desires. Atalide's loss of control over the intermediary position is exemplified in the eyes, mouth, and hands of the two female rivals that are suddenly grafted one onto the other. The speech that is forwarded from Roxane to Atalide is thus a slippage into a theatre-like dimension wherein (bodily) transferences between self and other occur.

Thus, speaking according to another suggests the danger of conflation between the actor and the role. If Roxane plays suitor to Bajazet through Atalide (and if Atalide accepts this role), it is not without a fair amount of transference between the two females,

as is represented in the transposition of their bodily parts. Yet this transmission is nonetheless incomplete for in his description of the actor, D'Aubignac asserts that "what prevents complete conflation of the actor and his role is the actor's voice" (Qtd. in McClure 212). Here, theatre overlaps postcolonial theory: Spivak asserts in her postcolonial treatise of the case of the Indian *sati* that one cannot speak for those who are outside of hegemonic discourse – "The Subaltern cannot speak" (113); similarly, in theatre one quite literally cannot speak for any other. In theatre, the material voice of a character belongs to one character and one character only[90]. Voice acts like the last safeguard against identity confusion. Atalide's artifice thus proves to be ineffective, despite her trust in the ruse of speaking to Bajazet for Roxane – "Bajazet va se perdre. Ah! si, comme autrefois, / Ma rivale eût voulu lui parler par ma voix!" (v. 395-96). Independently of her own volition, Atalide's voice creates an obstacle whereby Roxane can no longer rely on it to inform her of Bajazet's feelings. In the end, the death of Bajazet is the result of the lovers' theatrical flop, a failure that is signified in the multiple references to *adresse, artifice, détour, feinte, mensonge, perfidie*[91] and in Bajazet's exclamation to Atalide: "Le Ciel punit ma feinte, et confond votre adresse" (v. 666).

When Roxane begins to suspect Atalide and Bajazet of their deceptive roles, she remarks to Atalide the "discours glacé" (v. 1035)[92] of Bajazet that differentiates his speech from Atalide's own eagerness to speak of his affections. Roxane perceives the

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[90] McClure explains: "D'Aubignac notes that one actor cannot perform two different roles in the same play, unless he is portraying a character who disguises himself as another character. The reason for this restriction is that even if the actor 'change d'habits, de poil, & de visage' (changes clothes, appearance and face), his voice gives him away" (212).

[91] "Les mots *adresse, artifice, détour, feindre, feinte, mensonge, perfide* et *perfidie* atteignent dans cette œuvre une fréquence trois à quatre fois plus grande (39 occurrences) que dans les précédentes tragédies de Racine" (Forestier 1507).

[92] Roxane ponders the vacuity of Bajazet's sentiments: "Est-ce un songe ? Et mes yeux ne m'ont-ils point trompée ? / Quel est ce sombre accueil, et ce discours glacé / Qui semble révoquer tout ce qui s'est passé ?" (v. 1034-36).

vacuity of Atalide's attempts to satisfy her sentimentality, stating: "Je vois qu'à l'accuser votre adresse est extrême. / Vous parlez mieux pour lui qu'il ne parle lui-même" (v.1057-58). She thus discovers the theatricality of Atalide's discourse, due to the fact that theatrical discourse is devoid of individual agency. As Ubersfeld states: "Dans la mesure où le discours théâtral est discours d'un sujet-scripteur, il est discours d'un sujet immédiatement dessaisi de son *Je*, d'un sujet qui se nie en tant que tel, qui s'affirme comme parlant par la voix d'un autre, de plusieurs autres, comme parlant sans être sujet : le discours théâtral est *discours sans sujet*" (*Lire le théâtre* 264). In speaking for Roxane and for Bajazet, Atalide does not speak as an 'I'; in her dialogues with Roxane, she plays a role that consequently divests her speech of her own personality. Furthermore, if both Atalide and Bajazet act when speaking to Roxane, then their discourses serve as a *mise en abyme* not only of theatrical discourse, but also of the Orientalist discourse that empties the Orient of its subjectivity when the West "makes the Orient speak" (Said 20). The tyrannical force of Roxane's desires over the speech of Bajazet and Atalide reflects the imposition of a fictionalized Orient upon the real Orient. Much like the theatrical discourse that is '*sans sujet*,' Orientalist discourse is marked by the fact that "the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action" (Said 3).

Tragic Pitfalls of Silence

As we have seen, silence has the surprising ability to reveal what is not said. At times the motivation for a silence is correctly analyzed by its reader: Zaïre reads

Acomat's satisfaction on his face – "Ils ne m'ont point parlé; mais, mieux qu'aucun langage, / le transport du Vizir marquait sur son visage / qu'un heureux changement le rappelle au Palais" (v. 797-99); and Roxane reads the satisfaction of reciprocated love upon her rival's face – "Il faut… Mais que pourrais-je apprendre advantage? / Mon malheur n'est-il pas écrit sur son visage?" (v. 1221-22). At other moments, the interpretation of the language of the body derails the actual meaning of one's silence. For instance, when Bajazet pretends once again to cede to Roxane's desires he (finally) succeeds all too well, for in remaining entirely silent he manages to convince Roxane, Acomat, and Atalide that his love for her is sincere. It thus becomes evident that silence can lead to interpretations that extend beyond the 'essence' of who/what is represented and embrace instead the predispositions of the spectators. In such a way, Atalide is tricked by the spectacle that she had encouraged her beloved to perform due to Acomat's recounting of a predominantly silent scene between Roxane and Bajazet:

> Et d'abord une esclave à mes yeux s'est offerte,
> Qui m'a conduit *sans bruit* dans un appartement
> Où Roxane attentive écoutait son amant.
> Tout gardait devant eux un *auguste silence*.
> Moi-même, résistant à mon impatience
> Et respectant de loin leur *secret* entretien,
> J'ai longtemps immobile observé leur maintien.
> Enfin, avec des yeux qui découvraient son âme,
> L'une a tendu la main pour gage de sa flamme ;
> L'autre, avec des regards éloquents, pleins d'amour,
> L'a de ses feux, Madame, assurée à son tour. (v. 878-88)

Acomat is voyeur to a pantomime, an act without sound. The silence of the scene should cause Atalide to question the interpretations that Acomat proffers. It is natural that Acomat, the spectator in this *mise en abyme* scene, would be convinced of an interpretation that best suits his political plans, yet Atalide is surprisingly fooled by Acomat's representation and cannot trust that Bajazet is merely fulfilling her own wishes.

Thus, silence proves to no longer be an innocent refuge for the two lovers as it subtly erodes their own ruse.

Acomat's status as character, spectator, and narrator produces a theatre-within-theatre: Here, theatricality announces itself as it simultaneously unmasks the illusion upon which theatre depends:

> Le mécanisme de ce renversement du signe est fort complexe; il opère pour une très large part du fait que sur scène il y a des *acteurs* qui sont en même temps *spectateurs*, qui regardent ce qui se passe dans l'air interne de théâtralisation et qui renvoient inversé au public le message reçu. (Ubersfeld *Lire le théâtre* 53)

The reversal of theatre's illusion dispels a myth surrounding theatre and its 'passive' spectatorship: "Il serait faux de dire que le rôle du spectateur dans le procès de communication est passif" (44). Acomat is a voyeur to this secret scene – "Et soudain à leurs yeux je me suis dérobé" (v. 896), imposing his own interpretation or fantasy upon that which he sees. Atalide does not discern Acomat's perspective as a modification of the silent scene that he witnessed. She falls prey to an illusion not only of theatre, but also of silence and fails to recognize her own role in this silent theatre; she thus reproaches Bajazet for his infidelity. Her unnecessary jealousy proves to be fatal insofar as it leads Bajazet to write a letter that will reassure Atalide of his devotion to her. To the demise of the two lovers, this letter is then discovered by Roxane, thereby solidifying Bajazet's utter ruin. Just as Osmin's message given as a 'témoin sincère' in the first Act proves to be false, the "récit fidèle" (v. 897) that Acomat believes he reports is later revealed to be a "récit infidèle" (v. 977) as Bajazet comes forth to question its foundation, asking Atalide, "De ce discours quel est le fondement? / Qui peut vous avoir fait ce récit infidèle?" (v. 976-77). Silence becomes the tragic pitfall of the protagonist: The failure to mitigate emotions while interpretating a silent scene proves to be the seed of fatality

within a tragedy of unchecked passions. When Acomat's interpretation is revealed to be false, the silence that obscures what one sees (Acomat) and what one hears (Atalide) becomes that much more ominous.

In the attempt to recover the derailed interpretation that Acomat has relayed to Atalide, Bajazet explains to her the circumstances of the misinterpretation of the Vizir and of Roxane: According to Bajazet, what Acomat presumed to be a dialogue was in fact Roxane's interruption of Bajazet's discourse and a silencing of his (all too faulty) performance. By imposing silence, she could then fill in the blanks with her own desires. Thus, the silence of the aforementioned scene swells and becomes even more apparent as Bajazet recounts it from his own perspective:

> Moi, j'aimerais Roxane, ou je vivrais pour elle,
> Madame ! Ah ! *Croyez-vous que, loin de le penser,*
> *Ma bouche seulement eût pu le prononcer ?*
> *Mais l'un ni l'autre enfin n'était point nécessaire* :
> La sultane a suivi son penchant ordinaire ;
> Et soit qu'elle ait d'abord expliqué mon retour
> Comme un gage certain qui marquait mon amour,
> Soit que le temps trop cher la pressât de se rendre,
> *A peine ai-je parlé, que, sans presque m'entendre,*
> Ses pleurs précipités ont *coupé mes discours*.
> Elle met dans ma main sa fortune, ses jours ;
> Et se fiant enfin à ma reconnaissance,
> D'un hymen infaillible a formé l'espérance.
> Moi-même, rougissant de sa crédulité
> Et d'un amour si tendre et si peu mérité,
> *Dans ma confusion, que Roxane, madame,*
> *Attribuait encore à l'excès de ma flamme,*
> Je me trouvais barbare, injuste, criminel.
> Croyez qu'il m'a fallu, dans ce moment cruel,
> Pour garder jusqu'au bout un *silence perfide,*
> Rappeler tout l'amour que j'ai pour Atalide. (v. 978-98)

The troubled silence which Bajazet experiences in this scene is the result of Roxane's customary efforts to direct a scene of professed love that she so flagrantly wants. Indeed, she seems to impose silence in order to re-route meaning: Roxane regards Bajazet's manifest confusion and blushing as a sign of his love for her. Her tyranny of silence

becomes a detour that allows her to stage her own desires. Complicit and silent and no longer the *Je* of his discourse, Bajazet is molded into a theatrical object of Roxane's fantasy. He is othered, describing himself as 'barbare.' Speaking of Bajazet, Forestier claims, "Sa reddition n'a été faite que de silence [….] La crédulité aveugle de Roxane lui a suggéré les mots que le héros n'a même pas eu à prononcer" (1501).

Compressing Tragic Space; Strangulating Tragic Voice

Thus, the harem is a *scène clôture* where signs are turned on their heads due to the obscurity of silence. Along with the delimited stage, language is closed in – *clôturée*[93] – from every side by an oppressive silence that squeezes and forces signs into alternate positions. As Barthes states, "Le Sérail colle à Roxane à la fois comme condition, comme prison est comme labyrinthe, c'est-à-dire comme obscurité des signes : elle ne sait jamais *qui* est Bajazet" (103). Ultimately, the fluctuations of identity and of signs reflect the structure of the Oriental seraglio, "Llieu captif et captivant, agi et agissant, étouffé et étouffant" (Barthes 104) and thus these contradicting movements in and of themselves become a production or a staging of the 'Oriental':

> En un mot, le Sérail par sa double fonction de prison et de contiguïté, exprime sans cesse ce mouvement contradictoire d'abandon et de repris, d'exaspération et de frustration qui définit le tourment racinien : c'est là le côté 'oriental' de Racine : le Sérail est littéralement la caresse étouffante, l'étreinte qui fait mourir. (Barthes 104)

[93] "Dans Bajazet, la justice n'est nulle part, les limites sont partout. Les portes, les murs, les nœuds dégagent la métaphore-limite de la limite. La *clôture* répressive des portes du palais et des murs de la Cité trouve son expression ultime dans un acte de resserrement et de strangulation à la fois littérale et exemplaire" (Brody 221; my emphasis).

If the Oriental side of Racine is said to be a series of contradictions wherein both terms of opposition are embraced, then what is framed here is not simply the liberty of facts and fiction when staging the cultural other, but also the fact that the Oriental referent is *mise en scène* by indeterminate, arbitrary signs of silence.

According to Rykner, it is the moment when the silence of the shared love between Atalide and Bajazet "se brisera" (133) – when Roxane realizes for certain that Bajazet is only acting the role she has pressed upon him – that "le drame éclatera" (133) along with the breaking of that silence. In Roxane's persistent desire to make Bajazet perform, in Atalide's eager role-playing of Bajazet and of Roxane, and in Bajazet's indignant refusal to fully play the part, theatrical performance is striking in its failure to communicate without a feeling of enormous pressure that is linguistically tangible in this Oriental tragedy. Mediation thus becomes the cause of tragedy. Performance is particularly critiqued by characters as they consider the (body) language and silences with which other characters' performances are marked. The *failure* of performance and of speech is of great consequence for, as Philips states, "The failure to speak, because of the specific expectations set up by Racine, is as much an event as speaking. Far from reducing theatricality, the breakdown in language enhances it, exposing an absence and further advertising the stage as a place of presence" (40).

The silence of Bajazet and Atalide is a vehicle for tragic love and remains a central element of theatrical performance until the very end:

> *Bajazet* est particulièrement intéressant en ce que, finalement, la parole en question ne sera jamais vraiment prononcée. Le silence montre de la sorte sa capacité de résistance. En effet, Bajazet et Atalide se tairont quasiment jusqu'au bout. [….] Ainsi la parole des autres personnages est-elle systématiquement mise en branle par ce silence obstiné du couple. Et si celui-ci finit par céder à la fin de la pièce, c'est significativement d'une façon détournée, non-verbale : comme si seule la lettre trouvée sur Atalide (parole silencieuse et qui plus est surprise, soustraite à son destinataire) pouvait mettre un terme à ce mutisme partagé dans lequel s'incarne l'amour tragique. (Rykner 134)

The silence with which Bajazet must greet the challenge of performance gives out in the end, with an insurgency that was not at all the kind that Acomat had anticipated. Instead, the tragedy's finale may be considered to be a rebellion against the complicity of silence that performance in the harem demands of him – and thus, a revolt against theatricality itself. As Gross points out:

> Theatricality—the possibility of playing his final scene with Roxane "correctly"—may seem to offer Bajazet a way out, but his theatrical revolt coincides with his leaving of the stage and concomitant execution, for when Bajazet refuses to give in to Roxane's demands, he is met with the fatal command: "Sortez." (156)

The 'climax' of the tragedy brings with it the long-threatened hands of the mutes who will strangle, and thus forever silence, Bajazet at Roxane's command.

> Qu'il meure: vengeons-nous. Courez; qu'on le saisisse ;
> Que la main des muets s'arme pour son supplice ;
> Qu'ils viennent préparer ces nœuds infortunés
> Par qui de ses pareils les jours sont terminés. (v. 1277-80)

The cords of strangulation, the "all too literal 'nœuds infortunés' the silent executioners will twist around the unfaithful Bajazet's throat" (Scanlan 15), are reclaimed by Atalide who claims to have weaved them herself:

> Oui, c'est moi, cher amant, qui t'arrache la vie :
> Roxane, ou le sultan, ne te l'ont point ravie.
> Moi seule, j'ai tissu le lien malheureux
> Dont tu viens d'éprouver les détestables nœuds. (v. 1729-32)

If she can claim to have weaved the knots of the mutes around Bajazet's neck, it is because she could not silence her jealousy – "Non, non, il ne fera que ce qu'il a dû faire. / Sentiments trop jaloux, c'est à vous de vous taire" (v. 817-18) – but instead, she falls prey to the theatrical staging that she herself had concocted.

If the *dénouement* of this tragedy surrounds the strangulation of Bajazet, an act that squelches his life by compressing his voice-box, it seems that the very ability to speak or not to speak has been in question all along. From the beginning, the necessity of

Bajazet's speech as performance has been emphasized by Roxane: "Sa perte ou son salut dépend de sa réponse" (v. 326). Furthermore, if, as Philips says, "The crucial nature of the content of speech increases tragic tension" (41), then one can read that tension as the rope wound tight around Bajazet's neck. This tension was already foreshadowed in Acomat's attempt to persuade Bajazet to speak according to Roxane's wishes: "Seigneur. Dites *un mot*, et vous nous sauvez tous" (v. 620; my emphasis). Similarly, Atalide says of Bajazet, "Mais, Zaïre, je puis l'attendre à son passage: / D'*un mot* ou d'un regard je puis le secourir" (v. 398-99; my emphasis) ; and Roxane warns Bajazet, "Ne désespérez point une amante en furie. / S'il m'échappait *un mot*, c'est fait de votre vie" (v. 541-42; my emphasis). Here, the minimal response of one word contrasts with the influence that it would have on all, clearly underscoring the impact of the silencing or refusal of that one word. Furthermore, in no other plays does Racine employ the expression 'en un mot' so often[94]. It is as if the language of the characters is under constraint, as if each speaker must abbreviate what one has to say because, as Roxane tells Bajazet, "Les moments sont trop chers pour les perdre en paroles" (v. 1471). The compact nature of the harem's

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[94] Roxane :
"Femmes, gardes, vizir, pour lui j'ai tout séduit ;
En un mot, vous voyez jusqu'où je l'ai conduit" (v. 311-12; my emphasis).

Atalide :
"Qu'il l'épouse, *en un mot*, plutôt que de périr" (v. 400; my emphasis).

Roxane :
"Et sans ce même amour, qu'offensent vos refus,
Songez-vous, *en un mot*, que vous ne seriez plus ?" (v. 511-12; my emphasis).

Zaire :
"S'il fait ce que vous-même avez su lui prescrire,
S'il l'épouse, *en un mot*... " (v. 813-14; my emphasis).

Roxane :
"Mes soins vous sont connus. *En un mot,* vous vivez,
Et je ne vous dirais que ce que vous savez" (v. 1471-73; my emphasis).

Bajazet :
"*En un mot*, séparez ses vertus de mon crime" (v. 1557-58; my emphasis).

space parallels its compression of time; and thus, the mass of each word becomes increasingly dense as the atmosphere of the harem becomes a vacuum of silence, a zone of heightened pressure that lies in wait for the one word that would stop the debacle. That single word may very well be the "Sortez" (v. 1565) with which Roxane orders Bajazet to leave the stage – and consequently, to meet his death.

Scanlan's remark that one of the major elements of the play's *dénouement* is the strangulation of Bajazet with the ropes of the mutes is relevant to our study: The "loosening of the figurative threads of the narrative" (13) by the tightening of the rope around Bajazet's neck is performed by a relay of *silent* executioners, first Arumat, then the mutes. The tragedy unwinds as figures of silence strangle Bajazet, also a figure of silence. The silence that explodes in the climax of this tragedy reverberates with a hollowing out of representation itself that is signified in the final death, that of Atalide. Gross argues that "Atalide's suicide is arguably Racine's most radical transgression of *bienséance* – and this rupture occurs notably in the tragedy of nonintertextuality" (160-61). What is important is not only the absence of intertextuality, but its cause. For this rupture with *bienséance*[95] occurs rather significantly in the most Oriental of all stories to be represented by Racine, as if the representation of the Oriental other itself transgresses the beliefs and manners of the audience.

[95] The Classical French conception of *bienséance* can be considered as an 'imperative of [social or cultural] conformity': "To be *bienséant* required respecting a core of commonly held values" (Blanchard 219).

Imagined Voyages and Questionable Voyeurisms

The buttressing of this tragedy with an 'extra' introductory scene in which a rather voyeuristic French ambassador spies upon the Oriental man highlights, in its need to supplement the contents of the story, the cultural alterity of the story. This act of spying is a *mise en abyme* of Racine's relation to the story of Bajazet. Racine's Oriental tragedy can only be represented because of a French ambassador's act of spying upon an Oriental man and Racine's access to that hearsay. In order to introduce a story that is heard and then relayed by a French ambassador, the dramatist proposes an imagined voyage that will be shared between Osmin, the French ambassador, and the spectator. As we have seen, Racine establishes a *mise-en-abyme* in alluding to the abnormal accessibility to the harem in the opening dialogue (v. 1-5) between Acomat and Osmin. This *mise-en-abyme* structure progresses in the response of Acomat which further advances the possibility of peering not only into the harem, but also into the 'secrets' that are discovered when one (here, Osmin – or meta-textually, M. le compte de Cézy) returns from a long voyage with a story to tell:

> Quand tu seras instruit de tout ce qui se passe,
> Mon entrée en ces lieux ne te surprendra plus. [….]
> Instruis-moi des secrets que peut t'avoir appris
> Un voyage si long pour moi seul entrepris.
> De ce qu'ont vu tes yeux parle en témoin sincère :
> Songe que du récit, Osmin, que tu vas faire
> Dépendent les destins de l'Empire Ottoman (v. 6-15)

Acomat's appraisal of Osmin seems to echo Racine's indebtedness towards M. le comte de Cézy who returns to France and inspires this tragedy with the news he brings as a 'témoin sincère'. This dialogue also reflects a time in France when stories of the Oriental world are becoming more accessible and thus, for the spectators of French Classical

theatre, one can echo Acomat in saying, 'ces lieux ne [nous] surprendra plus'. Indeed, as suggested by Viala, Racine may be paying tribute with *Bajazet* to France's recently celebrated alliance with the Ottoman Empire: "Louis XIV s'était mis en tête de faire grande affaire, climax des relations internationales de son règne, d'une alliance avec l'Empire ottoman. Des ambassadeurs de la Sublime Porte étaient venus en grande pompe à Paris. Tout le monde en parlait à l'envi" (Viala *La Stratégie* 149).

The theatricalization of cultural alterity renders *Bajazet*'s *dénouement* as nothing less than a revolt against theatre:

> [Atalide's] suicide, however, is performed onstage, unlike the other deaths in the tragedy—the deaths of the first messenger, or Bajazet, of Roxane, of Orcan—which all take place offstage and are reported secondhand. In this way, Atalide's performance goes against the fundamental, underlying design of the play itself, from the preface to the penultimate death of Orcan: Atalide's violent death is not reported but witnessed firsthand by the audience, in flagrant violation of the classical rules of *bienséance*. […] The play is thus brought to an end not by a sense of closure, but by Atalide's suicide as a double revolt: against authority, in the person of Amurat, and, even more significantly, against textuality as the ultimate seal of authority—in its performance onstage. (Gross 160-61)

Time and time again, the representation of this Ottoman tragedy underscores the lack of authority in its partial representations of what is silent, what is obscure, and what is other. This is a tragedy where failures of communication repeatedly remind the spectator that the object of representation is that of a practically unknown culture, an object bound to endlessly play a role. The spectator's voyeurism is but a shadowed look at what remains hidden behind the veil or the stage curtain of the harem, for as Huré states: With *Bajazet*, "L'Orient n'y est plus un masque sur autre chose que sur soi-même" (71).

The rebellion against theatre in *Bajazet* reveals that the true referent of the Oriental radically resists representation. Representation is repeatedly shown to be an unfaithful mediation of the cultural other as the accounts of mediators and messengers such as Osmin, Atalide, and Acomat prove to be false. If, as Said says, the Orient can

only be represented in its absence, then this absence becomes a seed of rebellion in *Bajazet* that disturbs – or unveils – the genre of theatre itself. It is for this reason that miscommunication is everywhere cited in this tragedy: "En somme, l'ensemble des actions qui constitue l'intrigue de *Bajazet* est fait de paroles refusées, données, reprises, de silence interprétés, et, pour finir, d'aveux tracés sur un lettre" (Forestier 1501). The silence that goes hand in hand with faulty representations in *Bajazet* begs the reader to question the representational power to construct any image of the cultural other, and to consult that image in accordance with its distance to the actual referent. For the obscurity of silence that is inherent to the representation of the cultural other signifies the distance[96] and the gaps between the Western self to the Oriental other. However, the mediation of the cultural other, the theatricality, and the meta-textual reflections within this tragedy also attest to the possibility of the collapsing of that distance: Borrowing from a notion asserted by Barthes in *Mythologies*, Topping suggests the reversibility of cultural voyeurism:

> The East, as Barthes asserts, may be 'mutilated' by Western representation, but the West is subject to the same fate. Defining the Other and defining the Self are inevitable – if unconsciously – coterminous. Moreover, the Western gaze, which sees in the East everything that departs from the norm, may forget that that gaze can be returned, and *voyeur* become *vu*. (16-17)

Theatre is most 'theatrical' not when it regulates preconceived notions of self or of other, but when it disturbs such preoccupations – not only by questioning the discourse of characters, but by disrupting the Orientalist discourse which claims the *reduction* of the other to be the *representation* of self and other. Racine's depiction of the Ottoman socio-political space of the harem points to its own gaps in the system of reportage and to the limits of obscurity and silence which repeatedly mark that enclosed space. Racine

[96] This (geographical) distance is specifically cited within Racine's justification for writing *Bajazet* for the classical stage in the second preface.

bases this tragedy on hearsay, thus constructing a perfect metaphor and metacommentary of theatre itself, for as Ubersfeld remarks, in theatre "le même discours passe de bouche en bouche" (*Lire le théâtre* 296). In a tragedy where one character's narrative is said to be 'fidèle' at one moment and learned to be disastrously 'infidèle' at the next, representation is contested, deconstructed even, as it emphasizes its own failure to faithfully represent what is absent to the present scene. Metatextually speaking, what is absent-present on thes stage is the Oriental other. Yet this other also mirrors the self, for as Emelina states in her analysis of geographical exoticism in French Classical theatre: "Ce n'est qu'au bout du monde qu'on peut aller au bout de soi-même" (126).

If theatre is specifically the genre where discourse is informed by the *non-dit* due to the visibility of nonverbal codes (actors' bodies and setting), then the dramatization of the *non-dit* in *Bajazet* alters the dichotomous concepts of self-other and of speech-silence that preoccupy the genre of theatre, allowing silence to operate as a "'recreusement' de la forme" (Rykner 119). The rebellion against theater that is perceived in *Bajazet* is the result of a lack of authority in representation: Rather than enforcing the representation of what is foreign, the Oriental other defies representation, escaping it through an obscurity and a silence that prevail in the meandering *détours* of the tragedy's labyrinth. The problematic and seemingly paradoxical coupling of silence and performance is indeed the very making – and unmaking – of this tragedy within a tragedy.

CHAPTER 3

OFFSTAGE MONSTERS IN RACINE'S *BAJAZET*

The guiding star of theatre is mimesis, a principle which claims that art is the imitation of reality. According to Aristotle: "Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is admirable, complete, and possesses magnitude; in language made pleasurable, each of its species separated in different parts; performed by actors, *not through narration*; effecting through pity and fear the purification of such emotions" (Part VI; my emphasis). Yet it is in a more removed imitation of reality that one detects a disturbance of the mimetic function in Racine's tragedies due to a (partial) narration of cultural otherness. As a more incomplete representation, the theatricalization of the cultural other allows for a slippage from mimesis to diegesis (narrative) – and from diegesis to discursive forms of hybridity. As I will demonstrate later, hybridity originates as a biological term, however, in this Chapter we will be more concerned with hybridity as "the form of cultural difference itself" (Young 23). Cultural difference is assumed by colonial discursive practices as a proof of the superiority of the colonizer. Bhabha treats the specificity of this discursive strategy of domination to show how this strategy (or disavowal) is reversible. For Bhabha, hybridity presents itself as "the process of cultural interpretation formed in […] the disjunctive, liminal space of national society" (312). The stage becomes a 'disjunctive, liminal space' in Racine's *Bajazet* and *Phèdre* as it mirrors the 'real' trends

of seventeenth century French society to marginalize the cultural other. The stage seems to ostracize the most foreign of foreign characters – for example, Orcan, "Né sous le ciel brûlant des plus noirs Africains" (v. 1104).

However, the authority and authenticity of this exclusion is subverted by the theatrical narrative of the offstage characters. The offstage thus becomes a "hybrid displacing space" (Bhabha 57) due to a theatrical narrative which codes cultural disorder within *Bajazet* in terms of theatrical disorder. The placement of the cultural other within the fabric of Racine's tragedies disarms representation as a whole, for there is some trickery in the fact that the cultural other *seems* to be relegated to the 'outside' of the theatrical stage. This 'outside' can at first be conceived of in terms that mirror the 'inside/outside' distinction of colonialism as described by postcolonial critic, Kuan-Hsing Chen:

> The political epistemology of colonialism builds itself on a rigid 'inside/outside' distinction, and the main axes have been race and ethnicity: color, language, accent, religion, etc., mark the divide between the colonizer and the colonized; these are also cultural categories which mark hierarchies and unequal power relations. (19)

While we may consider Racine's distinction of the onstage/offstage to parallel colonialist structures of exclusion on the one hand, we find on the other hand that he blurs the onstage/offstage distinction. Racine dismantles dualistic representations through careful attention to the nuances of the discursive medium of theatre – and more specifically, of theatrical narrative – which render the absent present. In the final analysis, Racine's blurring of the 'inside/outside' proves to be incompatible with the colonialist policies that created oppositions between the cultural other and the self in the seventeenth century. His intuitive incline to complicate – if not reverse – dichotomies inadvertently touches upon postcolonial criticism of dualistic colonial structures.

Upon closer view, we find that the cultural other is inscribed as (what I call) the theatrical other: Without bodily or vocal presence, the most foreign of foreign characters is theatrically other – that is, non-performative. This offstage character nonetheless seeps into representation via other characters' discourses. The stage is simultaneously divided and joined by what is present, visible – in a sense, 'real' – and what is absent, invisible, and not real[97]. The mimetic function seems to be cancelled out as the offstage cultural other is constructed by a theatrical narrative that is removed from the realm of action. These characters are rendered passive as they are spoken of and for on the stage of representation. Furthermore, the character's absence leads at times to an exaggeration of what is (culturally or ethnically) different about him, as is the case with Orcan, the African 'monstre' in *Bajazet*. Such characters are evoked with a language that indicates their otherness by coding it in terms of monstrosity – yet this monstrosity remains hidden from the spectator's eye, relegated as it is to a discursive realm that breeds fear and tension. These spectral characters are worthy of our attention as they carry meaning in an ambivalent and atypical way[98] and complicate notions of subjectivity through the absence of the character's performance. In this way, Orcan and the Amazon, the offstage monsters in *Bajazet*, reflect a representational technique that echoes in a rather surprising way the silencing of marginalized cultural others who are denied access to the (world) stage, to speech, and to power within colonialism.

If hybridity can be described as "the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization" (Ashcroft 118), then hybridity is operative in

[97] As Lyons states: "What happens offstage does not, in concrete terms, happen at all [….] Offstage space is imaginary in a way that onstage space is not" (72).
[98] "The monster always becomes a primary focus of interpretation and its monstrosity seems available for any number of meanings" (Halberstam 2).

Racine's theatrical practice of discursively marking a contact zone between the offstage and the onstage. The unity of place is divested of its cultural purity despite the offstage positioning of the cultural other, for the offstage is repeatedly summoned within dialogue. Racine's theatre is unique in that it disturbs the 'staged' barrier between the self and the cultural other[99]. Thus, it is in theatrical form that the concept of hybridity intimates the affect of oppression upon the colonizing self as well as upon the colonized other[100]. Despite depreciatory connotations of otherness that peripheral monsters bring to the foreground of Racine's tragedies, one perceives a subtle yet repeated deconstruction of French desires for cultural (and theatrical) homogeneity. Indeed, homogeneity is framed within the limits of the stage – only to be haunted by the spectral presence of the marginalized offstage other.

[99] Corneille also allows the offstage to define or be inscribed within the onstage, as Lyons has eloquently shown in an article entitled, "Unseen Space and Theatrical Narrative; The 'Récit de Cinna'". It would be interesting to extend Lyons' analysis of the onstage and offstage in Corneille's theatre with a consideration of the ways in which cultural homogeneity and cultural alterity operate across the stage borders.

[100] The post-colonial and cultural studies scholar Kuan-Hsing Chen summarizes Bhabha's advances in postcolonial perspectives as such: "The exercise of colonial power produces the effects of hybridity; here, the effect cannot be understood as it used to be as being only monopolized by the colonizer, while the entire cultural tradition of the colonized was silenced. In fact, the colonized was 'more' hybrid than the colonizer in that 'he' has acquired the language, the accent and forms of expression of the dominant; although the colonizer looks down on 'him', the latter can still use the colonizer's language to insert denied knowledges and traditions into the dominant discursive space, and in turn, the colonizer's unfamiliarity with this whole set of cultural codes puts the colonizer in crisis, and hence undoes his authority; this anxiety is nothing but a form of recognition" (20).

Activating Cultural Imaginary: Announcing Blackness

Interestingly enough, there is a character in *Bajazet* whose unexpected[101] and (theatrically) chaotic presence/absence in the seraglio induces a violent turn of events. However furtive his entrance in the seraglio, it is curious that this character neither figures in the list of characters nor does he appear onstage. This textual and performative silence exceeds the expected parameters of theatre, for this character's actions trigger crucial events within the tragedy. Although suppressed in this fashion, he has a name – Orcan; he performs an action – he kills Roxane and Bajazet; and he speaks. However, he performs in a secondary fashion; nowhere does he figure as a character on the stage, save in the mouths of other characters (that is, in theatrical narrative). From Roxane's slave, Zatime, one discovers that he is a slave: "Mais, Madame, un esclave arrive de l'armée" (v. 1096). One learns that he is efficient in his services to the Sultan Amurat: "Oui, de tous ceux que le Sultan emploie, / Orcan le plus fidèle à servir ses dessins" (v. 1102-03). One then arrives at a physical image of Orcan, hazy as it is: "Né sous le ciel brûlant des plus noirs Africains" (v. 1104). The spectator thus has in mind a messenger-slave of a very dark skin color. Although one can infer that is he is a born African, this nomination is only indirectly applied to him. He is born under *their* burning hot sky, as if chance and accident conferred blackness upon him. He also loses singularity as he is conflated with the plurality of 'des plus noirs Africans'. Already, this reference to the darkest of Africans conjures up the cultural imaginary of the spectator – just as the term 'monstre' conjures up an unlimited set of imaginary creatures.

[101] He is first mentioned at the end of Act III, just in time for him to participate in Act IV – an Act "qui marque toujours le moment de la plus grande intensité dans une pièce de Racine" (Tobin "La Poétique" 251).

It is important to recall that French audiences would be familiar with the accounts of cultural difference that were circulating at the time[102]. The nuances that Racine gives to depictions of faraway places and cultural others are echoes of the ideas that were in circulation at the time. Thus, even though the inflections will be Racine's, it is important to recall that he may have never so much as seen the sea[103], let alone Africa. His information comes from what he has read and heard rather than from what he has seen. Thus, when the African character, Orcan, is described as a 'monstre' in *Bajazet*, the term had previously been evoked in Magnon's *Le Grand Tamerlan* (1648) with regards to the Oriental Prince[104]. Within the echo chamber that cultural otherness was becoming, the chances of misrepresentation were strong given the preliminary stages of cross-cultural interaction.

The question then becomes: What were French perspectives of Africa in the seventeenth century? Without a doubt, Africa was a mix of reportages that were strewn together by travelers who oft echoed one another, as if they needed to authenticate what they would add to the discursive patchwork that Africa was becoming in France at that time. Commentators thus took recourse to what had previously been said, adding their

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[102] Some exemplary sources of discussions regarding blacks and slaves in the seventeenth century are: Charles de Rochefort's *Histoire naturelle et morale des Iles Antilles de l'Amérique. Enrichie de plusieurs belles figures des raretez les plus considérables qui y sont décrites. Avec un vocabulaire Caraïbe* (1658) – the many reprints (1665-1716) of this work, as well as its translations in Dutch (1662), German (1668) and English (1666), attest to its popularity; André Chevillard's *Les desseins de son Eminence le cardinal de Richelieu pour l'Amérique ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable depuis l'établissement des colonies* (1659) ; and Jean-Baptiste Du Tertre's *Histoire générale des Antilles habitués par les François* (1667-71).

[103] Tobin expounds upon this conjecture: "On se demande ce que Racine a pu connaître directement des lieux étrangers. Comme la majorité de ses contemporains, ce poète célèbre pour ses évocations de l'eau et qui a sans doute partagé le sens augustinien de l'eau comme le reflet tiède de l'ambiguïté et de la variabilité humaines, n'avait probablement jamais vu la mer. Nous savons que, l'écriture étant un exercice intertextuel au dix-septième siècle, la culture de Racine était profondément littéraire, et on a récemment démontré que les allusions géographiques des récits de vrais voyages se fondent surtout sur un système de references à Homère, Platon et Virgile autant ou même plus sollicités que des historiographes tells que Plutarque et Pausanias" ("La Poétique" 244).

[104] "C'est un traistre, un tyran, un monstre, un parricide" (Qtd. in Requemora 138).

hesitant, perhaps uncertain accounts. To say anything about Africa was to be cognizant of the difficulty in making different perspectives correspond with preceding ones, so much was the African puzzle without congruent form. Rather than cohesive pieces, there were gaps. To the French, Africa was a silent and silenced mass, obscure in every sense of the word.

> Pour les Européens, ce continent était encore mystérieux. Il ne les intéressait alors que pour multiplier les comptoirs de commerce sur les côtes occidentales, pour aborder sur ses rivages souvent inhospitaliers et permettre à quelques Missionnaires de s'aventurer prudemment dans les terres intérieures. Ce vieux continent est sans doute un espace privilégié de réalités plurielles et contrastées. Il trouve aussi sa représentation dans cette zone indécise où la légende emboîte le pas sur l'histoire ainsi que la politique et prend, par une magique alchimie, valeur de mythe. (Bournaz 17-18)

The plural, contrasting realities and myths that comprised a muddled perspective of Africa in the seventeenth century left it too ambiguous or minor a concept to be included, for example, in Thomas Corneille's *Dictionnaire universel géographique et historique* (1708)[105]. Thus, Delesalle and Valensi assert that "malgré les grandes découvertes, les rédacteurs de dictionnaires méconnaissent l'Afrique et ses habitants et la traite dont ils sont victimes" (Qtd. in Gadhoum 25). One might wonder if the lack of hospitality stems from the geographical borders of Africa or from French interest in (and representation of) what is foreign.

In Hughes' presentation of seventeenth century British works which feature the misinterpretations that arise between differing cultures – European, Black African, and Native American – he suggests that at this time in history there was a range of attitudes

[105] Furthermore, "Dans le *Dictionnaire* de Furetière, l'Africain en tant qu'être appartenant à une communauté ethnique et géographique est absent dans les entrées principales ; s'il est mentionné c'est pour être aussitôt nié. Quant à l'Afrique, elle est multiple, elle continue, certes, à véhiculer une image traditionnellement monstrueuse, mais elle est aussi un espace géographique et culturel qui a une certaine histoire et qui ouvre sur l'ailleurs" (Gadhoum 30).

concerning slavery and colonialism rather than a fixed set of collective notions regarding the cultural other:

> All portray the alien with open-minded imaginativeness, and all treat the contrasts between alien and European as unstable, complex and reversible […] Thus, none of these works uses rigid and essentialist ideas of what came to be called 'race.' Although they portray the African with direct interest, however, they also use him as a means of exploring problems closer to home; the alien may be the familiar in an unfamiliar guise. (xii-xiii)

If the unfamiliar Africa is pliable to the point that it may represent issues close to home, one can imagine how it came to be that the African in *Bajazet* is represented as a monster, that is, as an imaginary creature who is composed of different parts; one might think of the monstrous as a combination of the familiar and the alien. In this way, the monstrous can be said to function in *Bajazet* in terms of the familiar and the alien: Orcan's character is formed through a combination of onstage (the familiar) and offstage (the alien) elements. The monster as composition works theatrically as the African character is restricted to an offstage, invisible 'performance' while he is still evoked (and determines events) onstage through theatrical narrative. Orcan embraces the familiar and the alien while promoting a rupture at the identification level between the French spectator and the unknown and invisible African other. The mimetic function is removed from Orcan, along with the ability of mimesis to create resemblances between the French spectator and the African other. Such distinctions may revolve around the perceived differences between black and white.

Contextualizing Orcan: Historical Overtones of Blackness

Even if there are not yet any prescriptions regarding race in the seventeenth century, some notions about the dark color of Africans had been set forth. Indeed, if there is "some continuity of negative stereotyping in European concepts of the dark 'Other'" (Malchow 94) to be found during the eighteenth century, such notions most certainly had their root in the "Western metaphysics of evil as black and good as white [which] is as old at least as Pythagoras" (Goldberg 203). Thus, blackness connotes the absence of morality in language as far back as the ancient Greeks. In the Racinian tragedies that precede *Bajazet*, this language appears to repeat itself: For instance, in *Britannicus*, Agrippine conflates crime and blackness, "J'ignore de quel crime on a pu me noircir" (v. 1117) and speaks of "une malice noire" (v. 1608); Burrhus pledges his services to Néron, "Si vous allez commettre une action si noire, / Me voilà prêt, Seigneur" (v. 1376-77); in *Alexandre le Grand*, Cléophile fuses ideas of moral filth together with a 'black' task, "Ah! Si son amitié peut souiller votre gloire, / Que ne m'épargniez-vous une tache si noire?" (v. 45-6) and Axiane speaks of a "noire trahison" (v. 687). Given the markedly violent images of Orcan in Osmin's narrative of his slaying of Roxane – Orcan is said to withdraw "son poignard tout fumant de son sein" (v. 1684) and to approach Osmin with "une main sanglante" (v. 1694) – it seems as though the darkness of Orcan's skin[106] is conflated with his violence. Yet the character of Orcan points to – and epitomizes – the peculiarity that Racine attributes to blackness due to his insistence upon Orcan's cruel actions rather than upon any predetermined essence. In the

[106] Indeed, darkness is already introduced with his clandestine entrance in the seraglio; and blackness may further be associated with the darkness offstage in which Orcan moves about.

examples cited above, blackness arises from a 'crime', an 'action', or a 'tache'; in other words, blackness is the mark of a deviating act. The references to Orcan's 'visage odieux' and to his skin color foreshadow his actions in this tragedy. If Orcan is a terrible force in this play, then the blackness of his actions is doubly accentuated by a reference to his skin tone as 'black'.

As an African who is 'né sous le ciel brûlant des plus noirs Africains', Orcan is depicted as 'noir' in the sense of "Un corps qui ne réfléchit pas de lumière" (as defined in the *Dictionnaire universel* – a definition which Furetière follows up with the example, "Les Mores ont le visage *noir*"). But he is also cast as 'noir' in its figurative sense – "en choses spirituelles & morales". One might thus conclude that the beginnings of the conception of blackness were steeped in (im)moral categories: As Goldberg states, "Since the sixteenth century [race] has both constituted its hold on social relations and prompted thinkers silently to frame their conceptions of morality in its terms" (197). This way of thinking seems to be passed on, inherited here and there throughout the centuries, as evidenced by Hegel's nineteenth-century writings when he asserts in his *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* that "among the Negroes moral sentiments are quite weak, or more strictly speaking, non-existent" (207).

Reaching back to the ancient times of Solomon, one perceives even then an echo of the notion that environmental elements render skin black – and that this tinting may result in a quasi-handicap, socially speaking. In the *Song of Songs*, the female voice urges her lover to not judge her based on her skin color: "Ne prenez pas garde à mon teint noir: C'est le soleil qui m'a brûlée" (Louis Segond Bible, Cant. 1.6). The beloved

explains her black skin or 'discoloration'[107] in reference to the work she has had to do in the fields for others[108]. Her need to offer an explanation for her skin tone intimates previous scrutinizing of black skin and suggests a dissection of the character of a person that occurs at the epidermal or superficial level. Racine's evocation of the 'ciel brûlant des plus noirs Africains' seems to overlap the tone of this Biblical verse. Furthermore, to evoke the effects of burning is to cite a painful wound. However, this wound is a mere perception that is cast upon the darker-skinned; any tenderness that would result from burnt skin does not come from African skin (which is not burnt), but comes instead through the derogatory words that are cast upon it. Thus, the symbolism of skin as an exterior and protective organ was actually inverted in certain concepts of black African skin. In addition, the skin became painful to the touch and no longer afforded the Africans a protective barrier in discursive trends that arose in Europe. Tenderness, vulnerability, and possible scarring are conferred upon the darker-skinned as the lighter-skinned attribute the origin of the African 'wound' not to the effect of the discourses that they impose, but to the extremities that the African elements characterize.

Twelve years after Racine's writing of *Bajazet*, François Bernier published an article entitled "Nouvelle Division de la Terre" (1684) in which he extends the term *race* from animals to mankind. According to his thought, divisions in humankind slowly arose with observations of physical traits. It is clear that these divisions signify nascent forms

[107] Racine read from the Vulgate, the Latin version of the Bible (Sisson 213). In this version, the verse in question reads as such: "nolite me considerare quod fusca sim quia decoloravit me sol filii matris meae pugnaverunt contra me posuerunt me custodem in vineis vineam meam non custodivi" (1.5). In this version, the female speaker refers to herself as discolored – 'decoloravit' – by the sun.

[108] The verse continues: "Les fils de ma mère se sont irrités contre moi, Ils m'ont faite gardienne des vignes. Ma vigne, à moi, je ne l'ai pas gardée."

of a human hierarchy based on race[109]. Of particular interest in this article is "the distinction made between inherent skin pigmentation and that which results from exposure to the elements" (Boulle 15). The connotation of 'brûlant' in the description of Orcan's origins thus posits a "white European norm, found in its perfection in temperate Europe" (Boulle 16). References to blackness as burnt skin was in fact already presented in French Classical literature with Scudéry's *Almahide ou l'Esclave reine,* published in 1660-63. As indicated by Pioffet: "Il est aussi fort significatif à nos yeux que Georges de Scudéry, dans la préface d'*Almahide*, se défende d'avoir situé le roman dans un pays habité par les Maures, opposant avec force l'Afrique du Nord aux régions plus méridionales qu'il appelle de façon dépréciative les 'Pays bruslez'" (79). In this way, Scudéry distinguishes the noteworthy regions of Africa – there where the people are, without coincidence, lighter-skinned – from the 'insignificant' areas surrounding the meridian where the darker-skinned live.

Burnt or black skin is a deviation from the 'norm' of white skin, at least as far as the 'norm' is perceived in Europe. The notion of burnt skin suggests a divergence[110] from this norm and thus connotes an environmental or historical transformation of skin color. In 1738, the author of an article entitled "Explication Physique de la noirceur des Nègres" explains dark skin, stating: "Ce serait l'effet de l'air, du soleil et de la nourriture qui peu à peu fit changer la couleur de leur peau, et il suggère que bien que cela semble difficile, rien n'exclut la possibilité d'un changement du noir vers le blanc" (Qtd. in

[109] "Even though Bernier's description of the races does not openly suggest a hierarchy, the very ranking, from 'we Europeans' to the Samoeds suggests a gradation of values. That this was not entirely unconscious is shown not only by the likening of the latter to 'ugly animals,' but by the description of some Venuslike African slave women he encountered in Moka as exceptions among a people with ugly faces,' characterized by 'those thick lips and that squashed nose.' Indeed, Bernier's use of *races* and *species* as synonymous terms places a huge distance between the Europeans and the others" (Boulle 16).

[110] "The further the distance north or south from this [European] region was the habitat, the more debased were the inhabitants" (Boulle 16).

Charnley 43). Thus, according to certain imaginative trends in Classical French thought, blackness poses a mutation not only of moral character, but also a mutability and reversibility of skin color. One detects within such thought a fear of blackness and a consequent desire to whiten African morals and skin. If black skin can be a temporary effect (of the sun, for example), then this is to insist upon the 'unnatural' aspect of blackness. This idea reemerges in the nineteenth century with regard to hybridity. As Young states; "In the nineteenth century, we have seen that a common analogous argument was made that the descendants of mixed-race unions would eventually relapse to one of the original races, thus characterizing miscegenation as temporary in its effects as well as unnatural in its very nature" (26).

The reversibility of skin color that Racine seems to embrace contrasts with the racial discourses of the nineteenth century which propose race as fixed, immutable, and essential categories[111]. Racine, however, depicts blackness as the result of the burning hot elements of the African sky and thus the emphasis falls on peoples and conditions rather than on races. Attributing blackness to the accidental, Racine challenges the Aristotelian categories that underlie nascent racial and essentialist discourses. In such a way, he proposes the notion of race as ambivalent rather than as an unchanging set of containable categories. Blackness thus becomes a feature that is conferred upon the skin from the outside in, rather than from the inside out. Having established the relative ignorance and wild conjectures that gave shape to the perceived differences of Africans at

[111] See Hegel's *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (1837) as well as Gobineau's *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* (1853). A noteworthy consequence of essential notions of race is the 'problem' of the métis: "The métis, in effect, exists only for those who profess the so-called system of pure race" (Blanckaert 63). Gobineau attributed the fall of civilization to miscegenation which, he argued, resulted in the degeneration of pure races.

this time, let us consider further still the reception of Orcan and the apprehensions that he arouses in the context of Classical French tragedy.

The African as Textual Disorder

In the beginning of Act IV, Atalide expresses horror at the news of Orcan's arrival:

> Ah! Sais-tu mes frayeurs? Sais-tu que dans ces lieux
> J'ai vu du fier Orcan le visage odieux ?
> En ce moment fatal que je crains sa venue !
> Que je crains…(v. 1123-26)

Atalide trails off, conceivably sensing that Orcan's arrival may result in the death of Bajazet, whose existence has been menaced by Amurat (Orcan's master). From the outset, Orcan is inscribed as a source of fear. This panic is further augmented by an additional comment which attributes fright to the physical aspects of his character, for he is noted as having a 'visage odieux'. Already, Orcan is cast in an unfavorable light which echoes racist depictions of Africans as ugly and fearsome. The correspondence of Racine's depiction of the African character with a characteristically distrustful, insulting, or hostile eye towards Africa[112] does not lead us to cast Racine as a proponent of embryonic forms of racism. Rather, as a dramatist who considers issues of representation, Racine may have found within the evocation of the African character a means of citing the limits of representation[113] – and specifically, of representation as a

[112] As manifested in other writings and attitudes of the time, as cited above.
[113] The African character naturally affords a consideration of the limits of representation in the context of seventeenth century France, a country who knew little to nothing about the continent's inhabitants at this time.

third-person narrative regarding the (theatrically) marginalized. It is thus at a textual, structural level that we will further interpret Orcan's role in *Bajazet*. Indeed, it is at this level that theatre intimates another level of understanding.

A parallel between Orcan and an intercepted letter occurs when Atalide trails off in her troubled thoughts regarding Orcan's arrival and then turns to ask her attendant about the whereabouts of Bajazet. Zaïre responds that Roxane is surely hiding Bajazet from Orcan: "Sans doute à cet esclave elle veut le cacher" (v. 1131). The attendant then adds that she has received a letter addressed to Atalide from Bajazet. The contents of the letter are intended to reassure Atalide of Bajazet's undying love, yet this letter evokes fear and dread: "C'est Roxane, et non moi qu'il faut persuader. / De quelle crainte encore me laisse-t-il saisie?" (v. 1148-49). Knowing that Roxane will have Bajazet killed if she discovers that she cannot have his love, Atalide hides the letter as Roxane's approach is announced: "Ah! Cachons cette lettre" (v. 1162). The relation between what is feared and what is cast beyond sight thus emerges. A fascinating overlap is thus developed between the letter that inspires fear and must be hidden and the African slave that inspires fear and from whom the protagonist must be hidden. If the African character's blackness is conceptualized in terms of an environmental accident (that is, as a white man whose skin was burnt by the sun), then this accident mirrors the letter which (also) deviates in an arbitrary manner from the author's original intention. Just as white skin becomes black as the result of an environmental accident, the letter is accidentally displaced and, instead of working towards the beloved's reassurance, works instead towards the Sultana's vengence.

Indeed, upon Roxane's interception of Bajazet's letter, she no longer attempts to hide Bajazet from Orcan, but orchestrates events such that Bajazet will meet Orcan, the mutes, and his death: "Oui, tout est prêt, Zatime: / Orcan et les muets attendent leur victime" (v. 1454-55). The letter that was to communicate a message of love proves to be lethal. Like a train that suddenly becomes unhinged and derailed, meaning becomes wild and unfixable, reversible and contaminable. Unexpectedly, Bajazet's letter weaves a web of (Atalide's) fear and (Roxane's) jealousy, at the center of which Orcan will catch (and kill) the writer of the letter. Orcan's sudden appearance in the seraglio parallels the interception of the letter and curiously, both interruptions within the tragedy trigger anxieties concerning representation. Perhaps unconsciously, the spectator associates the African character with the arbitrariness of the process of signification, for all foreseen outcomes are negated with his arrival and with Roxane's unanticipated discovery of the letter.

Furthermore, just as Bajazet's unrehearsed letter disrupts the theatrical ruse that he and Atalide had planned, Orcan's unexpected entrance disrupts theatrical unity. Scherer indicates the problems surrounding his late mention in the tragedy: "Dans *Bajazet,* la mort de Roxane ne résulte pas avantage des données de la pièce. La sultane est tuée par Orcan, envoyé du sultan Amurat. L'existence d'Orcan n'avait été mentionnée pour la première fois qu'à la scène 8 de l'acte III" (*Racine: Bajazet* 129). Orcan's entrance is perceived as a disruption to theatre's regulatory codes of *bienséance*; his entrance jars the spectators' expectations, adding to the general confusion of the tragedy's finale:

> Ce personnage semblait d'abord confirmer seulement le premier ordre du sultan en demandant à nouveau la tête de Bajazet. On pouvait à ce moment pardonner son introduction tardive, car il paraissait n'être qu'un rappel d'une nécessité permanente du

> drame. Mais dans le dénouement, il profite de la confusion générale pour assumer une fonction de plus, qui n'était ni prévue ni prévisible : il avait été chargé 'secrètement' par le sultan de mettre Roxane à mort. (129)

Thus, according to Scherer, the introduction of Orcan's character is disorderly in terms of dramatic code. Racine seems to wish to heighten racial awareness by calling attention to the superlative blackness of the African and to the disruption that this character provokes in the tragedy. Indeed, Racine differs from preceding fictional works in which blackness was practically effaced in accordance with what we may consider to be a French concern for cultural and racial *bienséance*[114].

For example, in 1627-28, François de Gerzan published *Histoire afriquaine de Cleomede et de Sophonisbe*. Although he assimilates Africa to a "pais des Mores" (Qtd. in Pioffet 84) and thus color-codes the Romanesque characters as 'black'[115], he does so only to then 'whiten' these African characters. Queen Chriseide is thus whitened and beautified in the following way: "Pour estre d'Afrique [elle] ne laissoit pas de surpasser en blancheur les plus belles Dames de Grece" (Qtd. in Pioffet 85). Perhaps to please or to assure the public, de Gerzan even conceives of a 'fictional' oil that would whiten the skin of the other African characters: "Pour celles que l'hérédité a pourvues d'une peau sombre, l'auteur imagine une huile 'pour blanchir le teint' dont usera avec profit la belle Olinde, qui deviendra par ce subterfuge 'aussi belle que sa sœur'" (Pioffet 85). Rather than 'whitening' the African in conformity with pres-established literary trends or *bienséance*, Racine embraces racial identity by 'allowing' Orcan to remain as black as '[les] plus noirs Africains.'

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[114] De Gerzan spares the public "un dépaysement trop brutal en gommant de son tableau les coutumes jugées contraires à la galanterie et à la courtoisie françaises. Les principaux protagonistes, grecs ou romains pour la plupart, *se conforment à ce qu'il est convenu d'appeler la bienséance*" (Pioffet 85; my emphasis).

[115] Furetière defines the 'More' as "Homme noir ou femme noire, nez en une region d'Afrique appelez la Mauritanie."

Might we attribute the effects of Orcan's interference of theatrical parameters to the characteristics that are explicitly attributed to him? It is perhaps not a coincidence that the *coup de théâtre* is triggered by the unknown, obscure figure of the African – nor would it be coincidental that this character is disembodied, appearing nowhere on stage in bodily form. He is usurped by a series of narratives that speak *of* him. The disorder that Orcan introduces at the structural level of the tragedy suggests that the cultural other disrupts the regulated fabric of discourse in French theatre and representation. In a sense, Orcan is like the letter from which the original intention is unfastened once the letter leaves the hands of the addressor or the *destinateur*[116] (here, the Sultan Acomat). In the following narrative of Orcan's appearance in the seraglio, we learn that Orcan is an African slave whose task it is to deliver and to enact an order that is signed by the Sultan. What is more, he is an 'assassin' and a 'monstre' as we learn when Osmin reports to Atalide and Acomat regarding the details surrounding Roxane's alleged death:

> Oui, j'ai vu l'assassin
> Retirer son poignard tout fumant de son sein.
> Orcan, qui méditait ce cruel stratagème,
> La servait, à dessein de la perdre elle-même ;
> Et le sultan l'avait chargé secrètement
> De lui sacrifier l'amante après l'amant.
> Lui-même, d'aussi loin qu'il nous a vus paraître :
> *Adorez*, a-t-il dit, *l'ordre de votre Maître ;*
> *De son auguste seing reconnaissez les traits,*
> *Perfides, et sortez de ce sacré palais.*
> A ce discours, laissant la Sultane expirante,
> Il a marché vers nous ; et d'une main sanglante
> Il nous a déployé l'ordre dont Amurat
> Autorise ce monstre à ce double attentat.
> Mais, seigneur, sans vouloir l'écouter davantage,
> Transportés à la fois de douleur et de rage,
> Nos bras impatients ont puni son forfait,
> Et vengé dans son sang la mort de Bajazet. (v. 1683-1700; my emphasis)

[116] Eco describes the communicative process as "the passage of a signal (not necessarily a sign) from a source (through a transmitter, along a channel) to a destination" (8).

In the original text of 1672, verses 1690-92 read as such: "*Connaissez*, a-t-il dit, *l'ordre de votre maître / Perfides, et voyant le sang que j'ai versé, / Voyez ce que m'enjoint son amour offense.*" Racine revises Orcan's discourse with the 1676 edition; what is emphasized in this edition (and those that follow) is no longer the spilt blood, but the notarized signature of the Sultan which 'authorizes' Orcan's message. With this modification, Orcan's performance is scripted much like a letter, signed and all. The fact that Orcan's speech is marked as a script serves as a *mise en abyme* of theatrical discourse. As Ubesrfeld states: "La langue de théâtre, qui mime la spontanéité, qui va jusqu'à en reproduire les approximations et les défaillances, est elle aussi le fruit d'une transposition, d'une recherche qui s'opère dans le creuset de l'écriture et qui se fixe dans le texte" (101). Orcan's speech thus reflects an originary impulse to pre-program what is said and to tame (even if 'killing' the spontaneity of) language by fixing it.

However, Orcan's sudden presence in the seraglio coincides with the letter's disruption of the coveted link between writing and the fixity of language. Messages unwind, and, spinning out of control, language is no longer attached to the meaning that was originally intended. What we read in the versions following 1676 is the loss of Orcan's voice[117]. When he does 'speak', his lines are spoken by another character, Osmin. He is then doubly silenced when one recognizes that Orcan's only words were those of Amurat. What we find in Osmin's report of his (or Amurat's) speech is a theatrical and discursive hybridity, for communication is killed in theatrical dialogue, giving way to a composition[118] of the absent presence of writing and the present absence of Orcan the speaker. In this way, what may be framed by this *mise en abyme* of failed

[117] It is interesting that this change occurs after the establishment of the *Code Noir* in 1685.
[118] "Le texte dialogué, qui s'inspire des échanges au quotidien, en a perverti toutes les propriétés pour produire cet appareil très composite; l'œuvre théâtrale, et cette œuvre appartient à la littérature" (102).

communication is the instability of early modern French projections of the distant African other.

The transimission of this letter – and of this performance – is flawed. Indeed, the letter that Bajazet writes turns on him and Orcan's message delivery has him killed on the spot. The transparency of the sending of the letter is interrupted not only by the interruption of the message by the messenger's death, but also by the opacity of the messenger's skin color. In *Bajazet*, the blackness of Orcan posits a striking difference to any notion of transparency (whether transparency is an imagined construct or not) in the process of communication. Thus, Orcan becomes the possible source of opacity – and thus the obstacle to transparency – in the following scenario of a written communication:

> Imaginons qu'un envoi soit en effet ce qu'on entend normalement par un processus de communication […]: un sujet, le destinateur, pleinement conscient de ce qu'il veut dire, envoie un message qui n'est que la traduction exacte et sans reste de ses intentions, à un autre sujet, le destinataire, lui aussi pleinement transparent à lui-même. Un sujet qui sait tout ce qu'il veut dire, communique le contenu de son vouloir-dire à un autre sujet, qui comprend tout ce contenu, et rien d'autre. L'envoi serait alors la transmission, l'échange d'une communication sans reste. (Marrati-Guénoun 119)

Orcan is the messenger that, like a scapegoat, absorbs the responsibility of the lack of transparency between two subjects as the message's content turns sour. Communication is derailed due to the absence of the *destinateur* (the Sultan Amurat, off at war) which parallels the theatrical absence of Orcan: Theatrically speaking, the deliverer of the message never arrives on the stage. In this (non-)communicative process, there is a remainder that is in excess to the stage. This excess is dramatized from the offstage position of the African character. Consequently, the question of presence/ absence becomes all the more implicated in Orcan's non-performative intrusion into the harem and the tragedy. While the seal of the Sultan's written order is meant to exonerate the murderous acts of Orcan, the seal marks instead the absence of the Sultan. Orcan is

shown to suffer not only from the absence of the *destinateur*, but at a metatextual level, this character sufferes from the opacity that his skin color proposes to those who are 'transparent' or white. Without a voice, without a message, he will be punished by death due to the opacity that representation confers upon him.

Osmin's narrative reveals that Orcan operates on a different level than most characters in Racine's theatre; his role can only be understood through hearsay and in retrospect – one learns from Osmin's account that he had been secretly charged with a mandate to kill. Orcan thus elicits blindness on the part of the characters and the spectators. It is also in retrospect (as afforded by our post-colonial perspective) that present-day readers may understand the intimations of the African character as a 'monstre' in French Classical theatre as an emergence of the racist and colonial discourses that became more pronounced in the centuries to come. Let us consider further still the fact that Orcan does not appear onstage. In such a way, he will emerge in the analogous terms of an obscure monster that is hiding in the closet.

Black Skin: Symbol of the Obscurities Surrounding European Knowledge

Although he does not appear, Orcan embodies the foreboding and secretive atmosphere of a 'closet' – that is, of the restricted space of the stage/seraglio:

> Lieu interdit, lieu sacré donc, le sérail-harem va figurer la proximité de la mort comme seule vérité. Tout autre forme de vérité que le langage s'efforce de cerner et de transmettre est prisonnière de ces ténèbres, de ce lieu. Et de fait, le langage ne parvient pas à élucider la vérité. (Huré 60)

Orcan is said to be a 'monstre à double attentat' insofar as he springs death upon Bajazet and Roxane. This double murder is retold by a theatrical narrative that confers a deductive role upon the spectator who, by all foreseeable conclusions, could not have expected to hear of such an event. The figure of Orcan twists the anticipated plot of the tragedy, reversing Roxane's plan to simply have Bajazet killed, inverting Atalide's hope to see Bajazet survive, and shocking spectators by a language that cannot fully take account of the astonishing series of deaths[119] that compel the spectator to imagine and to reconstruct the offstage bloodbath. The obscurity of the seraglio is *mis en scène* throughout the tragedy by hushed figures and whispered fears that obfuscate the dialogue; the correspondence between obscurity and silence is traced – and epitomized – in Orcan's character:

> La signification de sa noirceur physique n'est pas seulement morale ou immédiatement funèbre, mais aussi chromatique. Il a la couleur du fond de l'air qu'on respire dans *Bajazet* [….] Il est de surcroît le seul personnage de la tragédie ottomane à se mériter le titre de 'monstre' [….] Et si le sérail, enfin, est aussi l'empire des 'muets,' c'est évidemment, entre autres, parce que le silence est l'équivalent auditif de l'obscurité. (Soare "*Bajazet*"42)

Further linking the blackness of the messenger to silence and to death, Roxane groups Orcan with the mutes: "Orcan et les muets attendent leur victime" (v. 1455). If Orcan embodies the hauntingly silent atmosphere of the seraglio, it is fascinating that he does appear or speak there: As Durand states:

> Le fait que ce soit le muet Orcan qui enclance la tuerie finale en assassinant Roxane est très important. En effet, Orcan ou son chef Amurat viennent de l'extérieur, sont silencieux et n'apparaissent jamais sur scène. Ils rappellent la froideur des murs du sérail à cause de leur silence. C'est comme si c'était le lieu qui tuait. (41)

As the incarnation of the despotic seraglio, Orcan also figures the obscurities of language and of the offstage, becoming a monster and a messenger of death that lurks in the uncharted periphery of the stage limits.

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[119] It is not only the eponymous character that dies, but also Roxane, Orcan, and Atalide.

Why then does Orcan remain in the physically non-reprsentable spaces of theatre? While at one level, the layers of obscurity that arise in terms of Orcan's skin color and morals seem to conform to racist, fictional notions surrounding the cultural and biological 'inferiority' of Africans, these layers might also take account of the gaps in the shadowed knowledge that the French possessed in relation to Africa[120]. Such gaps are underscored by the (structurally remarkable) non-appearance of Orcan and signal an alteration of knowledge that confers immoral and monstrous characteristics upon blackness. This distortion of representation of the African other ultimately leads to the emergence of racial theories. European theories regarding Africans disenabled any real or accurate representations of this cultural other; and the theoretical slipped into the practical realm with the establishment of the slave trade and the West Indian colonies in the seventeenth century. There, theories that distorted the humanity of the African led to actual death, brutal punishment, and forced servitude. Let us flash forward to the nineteenth century with Hegel's *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* to perceive that the ideas that were emerging with regard to Africans in the seventeenth century would spread and take root as the Africans were transplanted by commercial trade; again and again, Africans would be painted in accordance with a narrative that deprives them of any voice or place in history as well as any claim to life:

> The peculiarly African character is difficult to comprehend, for the very reason that in reference to it, we must quite give up the principle which naturally accompanies all *our* ideas—the category of universality. [….] The Negro, as already observed, exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. We must lay aside all thought of reverence and morality, all that we call feeling, if we would rightly comprehend him;

[120] Charnley gives an example of the general ignorance that prevailed in the seventeenth century French perceptions of Africa: "Dans *Les Voiages*, La Mothe le Vayer dit que 'nous ne connaissons guères que la coste, et fort peu l'interieur' (La Mothe, 1662, t.2, 39), un sentiment exprimé également par Chapelain en 1671, quant à l'Éthiopie, 'cette partie de l'Afrique mal connue jusqu'ici de ceux du métier et dont Léon Affricain, Marmol ni le Nubiensis ne nous avaient donné que des connaissances fort obscures et fort imparfaites'" (41).

> there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character. (206)

Hegel presents the negation of African humanity and denies Africans any legacy besides what is 'wild and untamed'. His claims are founded upon the impenetrable differences that Africans seem to present to a collective European norm. Hegel exaggerates difference to the point of a radical disjunction between (European) self and African other in order to posit the first-person plural possessive adjective '*our*', creating a binary division between the 'onstage' of history and the 'offstage' of history. Yet this collective European identity which he designates (as he dismisses Africa from the stage of shared humanity) is fictional and based upon an illusory split of self and other. This split is illusory because it is a vast oversimplification – and oversight – of cultural differences.

The (Hegelian) dualism is reflected in the border between the theatrical stage and the offstage, both of which are complicated in Racine's theatre. The problem of discursive representation is elucidated in *Bajazet* by the fact that Orcan is referred to as a monster, which is itself a fictional identity. As a monster, Orcan is an offstage character who points to the hidden sides of representation and to that which is not real. The monster reveals fictions of identity – or the fiction of identity – in theatre. Can the spectator say for sure that Orcan exists and acts behind the scenes? Orcan inverts the process of representation by becoming 'real' in theatrical terms (through the consequences and the recounting of his actions) although he does not 'appear' as other theatrical characters do – that is, live, 'real', and in the flesh. While drawing on the composite elements of absence and presence in third-person narrative, Orcan is both (t)here and not (t)here. He thus reflects a makeshift world that relies on the spectator's recurring suspensions of disbelief in order to *imagine* him. Racine chooses to personify

that which undermines theatricality through a naming of the offstage space as African – that is, as a space of cultural imagination that resists the gaze and the knowedge of the French spectator.

Significantly, it is by the hands of the mutes and by the 'main sanglante' of Orcan that silence, monstrosity and obscurity are conferred upon tragedy itself – as its own *dénouement*. The tragedy unwinds as a monstrous layering of offstage shadows[121] and deaths. Indeed, *Bajazet* appears to be not so 'theatrical' – or orderly – as its climax was deplored by a contemporary of Racine, Madame de Sévigné, who found the ending to be abrupt and illogical: "Le dénouement n'est pas bien préparé: on n'entre point dans les raisons de cette grande tuerie" (Qtd. in Maison 214). One may attribute this confusion to the unforeseeable and invisible character of Orcan who triggers the final bloodbath.

It is interesting that the death that he brings and the death that is forced back upon him seems to dramatize a lack of respect for life that Hegel attributes to the 'Negro':

> In the contempt of humanity displayed by the Negroes, it is not so much a despising of death as a want of regard for life that forms the characteristic feature. To this want of regard for life must be ascribed the great courage, supported by enormous bodily strength, exhibited by the Negroes, who allow themselves to be shot down by thousands in war with Europeans. Life has a value only when it has something valuable as its object. (208)

As illustrated in Hegel's statements, misconstructions of the cultural other occur due to the tendency of the observer to distort the image of the cultural other. This distortion is effectuated according to the measure of perceived difference from the self. What is of interest is the ways in which Racine's depiction of Orcan anticipates racial stereotypes that become more widely recognized in the following centuries. However, African stereotypes (of the monster or of a hateful face) may be proffered in Racine's *Bajazet*

[121] According to Osmin's depiction, Bajazet is "de morts et de mourants noblement entouré / que vengeant sa défaite, et cédant sous le nombre, / ce héros a forcés d'accompagner son ombre" (v. 1701-03).

with the intention of revealing gaps in representation itself. The discursive assembly of Orcan signals a fragmented representation of the absent African body which lacks the authority to speak of African subjectivity or to affirm negative stereotypes. From our perspective, one finds therein a demonstration of the need (of the white man) to attribute gaps in represented knowledge to the so-called savagery of the cultural other[122]. The theatrical ambivalence (onstage/ offstage) of Racine's representation of the African other is significant: For in contextualizing the failure of the African to debut on the French stage, we find a dissection not of the African character, but of French knowledge.

It is important to note that misconstructions of the Africans may have been born not only out of sheer ignorance, but out of intention. Whether genuine or feigned, ignorance was doubled by the projection of Africa as an inferior object of study in the Classical period:

> Malgré tout l'intérêt suscité par ces voyages et les 'modes' pour telle ou telle partie du monde, on constate que pendant toute cette période, l'Afrique continua d'être très mal connu, intéressa peu les voyageurs et les lecteurs, et souffrit d'une fort mauvaise réputation à cause de tous les mythes et préjugés racontés à son égard. Ces mythes, qui remontent bien sûr aux auteurs classiques, furent perpétués et renforcés pendant des siècles par différents écrivains, et eurent pour résultat que peu de personnes se hasardèrent à voyager en Afrique, et que l'échec éventuel de leur projets fut automatiquement attribué à la nature 'vicieuse' des Africains et au caractère sauvage du continent. (Charnley 41)

Prejudices silence Africans as they are viewed by various peoples to be unworthy either of study or interaction. This notion further resonates with the Europeans' treatment of Native Americans: "The European's unwillingness to engage in dialogue, and the problems of intercultural communication generally, were attributed to the Indians incapacity to understand and to speak and this incapacity, this lack of essential humanity, was then deployed as a justification for domination" (Brown 664). Thus, as the French

[122] For another example of racial (or racist) discourse, see Arthur Gobineau's *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* of 1853 in *Œuvres*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1983).

explored/ exploited the land of others, muteness was attributed to the marginalized other rather than being recognized as the muting effects of cross-cultural interaction. Persistent unawareness allows for the hijacking of the representation of the 'silent' other. Indeed, it is the muting effects of representation that make possible the subjugation of any people.

Yet can representation itself be fully mastered? As we have seen in Chapters One and Two, the incapacity to fully suppress one's thoughts and passions disturbs self-representation through the rippling effects of the *non-dit* in Racine's theatre. In the present Chapter, we find that representations of a cultural other cannot occur when the voice of the other is bound or restricted. It is unfortunate that the gaps in the understanding of the cultural other posit a negation of the other's being, rather than an honest examination of one's own knowledge. Indeed, one would rather admit a lack in the other's being than a lack in one's power of knowledge. Yet what is also possible within the critique of the other is a critique of the self, for what is subtly apparent in the muting of the cultural other is that self-knowledge is more at stake – that is, at risk – than the accuracy of representing the cultural other.

The portrayal of the cultural other becomes a moral or political issue when one privileges the self over and against the other. The impact of thinking that the African has no value in or respect for life reveals the desire to skew one's own judgment and morality. Tragically, misrepresentations of Africa allowed for the disregard of universal human rights and representations were distorted according to the colonial and commercial needs of the French. As early as 1685 (just a few years after the production of *Bajazet*), *La Compagnie de Guinée* was formed "with the exclusive right of trade in Negroes and all other merchandise on the coast of Africa from the river of Sierra Leone

to the Cape of Good Hope. This company was given the exclusive privilege of transporting Negroes to the French Islands of America" (Riddell 322). Thus, at some level, the discourse of inhumanity regarding Africans allowed the French colonialists to justify the monopoly of lives and to promote (these) lives as merchandise to be sold. For instance, with the *Code Noir* of 1685, slaves were legally relegated to the status of 'meubles' or personal property, having no feudal or seigniorial rights of their own, as Article 44 of that Code states:

> Déclarons les esclaves être meubles et comme tels entrer dans la communauté, n'avoir point de suite par hypothèque, se partager également entre les cohéritiers, sans préciput et droit d'aînesse, n'être sujets au douaire coutumier, au retrait féodal et lignager, aux droits féodaux et seigneuriaux, aux formalités des décrets, ni au retranchement des quatre quints, en cas de disposition à cause de mort et testamentaire.

With this article, slaves are not only considered to be the merchandise of their masters, but anything that they have also belongs to the masters[123]. Thus, both the *être* and the *avoir* of the Africans are re-routed to the French colonial masters at this inception of French colonialism due to discursive practices that allow for the very real practice of debasing the lives of those who are said to be savage and bestial. Indeed, to regard the African as a monster is to confirm his animality, and thus his ability to be bought, traded, policed, tamed, beaten, or punished by death (as indicated in the edict).

[123] "Déclarons les esclaves ne pouvoir rien avoir qui ne soit à leurs maîtres; et tout ce qui leur vient par industrie, ou par la libéralité d'autres personnes, ou autrement, à quelque titre que ce soit, être acquis en pleine propriété à leurs maîtres, sans que les enfants des esclaves, leurs pères et mères, leurs parents et tous autres y puissent rien prétendre par successions, dispositions entre vifs ou à cause de mort; lesquelles dispositions nous déclarons nulles, ensemble toutes les promesses et obligations qu'ils auraient faites, comme étant faites par gens incapables de disposer et contracter de leur chef" (Article 28).

Striking at the Voice of the African

Of the many striking aspects of Osmin's narrative regarding Orcan is the fact that Orcan was killed *while speaking*: 'Mais, seigneur, sans vouloir l'écouter davantage, / Transportés à la fois de douleur et de rage, / Nos bras impatients ont puni son forfait'. It is significant that the death of Bajazet is avenged by striking his assassin first and foremost at the level of his speech. Thus, to strike at the voice (of the marginalized figure) is an act that is conflated with that of killing. The killing of Orcan is portrayed as an act of rebellion against the authority of the Sultan, for whom he speaks. Orcan both differs and defends the Sultan's presence as he commands that all recognize the 'auguste seing' of Amurat – yet he is interrupted and silenced by his own death. The despotic authority of the Sultan is thus slain (along with its messenger) somewhere offstage. Deconstruction undermines the scene from offstage as messengers, letters, seals, and speech are cut off from their original intention. Osmin and his comrades no longer wanted to *hear* Orcan speak because the origin of Orcan's speech is the will of the Sultan; in silencing and killing Orcan, one strikes not only the killer of Bajazet, but one also delivers a blow to the Sultan – metonymically, as it were. Osmin may glory in his account of having killed Orcan because he himself is still speaking and thus powerful, whereas Orcan and the Sultan are powerless and silent. One might wonder if it is intentional on Racine's part – or if it is a more unconscious move – that the dark-skinned African is cast as the justly silenced messenger. It is fascinating that the cutting of another's speech and voice is equated with killing in Racine's theatre – and particularly there where the most foreign or unfamiliar of cultural others is concerned. It may be

more than a striking coincidence that Africans were being subjected to the brutality of slavery under French colonialism at the time of the production of *Bajazet*.

Not only is Orcan's speech interrupted with the punishment of death, but he is killed at a moment in which he is speaking in the name of another. He acts under orders of the Sultan and refers to this authority by forcing recognition of the written order of the Sultan. Furthermore, Orcan's faithfulness to the task of putting Roxane and Bajazet to death reveals him to be radically subservient to the will of another, even to the point of dying[124]. Where then is Orcan's own agency? His words and actions are scripted for him by the Sultan to whose authority he consistently refers – or defers. Centuries later, Hegel echoes the lack of agency of the African by basing the image of a subservient Negro upon his supposed predilection for 'sensuous barbarism' and his need for despotic power:

> Turning our attention in the next place to the category of *political constitution*, we shall see that the entire nature of this race is such as to preclude the existence of any such arrangement. The standpoint of humanity at this grade is mere sensuous volition with energy of will; since universal spiritual laws (for example, that of the morality of the family) cannot be recognized here [….] Nothing but external force can hold the state together for a moment. A ruler stands at the head, for sensuous barbarism can only be restrained by despotic power. (208)

One can thus imagine how the manipulation of African characteristics might be posited in order to legitimize the reasons for the European slave trade. As Brown states:

> Cultural difference becomes political deviance, and cultural representation becomes ideological legitimation [….] These ideological functions do not necessarily contradict the 'truth value' of the cultural markings. On the contrary, the more that such markings are generated in consistency with the accepted system of representation that guarantees their truth, the more they are seen as natural and inhering in the persons or practices so marked. (661)

It is thus apparent that Racine was aware (as a dramatist) that forms of domination begin with discursive strategies.

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[124] Notions of subservience and punishment by death reflect the tents of the French practices of colonialism, as indicated in the *Code Noir* of 1685.

Orcan's lack of agency is made all the more complete in *Bajazet* as he does not so much as appear onstage. This lack is quite glaring when one considers Maskell's description of Racine's theatre: "Racine creates verbal action by endowing his character with all the skills of the orator in the construction of a speech, in the display of passion, in the use of facial expression, gesture, and tone of voice [….] So, even when language predominates, Racine is theatrical because the words are both active and acted" (245). The verbal skills and the expression of the orator that compose theatrical performance is not possible with regard to Orcan; his words are neither active nor acted. He is incapable of constructing himself through speech acts and is instead constructed through another's narrative. If the subjectivity of Africans would be pillaged for centuries to come with the onslaught of British and French colonialism, then it is plausible that Africans as a people could be overlooked as one focuses on the violent character of Orcan. As Brown states, the collective *they* can potentially be "distilled even further into an iconic *he* (the standardized adult male specimen)" (662). Thus, Orcan can be viewed as a single construction of African *others*. As Brown points out:

> The features of the other are represented as fixed and unchangeable, an endless repeated element in a given natural order of differences. This textuality produced other has no explicit anchoring either in an observing self or in a particular encounter in which contact with the other takes place. "He" is *sui generis* , the "mark of the plural" as Memmi put it, often only a list of features set in a temporal order different from that of the perceiving or speaking subject. (662)

Without access to speech, the single cultural other loses individuality and power of self-representation and can be further manipulated as a denigrated representative of an entire people[125]. Without representation, Orcan's ability to perceive is passed over; instead, he

[125] As early as Gerzan's *Histoire afriquaine de Cleomede et de Sophonisbe* (1627-28), there is a loss of plurality in French depictions of African terrain and language: "Tout se passe comme si l'auteur ne soupçonnait pas la vastitude de cette partie du monde [….] Cette terre est vue davantage comme un pays homogène que comme un continent étendu. De même sur le plan linguistique, Gerzan fait di de la pluralité.

appears to be perceived. He is a monster in a theatrical no man's land, a wasted realm of cultural perception that produces and stamps false findings through repetition. In a literal sense, he is not perceived. He lingers offstage and may benefit from this position of exteriority to observe the stage much like the spectator does. The ambivalence of his theatrical positioning leads us to wonder if it is Orcan as African that is monstrous (as emerging racist discourse seemed to insinuate even in the seventeenth century) or if it is the African as un(re)presentable that is monstrous?

Monstrous Composites

In contemporary thought, one thinks of a monster as a grotesque creature and a projection of our fears, but what were its specific associations in the seventeenth century? And in what ways were societal fears inscribed within the monstrous at that time? Interestingly enough, one finds references to the African continent and its creatures in the *Dictionnaire universel* under the first definition of *monstre*:

> Monstre. Prodige qui est contre l'ordre de la nature, qu'on admire, ou qui fait peur. Aristote dit que le *monstre* est une faute de la nature, qui voulant agir pour quelque fin, n'y peut pas néanmoins arriver, à cause que quelques-uns de ses principes sont corrompus. L'Afrique est pleine de *monstres* à cause de l'accouplement des bêtes féroces de différente espèce qui s'y rencontrent.

Africa becomes a place that engenders monsters[126]. According to Furetière, this is due to a supposition of its crossing of ferocious beasts 'de different espèce'. Africa is thus

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Ainsi écrit-il de Sophonisbe qu'elle s'exprimait en 'langue africaine' comme si un seul idiome y était parlé" (Pioffet 87-88).

[126] In Gerzan's *Histoire afriquaine de Cleomede et de Sophonisbe*, there is a satirical reference to monsters in Africa "dans le paratexte limiaire de la deuxième partie où l'auteur dresse la liste de toutes les coquilles laissées par l'éditeur : 'il est advenu que les Imprimeurs, par un vice qui ne leur est que trop familier, de

associated with hybridity[127]. If one continues with the list of examples, one notices that Africa is a real place that is said to be 'pleine de *monstres*' and yet it is juxtaposed with a bizarre series of creatures that exist in non-real spaces – that is, in the festivals of Paris, in Greek literature, and in one's sheer imagination – or with creatures that are set apart as biological deviations:

> On voit des *monstres* à la Foire St. Germain. Les Cyclopes, les Centaures, l'Hydre de Hercule étaient des *monstres*. Un enfant qui a deux têtes, quatre pieds ; un animal qui a plus ou moins de parties qu'à l'ordinaire, ou mal disposées, passe pour un *monstre*. Les *monstres* n'engendrent pas ; c'est pourquoi quelques-uns mettent les mulets au rang des *monstres*. Quelques-uns y mettent aussi les hermaphrodites.

The association of the monster with the mythic or with a deviation from the biological norm connotes a sterility that seems to be conferred onto Africa itself in this French definition: Africa is associated with sterile monsters and hermaphrodites – perhaps because cultural alterity inspires fears surrounding miscegenation, and thus the desire to confer an imagined sterility upon mixed offspring. Indeed, the sterility of the monster runs parallel to the supposed sterility of the hybrid – and more specifically, of the mulatto in later racial legal discourse[128]: In *Histoire générale des Antilles* (1667-71), Jean-

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mon ouvrage en ont faict une Chymere plus insupportable à mes yeux, que ne sont les monstres qui viennent d'Afrique tant ils l'ont remply de fautes contre mon sens'" (Pioffet 89). Suppositions surrounding monsters in Africa can be traced to the first century with Pline's *Histoire naturelle* in which he states: "A l'ouest sont les Nigres, dont le roi n'a qu'un œil, et dans le front ; les Agriophages qui se nourrissent surtout de chair de panthère et de lion; les Pampages, qui mangent de tout ; les Anthropophages, qui se nourrissent de chair humaine ; les Cynamolges, qui ont des têtes de chien ; les Artabatites, qui errent comme les quadrupèdes sauvages" (Qtd. in Pioffet 25).

[127] In the third or fourth century, Gaius Julius Solinus "fait état de 'satyres', de 'cynocéphales' et de curieux hybrides qui hantent [l'Afrique] : 'En Éthiopie, l'accouplement de cet animal [l'hyène] avec la lionne produit un monstre que l'on nomme crocotte, qui sait pareillement imiter la voix de l'homme. Ses yeux sont fixes et ne clignotent jamais. Ses mâchoires sont dépourvues de gencives ; sa denture n'est formée que d'un os continu, qui, pour ne pas s'émousser, est enchâssée dans la mâchoire qui forme une espèce de bourrelet' […] À l'est de l'Éthiopie, il décrit en faisant écho aux propos de Pline des êtres à 'l'aspect monstrueux' : 'les uns n'ont pas de nez et leur visage plat offre les traits les plus difformes ; d'autres ont la bouche tellement rétrécie qu'ils ne peuvent prendre leur nourriture que par une petite ouverture et au moyen d'un tuyau d'avoine ; quelques-uns n'ont pas de langue, et ne se font entendre que par gestes et par signes'" (Qtd. in Pioffet 27).

[128] As Garraway states: "The question of degeneration recalls the very origins of the term 'mulatto,' deriving from 'mule' and implying the crossing of two species into a hybrid. When first describing mulattoes in the seventeenth century, Father Du Tertre wrote, 'These poor children are engendered from a

Baptiste du Tertre relates the mulattoes in the French Antilles to mules, "Ces pauvres enfans sont engendrez d'un blanc et d'une noire, comme le Mulet est le produit de deux animaux de différentes espèces" (Qtd. in Garraway 243). The hybrid is thus not only monstrous, but is relegated to the status (and one might assume the stupidity and the servitude) of a nonreproductive animal. Although Honoré Jacquinot claims to be "the first to signal this sterility of the métis of the human species" (Qtd. in Blanckaert 49) in his "Considérations générales sur l'anthropologie" of 1846, such notions were already at play in the pejorative designation of mixed (black and white) individuals as mulatto.

As composites of different elements, one may conclude that the monster and the hybrid are practically synonymous[129] – above all in terms of the impulse to bracket the monster and the hybrid off from the self. This eschewing is evidenced by the categorization of the monster and the hybrid as sterile, for the racial thinking that underlies Aristotelian categories would be nullified were one to acknowledge that hybrids can in fact reproduce. Young summarizes the uses of hybridity in terms that, as we will see, closely evoke Aristotle's definitions of the monstrous as well as those posited in Furetière's definition of the 'monstre':

> The word 'hybrid' has developed from biological and botanical origins: in Latin it meant the offspring of a tame sow and a wild boar, and hence, as the OED puts it, 'of Human parents of different races, half-breed'. The OED continues: 'A few examples of this word occur early in the seventeenth century; but it was scarcely in use until the nineteenth'. 'Hybrid' is the nineteenth century's word. (Young 6)

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white male and a black female, just as the mule is the product of two animals of different species'. The analogy in Du Tertre exploded into a full-scale debate in the following century over race and species" (234).

[129] Indeed, Jacquinot asserts that a métis is "an abnormal, monstrous being, which persists under the influence of the conditions that presided at his creation, but which must necessarily becomes extinct when the same conditions disappear" (Qtd. in Blanckaert 49).

Thus, one may consider the word 'monstre' to fill in for the term 'hybride' which was not yet listed in the *Dictionnaire universel.* With the absence of reproduction, the monster challenges notions of resemblance and of mimesis as does the hybrid. As Young states:

> A hybrid is a cross between two species, such as the mule and the hinny, which are female—male and male—female crosses between a horse and ass. The point generally made is that both the mule and the hinny are infertile, which results in the species remaining distinct, held separate by an apparent natural check. As a result of this definition, the argument that the different races of men were different species hinged on the question of whether the product of a union between different races was fertile or not. (8)

Thus, in response to the theoretical question – Can the monster be (re)produced on the Classical French stage? – one realizes that, in fact, it cannot. The monstrous presents an obstacle to (theatrical) reproduction, resemblance, and representation.

Hearkening back to Aristotle, we find that he intertwines human and animal in his treatment of the monster, while proclaiming that in one and the other case, "The account of the cause of monstrosities is very close and similar in a way to that of the cause of animals being born defective in any part, for monstrosity is also a kind of deficiency". When it comes time to give an example of defective combinations of human and non-human parts, he situates the probability of (human) monsters in Africa[130]:

> So, too, monstrosities are commoner in other animals if they produce many young. Hence they are less common in man, for he produces for the most part only one young one and that perfect; even in man monstrosities occur more often in regions where the women give birth to more than one at a time, as in Egypt. And they are commoner in sheep and goats, since they produce more young. (106)

Thus, with Aristotle's conception of monstrosity emerge notions of deficiency, of excess, of imperfection, and of questionable resemblances[131]:

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[130] As we have seen, Furetière picks up on this thread of monstrosity that seems to originate in Africa in his first example of the term *monstre*.

[131] "Monstrosities are thus doubly deceptive. [….] By presenting similarities to categories of beings to which they are not related, monsters blur the differences between genres and disrupt the strict order of Nature. Thus, though the monster was first defined as that which did not resemble him who engendered it, it nevertheless displayed some sort of resemblance, albeit a false resemblance, to an object external to its conception" (Huet 4).

> Why this happens and why they produce many young must be stated later, but in them Nature has made an advance towards the production of monstrosities in that what they generate, being imperfect, is so far unlike the parent; now monstrosities also belong to the class of things unlike the parent. Therefore this accident also often invades animals of such a nature. So, too, it is in these that the so-called 'metachoera' are most frequent, and the condition of these also is in a way monstrous, since both deficiency and excess are monstrous. For the monstrosity belongs to the class of things contrary to Nature, not any and every kind of Nature, but Nature in her usual operations. (106)

Thus, what makes Orcan monstrous in Racine's *Bajazet*? As listed in the *Dictionnaire universel*, a *monstre* is a "prodige qui est contre l'ordre de la nature, qu'on admire, ou qui fait peur"; "ce qui est gros extraordinairement" ; "ce qui est extraordinairement laid" ; "ce qui est mal fait, mal ordonné." He evokes physical excess in terms of his darkness – one notes the superlative when Zaïre states 'des plus noirs Africains' – and in terms of 'ce qui est laid' when Atalide refers to his 'visage odieux'[132]. In effect, notions of deficiency and of excess apply to his character – in general physical descriptions of his character and, more importantly, in theatrical terms, for Orcan is in excess to what is represented on stage. The theatrical narrative that recounts his actions is deficient in that it is a removed manifestation of the character as well as a feeble presentation of his offstage actions. Speech is also deficient in Orcan's case because he is unable to produce it. Much like the ambivalence of the term itself, Orcan evokes the ambivalence of that which 'on admire, ou qui fait peur' in his own theatrical hybridity – he is absent in *Bajazet*, yet present.

As a symbol of excess and deficiency, the monster perturbs notions of resemblance[133] – which in artistic models, can be equated with the function of *mimesis*.

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[132] The African character may also be coded as monstrous in terms of a growing European reflection of Africa as an extraordinarily 'dark' continent, both in the seventeenth century and again with Hegel in the nineteenth century: "Africa proper, as far as history goes back, for all purposes of connection with the rest of the world, shut up; it is the gold-land compressed within itself—the land of childhood, which lying beyond the day of self-conscious history, is enveloped in the *dark mantle of night*" (205; my emphasis).

[133] As Aristotle states: "The same causes must be held responsible for the following groups of facts. (1) Some children resemble their parents, while others do not; some being like the father and others like the mother, both in the body as a whole and in each part, male and female offspring resembling father and mother respectively rather than the other way about. (2) They resemble their parents more than remoter ancestors, and resemble those ancestors more than any chance individual. (3) Some, though resembling

In *Generation of Animals,* Aristotle addresses the phenomena surrounding degrees of resemblance as well as "the reason why the offspring is sometimes unlike any of these but still a human being, but sometimes, proceeding further on these lines, appears finally to be not even a human being but only some kind of animal, what is called a monstrosity" (104). The murkiness that may occur at the borderlines between species becomes the site of the monstrous for Aristotle. His concept of the monstrous closely follows the concerns surrounding resemblance that reached an apex in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries perspectives on hybridity: "The question of human crossbreeding retains its supposed important through the first few decades of the twentieth century [….] In its two constituent elements – Are métis viable or not? Do they inherit the best 'qualities' from their parents, or are they a vehicle of degeneration?" (Blanchaert 43). Furthermore, we find a striking parallel between Aristotle's vocabulary and that of Bhabha: When Aristotle cites an example of the monstrous as a case where a human resembles an animal, he states that this offspring is 'still a human being' but appears to 'be not even a human being but […] animal'. Here, Aristotle describes the monstrous in terms that foreground Bhabha's reflections on the ambivalence of hybridity and mimicry as a phenomenon of "*almost the same but not quite*". Clearly, hybridity raises questions of resemblance that result in a straddling of the similar and the different, the self and the other, and thus in a challenge to essentialist notions of identity.

Although the 'problem' of the métis and of the mulattoes "belongs to the long history of colonial domination" (Blanchaert 43), it is informed by a naturalist tradition that claims "to articulate all the elements of a fixed economy of nature, altogether a

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none of their relations, yet do at any rate resemble a human being, but others are not even like a human being but a monstrosity. For even he who does not resemble his parents is already in a certain sense a monstrosity; for in these cases Nature has in a way departed from the type" (IV.3).

relationship to a world created by God, a relationship to the other and to the self. The determination of species (or of 'race') is the pivot of it" (43). Race (and by extension, interracial unions) is the quintessential handle by which one may grapple with questions of cross-cultural transferences[134]. The insistence upon difference with regards to the notion of race is a way of stabilizing the security or superiority of those who wish to dominate the world stage. Yet if hybridity throws resemblance and its tenets into question, the discursive practice of mimicry allows the exaggeration of difference to fly in the face of those who insist upon the difference of the cultural other and the homogeneity of the self. As Andrews explains:

> Mimicking another's cultural identity for Bhabha takes the form of camouflage, intended not to repress difference but to form a pattern of resemblance. The element of disavowal is most clearly expressed in this relationship of resemblance between imitator and imitated. If the imitated cannot dispel its resemblance with the imitator by emphasizing some aspect of different (the 'not quite' rejoinder to the 'almost the same' formula), its own identity loses coherence and enters into the diachronic mix of identities. In this action its authority becomes disavowed and devalued; according to Bhabha, once identities enter into the historic, the process 'alienates its own language… and produces another knowledge of its norms.' In this way, mimicry is asserted as 'at once resemblance and menace.' The impact of mimicry on the imitated is in Bhabha's words 'profound and disturbing,' for the 'form of resemblance is the most terrifying thing to behold.' (Andrews 67)

Thus, mimicry undermines, much as the monster does, the binary divisions of self-other, offstage-onstage, and black-white, for each time that hybridity emerges it "suggests the impossibility of essentialism" (Young 27).

If the African character is a 'monstre' in *Bajazet*, it is important to recall that the monstrous entails the grossly exaggerated[135] physical or biological traits of an individual creature. Th monstrous reveals its own exaggerations and embellishments as the fear of

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[134] Hybridity is often referred to as "the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization" (Ashcroft 118).

[135] "The essential condition for a monster is that the human characteristics it possesses must not be changed too far. [….] Transforming a person into a monster is achieved by the exaggeration of one or two features" (Reichardt 139).

non-recognition, non-transparency, and non-resemblance. Mimicry thus has a visual character as it purposefully befuddles the same and the other:

> At its simplest, hybridity […] implies a disruption and forcing together of any unlike living things, grafting a wine or a rose on to a different root stock, making difference into sameness. Hybridity is a making one of two distinct things, so that it becomes impossible for the eye to detect the hybridity of a geranium or a rose. [….] Hybridity thus makes difference into sameness, and sameness into difference, but in a way that makes the same no longer the same, the different no longer simply different. (Young 26)

The hybrid represents the idea of cultural mergence, an idea that was shunned by those who wished to maintain essentialist perceptions of race. Racine introduces hybridity at the theatrical level by producing the offstage on the stage. Orcan speaks while being spoken; he is produced by theatrical narrative while being rigorously hidden from view. Racine thus weaves the monstrous into the fabric of his tragedies in order to contest the essentialist categories of the implicit categorizations of race in Aristotelian thought. As we have seen, Racine presents a consciousness of racial difference that is based on the environmental aspects of blackness rather than on essential aspects. By crafting Orcan's character through a hybridity of representation (onstage / offstage), he disrupts theatrical borders as well as essentialist categories of race.

Forcing the Monster back into the Closet

Let us focus on the attributes of the monster that reflect representation itself – as etymologically *monstrum* meant 'to show' or 'to warn'. Orcan's role is to bring representation itself into question. There is thus something that is excessive, prodigious,

and out of the ordinary about Orcan's theatrical representation: He is not announced in the list of characters, yet he plays a determinative role in this tragedy, a role that is based on a narrative that removes him from representation. Whereas an actor's presence to the stage determines his or her performance; here it is that performance is cast in terms of absence. A character without a performance, Orcan engages questions of marginality. This non-performance is a deceptive operation insofar as other characters' narratives are conflated with his performance – though the difference between the two would seem to be crucial. According to Dorsey, "Mimesis, particularly in its Aristotelian sense, also involves constructedness, but its expression as performance often conceals its rhetorical character" (437). What is thus exposed within Orcan's monstrosity is the rhetorical construction of a character that exists as an inflated (but in some cases, collapsible) fiction of theatrical discourse. It is not readily perceptible that Orcan is constructed by unstable symbolic elements that at one level seem to stand in for his character (though our reading of Bajazet's misdirected letter will has already established Orcan's problematization of communicative transmission). As a 'monstre', Orcan can be considered to be a warning of the ways in which the absence of identity is dissimulated through a written script.

The hybridity of the monster occurs at a linguistic and performative level, for Orcan is presented in the form of a narrative. Inscribed in such a narrative, it is significant that "theatrical report, as the mode of distance, absence, and temporal disjunction, flickers […] as an unstable mixture with dramatic enactment" (Lyons 82). Narrative stands in for the African 'monstre', yet this stand-in is an impoverished thread that poses as the 'real'. The language that simultaneously summons and wards off

Orcan's presence signifies the superstitious shadows and pitfalls that are inherent to comprehending – or apprehending – cultural alterity. Indeed, "*Récit* is used to show the unshowable, to bring to the spectator something that cannot be put on stage, something that is beyond the limits of enactment/mimesis" (Lyons 86). The cultural other is summoned by a set of words that are more prevalent in racist and colonial discourses of the eighteenth and following centuries – words that, upon further scrutiny, are devoid of any essence of the supposed referent. Whether one speaks for another (as Orcan speaks in the name of Amurat) or is spoken for (as Orcan is presented by a series of narratives), there is a degree of oppression and a series of diffractions of otherness at play in *Bajazet*. This is evident in part due to our informed postcolonial view; one recognizes that colonization – and theatre for that matter – operates first and foremost at a discursive level. The seeds of silence within colonial discourse can be found in the theatrical discourses that usurp and render partial the representation of the cultural other.

If the identity of the African (and of the cultural other in general) was deciphered through guesswork and secondhand accounts of missionaries[136], of novelists[137], and of very few travelers[138], the language that comes to represent the cultural other is disconnected from the real and is thus even more unlikely of giving any accurate

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[136] For example, Jean-Baptiste du Tertre.

[137] For example, Georges de Scudéry's *Almahide ou l'Esclave Reine*. See also Gerzan's *L'Histoire afriquaine de Cleomede et de Sophonisbe par M. de Gerzan* (Paris : Claude Morlot, 1627-28, 3 vol.) and Marin le Roy de Goberville's *Polexandre* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1978 [1632-37], 5 vol.).

[138] Geoffroy Atkinson remarks French disinterest in traveling to Africa in the relatively small number of treatises concerning voyages in Africa in *Les Nouveaux Horizons de la Renaissance française*: "80 sur les Turcs, plus de 50 sur les Indes Orientales, plus de 50 sur les autres pays de l'Asie, 40 sur l'Amérique, 5 sur l'Afrique et 4 sur les Pays Septentrioinaux" (11). Also, for travelers' accounts of Africa in the seventeenth century, see René du Chastelet des Boys' *L'Odyssée ou Diversité d'Avantures, Rencontres et Voyages en Europe, Asie & Affrique* (La Flèche: Gervais Laboe, 1665), Jean Mocquet's *Voyages en Afrique, Asie, Indes orientales et occidentales faits par Jean Mocquet, Garde du Cabinet des Singularités du Roy, aux Tuileries* (Paris: Chez Jean de Heuqueville, 1617), and Jean Hugues de Linscot's "Description de la Guinée, Congo, Angola et autres pays maritimes d'Afrique" in *Histoire de la Navigation de Jean Huges de Linscot Hollandois et de son voyage es Indes Orientales* […] (Amsterdam: Henry Laurent, 1610).

imitation. The representation of the offstage cultural other is a mutation of mimesis since it alludes to what is dissimilar within human reality. The monster is an image of otherness, disembodied as it were through a language that accentuates its otherness through its absence from the theatrical stage. As a composite of human and non-humans parts, of the familiar and the alien, and as a creature that exists as a deviation from the norm, the monster works against the goals of unity of place – of *cultural* place – and of a certain performative of subjectivity within Classical representation. Therefore, one discovers that the preoccupation with monsters that surfaces in *Bajazet* speaks not only of a concern with cultural homogeneity, but it also reveals a labored concern with the monstrous – or reverse – aspects of representation: "If Art must imitate Nature, in cases of monstrous procreation Nature imitates Art" (Huet 7). The language that supplements the absence of the African becomes as composite, as reversible, and as abortive as the monster of which it speaks. Language proposes an imaginary screen upon which a web of interpretations may be cast: As Punday suggests, "The monster is an entity created precisely by suppressing agency. It is, in other words, an object of pure being that usually embodies whatever meaning we attribute to it seamlessly" (817-18). Thus, it is in silencing the voice of the cultural other that Racine makes of him a demonstrative monster of the instability of theatrical absence and presence.

The monster (and in turn, the cultural other) accentuates the European's unresolved difficulties surrounding the mythic, fictional, and radically different Africa while also revealing what has always been at question within the genre of theatre: (Un)faithful imitations, as well as their dangerous effects.

> At the same time that monstrosity takes art as its model, its mimesis is devoid of aesthetic intention. Far from dissimulating its artificial nature, that is, its own artistic origin, the monster reveals its genesis. There is no *faux-semblant* in monstrosity. On the contrary,

> the monstrous creation does not mislead, it reveals; it does not hide its nature, it exposes the shameful source of its deformity, its useless and inappropriate model. (Huet 26)

Indeed, there is an inherent warning that Orcan as 'monstre' evokes: The language that is to evoke the absent cultural other in Racine's theatre exposes the processes of representation. The monster indicates possible deviations from appropriate models of representation – such as presence, action, and discourse – in theatrical representation. Interestingly enough, this revealing of representation as a deformation seems to coincide with the historic beginnings of the racial and colonial discourses that would represent – or distort – the cultural other in the centuries to come. Thus, the monster warns of the potential unfaithfulness of hybrid discourses that represent the cultural other with the semi-conscious effects of dominating him or her.

The Perpetual Exile of the Monster

A specific phenomenon of representing the cultural other is the process by which otherness becomes diluted in French classical theatre. Emelina speaks of a minimal exoticism in the theatre of the seventeenth century, stating: "De tous les Persans de tragédie, aucun ne nous incite à nous poser la question célèbre de Montesquieu: 'Comment peut-on être Persan?'" (118). In Racine's *Bérénice*, it is the consensus of the Roman populous that the Oriental Queen "a même, dit-on, le cœur d'une Romaine" (v. 375) and in his criticism of *Alexandre le Grand*, Saint-Évremond, a contemporary of Racine, disparages the lack of cultural imaginary in the portrayal of Alexandre and an Indian Prince named Porus, stating: "C'était à nous à les regarder sur les bords de

l'Hydaspe, tels qu'ils étaient, non pas à eux de venir sur les bords de la Seine étudier notre naturel, et prendre nos sentiments. Le discours de Porus devait avoir quelque chose de plus étranger et de plus rare" (Forestier 185). In Racine's *Bajazet*, the Oriental harem is staged, yet the representation does not necessarily cross a cultural threshold; rather, one enters a liminal space where what is most 'other' is cast *yet again* to the exterior spaces of representation. Thus, otherness is deferred to another space of representation that does not yet exist. In its absence, the referent of the cultural other posits a frame of reference that remains unknown.

Ultimately, seventeenth century theatre cannot escape the imperative of the genre to reflect a *bienséance* that is predetermined by the customs and morals of France. Thus, Classical theatre works in many ways according to a mirror:

> The mirror and its reflections work for an audience because what happens onstage may not only *look* real but also, in some respects, actually *is* real. A play uses the same elements as life itself: onstage there are real men, women, and children; there is talk, noise, and silence; light and darkness; movement and stillness. What is seen in the mirror may be unlikely or immediately exciting, but it will always be made of the same materials as those found in reality, and it is experienced using the same kind of consciousness: it is sensed by every means we use in living experience. (Brown 8)

If what is staged ought to resemble the real world, then theatre is a paradox in that it manifests the 'real' through the 'unreal'. As a mimetic work, tragedy allows an interesting study of the beginning perceptions of a 'different' (and perhaps as yet 'unreal') world outside of France in the early modern period. In Racine's theatre, the cultural other is a rhetorical construction that is emptied of its referent, and thus otherness is reverted to the same:

> La Grèce de Quinault ou des pièces à machines est une Grèce de pure convention et de carton-pâte. Que dire de l'Orient parthe, persan ou musulman ! Cette 'formidable érosion des contours', 'ce volontaire écartement de la vie', pour parler comme Nietzsche et Gide de la tragédie, concernent donc non seulement le langage, le comportement, les objets, mais aussi un espace prétendument réel qui est devenu *espace de nulle part et pure intertextualité*. Ici, les terres étrangères ne sont jamais étranges. (Emelina 119)

If theatre mirrors the real world, it seems that the world outside of France seems to be relegated to the service of French self-images. French actors play the role of cultural others, who are divested of their own otherness and speak in turn as French characters. Huggan's remark about Taussig's twentieth-century observations of indigenous peoples of Niger is remarkably applicable in this situation: Indeed, it is "as if mimicry, of whatever order, fixates its object, enhancing its visibility while draining its force" (Huggan 98).

Mimicry seems to allow a camouflaging of the self within the portrayal of the other: "Mimicry is like camouflage, not a harmonization or repression of difference, but a form of resemblance that differs/ defends presence by displaying it in part, metonymically" (Bhabha 131). Racine's representation of cultural alterity functions much like mimicry, for otherness is presented discursively onstage only to be physically removed from the stage. In this double-voicing of otherness, the Western self cannot suppress its own doubt and self-estrangement. Bhabha's concept of mimicry is foreshadowed by the figure of the monster in Racine's theatre – that is, both operate discursively and through a veiled absence/ presence. Consequently, speech is not without ambiguity, for characters like Orcan occupy an offstage position in order to point to the great difficulty of ever entering representation. If Orcan is a monster, he defies categories of definition by a resistance to stage performance. The discourse that 'takes his place' and describes him is undermined by his absence. In the following chapter, we will pursue our exploration of the ways in which silence and the monstrous haunt onstage speech in Racine's *Phèdre*. Whereas Thésée speaks from a position of legitimacy as king, designating his son as a monster, the speech of hybrid characters such as Hippolyte

and Phèdre is suffocated by a cultural position of non-legitimacy. Yet another set of monsters, Hippolyte and Phèdre experience only a partial presence to their own words as they fumble their self-representation, giving it up to characters such as Œnone, Théramène, or Aricie. Let us then examine the monstrous and the hybridity that both construct and deconstruct the characters in *Phèdre*.

CHAPTER 4

THE SILENCE OF THE LABYRINTH IN RACINE'S *PHÈDRE*

In 1667, Racine penned his last secular tragedy, *Phèdre*[139]. It is a drama that is populated by a series of monsters: Hippolyte, Phèdre, Œnone, the Minotaur, and the monster within Théramène's narrative. When the monstrosity of these characters is not derived from their relation to the animal, it is obtained from their cultural hybridity. As a continuation of the previous Chapter, this present analysis will probe the offstage as the emblem of indeterminacy which characterizes the problematic of the cultural other and the monstrous on the Racinian stage. Monsters dwell in the non-representable spaces of Racine's theatre. The characters of these spaces lie beyond the spectator's conception, signaling in a rather ambivalent fashion the difference between self and cultural other. Implicitly informing our argument is the figure of the labyrinth[140], a model that Hippolyte intuitively selects to bury the shame of his father's desire, his own desire, and Phèdre's desire. Our focus will thus be centered on Hippolyte's impulse to censor a term within the pairs of opposition that construct the monstrous. It is thus ironic that Hippolyte, a

[139] "Ever since the 1687 edition of Racine's collected works, the title of the play has been *Phèdre*, no the original *Phèdre et Hippolyte*. While it is undeniable that the audience is interested in the fate of the couple Phèdre-Hippolyte, the title change defines the true focus of Racine's tragedy. [….] If the subject is Euripidean, the emphasis is surely Senecan, for Racine follows the Latin author in concentrating his play on the inner life of the queen Phèdre, rather than on her husband, Thesus, and his son, Hippolytus, as had been the case in the Euripidean version" (Tobin *Racine Revisited* 124).

[140] The labyrinth of discourse operates as a way of signaling "a desire to bury the secret of what has been spoken" (Marder 67). In other words, silence occupies a position that is much like that of the Minotaur at the center of the maze: "But like the monster at the center of the labyrinth, [the] secret cannot be buried, but only immured in detoured walls of discourse" (67).

'monstre', will himself be eschewed from the stage. However, the transposition of the monstrous to the offstage allows the non-representable to emerge within theatrical discourse. The French stage loses representational authority as its efforts to stake out a zone of homogeneity are splintered through multiple deferrals of cultural and discursive hybridity. Representation seems to be hiding its own monsters, much as Hippolyte and the labyrinth do. Let us then consider Barnett's assertion, "Chez Racine, la parole devient monstre" ("La Parole" 175): Indeed, speech engenders silence so as to house the monstrous.

Subtending the problems of exogamy[141] that Hippolyte's hybrid identity poses in Athens are the anxieties of the French empire, which sought to establish France in (Colbert's) terms of "un mesme peuple" and "un mesme sang" (Qtd. in Melzer "Incest" 423). Melzer indicates the problem as such, "France's expansionism gave rise to a fundamental contradiction: how can the state grow into an empire, how can it incorporate the barbarian 'other' and yet maintain its identity and purity?" (436). It seems that dichotomies of speech/silence and of onstage/offstage reflect the "creation of the early modern state [which] required both external expansion and internal purification through elimination of the other" (Melzer "Myths" 74). Yet in *Phèdre*, the border of self and cultural other is not distinguishable as speech and silence begin to operate in a similar way. Each one ensconces monstrosity and hybridity such that discursive self-representation is "never lucid, successfully penetrating dominance or possession of a comprehensively displayed Other" (Riggs 39). Representation becomes an impossible affair as either Phèdre's silence or her confession threatens to condemn her. As Œnone

[141] Melzer asserts that "Pasiphae's love for a beast is a form of exogamy, a socially censured desire for too much difference, the 'same' mating with the 'other'" ("Incest" 423).

says to her, "Ah! S'il vous faut rougir, rougissez d'un silence / Qui de vos maux encore aigrit la violence" (v. 185-86. Yet the double bind resounds as Phèdre exclaims, "Tu frémirais d'horreur si je romps le silence" (v. 238).

Thus, the question remains: To speak or not to speak? Indeed, we find that neither is an option for the problematic is set up such that silence is not silent in Racine's theatre. Phèdre moderates her own speech so that Œnone will voice the name of the one she loves. Phèdre's best efforts to silence the horror of her incestuous love prove to be ineffective, for even when she builds an altar in order to appease Venus, she burns inside for yet another god, Hippolyte[142]. It is as if the inability to name her desire spurns it on. Marder speaks of the "verbal detours that circumscribe the unnamed cause of her silence" (60). In her verbal detours, Phèdre emulates the position of her half-brother, the Minotaur, who was forced to hide within the detours of the labyrinth so as to release their mother from the shame of her adulterous desire for the bull. Victim of her ancestral lines and cultural hybridity, Phèdre crafts a labyrinth which has the same effects as the one that housed the Minotaur – that is, "both to conceal and to contain [the] monstrous effect" (Marder 61) of unnatural desire. Discursive hybridity mirrors cultural hybridity: The choice of speaking or not speaking washes away as one speaks while not speaking. In a remarkable way, speech functions as silence does, for as we saw in Furetière's *Dictionnaire universel*, silence is "la discrétion qui fait qu'on retient des paroles qu'on n'ose ou qu'on ne veut pas prononcer." Silence depends upon concealment and

[142] Phèdre's time of worship before Venus is a site of slippage: "Je lui bâtis un temple, et pris soin de l'orner [....] / En vain sur les autels ma main brûlait l'encens : / Quand ma bouche implorait le nom de la déesse, / J'adorais Hippolyte ; et le voyant sans cesse, / Même au pied des autels que je faisais fumer, / J'offrais tout à ce dieu que je n'osais nommer" (v. 280; 284-88).

containment – and yet this is how the detours in speech function as well. In this way, speech and silence are haunted by their own monstrous coupling.

Speaking Oneself into the Labyrinth

Racine's alexandrine verses are renowned for their simplicity and for their beauty; there is a certain subtlety that underlies his choices of expression. The passions of the soul are like the rhythms of a musical composition. Comprised of poetry and of human voice, this rather musical form rises and falls – its cadence marking the character's hesitancy or demand to speak. For instance, one senses the failed battle against pride and sensibility as Hippolyte utters love's first declaration. The echo of his reticence to speak 'une langue étrangère' and to pronounce 'des vœux mal exprimés' accentuates the full and triumphant victory of Aricie when he confesses to her: "Songez que je vous parle une langue étrangère, / Et ne rejetez pas des *vœux* mal exprimés, / Qu'Hippolyte sans vous n'aurait jamais formés" (v. 558-60; my emphasis). To speak is to stumble upon self-awareness – or rather, to venture away from it – as illustrated by Phèdre: "Insensée, où suis-je? Et qu'ai-je dit? / Où laissée-je égarer mes *vœux*, et mon esprit?" (v. 179-80; my emphasis). In the case of both Hippolyte and Phèdre[143], the protagonist's *vœux* are exceptional in that they bind notions of subjectivity together with a verbal act, yet not without an "immasterable emotivity, the constituents of an almost ode to 'lost-ness'" (Barnett *Detour* 83). The influence of speech and discourse over

[143] It is in their shared hesitancy to speak and to make a confession that Phèdre and Hippolyte differ from Thésée. It is not without a certain amount of irony in this tragedy that Thésée is depicted as "the reputed monarch, slayer of brigands, monsters, and barbarians, the upholder of civilization" (Horowitz 137).

subjectivity is underscored by the fact that verbal acts function like a confession in *Phèdre*. The *vœux* that Phèdre and Hippolyte speak are pronounced in spite of themselves: Witness Phèdre's declaration, "J'aime / Ne pense pas qu'au moment que je t'aime, / Innocente à mes yeux je m'approuve moi-même" (v. 673-74). Despite themselves, speech signifies a move into a more unfamiliar and terrifying space – Phèdre into the realm of judgment, Hippolyte into the 'langue étrangère' of a lover's discourse. Whether trailing off or making a declaration, whether confiding or letting something 'slip' out, the questions of how one speaks – or does not speak – provides an emotional map by which the spectator gains access to the character's fears, obsessions, and desires.

The act of speaking is not without giving way to certain dangers for in the unstable universe of Racine, words are "the tools of a fragile, subtly disintegrative mechanism that co-informs and over-determines all textuality" (Barnett *Detour* 90). The *voeux* of Thésée are repeatedly underscored at the tragedy's finale as senseless and overdetermining, for they are as the cause of the alienation and destruction of his son, Hippolyte: Thésée reminds Neptune of his promise to "exaucer le premier de [ses] vœux" (v. 1068); Phèdre speaks of Thésée's "vœux irrités" (v. 1179); while Thésée believes them to be his "vœux légitimes" (v. 1181), Aricie urges Thésée to repent of his "vœux homocides" (v. 1434), and only too late does Thésée realize "Ah! de quel désespoir mes vœux seront suivis!" (v. 1487). Thus, Thésée's rashly spoken words take on a trajectory of their own, falling back upon him with a vengeance. Representation thus turns on the monstrous as Thésée's words, spoken so that Neptune may hear and avenge him – "Venge un malheureux père. / J'abandonne ce traître à toute ta colère" (v. 1074) – gives rise to a "monstre furieux" (v. 1516), a "monstre sauvage" (v. 1522), a

"monstre bondissant" (v. 1531). This textual monster emerges from the sea in order to destroy the son whom Thésée scripts as a "monstre" (v. 1045). Thésée, known as the formidable slayer of monsters, bears a declarative speech which intersects – and destroys – two textual monsters. The deaths of Hippolyte and of the monster seemingly restore order to the tragedy as they necessarily push the monstrous to the exterior – or perhaps to the inner depths – of representation, never to return: "In an extremely subtle play of inversions, the tragic plot will work itself out, resolving the political crisis, by and through the sacrifice of the tragic hero […] who, becoming the victim of the world's trauma, is immolated to expiate the sins of society and, by so doing, restores order to it" (Greenberg "Absolute Fantasies" 54).

Moreover, the deaths are not shown onstage, but are told. The monster lurks in the shadows of speech. In such a way, the monster corresponds perfectly with the underlying unrepresentability (and foreignness) of language[144]; it must therefore be eschewed from theatrical representation (with an off-stage death) in order to restore a sense of purity to representation:

> La mort physique n'appartient jamais à l'espace tragique : on dit que c'est par bienséance ; mais ce que la bienséance écarte dans la mort charnelle, c'est un élément étranger à la tragédie, une 'impureté', l'épaisseur d'une réalité scandaleuse puisqu'elle ne relève plus de l'ordre du langage, qui est le seul ordre tragique: dans la tragédie, on ne meurt jamais, parce qu'on parle toujours. (Barthes 17-18)

Hippolyte dies because of a (theatrically scandalous) choice to stand onstage and to not speak; his honor precludes him from exposing the truth regarding Phèdre's accusations against him. Thus, the scandalous, the foreign, the impure, is relegated to that which hesitates between the unsaid and the said: "Parole ici iphigénieuse, bérénicienne, encore

[144] In his declaration of love to Aricie, "Hippolyte refers repeatedly to his 'foreign,' 'wild' and 'barbaric' mother, Antiope. He asserts that the words he uses to express this love are not his, but, rather, are spoken in a 'foreign tongue'" (Marder 65-66).

and parfois hippolytique, mais toujours tournée vers soi; et laquelle, indestructible, annonciatrice, cache obscurément le fait qu'elle ne cache rien, ni labyrinthes, ni ténèbres, ni détours" (Barnett "Parole" 175). The ambivalence of enunciation is verbally driven from the tragic space by the 'vœux' of the "monster-slayer" (Spitzer 245), for the announcement of what is hidden – or even unknown – in Racine's work is a linguistic device that hints at the hollowed-out space that is open *not* to the self, but to the other.

The figures that exceed representation are said to be monsters because they hover in the liminal space of what can and cannot be shown – as well as of what can and cannot speak. What is shown in theatrical representation is that which speaks – whereas the 'monstre' cannot poise itself as the speaking subject. The monster thus proposes a deviation from – or within – what can vocally come into representation. It is perhaps for this reason that Phèdre, in her first appearance onstage, lacks the physical (or verbal) force to advance any further within the scene:

> N'allons point plus avant. Demeurons, chère Œnone.
> Je ne me soutiens plus. Ma force m'abandonne.
> Mes yeux sont éblouis du jour que je revois,
> Et mes genoux tremblants se dérobent sous moi.
> Hélas ! (v. 153-57)

Bearing a "silence inhumain" (v. 227), she hesitates to come forth, for what she has been hiding from the light of day is something that is monstrous. Additionally, her monstrosity is set forth from the *Préface* in which Racine marks her as a tragic composite: "Phèdre n'est ni tout à fait coupable, ni tout à fait innocente. Elle est engagée, par sa destinée et par la colère des dieux, dans une passion illégitime, dont elle a horreur toute la première" (817). The "fille de Minos et de Pasiphäé" (v. 36), she is half Cretan (that is, Eastern); as Orlando asserts, she is "a foreigner of perverse race" (Qtd. in Horowitz "Racine's Laws" 134). Additionally, her ancestry departs from the human in

order to join the non-human: "Pasiphäé, her mother, and lover of the bull that produced the Minotaur, may be no less 'barbaric' than Antiope!" (Horowitz 134) [145]. After a series of digressions in which Phèdre confesses her incestuous love (first to Œnone, then to Hippolyte), she commands Hippolyte to strike her with his sword, speaking of herself in the third person as 'un monstre', 'la veuve de Thésée', and 'ce monstre affreux'. "Délivre l'univers d'un monstre qui t'irrite. / La veuve de Thésée ose aimer Hippolyte? / Crois-moi, ce monstre affreux ne doit point t'échapper. Voilà mon cœur. C'est là que ta main doit frapper" (v. 701-04). Is it her confession that is monstrous and that bids her to ask to be slain? Or is it the silencing of that confession (by Hippolyte) that is monstrous? Phèdre is struck by the weight of her words which seem to go unnoticed by Hippolyte: "Ciel! Comme il m'écoutait! Par combien de détours / L'insensible a longtemps éludé mon discours!" (v. 43-44). Indeed, it is the composition of speech and silence that is monstrous. Echoing Hippolyte's muting effects of love's discourse, she designates herself as a monstrous composite of the spoken and the non-spoken (or unheard). In positing herself as a monster, she hopes to tempt Hippolyte to penetrate her with his sword. Furthermore, Phèdre bypasses her own name, referring to herself as both a monster and the widow of Thésée, thereby enfolding Thésée's name (rather than her own) within a set of monstrous signifiers. Contradictions abound as the name of Thésée, enemy of all monsters, is juxtaposed with the atrocious figures that inhabit her discourse.

In addition, Phèdre moves phonetically from 'monstre' to 'mon cœur'; the substitution of one syllable for another underscores the fact that she is bound to linguistically struggle with the question of revealing herself. 'Voilà mon cœur', she says,

[145] Phèdre's monstrosity is linked to her ancestry, which includes her mother's copulation with a bull and which reference Phèdre's half-brother, the Minotaur. The Minotaur is a "hybrid monster, half-human, half-animal" (Melzer "Incest" 433).

as if to indicate a visible object, yet the heart is covered by bone, skin, and garments. She seems to believe that the very image or imagination of her heart's contents is all too monstrous – and, in fact, it is for reasons of the shame that affects both she and Hippolyte – yet her heart is also a monster because it is linguistically evoked while not being shown. For instance, Barnett sees a perfect illustration of Barthes' description of Racinian tragedy as "un spectacle de l'impossible" (Bathes 61) in Agrippine's (seeming) declaration in *Britannicus*: "Mais, je t'expose ici mon âme toute nue" (v. 408). Agrippine's assertion echoes Phèdre's 'Voilà mon cœur'. Both of the heroine's declarations exemplify an:

> Enoncé lancinant, lapidaire – dont la nudité contenue, divulguée, exposée ne promulgue, n'indexe, ne sémiotise, enfin, qu'un effayant écart, la non-exposition qu'il déploie, l'irrémédiable vacuité du contenant linguistique qu'il étale. Or, ce même énoncé exemplaire, en nous renvoyant aux espaces insignifiants qu'il engendre, fonctionne comme métonyme du discours échoué. (Barnett "The Pathology" 174)

The monstrous is a covert refusal of representation, covert because it *seems* to give itself in language.

The word 'monstre', derived from *monstrum* – to show – is a linguistic stand-in for that which it in fact cannot do. In this way, the signifier or word 'monstre' is one among many *mises en abyme* in the tragedy of Phèdre and Hippolyte. Existing only as metatext throughout its course, this tragedy births "a language of language" (Barnett "The Pathology" 161) and "in its utter, immutable self-reflexivity, language depletes the signification which it would referentially harbor" (162). The word 'monstre' (figuring 18 times in *Phèdre*) is itself a theatrical event in that it promotes the double nature of self and other, of appropriate and inappropriate representations, of language and its deficiencies. The monstrous does not fully come into being on the stage – it can only be spoken of. Or if it is onstage it posits its location as the labyrinth-like offstage: Knowing

the Cretan origins of the heroine as well as her inevitable death, one may revisit Phèdre's hallucinatory declaration to Hippolyte – "Par vous aurait péri le monstre de la Crète / Malgré tous les detours de sa vaste retraite" (v. 649-50) – as an ironic ambiguity. Is it the monstrous Phèdre or her half-brother the Minotaur that Hippolyte would/ will have caused to perish? The non-position of Phèdre is aligned with her dilemma of speaking and not speaking. As a theatrical scapegoat of sorts, the figure of the monster points to the dread of discursive detours:

> Whence, Phèdre's dismantling tropology of desire stands fundamentally and crucially as an autotelic figuration of its own limits, the unremitting deferral of its own actualization, a commentary from within upon the corrosive substance of its own literarity. A like discourse interminably re-enacts, repeatedly reifies and eviscerates the very absence around which it spins its monstrously inebriating web. The obsessive evocation of 'nothing' designates a wreckage of words in the face of that which language inadequately and only elliptically embraces, from which it recoils in dread. (Barnett "The Pathology" 158).

The monstrous is thus progressively relegated to the *hors scène*[146], a position which encapsulates the absence of a position from which to speak.

Centrifugal Diffractions

What of the monstrous in Racine's tragedy? What of the figures who are eschewed from the stage, only to be evoked onstage, but who cannot speak for themselves? Indeed, it is fascinating to examine characters who are doubly eclipsed – first by their cultural alterity and then by their theatrically offstage otherness – and who

[146] According to Barthes, the offstage is marked by 'la mort', 'la fuite', and 'l'Événement' (17). Furthermore, Ubersfeld speaks of the "purity of the void," stating, "Everything that matters – life and death, sex and power, conquest and passion – is off stage. [….] This abstract space requires a non-mimetic fiction, and is required by it. We feel that we are taken to the extreme limit of classical tragedy" (Ubersfeld "The Space of *Phèdre*" 209).

are therefore divested of bodily form[147] and of speech within the Racinian scene. These characters are conjured through a striking set of vocabulary – words pertaining to monsters and to an obscurity that suggests cultural connotations. The reference to such unseen characters acts as a linguistic and theatrical deferral of what is excessively – perhaps even obscenely – other. What is culturally ungraspable and thus unrepresentable undergoes a bivalent relay from theatrical narrative to the offstage and back again, leaving a trace of its presence onstage as it is effaced:

> La tragédie classique a éliminé les objets et les choses à la fois sur la scène et dans le discours par souci de dignité et de distinction. Elle ne pouvait éliminer aussi radicalement l'espace géographique, étroitement lié à l'histoire, mais elle ne l'a gardé que comme caution nécessaire du vraisemblable. Elle en a gommé tout ce qui pouvait être trop particulier, trop étrange, trop précis ou trop coloré, au nom d'une primauté absolue donnée aux problèmes humains. (Emelina 124)

While this *gommage* of what is too foreign (or too particular to a certain geographical, political, or cultural arena) may at times be noticeable, it is not without influencing representation. Offstage monsters seem to function much like a "discours échoué" – whose failures signify in a liminal manner: "[Telles failles] nous parlent, elles nous incitent, elles nous crient plus fort que les vaporeuses et emboîtantes dénotations qui les ponctuent, qui les couronnent" (Barnett "La Parole" 174).

It is the characters onstage who question and refer to the foreign and dark world beyond the stage light; indeed, Starobinski highlights the importance in Racine's theatre of being "located on another scene, a scene that is absent from the tragedy but which never ceases to exert an influence over the entire represented drama" (Greenberg "Absolute Fantasies" 56). The influence of the fears surrounding the offstage marks and inhabits their speech such that "même les moments d'apparence 'diaphane' […] dérivent

[147] "Ubserfeld speaks of the multiple synecdoches of the body in *Phèdre* that point "to the impossibility of seizing the human body in its totality or in its unity" (Ubersfeld "The Space of *Phèdre*" 209).

d'un langage à la fois disparu et retrouvé, à la fois émis et désarticulé, conjointement présent et absent" (Barnett "La Parole" 174-75). The cultural other introduces a source of hybridity and non-positionality within theatrical dialogue which confuses the absent and the present, the other and the same. From the servile Persians (*Alexandre le Grand*) to the Oriental sultan (*Bajazet*), from the African messenger (*Bajazet*) to the Amazonian mother (*Phèdre*), absent foreign characters haunt the onstage characters from an imperceptible (because offstage) viewpoint. The references to the offstage other become a source of fascination and of influence over the stage, intimating a blending of the self and the absent other.

> Par une épuration progressive et sans précédent, par une mythification et une codification impitoyable, [la tragédie du XVII^{e} siècle] réduit, quand elle ne l'abolit pas tout à fait, la puissance de dépaysement que ses sources contenaient en elles. Etrange retournement ! C'est bien d'ici : amour, politique, et religion, que parle un genre qui a prétendu faire de l'éloignement (*e longinquo*) sa loi. A sa manière […] la tragédie est *centripète*. (Emelina 120)

If theatre is centripetal, then the centrifugal move to cast the monstrous – and monstrously foreign – outside of representation is a move that folds back upon itself. The stage is thus a tautological construction that mirrors the fear of exogamy and results in the incestuous desires of Phèdre. The contradiction between *monstrum* as an act of showing and the 'monstre' that is in fact repressed by the stage mirrors yet another striking contradiction – that of the term 'other' which refers to that which is not so 'other' in theatre. Indeed, the monstrous resurfaces onstage as the underbelly of Phèdre's incestuous love for Hippolyte, while also marking the cause of Thésée's banishment of his son. The figures which 'should' remain separate are in fact blended through the undoing of dichotomous structures as speech passes from one character to another. Indeed, the effort to craft meaning repeatedly frustrated by the verbal detours and silent resonances of the characters.

Indeed, the mirror function of theatre cannot be easily undone. If the theatrical mirror is to reflect an image of the spectator's own vices and virtues – as Hamlet proclaims "the play's the thing / Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King" (v. 604-05) – what happens when the subject that runs tangent to theatrical representation is marked as the absent cultural other? Otherness seems to be placed beyond language and representation – as if to create the illusion that otherness is beyond the self. Yet this notion of an impenetrable self that is free of otherness is indicated as illusion for Racinian tragedy is not always mimetically decipherable nor is the functioning of the self perceptible even if it is supposed to be automatic: Titus wonders, "Moi-même en ce moment sais-je si je respire?" (v. 1240). As Barnett says: "There is no certitude, no verificability: the 'seen'/ 'scene,' the 'said,' the very respiration of one's own machine are independent components of the same bleardness, the same anamorphosis, the same textual cloth" (*Detour* 75). Melzer asserts that "seventeenth-century France was in fact much more hybridized than its homogenized image would indicate" ("Incest" 433) and Spitzer alludes to critics who persist in upholding "the illusion of a homogeneous 'siècle de Louis XIV'" (244). Within the opacity of the Racinian universe, there is a continual practice and process of diffracting otherness so that the Classical stage is not simply centripetal. Rather, there is a surreptitious undercurrent whose pull is also centrifugal. Otherness seems to attract attention from the offstage. Indeed, as we have seen in Chapter One, the Western self becomes ironically unaware of itself in denying the centrifugal attraction to the Oriental other: Titus fails to experience his own body in his "unyielding, self-serving fixity of his determination to renounce the Palestinian queen" (Barnett *Detour* 80).

Language acts not only as a construct of identity, but also as a dangerous supplement, for it becomes a catalyst for one's self-destruction. If Phèdre has not yet spoken of her incestuous love for Hippolyte, it is because she prefers to not bring it into reality. As Barthes states: "Phèdre est sur tous les plans une tragédie de la Parole enfermée, de la Vie retenue" (118). In a noble, yet self-tormenting gesture, she tries to bury within her the horrid love she feels in spite of her better judgment. As soon as Phèdre speaks of her love, the tragic effects of her confession are set in motion. "Qu'est-ce donc qui fait la Parole si terrible? C'est d'abord qu'elle est un acte, le mot est puissant. Mais surtout c'est qu'elle est irréversible : nulle parole ne peut se reprendre : livré au Logos, le temps ne peut se remonter, sa création est définitive" (Barthes 118-19). Language is featured in Racine's theatre in terms of its capacity to bring unpredictable and irreversible phenomenon into representation. Yet it also allows otherness to enter the labyrinth of the cultural imaginary through a narrow opening.

The Eclipsing of the Son

Hippolyte is defined by a figure who haunts the tragedy of *Phèdre* from the non-space of the offstage – his mother the Amazon. Indeed, numerous references to the offstage character of Antiope in *Phèdre* designate hybridity as the implicit sources of Hippolyte's tragic downfall. Hippolyte's mother is referred to as Antiope, as an Amazon, as a barbarian, as a Scythe, and as a foreigner throughout the play. In every reference, the pride, the self-contradiction, or the foreignness of Antiope is reflected upon her son:

Speaking of his mother, Hippolyte states "C'est peu qu'avec son lait une mère amazone / M'ait fait sucer encor cet orgueil qui t'étonne" (v. 69-70) and "La Grèce me reproche une mère étrangère" (v. 489); Théramène reminds Hippolyte of the burning desire[148] of Antiope which served as the source of his conception, "Vous-même, où seriez-vous, vous qui la combattez, / Si toujours Antiope à ses lois opposée, / D'une pudique ardeur n'eût brûlé pour Thésée ?" (v. 134-36); Both Œnone and Panope refer to Hippolyte as the "fils de l'étrangère" (v. 202; v. 328); Hippolyte is the "fils qu'une Amazone a porté dans son flanc" (v. 204) and Phèdre characterizes him as the "fils de l'Amazone" (v. 263) ; Speaking of Hippolyte, Œnone reminds Phèdre "Songez qu'une barbare en son sein l'a formé," to which Phèdre responds, "Quoique Scythe et barbare, elle a pourtant aimé" (v. 787-88). The stereotype of the Amazon placed her beyond the capacity of loving – as if she were not human. Hippolyte will try to adopt this position as he naively considers it to be a safe refuge of another kind of monstrosity – that of his father's multiple and unfaithful relations with women. Hippolyte is a descendent of the Eastern barbarian; as we shall see, this genealogical makeup does not leave his own discourse and identity untouched.

An emblematic figure of cultural alterity in Ancient Greece, the Amazon, "Located beyond the Greek world's eastern borders" (Stewart 583), was of Persian descent. It is significant that this society of women lived "on the borders of the known world" (Hardwick 14), for in Greek thought, there was "a stark dichotomy between those

[148] This burning desire for Thésée was also forbidden, as she is an Amazon and thus supposed to shun men. In this way, the forbidden and burning desire that is the source of Hippolyte's conception closely parallels Phèdre's forbidden burning for Hippolyte: "Oui, prince, je languis, je brûle pour Thésée. / Je l'aime, non point tel que l'ont vu les enfers, / […] Mais fidèle, mais fier, et même un peu farouche, / Charmant, jeune, traînant tous les coeurs après soi, / Tel qu'on dépeint nos dieux, ou tel que je vous vois" (v. 634-35 ; v. 638-40). And further on, Phèdre exclaims : "Mon époux est vivant, et moi je brûle encore !" (v. 1266).

who did and those who did not live in 'the world,' [….] For the Greeks, the dichotomy was the starkest since the 'barbarians' were essentially fixed in their position outside the *polis*" (Melzer "Incest" 434). The Amazon's otherness was established in Greek thought as early as the eighth century B.C.: "She occupied a central place in Greek thought about the Other. Being female, 'antimale' (and ambiguous term as will appear), and a non-Greek 'barbarian,' she was certainly well placed to fit this role" (Stewart 572). Hippolyte thus encapsulates the notion of a subject that is "not one but two" (Greenberg "Absolute Fantasies" 52) which, as we shall see, explains his predilection for manipulating identity into mathematical halves. Indeed, Hippolyte's origin and destiny is informed by the Amazon mother whose name substitutes for his own – he is the 'fils de l'Amazone'. The traumatic history of the half-Amazon son is underscored as an otherness and a self-contradictory nature that determines, haunts, and usurps his identity:

> All of Racine's characters are condemned by a traumatic history that has inexorably shaped their destiny but that forever escapes their understanding. It is these originary scenarios that are the phantasmatic answer to the question of 'origins,' of who they are, of what they are, and of why they are the way they are. But it is an answer that, instead of providing them with a firm definition of their being, sends them reeling into the inchoate. (Greenberg "Absolute Fantasies" 56)

In *Phèdre*, Hippolyte will be banned from the stage. The modification in his stage position emphasizes his increasingly inchoate nature, for the offstage seems to epitomize the unformed and the embryonic as it hosts another child, the son of Phèdre: "Here we find a character who is not only absent but anonymous, yet who has a vital place in the political considerations central to the play in the acts where Thésée is assumed dead" (Parish 122-23). The son of Phèdre is without a name or figure and is "invisible throughout the tragedy (as was Astynax in *Andromaque*), signaling his existence solely at the level of the Word" (Horowitz "Racine's Laws" 137); he is mentioned only in reference to an undetermined political situation. He is thus a silent *in-*

fans without precise form which floats in an abstract space, coming into existence only through the trembling[149] and negligent[150] speech that surrounds the mother who will betray[151] him. Indeed, as Parish indicates, this son becomes a (silent) pretext for Phèdre to announce her desire to Hippolyte: "Je vous viens pour un fils expliquer mes alarmes" (v. 586) she exclaims, only to later admit: "Je te venais prier de ne le point haïr. / Faibles projets d'un cœur trop plein de ce qu'il aime! / Hélas ! je ne t'ai pu parler que de toi-même" (v. 696-98). The offstage is thus a nebulous birthplace of the indeterminate. If Hippolyte is to join this space, it will be as a return to the mixture to which his origins attest, a mixture which contests the purity and legitimacy of the self-representation that he so strongly censored.

Of Eastern, or more precisely, Persian descent, the foreign, masculinized female Amazon circuitously scripts Hippolyte's longstanding barrier and projection of pride and purity that, to a certain extent, had protected him from the wounding of love or desire. Yet when Théramène rightly suspects that Hippolyte's plan to flee the city of Trézène[152] is a flight from the unfamiliar feelings that Aricie inspires within him[153]. These borders

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[149] "Tremblante pour un fils que je n'ose trahir" (v. 695).

[150] Œnone must reminde Phèdre of her son's dependence upon her life: "Souvenez-vous d'un fils qui n'espère qu'en vous" (v. 583).

[151] When her son has been affirmed as king – as Théramène announces to Hippolyte, "Son fils est roi, Seigneur" (v. 727) – Phèdre will disregard her son's rights to the throne and tell Œnone to offer it to Hippolyte, "Fais briller la couronne à ses yeux. / Qu'il mette sur son front le sacré diadème" (v. 695).

[152] The tragedy opens with Hippolyte's declaration: "Le dessein en est pris: je pars, cher Théramène, / Et quitte le séjour de l'aimable Trézène" (v. 1-2). As Goodkin aptly notes: "This initial plan of Hippolyte's is a flight from his own desires, 'aimable Trézène' being a covert allusion to the true cause of his departure, Aricie" (155). Goodkin further insists: "From the beginning Hippolyte asks only to leave behind 'l'aimable Trézène,' that is, the very possibility of love ('aimable') which is his frightening internal dilemma" (156).

[153] Whereas the Hippolytos of Euripides "seems to be a creature with no desires" (Goodkin 155), Racine's Hippolyte does not recognize himself (in an intertextual and metatextual way) as he experiences passion for Aricie.

will be prodded as Théramène[154] attempts to extract an avowal of love from the young protagonist's mouth (much to Hippolyte's chagrin). Hippolyte responds indignantly:

> Ami, qu'oses-tu dire?
> Toi qui connais mon cœur depuis que je respire,
> Des sentiments d'un cœur si fier, si dédaigneux,
> Peux-tu me demander le désaveu honteux ?
> C'est peu qu'avec son lait une mère Amazone
> M'ait fait sucer encor cet orgueil qui t'étonne.
> Dans un âge plus mûr moi-même parvenu
> Je me suis applaudi, quand je me suis connu. (v. 65-72)

One is struck by the pride of Hippolyte yet the price for this 'orgueil' is the restriction it places upon his speech. Interestingly, this pride is directly linked to the motherly milk: His evocation of the Amazon maternal breast suggests its role in inhibiting his speech, a speech that is intimately tied to his possibilities for love and reproduction. The milk of the mother, received orally by the infant son, is regurgitated in his mature years – 'm'ait fait sucer *encor*' (my emphasis) – through a problematic of forbidden love and of a body that is closed off by pride. Hippolyte cannot admit that he loves Aricie due to his impulse to preserve the borders of the self.

Furthermore, there is a contradiction at the origin of this mother-son relationship – which will later emerge as an interdiction – for, according to Amazon regulations, this maternal milk was itself forbidden. An Amazon was not to mother a son[155]. Furetière defines 'Amazone' in the *Dictionnaire universel* in the following way: "C'étaient autrefois des femmes de Scythie qui habitaient près du Tanaïs & du Thermodon, qui ont conquis une partie de l'Asie, qui vivaient sans hommes, & qui s'abandonnaient aux étrangers ; mais elles faisaient périr tous les enfants males, & elles

[154] Interestingly, Théramène is concerned with the borders of Hippolyte, while he is also the "tuteur d'Hippolyte en géographie et en histoire" (Tobin "La Poétique" 247). Concerned with geographical borders (for additional examples, see Tobin 247), his name also bears reference to the attachment of Hippolyte to the land, *Terre amène* (Soare "*Phèdre*" 155).

[155] "Living beyond the confines of polis society, [Amazons] mate with men at their own convenience and pleasure and maim or kill the male infants born of these promiscuous liaisons" (Stewart 579-80).

brûlaient la mamelle gauche des filles pour les rendre plus propres au combat." Hippolyte's access to the maternal body came through Antiope's single breast[156]; curiously, his first (and only) attachment to the feminine body was through a feminized phallic symbol: The single maternal breast juts out, eager[157] to nurse the young Hippolyte with a warm, milky liquid. In this way, the milk is spewed from a breast that stands out pointedly; the maternal sustenance that Hippolyte knew as a child closely resembles an ejaculation. The erotic and homoerotic overtones of Hippolyte's nursing suggests a fetishization of the forbidden which may lead to his attraction to Aricie[158]. Aricie represents the forbidden, for "according to the ban placed on her by Thésée, [she] may never marry, may never bear children – 'Mon père la reprouve, et par des lois sévères, / Il défend de donner des neveux à ses frères' (v. 109-10)" (Horowitz "Racine's Laws" 136). Aricie is denied the right to bear a male child, and in this way she echoes the Amazon woman[159].

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[156] "The breast ('sein'), or rather the lack of a breast, is what characterizes the race of his mother, the Amazon Antiope. This is reflected in the iconography of the Amazons – often depicted as having only one breast – as well as the common etymology of their name (alpha privative plus 'mazos', 'breast'). The lack of a breast, which is often interpreted as a sign of the Amazons' rejection of female sexuality, also suggests a nonmaternity" (Goodkin 155).

[157] Antiope went against the laws of the Amazons, nursing rather than killing Hippolyte.

[158] Hippolyte "loves Aricie, who is a kind of 'forbidden fruit'. Being the last of a family, the Pallantides, that opposed the claim laid to the throne of Athens by Hippolyte's father, Thésée, she must not bear children capable of renewing the Pallantides' pretension to royal power" (Tobin *Racine Revisited* 126). Antiope embodies the forbidden not only because, as an Amazon, she was not allowed to mother a male child or to let him survive, but also because of further associations that her cultural heritage bestows upon her: "Far from the demure virginity prescribed by law and custom, [the Amazons'] sexual life is a continual series of flagrantly public one-night stands" (Stewart 580). The Amazon thus represents not only the threat to "the stability of the family, but the lure of forbidden fruit as well" (580).

[159] Her legitimacy to the throne through her direct blood ties may also attract Hippolyte, who, for reasons of mixed blood, cannot pretend to the throne (as we shall see). Thus, Hippolyte may wash himself clean of anxieties concerning illegitimacy by restoring the throne to the woman that he, perhaps not so coincidentally, loves: "Quelque prix qu'il en puisse en coûter, / Mettons le sceptre aux mains dignes de le porter" (v. 735-36).

A masculinized female[160], Antiope's strong concerns for a regimented (because ambiguous) sexual identity is conferred upon Hippolyte. The ambivalence of gender signifies through Antiope and Hippolyte the unstable elements of identity transcription and the wish to control those elements through, for example, Hippolyte's impulse to remain a *virgo intacto* – that is, an intact (because pre-sexual) being. Indeed, it is thus through his mother that Hippolyte is defined: He is the "fils de l'Amazone" (v. 263). This nomination signals a certain role that Hippolyte will embody in the tragedy, a role that is clearly reinforced through repeated references to the Amazon mother. As Brown states, "To be called a son and not a lover implies a different role and identity, different rights and duties, different norms and sanctions" (658). Yet it also designates him as an aberration, that is, as a monster – for an Amazon woman should not bear a son. Thus, in assigning the attributes of the mother to the son through epithets that refer explicitly to the Amazons, Hippolyte's own sexual and cultural ambivalence becomes increasingly ambivalent.

Antiope is an Amazon who codes herself in a masculine way, who rejects men and sons, while openly contradicting those dictates; it is not mere coincidence that she is the woman under whose shadow Hippolyte's identity constantly falls. Given the cultural history in which Antiope is inscribed, Hippolyte's origins are rather surprising and unique, as indicated when Théramène reproaches the young man for his disdain towards love:

> Quels courages Vénus n'a-t-elle pas domptés!
> Vous-même où seriez-vous, vous qui la combattez,
> Si toujours Antiope à ses lois opposée

[160] Indeed, the Amazon is not strictly female, but is 'man-like'. In *Iliad*, Priam refers to the Amazons as "*antianerai*, 'a match for men', 'man-like', the implication being that in war they have the appearance and fighting strength of men. The epithet emphasizes their male type, while the context emphasizes their status as opponents" (Hardwick 15).

D'une pudique ardeur n'eût brûlé pour Thésée ? (v. 123-36)

The self-contradiction of the mother becomes the interdiction of Hippolyte's speech whereby he attempts to silence his sentiments for Aricie (another 'forbidden' woman). Théramène links the contradictions surrounding Antiope's relation to Thésée and her conception of Hippolyte to the 'superbe discours' that Hippolyte cannot fully effectuate: As Théramène says to him, "Mais que sert d'affecter un superbe discours? / Avouez-le, tout change" (v. 127-28). It is thus the Amazon impulse within Hippolyte that engenders the muteness and sterility of his 'superbe discours'. Antiope was one of those conquered ('domptés') by Venus; like her, Hippolyte is said to war against love ('vous qui la combattez')[161]. If the combat against love is to preclude the self from being penetrated by the female other, it is interesting that this combat takes place within language. It is with the adoption of a 'superbe discours' that Hippolyte attempts to override and mask the confusion of passion that his own silence harbors. As Barthes indicates, "Hippolyte est muet *comme* il est stérile; en dépit des précautions mondaines de Racine, Hippolyte est refus du sexe, antinature; la confidente, voix de la normalité, par sa curiosité même, atteste le caractère monstrueux d'Hippolyte, dont la virginité est spectacle"[162] (117). Without language, Hippolyte becomes a mere spectacle for the eyes, revealing that his regimented construction of self[163] as an impenetrable and non-penetrating virgin-self is naïve. Indeed, the sexual barriers that would preserve his intactness were bound to fail

[161] In an attempt to console Phèdre, Œnone reminds her that Hippolyte is of Amazon descent, thus implying that he is incapable of love, "Songez qu'une barbare en son sein l'a formé" (v. 787). However, Phèdre aptly points out that Antiope loved despite this cultural heritage: "Quoique Scythe et barbare, elle a pourtant aimé" (v. 788). Phèdre thus opens up the possibility for the individual to go against cultural tendancies by recalling that this is what Antiope did. As neither one knows at this point that Hippolyte loves Aricie, Œnone once against insists upon Hippolyte's bloodline as an explanation for the fact that he does not love Phèdre: "Il a pour tout le sexe une haine fatale" (v. 789).

[162] In reference to this last statement, Barthes quotes the following verses: "Et même en le voyant, le bruit de sa fierté / A redoublé pour lui ma curiosité" (v. 407-08).

[163] Hippolyte resembles the Amazons who attempt to sanction their own identity through sexuality.

from the start: At times eclipsed by her identity and name, Hippolyte emerges as a monstrous site of contradiction, much as the Amazon woman did. His muteness evokes sterility, for both he and his mother are destined by their cultural heritage to struggle with the self-imposed necessity to operate against nature (and self), that is, to refuse reproduction. Like his mother, he signifies a wish for purity and self-coincidence that, despite rigorous measures to avoid the other sex, is not possible. Hippolyte relives his ancestral history through a failure to maintain a barrier against ambiguity and otherness.

A Culturally Handicapped Hippolyte

At the time in which Euripedes' *Hippolytos*[164] was penned, it was Greece who had recently established a barrier against cultural half-breeds such as Hippolyte. This barrier is of consequence to the depiction of Hippolyte's character, for his identity seems to be influenced by a blockade to otherness (a line of defense to which he also subscribes). According to Stewart, there was a propagation of Greek interest in Amazons around the year 450 that "may have had something to do with the immigration crisis that precipitated Perikles' Citizenship Law of 451" (587). This piece of legislation denied citizenship to the offspring of mixed unions, stipulating that "no-one should share in the city who was not born of Athenians on both sides" (Stewart 587). This law proclaimed Athenians to be "one big, endogamous family" and dictated that "only pure Athenians would share in the benefits of citizenship and thus of empire; they would constitute an imperial elite" (Stewart 588). Following the notion of several scholars that Euripides'

[164] Euripedes' tragedy was one of the sources for Racine's *Phèdre*.

Medea and *Hippolytos* were responses to this law, Stewart claims that *Hippolytos* (428 B.C.) is the more forthright of the two and indicates the following segment of the tragedy as an insistence upon the problematic of the *barbaroi*:

> At lines 304-8 the nurse (calling the Amazon queen Hippolyte instead of Antiope) says to Phaidra: 'Your children will never inherit their father Thesus' palace – / No by Hippolyte, Queen of the horse-riding Amazons – / She has a son whom your boys will serve as slaves, / A bastard who thinks himself legitimate, you know him well: / Hippolytos'. (Qtd. in Stewart 590).

It thus seems plausible that the fear of exogamy leads to extreme endogamy and incest[165]. The fear of the cultural other seems to give birth to the tragic overtones of incest that are replete within Racine's work; as Greenberg asserts, "Racinian tragedy is born of incestuous blood" ("Absolute Fantasies" 44).

Following the presumed death of Thésée, the problems of the mixed child and of the (il)legitimate assumption of royal power are further dramatized. According to Horowitz, in *Phèdre* lies "the compelling drama of the succession to the throne" ("Racine's Laws" 134) and Ubersfeld describes Trézène as a "*zero place*, off the center owing to the vacancy of the throne, a place without hierarchical weight, without any order, a *place of nothingness*. The emptiness of the tragic corridor is pushed here to its uttermost limit" ("The Space of Phèdre" 204). At the first mention of the king's death, the body and voice of Athens is fragmented by the empty seat of authority and is thus half-resolved to forget the laws (one recalls the Perikles' Citizenship Law of 451) in order to enthrone the foreigner's son. As Panope recounts to Phèdre:

> Pour le choix d'un maître Athènes se partage.
> Au prince votre fils l'un donne son suffrage,
> Madame ; et de l'état l'autre oubliant les lois,
> Au fils de l'étrangère ose donner sa voix.
> On dit même qu'au trône une brigue insolente

[165] The incestuous overtones of Phèdre's desire for Hippolyte is not without echo in the postcolonial works of Maryse Condé (*Dieu nous l'a donné*), Marguerite Duras (*Un Barrage contre le Pacifique*), and William Faulkner (*The Sound and the Fury*).

Veut placer Aricie et le sang de Pallante. (v. 325-30)

Yet if lawful kingship is ultimately granted to Thésée and Phèdre's son, it is because "Hippolyte, born to the Barbarian, Antiope, is not in contention, rejected by Athenian law for his 'impure' status. In this clearly xenophobic universe, as son of an Amazon mother, he is a 'foreigner'" (Horowitz "Racine's Laws" 134). Indeed, Hippolyte states: "La Grèce me reproche une mère étrangère" (v. 489) and in the end, Athens' declaration[166] is against the son of the foreigner: "The ten tribes of Athens vote in plebiscite on behalf of Phèdre's son – sanctifying through their act the intention of the original law of succession" (Horowitz "Racine's Laws" 135).

Thus, *Phèdre* recreates the drama of the nation-state which must eradicate the blurriness of composites, for all civilization, as Enriquez states, is " a struggle against chaos. Not against chaos as it might or might not have actually existed in prehistoric times, but against the phantasm of a primordial chaos, of a primeval disorder, of an immixture, of the undifferentiated" (Qtd. in Greenberg "Absolute Fantasies" 41). Thus, Athens, as the "ultimate quintessential sign of Western civilization" (Horowitz "Racine's Laws" 138), demonstrates the Western obsession with the fantasy of pure origin and unity. In this way, Athens reflects France's seventeenth century desire to eradicate cultural otherness in order to create the myth of an absolute identity. The creation of this mythic image was attempted through the Classical codes of French theatre which sought to repress the desiring body that was in excess to "a law that always proves too restrictive of the characters' passion" (Greenberg "Absolute Fantasies" 41). Greenberg cites the reasons for the absence of the body, stating:

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[166] Théramène informs Hippolyte : "Mais Athènes, seigneur, s'est déjà déclarée. / Ses chefs ont pris les voix de toutes ses tribus. / Votre frère l'emporte, et Phèdre a le dessus. [….]/ Un héraut chargé des volontés d'Athènes / De l'état en ses mains vient remettre les rênes. / Son fils est roi, seigneur" (v. 722-24 ; 725-27).

> Of course, the concept of 'bienséance,' which, when coupled with those other 'dicta' of French neoclassical protocols, the 'three unities,' can be seen as doing to the theatrical body precisely what Foucault suggested the general epistemic shift of the seventeenth century did to those socially undesirable others—the mad, the heterodox, the 'feminine,' The body is circumscribed, limits are imposed on it (limits as to its visibility), it is objectified as foreign to a certain aesthetic (but also sexual and political) ideal, and then it is banished. (41)

This circumscribed and banished body is that of Hippolyte which Athens rejects for reasons of cultural alterity. The disavowal of Hippolyte, performed originally by Athens in the absence of the father, is further emphasized upon Thésée's return by his order of Hippolyte's exile (following the false accusations of Œnone/Phèdre). Hippolyte thus becomes an intolerable figure within the *polis*, demonstrating that "the sacrifice that is central to Racine's entire opus turns on ridding the community of the monstrous within itself. Concomitantly, this monstrous is centered on the woman and on the child" (Greenberg "Absolute Fantasies" 54). Hippolyte's monstrosity is born of the mother-son dyad that he forms with Antiope; his foreignness and self-contradiction are inscribed not only upon his discourse and his silence, but also upon his body[167], which becomes increasingly excessive and uncontainable within the tragedy.

Indeed, the uncontainability that underlies Hippolyte's monstrosity is reflected by his positing of an unnamed monster that would have escaped Thésée's knowledge. Rather than affirming his father's heroic thoroughness, he alludes to the possibility of a remainder of glory that Thésée had not yet attained for himself. Hippolyte proposes that Thésée's glory fall upon himself through an imagined inaugural act of slaying a monster (or dying in the attempt) – as if filiation was not enough to prove his origins. Indeed,

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[167] "The question of origins that these fantasies answer is also 'embodied,' that is, these fantasies are always a question of families, of bloodlines, and geneaglogies, of, in other words, the particular fit of the subject (where does s/he come from?) in a line of descent and ascent that can only be inscribed in/as the body [….] They help us to see how the body is made an object of ideology as it incorporates, as 'fantasy,' an inscription of a semiotic network of power/knowledge that preexists that particular body's entrance onto society's stage and, at the same time, they help us see how fantasies of the body become inscribed in lived sociopolitical experience" (Greenberg "Absolute Fantasies" 46).

Hippolyte experiences filiation as insufficient proof of his descent from either Thésée or Antiope:

> Et moi, fils inconnu d'un si glorieux père,
> Je suis même encor loin des traces de ma mère.
> Souffrez que mon courage ose enfin s'occuper.
> Souffrez, si quelque monstre a pu vous échapper,
> Que j'apporte à vos pieds sa dépouille honorable,
> Ou que d'un beau trépas la mémoire durable,
> Eternisant des jours si noblement finis,
> Prouve à tout l'univers que j'étais votre fils. (v. 945-52)

His appeal to the king-father suggests that Hippolyte is at a loss for an *empire sur soi-même* or an *empire sur les autres*. He denies the traces of both Thésée and Antiope within him, electing instead an inauguration of his being that rests upon the obliteration of the contradictory elements of which the monster is composed. He imagines his conception not as the burning desire of the Amazon for Thésée nor as the all too liberal spreading of the seed of his father, but as his own battle with the monstrous. "Hippolyte's identity, until now, has been built around the delusion that he can separate the 'halves' of the minotaur and remove from himself the desires and drives that he finds inconvenient in his father" (Riggs 49). Is the inglorious half of his father's history the monster whose empty shell Hippolyte proposes to offer? If he can only ever deny the elements that contradict his mother or his father's identity without ever fully effacing the effects, why does he insist upon the possibility of finding and killing a monster that exists somewhere 'out there'?

Censorship as an Impoverished Form of Slaying the Monster

To aver a superb discourse for the self is to censor what nonetheless persists – the possibility of otherness. His illusory desire to cut himself from his own monstrosity by killing or being killed by a monster is transferred to the language that he speaks, "Un langage qui s'interrompt sans répit afin de 'transcrire' en paroles ce qu'il ne saurait rendre" (Barnett "La Parole" 169). Hippolyte proposes the removal of doubt concerning monstrosity through a untenable declaration – if anymore exist, he says, I will get them. In the mouth of Hippolyte, the question of whether there are any monsters or not, when enunciated, takes on self-exploratory undertones; he proposes a more distinct self-image that would be born in opposition to the monstrous, an opposition that is inevitably deferred to some future or imagined event. To prop himself up against the monster or not? Like the question, "Être ou ne pas être" (Barnett "La Parole" 169), it seems that each term of Hippolyte's fundamental question of being pivots on the monstrous: In this way, "Chaque terme de l'alternative enjambe sur l'autre de sorte que l'empiètement oblitère les lignes de démarcation, jusqu'à ce que 'ce qui est' soit 'ce qui n'est pas' – et réciproquement" (169).

Thus, what does it mean that Hippolyte is pulverized, disseminated even[168], at the end of the tragedy? Inevitably, this has something to do with the questions of monstrosity that Hippolyte opens up throughout the tragedy, though he desperately – and all too unsuccessfully – tries to locate and combat any monster: Hippolyte's search is

[168] Seized by the fright of the monster, Hippolyte's horses drag him as they run away. Théramène describes this "image cruelle" (v. 1545), stating : "Tout son corps n'est bientôt qu'une plaie" (v. 1550). He runs to find Hippolyte who has leaked blood as a trail: "De son généreux sang la trace nous conduit / Les rochers en sont teints. Les ronces dégouttantes / Portent de ses cheveux les dépouilles sanglantes" (v. 1556-58). In the end, Hippolyte leaves behind a "corps défiguré" (v. 1568). We will return to a discussion of this scene.

one for absent monsters. He feels that he cannot love until he conquers a monster – "Thésee has made war, therefore he can make love" (Tobin *Racine Revisited* 134) – and because he has not done as his father, he takes recourse to a verbal abbreviation that would supplement his incapacity to pierce a monster or a woman. Cutting (hi)story, Hippolyte attempts to conquer the monstrous through silencing the intolerable parts of his father's history. Gorging himself on the noble exploits of his father, as narrated to him by Théramène when he was just a young boy, Hippolyte savoringly rememorizes the list of monsters that his father conquered. He thus says to Théramène:

> Tu sais combien mon âme, attentive à ta voix,
> S'échauffait au récit de ses nobles exploits,
> Quand tu me dépeignais ce héros intrépide
> Consolant les mortels de l'absence d'Alcide,
> Les monstres étouffés et les brigands punis,
> Procruste, Cercyon, et Scirron, et Sinnis,
> Et les os dispersés du géant d'épidaure,
> Et la Crète fumant du sang du Minotaure (v. 75-82)

Hippolyte is warmed by the list of monsters that his father had conquered. This list of monsters is immediately followed by a list of the romantic exploits of his father, which elicited an altogether different desire within him – the desire for censorship. Hippolyte continues:

> Mais quand tu récitais des faits moins glorieux,
> Sa foi partout offerte et reçue en cent lieux ;
> Hélène à ses parents dans Sparte dérobée ;
> Salamine témoin des pleurs de Péribée ;
> Tant d'autres, dont les noms lui sont même échappés,
> Trop crédules esprits que sa flamme a trompés :
> Ariane aux rochers contant ses injustices,
> Phèdre enlevée enfin sous de meilleurs auspices ;
> Tu sais comme à regret écoutant ce discours,
> Je te pressais souvent d'en abréger le cours,
> Heureux si j'avais pu ravir à la mémoire
> Cette indigne moitié d'une si belle histoire. (v. 83-94)

The juxtaposition of the list of monsters with the list of women (Hélène, Péribée, Ariane, Phèdre, and 'tant d'autres' that were conquered, in a sense, by Thésée) suggests a

conflation of monstrosity and love that Hippolyte would like to separate. Hippolyte views the conquest of women as unworthy and the conquest of monsters as worthy – he is unable to uphold the contrary values that the 'indigne moitié' poses to the 'belle histoire'.

However, the juxtaposition of the monsters with women in his discourse suggests a link between the two; indeed, copulation with women is 'monstrous' in that it involves penetration (whether by sword or by male genitalia) and thereby blends composite parts (the biological parts specific to each gender). It is this mingling effect that causes Hippolyte not only to shun love, but to wish to silence its part within Thésée's defeats and to remain silent with regard to his love for Aricie. Thus, his inability to mediate between opposites is transferred to his resistance to the 'opposite' sex. Not realizing that multiple exploits of monsters accompanies multiple exploits of women, Hippolyte claims that the former excuses the latter – as if he could thus eradicate the monsters – that is, the women – that frighten him most. For if the monster is defined in terms of excess and deficiency, Hippolyte is both: He is excessive in terms of his strict regimentation of sexual purity and deficient in terms of his incapability of killing any monsters. The either/or that he imposed upon his father's story betrays his own desire to reach an absolute, yet the Racinian world "est fait de contraires purs que jamais rien ne médiatise" (Barthes 51). Thus, if a monster is a composite of contradictory elements, Hippolyte's speech and concomitant silence take on this form.

The Implosion of the Virgo Intacto's Discursive Boundaries

It is due to his inability to control the hi(story) of his father, and more specifically, his incapacity to silence the stories that devastated his own pride, that Hippolyte effects a discourse of pride while remaining a 'virginal' (and less valiant) warrior. As he states:

> Et moi-même, à mon tour, je me verrais lié?
> Et les dieux jusque-là m'auraient humilié?
> Dans mes lâches soupirs d'autant plus méprisable,
> Qu'un long amas d'honneurs rend Thésée excusable,
> Qu'aucuns monstres par moi domptés jusqu'aujourd'hui
> Ne m'ont acquis le droit de faillir comme lui. (v. 94-100)

If Thésée's comportment with women is excused because he has rid the world of monsters, then the virginity of Hippolyte is a direct result of his inability to pierce a monster. Perhaps the monster that he seeks lies within, as suggested by Hippolyte's desire to erect only one-half of his father's identity and – one may presume – of his own identity.

In her avowal of love to Hippolyte, Phèdre cites herself as a monster. She thus presents herself as the threshold across which Hippolyte may lose his virginity:

> Venge-toi, punis-moi d'un odieux amour.
> Digne fils du héros qui t'a donné le jour,
> Délivre l'univers d'un monstre qui t'irrite.
> La veuve de Thésée ose aimer Hippolyte!
> Crois-moi, ce monstre affreux ne doit point t'échapper.
> Voilà mon coeur. C'est là que ta main doit frapper.
> Impatient déjà d'expier son offense,
> Au-devant de ton bras je le sens qui s'avance.
> Frappe. Ou si tu le crois indigne de tes coups,
> Si ta haine m'envie un supplice si doux,
> Ou si d'un sang trop vil ta main serait trempée,
> Au défaut de ton bras prête-moi ton épée.
> Donne. (v. 699-711)

Declaring herself to be a monster, she asks for him to penetrate her – thus a further conflation of monstrosity and copulation. She asks for his sword, a phallic symbol, yet this is also an erotic demand. She commands him, 'donne', in a manifestation not only of

her frustration with the shame she inspires within him – as he says "ma honte ne peut plus soutenir votre vue" (v. 669) – but also in a manifestation of her inability to master her sexual desire[169] for him. Once again, monstrosity is revealed to be that which cannot be shown, that which only half can emerge. Indeed, Hippolyte's predilection for the suppression of one half and the praise of another half is evidenced in his censoring of his father's (hi)story: "Hippolyte's 'dessein,' to leave Trézène before admitting that he has fallen in love, reflects his desire to choose only one-half of his father. He attempts to censor the narration of Thésée's various adventures and to exclude 'Cette indigne moitié d'une si belle histoire' (v. 94), that is, his father's amorous escapades, leaving only his heroic exploits" (Goodkin *The Tragic Middle* 155). Furthermore, Michael Edwards speaks of "the almost mathematical precision of the word *moitié*" (Qtd. in Goodkin *The Tragic Middle* 205). Ubersfeld cites the similarity between Phèdre and Hippolyte as the problem of the double: Phèdre is "a double being, familiar and strange, part Cretan, part Greek, the offspring of Minos and Pasiphae, just as Hippolyte, the son of the Amazon and the Athenian hero, is a double being" ("The Space of *Phèdre*" 203). Whereas Phèdre is a monster in the sense that she is "a creature which no longer fights against itself, which has accepted its contradictory and irresolvable nature" (Goodkin *The Tragic Middle* 165), Hippolyte differs from her in that he represses his own contradictory nature through an adamant attachment to silence, to his own demise.

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[169] "On her knees before the instrument of penetration, Phèdre pleads, 'Give me it' (v. 711). The temptation to view this scene through the prism of depth psychology is irresistible; clearly, Phèdre would be thrilled to die in a symbolic act of consummation with Hippolyte" (Tobin *Racine Revisited* 131). As a supporter of Corneille, Subligny was a somewhat bias commentator, yet he may have had some basis (given the allusions of Phèdre's "Donne") in claiming in 1677 that Phèdre's conduct was perfectly scandalous: "J'ai vu les dames les moins délicates n'entendre ces mots, dont cette pièce est farcie, qu'avec le dégoût que donnent les termes les plus libres, dont la modestie ne peut s'empêcher de rougir" (Qtd in Descotes 134).

Hippolyte decries his status with his reference to 'aucuns monstres par moi domptés jusqu'aujourd'hui'. In effect, these 'absent' monsters are unconquered within him. He attempts to ward off monsters, yet monstrosity emerges in a heightened attachment to fix a self-representation, that is, in an exaggerated sense of nobility and of honor. He thus strives for the integrity of the onstage which is (seemingly) defined by its opposition to what cannot be seen. Hippolyte naively believes that what is offstage – or unsaid – can be tucked away, mastered and remain hidden. He thus embraces the dualism that the Classical stage was thought to uphold:

> The enclosure of space in seventeenth-century theatre proceeds from a porous, loosely structured stage setting, to a rigorous dualism. [….] From many spatial divisions the theatre is reduced to two, offstage and onstage […] The onstage thus entirely and permanently coincided with the visible and the offstage with the invisible. (Lyons 71)

Yet the monsters in the closet creep back in; and thus, it is with boundless irony that Hippolyte invokes his own genealogy when speaking of 'un monstre' as he asks Aricie:

> Moi, vous haïr, madame ?
> Avec quelques couleurs qu'on ait peint ma fierté,
> Croit-on que dans ses flancs un monstre m'ait porté ?
> Quelles sauvages moeurs, quelle haine endurcie
> Pourrait, en vous voyant, n'être point adoucie ? (v. 518-22)

Although Hippolyte poses this rhetorical question surrounding a monstrous filiation as if the answer was a resounding 'no', the very posing of the question indicates a deeper preoccupation that has not yet been explored. Hippolyte cannot bear the possibility that he may descend from the monstrous. However, his question perfectly echoes Œnone's nomination of Hippolyte – "Ce fils qu'une Amazone a porté dans son flanc" (v. 204). Through discursive echoing, the 'flancs' of the Amazon and of the monster (in which Hippolyte may or may not have been carried, 'porté') fold one upon the other as the original matrix, womb, and deliverer of Hippolyte.

If filiation posits the possibility of exclusion, what is interesting here is that Hippolyte wishes to exclude the implications of his matrifiliation. He attempts to distance himself from the monstrous image of his mother and to dissimulate any way in which he may resemble the inglorious side of Thésée. Like colonial discourse itself, his utterances balance on the "*inter dicta*: a discourse at the crossroads of what is known and permissible and that which though known must be kept concealed" (Bhabha 128). Hippolyte raises the question of the monster's presence – which refers also to a representation of difference – only to negate the monstrous through a rhetorical maneuver. In wishing to assert authority over the monstrous, his desire to resist the signification of otherness will turn linguistically (through the theatrical narrative that transports the character of Hippolyte to an offstage space of madness) and figuratively (through the monster that provokes his death) upon him. That which he would like to tame becomes the untamable within him. His 'superbe discours' is more harmful than it is fruitless, for it exceeds his grasp. For instance, the honor that precludes him from pronouncing Phèdre's guilt turns on him and causes him to become synonymous with a monster in his father's eyes: "Monstre, qu'a trop longtemps épargné le tonnerre, / Reste impur des brigands dont j'ai purge la terre" (v. 1045-46). And it is his rejection of Phèdre's desire that causes him to become a monster in her eyes as well: "Je le vois comme un monstre effroyable à mes yeux" (v. 884). Thus, as Tobin proposes, "Not only is he incapable of purging the earth of monsters, but he has become one himself" (*Racine Revisited* 134).

Language betrays Hippolyte as either the ambiguity or the complete absence of speech casts him as a monster and exiles him to the offstage. This ambiguity appears

ironically in the discourse of Aricie as she warns Thésée of his mistaken identification of his son as a monster:

> Prenez garde, seigneur. Vos invincibles mains
> Ont de monstres sans nombre affranchi les humains ;
> Mais tout n'est pas détruit, et vous en laissez vivre
> Un... Votre fils, seigneur, me défend de poursuivre. (v. 1443-46)

Here, Aricie trails off as she alludes to an (as yet) undestroyed monster; she thus leaves behind a dangerous verbal vacuity in the wake of her warning – a vacuity that could be filled with suppositions of the unnamed monster. It is fascinating that she refers to Hippolyte when she resumes her speech. Indeed, her pause or change of thought betrays her reticence as she accidentally names Hippolyte (rather than the Cretan monster, Phèdre, of whom she is actually thinking) as the remaining monster – 'Vous en laissez vivre / Un… Votre fils'. It is as if language and nomination work against her intentions to censor: "Consentir que l'énoncé tragique soit imbu de signification, […] c'est se retrouver à nouveau exégétiquement coincé, car l'objet signifiant ne cesse d'hésiter, résiste à vouloir dire, alors qu'il s'arroge le vertige séminal de son inadmissible forclusion" (Barnett "La Parole" 166).

Aricie's silence becomes vertiginous as her opaque reference to a remaining monster echoes the opacity of speech that Hippolyte adopts. Hippolyte seems to silence his own language in order to use discourse as "a trope for erasure, a trope for the flight of meaning" (Barnett "Inbound" 164). Perhaps unconsciously, he introduces the flight of meaning within speech as a means of doing what he cannot do in reality (or of undoing the reality of his own cultural and sexual ambiguity). The tragedy opens with Hippolyte's announcement "Je pars" (v. 1); and yet, his flight from Trézène is constantly deferred throughout the play, to his final detriment. Aricie's silence echoes Hippolyte's

flight from speech and his intention to remain silent, for her intention is equally contested by her own speech. Indeed, she has unknowingly named the monster – despite her claim to resist naming it:

> Instruite du respect qu'il veut vous conserver,
> Je l'affligerais trop si j'osais achever.
> J'imite sa pudeur, et fuis votre présence
> Pour n'être pas forcée à rompre le silence. (v. 1447-50)

The combination of a drifting of referents in speech and a flight from discourse that characters repeatedly attempt ('je…fuis') highlight the overwhelming nature of silence in relation to troubled identities. Thus, it is not surprising that Hippolyte's silence has made him into a monster. Indeed, Aricie was aghast at Hippolyte's resolution to remain silent in the face of the unjust accusations made against him: "Quoi vous pouvez vous taire en ce péril extrême? / Vous laissez dans l'erreur un père qui vous aime?" (v. 1329-30). Hippolyte effectuates not only his own silence, but he is also the subject (and victim) of Aricie's silence and uncontrollable slipping of referents. Her desire to warn Thésée (while not entirely accusing him of poor judgment) gives way to a mute opacity of speech[170] that foreshadows Hippolyte's fate and identifies him as the monster that remains to be killed. Hippolyte secures the silence of Aricie (even from his current offstage position) and his influence figures in the shadows of her confounded speech. He thus reenacts with Aricie the silencing effects that his mother had placed upon his own speech: For when it came time to speak of love, his tongue was confused as though he was immersed in a foreign language. The marrying of silence and of language is the promise of a monster-offspring – the mute opacity of language – which is surreptitiously made manifest at the level of the word. Indeed, in a metatextual self-contradiction

[170] This expression is evoked by the modern poet, Francis Ponge (Qtd. in Barnett "La Parole" 166).

Hippolyte *expresses* to Thésée the silence to which Phèdre's accusations restrict him: "Un tel excès d'horreur rend mon âme interdite, / Tant de coups imprévus m'accablent à la fois / Qu'ils m'ôtent la parole, et m'étouffent la voix" (v. 1078-80). The hybridity of speech and of silence begins to weave the web of Hippolyte's death, as Marder indicates:

> Hippolyte remains silent—but his silence only speaks further against him. Accused and condemned of trying to seduce his stepmother, his is banished by his father and dismembered by a monster from the sea. Struck by the force of a discourse of desire in which he himself is implicated, Hippolyte can only look at himself with horror. Hippolyte's desire to remain silent is articulated as a desire to bury the secret of what has been spoken. But like the monster at the center of the labyrinth, this secret cannot be buried, but only immured in detoured walls of discourse. (67)

The Abstraction of the Monster: Extracting Hippolyte from the Tragic Space

Once the Amazon's son is commanded to leave the stage, he will die[171]. Hippolyte's death results from a monster that exists solely in Théramène's discourse and that consequently challenges the mimetic function of theatre. The scene of death described in Théramène's narrative cannot be represented onstage: As Spitzer exclaims, "What is a monster unless seen? A monster in the abstract!" (250). Emerging from the nonfigurative offstage – here, described as the depths of the sea – this monster "n'est pas sans évoquer le Minotaure" (Tobin "La Poétique" 254). Indeed, this "monstre furieux" (v. 1516), "monstre sauvage" (v. 1522), and "monstre bondissant" (v. 1531) is also an "indomptable taureau" (v. 1519) – an animal which evokes the monstrous aspect of

[171] "There is something terrifying about this absent space. In Racine's tragedy, as Barthes has shown, the offstage is identified so closely with death that the order to leave the stage is equivalent to the command to die" (Lyons 72).

Phèdre's half-brother, the Minotaur. In his culminating struggle with the monstrous, Hippolyte at last penetrates the thorn in his (own) side:

> Hippolyte lui seul, digne fils d'un héros,
> Arrête ses coursiers, saisit ses javelots,
> Pousse au monstre, et d'un dard lancé d'une main sûre,
> Il lui fait dans le flanc une large blessure. (v. 1527-30)

Yet the wounding of the monster does not occur without being mirrored by a wounding of Hippolyte: "Tout son corps n'est bientôt qu'une plaie" (v. 1550). On either side of the sea-land border, a wound is reciprocated by Hippolyte and the monster. Each wound allows life to spill from a divide, ultimately leaking unto death. Borders[172] are repeatedly underscored in this tragedy, only to be blurred here by the heterogeneous narrative of Théramène[173]. This narrative weaves paradoxes together as if each element was one and the same with its opposite: "Perhaps the famous 'account of Théramène' is given this excessive length […] only for the sake of breaking to pieces the ideal human figure under its aspects: inhuman Monster and split, divided, dispersed Beauty" (Ubersfeld "The Space of Phèdre" 210).

Furthermore, the land mirrors the sea as Hippolyte is liquefied in the nebula of offstage and discursive representation, his blood dotting the rocks as an imitation of the spray of sea water: "De son généreux sang la trace nous conduit / Les rochers en sont teints. Les ronces dégouttantes / Portent de ses cheveux les dépouilles sanglantes" (v. 1556-58). The border between land and water dissipates with the liquefaction of

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[172] For further study of the recurring morphemes of 'bords' and 'rivages,' see Ubersfeld's "The Space of *Phèdre*," Tobin's "La Poétique du lieu dans *Phèdre*," as well as Racevski's *Tragic Passages* (Chapter 9).
[173] Greeberg alludes to Théramène's narrative as heterogeneous: "Spitzer points out that this speech reveals the continued present of the 'baroque' within the canon of French classicism" (55). Greenberg elaborates on the semantic field of the word *baroque* as echoing "classicism's prejudices of what is excessive, indistinct, heterogeneous, of what it has had to repress in order to be classical" (55).

Hippolyte, just as the border of language and silence dissipates with the mute opacity of words:

> As a self-generated, self-obsessed, auto-referential monument of designification, fixed upon its own-ness, with a monstrously monolithic, redundant refrain, language – if little else – transfixes, transforms into an object of engrossment, a source of monomania, prone to benumb all within its grasp: 'A ce mot ce héros expire / N'a laissé dans mes bras qu'un corps défiguré (V, vi).' (Barnett "Inbound" 163-64).

In Hippolyte's attempt to imitate his father, he succumbs to his own dismemberment. Indeed, the obliteration of Hippolyte greatly contrasts with the heroism of his father: "Thésée's valor as a slayer of monsters takes the concrete from of the safe shores his exploits have created: 'Vous avez des deux mers assuré les ravages. / Le libre voyageur ne craignait plus d'outrages' (v. 941-42)" (Racevskis 167). While the destruction of monsters ensures the security of the nation's borders in Thésée's case, the dissipation of Hippolyte's own being at the geographical limits of Greece transcribes his body as "unrecognizable and thus other" (Racevskis 179). This scene thus becomes a discursive portrayal – and portal – of otherness. The boundaries of Hippolyte's body are figuratively stretched across the borders of land and of water as his blood mirrors sea water. Borders are further blurred as the onstage discursively represents the (nonrepresentational) offstage. If, as Racevskis comments, "This otherness throws into relief the sameness of the emotions that he has cultivated from the very beginning of the tragic action" (179), it is even more fascinating to consider that the otherness that is reflected in Hippolyte's moment of dying returns to the question of his own cultural hybridity (as well as to that of theatrical hybridity). Theatrical hybridity is further illustrated with the death of yet another cultural hybrid, Phèdre, for her death closes the tragedy by weaving absence and silence into the final dissolution of the stage:

> Her first and final silence is a cipher of her own imminent absence, synonymous with her departure from – and the very dismantling of – the stage. 'Elle expire, Seigneur' (V, vii).

> As she drifts back behind the curtains, drowned out, as it were, she is succeeded only by eleven limping lines: the disintegrated text is but vestige, an auto-reflexive allusion to – and meta-commentary upon – its de-constructed, disembodied self. It is a trope for all that verse cannot even liminally embrace, a trope for textuality radicalized, marginalized, and alas, rescinded. (Barnett "Inbound" 166)

Additionally, the borders of self that Hippolyte had cherished in his pride, in his discourse, and in his resistance to love are like the horses that he had nourished and that are now the source of his downfall:

> J'ai vu. Seigneur, j'ai vu votre malheureux fils
> Traîné par les chevaux que sa main a nourris.
> Il veut les rappeler, et sa voix les effraie ;
> Ils courent. Tout son corps n'est bientôt qu'une plaie. (v. 1547-50)

Betrayed by what he has nurtured, Hippolyte loses the self-image that he had once applauded. What remains of that image is a body that is torn – Thésée speaks of "mon fils déchiré" (v. 1606) – that leaves blood trailing throughout the narrative. This "sanglante image" (v. 1606) refuses to identify or to resemble the person he once was. As Théraméne says:

> […] Ce héros expiré
> N'a laissé dans mes bras qu'un corps défiguré,
> Triste objet, où des dieux triomphe la colère,
> Et que méconnaîtrait l'œil même de son père. (v. 1567-70)

Thus, the contents of Théramène's narrative reveal a disfigured Hippolyte. This offstage (and unrepresentable) disfigurement likens him to that which cannot – should not – be seen. In addition, once Hippolyte passes to the offstage position, he can no longer succeed in being heard. Thus, the physical disfigurement is prefigured by the disfigurement of Hippolyte's voice, for his cherished horses are said to no longer recognize his voice when he bids them to remain steady: "Il veut les rappeler, et sa voix les effraie ; / Ils courent" (v. 1549-50). Because of this altering or silencing of his voice, he is dragged by the horses until he is mutilated beyond recognition. The silence of the offstage space thus disfigures the character and the theatrical narrative, bringing us to the

limits of tragedy: Theatrical narrative is thus "used to show the unshowable, to bring to the spectator something that cannot be put on stage, something that is beyond the limits of enactment/mimesis" (Lyons 86).

Encasing Hybridity and Consequent Subversions of Silence

The silencing of his voice as it passes to the offstage may also allude to the confusion of his speech – the 'langue étrangère' – that Hippolyte manifested onstage in his avowal of love to Aricie. As Goodkin points out, Racine would have found in Euripide's *Hippolytus* a description of Hippolyte's loss of control over his horses[174] that is "remarkably close to the passage in Plato's *Phaedrus* which describes the two conflicting parts of the soul, figured as two horses, one good and one bad, when their 'driver,' a man in love, lays eyes on his beloved" (149)[175]. One may extend the link between passion and horses in order to see that much like a bridled horse, Hippolyte attempts to keep his blinders and bit in place in order to maintain control of the self. Yet "it has become a critical commonplace that Desire in *Phèdre* exists as a linguistic sign no 'civilizing' imperative can ban or repress" (Horowitz "Racine's Laws" 142). His loss of

[174] Euripides describes the flight of the horses and the dragging of their masters in *Phaedra* as such: "And straightaway a terrible fear falls upon the young horses; ' and the master, quite used to the horses ways, / Seized the reins in his hands, / And pulls – like a ship-pilot on the oar – / On the straps, straining his body backward / But the horses, biting the forged bridle-bit with their jaws, / became riled" (Qtd. in Goodkin, 149).

[175] One finds in *Phaedrus* the following analogy: "Now when the charioteer beholds the love-inspiring vision, and his whole soul is warmed by the sight, and is full of the tickling and prickings of yearning, the horse that is obedient to the charioteer, constrained then as always by modesty, controls himself and does not leap upon the beloved; but the other no longer heeds the pricks or the whips of the charioteer, but springs wildly forward [….] And as the charioteer looks upon him […] he is afraid and falls backward in reverence, and in falling he is forced to pull the reins so violently backward as to bring both horses upon their haunches" (Qtd. in Goodkin, 149).

power is incurred through love, a centrifugal force which ultimately rips the intact Hippolyte apart and through a repression of desire that he foolishly guarded. Not only did he try to repress his love for Aricie, he also represses Phèdre's desire which he refuses to process or to speak of: "Phèdre… Mais non, grands Dieux! Qu'en un profond oubli / Cet horrible secret demeure enseveli" (v. 719-20)[176]. His choice to remain silent regarding Phèdre's adulterous passion is a conservative move that he believes will protect his honor, yet, more than the alleged crime itself, Thésée condemns Hippolyte for an all too calculating silence: "Traître, tu prétendais qu'en un lâche silence / Phèdre ensevelirait ta brutale insolence" (v. 1081-82). In essence, Hippolyte repeats the desire to repress the shameful half of the story when he is falsely accused by Phèdre: In revealing the mystery of his impending banishment to Aricie, he proclaims: "Je n'ai pu vous cacher, jugez si je vous aime, / Tout ce que je voulais me cacher à moi-même" (v. 1345-45). He further urges her to not utter a word regarding Phèdre's infamy, "Oubliez, s'il se peut, que je vous ai parlé, / Madame. Et que jamais une bouche si pure / Ne s'ouvre pour conter cette horrible aventure" (v. 1348-50). Hippolyte thus constructs a labyrinth of silence, at the center of which the Minotaur, the monstrous figure of repression, will seemingly hide: "C'est pour cacher la honte incarnée de son épouse que Minos a fait bâtir, ou plutôt creuser, le labyrinthe" (Soare "*Phèdre*" 151). In a comparison between speech and the detours of the labyrinth, Orlando concludes that the labyrinth is the central image of the play, "Myth, image, verbal structure, symbol of secrecy, of repression, of the irreversibility of the paths of the repressed" (Qtd. in Horowitz "Racine's Laws" 142).

[176] When Phèdre mentions her mother's sexual excesses, Œnone echoes Hippolyte's impulse to consign real history to silence: 'Oubliens-les, madame, et qu'à tout l'avenir / Un silence éternel cache ce souvenir' (v. 251-252)" (Riggs 50).

Yet in an ironic twist, the repression that Hippolyte seeks as a refuge turns on him. Indeed, Œnone's false accusations speak louder than his naïve silence[177].

Within the labyrinth-like discourse of this tragedy is thus hidden a tremendous monster of silence which contests the imperious desires of the subject. The ideological image of France is itself implicated in the labyrinthine construction of theatre: "Actual theatrical practice subverts the effort of orthodox neoclassicism to make theatre a mirror and confirmation of the cultural power of the State; it resists codification, classification, and conscription into the State's ideological project" (Riggs 39). Riggs further links the underwriting of the early modern state to the subversion of the Sovereign subject through the "performance of man the 'Minotaur'" (39). Indeed, we discover in *Phèdre* that "the 'thread' of Racinian discourse does not lead us out of the Labyrinth; it keeps us *in* the Labyrinth" (39) for neither the characters' discursive self-representations nor their visions of others are lucid or comprehensive (39). In a similar vein, one finds that the goddess[178] that arises at the moment of the horses' fright/flight is also a haunting figure of love and of silence in Racine's tragedy: Théramène only suggests the presence of Aphrodite, stating "On dit qu'on a vu même en ce désordre affreux / Un dieu, qui d'aiguillons pressait leur flanc poudreux" (v. 1539-40). As Goodkin states, "It is particularly appropriate that the play only hints at Aphrodite's name and her presence in the general

[177] It is worth noting that Phèdre's monstrous accusation against Hippolyte was pronounced by yet another cultural hybrid and monster, Œnone. Œnone identifies herself as a cultural hybrid when she exclaims: "Mon pays, mes enfants, pour vous j'ai tout quitté" (v. 235) ; and "Pour la servir j'ai tout fait, tout quitté" (v. 1327). Phèdre relates Œnone to the monstrous, which she consequently silence and eschews, "Je ne t'écoute plus. Va-t'en, monstre exécrable" (v. 1317).

[178] Euripedes' *Phaedra*, one of Racine's sources, depicts the sea foam in terms that are reminiscent of Aphrodite: "And then [the wave] swelled and, spewing foam all around [perix aphron] / In great quantity with a sea rumble, / Moved toward the shore, where the four-horse cart was. / And with a commotion and a triple breaker / The wave put forth a bull, wild and monstrous" (Qtd. in Goodkin 148). Goodkin explains that "The wave which sends the bull onto the shore, the very image of powerful, irrational excess, strongly recalls Aphrodite, Hippolytos' persecutor, by the use of the term 'aphros', 'foam', which is the first element of her name, the legendary medium of the birth of the goddess being the foam of the sea" (148).

disorder, for the goddess' victory consists in large part of her absence and her silence: unlike her Euripidean counterpart, […] she is not asked to speak" (167). If the question of whether or not Hippolyte was born from a monster was suggested only to be left open, Théramène's narrative stresses the relevance of linking Hippolyte's death to his monstrous/ hybrid origin: Indeed, Soare speaks of the symbol of Hippolyte's own blood as an imaginary thread within the Cretan labyrinth: "Nouvel fil d'Ariane, labyrinthe réécrit avec le sang de sa dernière victime" ("*Phèdre*" 146).

Théramène's narrative reveals monstrosity at the structural level of the tragedy, for the monstrous pertains to the undermining of theatrical representation itself: As Lyons proposes, the narrative of the horrifying attack of the monster suggests "the possibility that what is monstrous is not the creature from the sea but the unseen space which is evoked by dramatic narrative or *récit* itself" (71). According to Lyons, the difference between the offstage and the onstage is a difference between mimesis and diegesis: Onstage spaces are aligned with enactment and with the seen while offstage spaces coincide with report, with the unseen, with the nonexistent, and with the imaginary. Our study of offstage characters or monsters accentuates our findings in Chapters One and Two – here, the specifically offstage position of a foreign or hybrid character reveals even more that representation of the cultural other is a deformation. Regarding the lack of knowledge regarding Africans in the seventeenth century, we found in Chapter Three that Orcan's offstage position suggests a correspondence between the cultural other and the unseen (and thus with the offstage) whereas the French self corresponds with what can be seen onstage. The subversion of voice and of physical

appearance that occurs offstage allows us to recognize the tainting of character[179] that is possible with regard to theatrical positioning. If French Classical theatre revolves around Greek or Roman influences, then what is left to the offstage is often foreign characters. The theatrical offstage haunts the onstage because it is figured as the realm of the tainted:

> The monster from the sea in *Phèdre* can be treated as a metonym for the double space from which it comes: first from the sea and then from the offstage, both spaces that remain unseen, as does the monster itself. The kind of monstrosity that inhabits the offstage varies from tragedy to tragedy and from author to author, but is rarely free of some taint. In Racine's theatre narratives usually bring accounts of human or divine crime and excess, from Néron's monstrous voyeurism in *Britannicus* to the sacrilege of *Athalie*. In Corneille's theatre, the *récit* tends to be impure in an even more radical way, by pretending to be an account of truth when it is illusion and self-deception. (Lyons 77)

It is indeed remarkable that the most foreign of characters and of creatures reside in the offstage spaces – a space that is recounted by onstage characters. This coincidence implies that the foreign is tainted, yet it is tainted not in essence, but in representation. The representation of the offstage space and its constituents depends entirely upon the limited perception of the onstage character(s): "By reminding ourselves of the physically nonexistent nature of the offstage space, we can perceive the fact that what we hear in the *récit* is what the character believes, wishes, or fabricates—not what *is*" (Lyons 77).

[179] We are concerned with this tainting insofar as it affects characters that are not included within French, Christian, or Greco-Roman heritage. The offstage corresponds to what is not real and, by extension, false. Indeed, the current study of French perceptions of the African other in Classical French theatre reveals the emerging (theoretical and political) trends of *excluding* the non-European. As Aldrich summarizes: "Europeans, in brief, were superior to the Indochinese, Maghrebins, black Africans, Malagasy, Oceanic peoples and any other population not blessed with a Greco-Roman heritage, Christian religion, the legacy of the Enlightenment and Revolution, modern science, a capitalist economy and white skin" (92).

The Other Scene

Lyons links the offstage to the disturbance of homogeneity: "Yet in escaping the homogeneity imposed on visual space, the offstage space relegates itself to the status of the place of distortion, error, madness, and crime" (85). However, he does not treat the homogeneity in terms of cultural homogeneity nor does he treat it in terms of the cultural alterity that is relegated to the offstage space. Yet we find that his view of the offstage – which is based upon the readings of Corneille, Racine, and other seventeenth-century dramatists – coincides perfectly with the silencing and the misrepresentation of the cultural other in Racine's theatre. Racine introduces this problematic in his corpus not to stigmatize the cultural other, but to double the monstrous within the self, by exposing the monstrous aspects of French theatrical representation. The offstage cultural other becomes the route by which the unseen and the unheard trouble, challenge, and undermine the self that is to mirror and confirm "the cultural power of the State" (Riggs 39). The detour of the offstage reveals that the Racinian subject is incapable of controlling the self – let alone the cultural other. As Phèdre exclaims: "Moi régner! Moi ranger un état sous ma loi, / Quand ma faible raison ne règne plus sur moi! / Lorsque j'ai de mes sens abandonné l'empire!" (v. 759-61).

The ambivalence of self and other that the offstage space ultimately brings to the forefront of theatre leads us to consider it as a possible scene of mimicry. Racine privileges neither the domination nor the borders of the onstage; he emphasizes instead that the onstage is troubled by its relation to the offstage. Lyons points to the offstage as a space that is 'continuous… yet different' – that is, 'almost the same but not quite' –

when he states: "The offstage is somehow continuous with to visual space, yet different from it in regard to the laws which govern it" (85). The Classical insistence upon the unity of space and upon the dualism of the onstage and the offstage is undermined in Racine's theatre. This disturbance thus foregrounds, in a theatrical way, postcolonial criticisms of the colonial discursive representations of the colonized. Bhabha's treatment of mimicry seems to correspond with the ambivalence of self and cultural other that occur in Racine's onstage and offstage projections, above all when he speaks of a colonial desire that, "through the repetition of *partial presence*, which is the basis of mimicry, articulates those disturbances of cultural, racial, and historical difference that menace the narcissistic demand of colonial authority" (Bhabha 126). By extending Bhabha's thought to the inceptions of French colonialism in the seventeenth century, one may find that Racine was experimenting with forms of mimicry as he allowed the partially present cultural other to menace the narcissistic demands of French identity within the Classical theatrical mirror. If the offstage threatens the staged borders of identity, it is because offstage characters challenge the myth of transparency that the absolute subject seeks: "Racinian theatre works against the myth of transparency, lucidity, and impartiality that undergirds the Sovereign Subject of both epistemology and politics" (Riggs 39). Due to their exteriority, both the monster and the spectator cast a 'gaze of otherness' upon the subject that attempts, like Hippolyte in imitation of his father, to remain absolute on the stage.

Bhabha further addresses colonial desire, stating:

> It is a desire that reverses 'in part' the colonial appropriation by now producing a partial vision of the colonizer's presence. A gaze of otherness, that shares the acuity of the genealogical gaze which, as Foucault describes it, liberates marginal elements and shatters the unity of man's being through which he extends his sovereign. (126-27)

In Racine's theatre, the divide between onstage and offstage characters allows a reversible perspectives of the cultural other and the self. This divide presents a subtle break with the unity of place in Classical tragedy – and thus, the offstage that was disavowed by the onstage folds back upon it, disturbing the purported sovereignty of staged identity: "The operation of verse is other: it is a keynote, and earmark, a banner, it is a construct of absence [….] Absent representation usurps the text, steals the scene" (Barnett "Inbound" 165). If the offstage character is so disfigured as to become monstrous, this possibility of representation awaits the onstage characters as well: "In the midst, in the very thick of this theater of absence, on the center stage of this theatre unto itself, *la parole*, histrionically adept in the 'seductions' wrought by nothingness, reveling in its own demeanors, becomes in a fragmenting, dissipating sense the mirroring image of its sayer" (Barnett "Inbound" 165).

In Racine's theatre, one encounters otherness through multiple constructions and diffractions of otherness. Through the theatrical *partial presence* of the foreigner, otherness is reversed and one recognizes that onstage characters are also partial representations of identity as language becomes a labyrinth: For Barnett, the labyrinth in *Phèdre* is "a phenomenon at once purely linguistic and linguistically impure" ("Inbound" 165). The spectator perceives the unstable discursive props upon which the staged French self depends. If tragedy is based on an imperious desire that is impossible – "The greatest tragedy that Racine's theater stages [is] the imperious desire to be absolute when that desire is shown to be (by the very predicates of absolutism) impossible" (Greenberg "Absolute Fantasies" 54-55) – then the limits (and the limited view) that is cast upon the cultural other fall upon the staged self as well. Like mimicry, theatre involves the

"process by which the look of surveillance returns as the displacing gaze of the disciplined, where the observer becomes the observed and 'partial' representation rearticulates the whole notion of *identity* and alienates it from essence" (Bhabha 127).

Although the attempt to restrict the most foreign of foreigners to a realm that exists outside of theatrical performance (and beyond the stage) would seem to allow for the centering of French values – or the "stately image of Classical France" (Greenberg "Absolute Fantasies" 41) – on the stage, this is not the case. Indeed, the reference to the most foreign of foreigners in theatrical narrative allows for yet another cultural context to be layered upon the French cultural context (despite the fact that the foreign context is present only in its absence). In fact, the image of another is most potent when he or she is absent – as Hippolyte admits to Aricie: "Présente je vous fuis, absente je vous trouve / Dans le fond des forêts votre image me suit" (v. 542-43). Marked by absence, references to the African or to the Amazon generate a hybridization of representational authority. The mysterious and unknown other, ungraspable by the French stage, proliferates indeterminacy, casting a doubtful light upon any representational authority (that is not his or her own voice). The desire to dominate cultural others is layered against other cultures so that "the periphery – the borderline, the marginal, the unclassifiable, the doubtful – has become the equivocal, indefinite, indeterminate ambivalence that characterizes the centre" (Young 161). Upon closer look, one sees that the borders of the stage are fictional (much like the borders of identity). In Racine's theatre, these borders are noticeably in a state of being *fictionalized* due to an insistence upon the lack of authority within logocentric representation. Racine plays with the (discursive and performative) medium of theatre, challenging theatrical structure by diffracting representation via a

cultural prism. His construction of the offstage cultural other in narrative engages a problematic surrounding the actual limits of visibility and speech of the cultural other in seventeenth century French society. This limiting of representation returns to haunt the self.. The representation of the self is decentered by all that it cannot harness within and without.

As a mirror of French values, theatre appears to cast the cultural other as an off-stage monster and very distant shadow of the self. Yet this mirror is splintered through multiple diffractions and deferrals of otherness in Racine's tragedies as they are cast beyond representation. The depiction of the African as a 'monstre' reflects a desire to cast the cultural other to a realm that is beyond the space of French performances, thereby reducing the threat to (cultural) homogeneity. Indeed, the unity of place upon the theatrical stage manifests a desire to eject what is most culturally other, as if to neatly package a representation of the French self that is safe and secure within staged borders of representation. However, the hybridity of the fearsome monster effectuates a reversibility of the self and the mysterious cultural other as the monster effects onstage events and is made even more manifest through the hybridity of onstage/offstage in theatrical narrative. If a representative of cross-cultural interactions were to exist, it would be the absent, yet discursive figure of the monster itself. This figure signals at an instinctual level the confusion of self and other: "Critics have long recognized that literary monsters serve to challenge the homogeneity of society by revealing its tensions, inconsistencies, and gaps" (Punday 803). Indeed, contemporary theory claims that the monster reveals "social disunity through bodily multiplicity" (803). With commanding

foresight, Racine calls upon the figure of the monster in order to create and to intertwine the cultural and discursive tensions in *Phèdre*.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen in Racine's theatre, cultural otherness is often implied through geographical references or through the theatrical setting – indeed, the imperial site and the land of the cultural other are of equal importance for one is offset by the other. For example, the reference to "la rebelle Judée" (v. 104) in *Bérénice* is evoked in terms of the victory of Roman imperialism. If Judea is rebellious, this suggests a system of punishment that the West effectuates over the East. What is also figured in the naming of Judea's rebellion is the search for an escape from constraints imposed by imperial power. Rather than a myopic view of the West, there is a plurality of perspectives which includes the perspective of the conquered. One thus understands the resistance to Titus, "Héros vainqueur de tant de nations" (v. 497), and to a Roman army that stood ready to absorb the Orient into "l'Empire du monde" (v. 456) as vital. What subtends the discourse of imperial glory is a different system of values that finds articulation, for instance, when Antiochus references the hands of Titus' vengeance, stating: "La Judée en pâlit. Le triste Antiochus / Se compta le premier au nombre des vaincus" (v. 197-99). Although the swift power of Rome is asserted through the subjugation of the Orient, the silencing that accompanies this defeat is nonetheless articulated in a manner that attracts our attention. Now a scorned lover in comparison with Titus, Antiochus becomes the apprentice of alternate forms of speech: Speaking to Bérénice, he asserts: "Je disputai longtemps, je fis

parler mes yeux" (v. 201); "J'espérai […] qu'au moins jusqu'à vous porté par mille exploits, / Mon nom pourrait parler, au défaut de ma voix" (v. 212-14) Is it not surprising that Antiochus's body becomes the support of Titus' muted voice as well? Whereas Titus must take recourse to the body of the Oriental male in order to break through his own aphasia, Antiochus uses his eyes, actions, and body in a very astute and sensible manner in his own struggle for expression. He learns to supplement the failure of his voice with the intermediary of his body[180] – a very theatrical gesture indeed[181]. The silenced other in Racine's theatre finds voice.

. If Thésée was celebrated as a generous king for having secured the borders of Greece – "Vous avez des deux mers assuré les rivages" (v. 941) – and if Titus will achieve glory and renown if he bids the Oriental Queen farewell, then it appears that the traditional, imperial, and culture-founding move is to relegate the other to the 'offstage'. Yet the monstrous reemerges with a different head – that is, in a suppressed (yet doubly expressed) representation. Thus it is that the list of women that Thésée has seduced corresponds with the list of monsters that he has conquered: And the fruits of the

[180] The presence of the body in a performative silence raises the issue of seeing, for discourse is to hearing as gesture is to seeing. In *Bérénice*, to see someone and to be seen by that person is to speak. As Titus worries about how to tell his beloved that they must part, he hides from her sight so as to avoid the ultimate question: To speak or not to speak? Keenly aware that his body is a readable text before his lover's eyes, he will go so far as to send another in his place to speak for him. Eye-catching is a sticky situation not only because of the obligation to speak, but is doubly tricky for Titus because his eyes, his expression, or his body language may betray what he wishes to verbally hide from Bérénice: Thus, he will exit the stage, leaving her presence, "Sortons, Paulin : je ne lui puis rien dire" (v. 624). Unable to formulate the words to say to her, he avoids eye contact with her. In some instances, seeing equates the breaking of silence because the body is itself a text, a language, a letter. Thus, when Titus can no longer delay and feels the pressure to acknowledge the situation, he will *see* Bérénice: As he says to Paulin, "Il faut la voir, Paulin, et rompre le silence" (v. 484).

[181] Here, we are reminded of Diderot, who, in *Dialogue sur les sourds et les muets* (1751), speaks of the crossroads of bodily gesture and of a verbal silence as a powerful locus of meaning in the spectator's experience: "Aussitôt que la toile était levée, et le moment venu où tous les autres spectateurs se disposaient à écouter, moi, je mettais mes doigts dans mes oreilles, non sans quelque étonnement de la part de ceux qui m'environnaient, et qui, ne me comprenant pas, me regardaient presque comme un insensé qui ne venait à la comédie que pour ne la pas entendre…. Les moins curieux hasardaient des questions auxquelles je répondais froidement 'que chacun avait sa façon d'écouter, et que la mienne était de me boucher les oreilles pour mieux entendre'" (532-33).

simultaneous practice of bedding women and of removing monsters are figured in the birth *and* the destruction of his son, Hippolyte. Thus it is that cultural alterity symbolically emerges within the *polis* (or within the self) in order to expose the weakness of a self-enclosed Narcissus: "If I make disappear what I cannot not desire, I disappear too" (Spivak "Echo" 183). Whereas the imperial city fears hybridity and bids its exit from the city-stage, it remains haunted by its naive and unsustainable barriers to the other.

As we have seen in *Bérénice*, *Bajazet*, and *Phèdre*, a frequent cause for the manifestation of silence within Racine's theatre is cultural alterity or cultural hybridity. Whether culture mixture appears in the ancestral makeup of a character or whether it subtends seventeenth-century fears surrounding assimilation of the cultural other, hybridity surfaces through the displacement of voice. Silence is thus more than a psychological case of aphasia; it is a space for social commentary and cultural imagination. Indeed, hybridity creates an alterity that necessitates silence, for French colonial discourse seeks to suppress mixture in order to promote unity rather than a composite or fragmented identity. Yet, when silenced, one finds expression through the body, through references to the monstrous, or through the mouth of another representative. Silence and displaced voice are the figures of identity slippage between self and other. Representation is thus a hybrid rather than a unified construct in Racine's theatre.

Racine's concept of representation further mimics hybridity by allowing the *hors-scène* to cast its shadow over the stage; representation is consistently undermined by what escapes it. Cultural coding of the collective self does not occur without another reference

point rising to contest it: In Racine's theatre, we have the West *and* the rest. In Racine's *Andromaque*, Oreste's voyage (and the tragedy itself) begins with Pyrrhus' decision to raise the young Astyanax – "L'ennemi de la Grèce" (v. 70) and a remaining figure of "tant de rois sous Troie ensevelis" (v. 72) – within the Greek courts of Epire. Thus, what is often 'enseveli' or buried alive within the hegemonic and dominant site is the threat of the Eastern other, as emblematized by the shadow of Hélène which straddles both the East and the West in *Iphigénie*, as Clytemnestre says to Agamemnon: "Cette Hélène, qui trouble et l'Europe, et l'Asie / Vous semble-t-elle un prix digne de vos exploits?" (v. 1278-79). The interdependence of East and West are often figured as a clash in Racine's theater, yet not without alluding to the failure of hegemonic thinking.

Thus, the West – or the French – are not unmarked by intercultural relations. The Classical stage of the absolutist subject may have operated like the French journals of the 1950s[182] and 1960s[183] – that is, by silencing the problems surrounding the conservation of the French colonial order and by inventing the unity of the collective self in a radicalized opposition to the cultural other. However, as we have seen, Racine emphasizes the inbred alterity of the collective self. He is not a racist in relegating the African character to the offstage in *Bajazet* – rather he allows this character to signify the disruption of the text and of the stage. This disruption points more to the weakness of imperial and exclusionary thought rather than to any essential deficiency of the African. Colonial thought – that is, the belief in "*une* vérité historique qui triomphe des autres" (Savarèse

[182] The problems surrounding the preservation of the French colonial order were passed over in silence as France ventriloquized these issues during decolonization by concentrating instead on the racism towards African-Americans in the United States. For information regarding this problematic, see Jane Bradley Winston's *Postcolonial Duras*, Chapter 5: "Transatlantic Connections: Wright's *Black Boy* and Duras's *Colon* Girl."

[183] Tunisia, Morocco, Guinea, Cameroon, Togo, Mali, Senegal, Madagascar, Benin, Niger, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Chad, Central African Republic, Congo, Gabon, and Mauritania had obtained their independence from France by the year 1960.

163) – was subtly contested Racine and (perhaps louder) by others still, yet as we know, it persisted well into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The very fact of colonial oppression was silenced to such a point that this silencing endured, as attested to by the French scholarly books of the 1960s. As Savarèse states:

> Même l'amorce de la décolonisation ne modifie pas en profondeur l'imaginaire colonial [….] A ce moment, le problème de l'indépendance des anciennes colonies commence à être abordé, mais un certain paternalisme autoritaire et intimiste, formé dans la relation coloniale, demeure latent : 'Les uns après les autres, les pays d'outre-mer qui constituaient l'empire colonial français acquièrent leur indépendance. Cependant, la France a réussi à maintenir, entre elle et un grand nombre de ses anciennes colonies, des liens amicaux fondés sur le respect de chacun et l'intérêt mutuel. Elle continue d'y envoyer des techniciens, des médecins et des professeurs, et d'en recevoir des étudiants.' Ni la guerre d'Indochine, ni le drame algérien ne suffisent donc à remettre en cause la certitude, solidement ancrée dans les consciences depuis les débuts de la troisième République, d'une colonisation généreuse et profitable aux peuples anciennement soumis à l'autorité de la France. (164)

The inability to acknowledge the real facts of either French exploitation or of its direct contradiction with the revolutionary ideals of "*Liberté, Egalité Fraternité*" signifies a deep-rooted blindness[184] that persisting during nearly four centuries of colonialism. This imperceptibility (which lasted beyond decolonization) is yet another cause and effect of French efforts to not only promote the silence of the colonized subject, but to also endorse French ignorance with regards to the problems of cultural difference and oppositional politics[185]. This may be why the *hors-scène* is *mis en scène,* if you will, in the theatre not only of Racine, but also of Marguerite Duras[186] and Maryse Condé, for the

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[184] The impotence of the West in Racine's theatre is echoed during the period in which Duras wrote her semi-autobiographical novel, *Un Barrage contre le Pacifique* (1950). Winston speaks of the possibility that the continental French populous might not have fully 'seen' the contradiction inherent to the Revolutionary ideals of equality, further asserting that "This possible blindness suggested that popular support of Empire might be grounded not only in self-interest, but in propaganda – induced ignorance as well" (Winston 21).

[185] In *Un Barrage contre le Pacifique*, Duras introduces "cultural difference and opposition politics into the colonial representation *Indochina* and their silencing. Now, it concludes by showing that their 'disappearances' notwithstanding, those differences and politics did not cease playing behind the scenes; in the dark" (Winston 5).

[186] It will not appear to be a mere coincidence that Duras wrote two short film pieces, "Césarée" (1979) and "Roma" (1993), in which she echoes the tragedy of Racine's *Bérénice*. She picks up on the linguistic disappearance of Titus that was already present in Racine's theatre, for in "Roma" "Rome n'appelle pas

offstage enables the playwright who is concerned with postcolonial questions to dramatize and to challenge what is selected for representation and what is not: *To speak or not to speak*? is thus translated in theatre[187] as *To represent or to not represent*? The displacement of voice and the problem of silence reveal that these questions are a double bind, for as characters such as Phèdre and Hippolyte demonstrate, one is doomed either way. This inevitable failure to situate oneself in relation to speech or to silence is caused by the (cultural) monstrosity or hybridity of the character. The non-position of the character gives way to a liminality that affects his or her ambiguous relation to self-identity, to discourse, and to others.

The problematization of silence and cultural alterity is framed by Racine in the seventeenth century (just as French colonialism was being instated). This problematic can be further explored in the twentieth century theatre (following the formal collapse of the French colonial institution) of two female dramatists who lived at the margins of French culture: Marguerite Duras[188] and Maryse Condé[189]. Each woman challenges the

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d'images, Titus ne bénéficie d'aucun portrait [….]" (Blot-Labarrère 17). In "Roma," the imperial city and its emperor are eclipsed by the reverberation of the announcement of a separation: "A ce moment de l'histoire, on ne voit plus que l'interminable ressassement de la phrase du prince: Un jour, un matin, un bateau viendra qui vous ramènera à Césarée" (125). The shattering of voice and of repeated evocations of the Roman name of the Oriental city – "Césarée / L'endroit s'appelle ainsi / Césarée / Césaréa" (95) – is presented against the images of the Tuileries gardens in Paris. Thus, there is a fading out of any reference to Rome and the Orient, leaving us with the former imperial center of the French empire – Paris. Indeed, Duras' "Césarée" ends with the image of the Parisian gardens and we hear "Il fait à Paris un mauvais été. Froid. De la brume" (102).

[187] As Edward Said asserts, "The idea of representation is a theatrical one" (63).

[188] Marguerite Duras, a French woman born in 1914 to a mother from Pas-de-Calais and to a father from Lot-Et-Garonne in the French colonial territory of Indochina, defines herself as an outsider to France: "Je suis créole, je suis née là-bas" (Pivot). She explains the ambiguity of her cultural identity in an interview with Porte, referencing the poverty in which her mother lived: "[…] du fait que nous étions très très pauvres et qu'elle avait un emploi tout à fait parmi les derniers là-bas, […] elle était beaucoup plus proche des Vietnamiens, des Annamites, que des autres Blancs. Je n'ai eu que des amie vietnamiennes jusqu'à l'âge de quatorze ans" (56). Indeed, the theme of poverty accentuated in Duras' semi-autobiographical works – *Un Barrage Contre le Pacifique*, *Eden Cinéma*, and *L'Amant* – depicts her family's experience of French coloniality from the perspective of the colonized rather than from that of members of white society.

[189] Born in Guadeloupe in 1937, Maryse Condé was from the upper-class and describes her cultural upbringing in Guadeloupe as a general boredom that resulted from being cut off from interactions with

narcissistic (and male-dominant[190]) discourse that underlies colonial discourse in ways that echo Racine's depictions of the muting effects of otherness, of ventriloquism and of the offstage. Indeed, each of these writers weaves cultural otherness into their work, allowing the voice of the marginalized to challenge Western discourse through individual stylizations – and emphases – upon silence. We will thus refer to similar sketches of displaced and muted voice in the theatre of these playwrights in order to perceive the relevance and the foresight of Racine's attention to postcolonial questions of silence in the seventeenth century. Indeed, the effects of cultural alterity on representation can be seen as a Racinian legacy as these questions are taken up in the more established postcolonial contexts of Duras and Condé.

The settings of Duras' *India Song* and *Eden Cinéma* and of Condé's *Dieu nous l'a donné* are relevant as they are situated in the colonial settings of India, French Indochina, and Guadeloupe (respectively), while also referencing the French colonial powers that haunt the setting from the offstage. Once again, the representation of silence is aligned with imperial confrontations between the (former) colonizer and the (previously) colonized. Because Duras and Condé identify (for the most part) with the colonized, the cultural 'other' is now the French self. The positions are thus reversed whereby the

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'others': "We couldn't mix with just anybody. We were not allowed to speak to the other Negroes living on the same street, of course. We could not socialize with mulattoes, because they were illegitimate children of Whites. Obviously, we were not to mingle with Whites either. They were the enemy. We lived in isolation and displayed contempt for everything that was different from us, a kind of arrogance that was one of my parents' main traits, especially of my mother" (2). Perhaps it is for this reason that she states: "In the final analysis, it is very bad to put down roots. You must be errant and multifaceted – inside and out. Nomadic" (Pfaff 28). Indeed, Condé has lived in Guadeloupe, France Guinea, Ghana, the Ivory Coast and Senegal.

[190] Challenges to male-dominant discourse accentuate the undermining of the dominance of colonial discourse itself. As one critically reviews the narrative sanctions that the colonizer propagated in order to establish his 'mission civilisatrice', one finds that "race was defined in terms of cultural, particularly gender, difference" (Young 94). Furthermore, Spivak reminds us that "both as object of colonial historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant" (287).

French self is cast to the offstage, while being referenced by the speech of onstage characters. In the modern period of these two postcolonial writers, the notion of the omnipotence of discourse, so dominant in the Classical period, has dissipated. Yet the centering of the thematic of the unsaid remains remarkably unique in its coincidence with intercultural and colonial encounters. Within the cluster of Duras' and Condé's sketches of silence are questions that touch upon the work of their seventeenth-century predecessor: For as we shall see from our brief analyses of *India Song*, *Eden Cinéma* and *Dieu nous l'a donné*, Racine was ahead of his time in promoting a deconstruction of hegemonic relations through the privileging of silence.

If Orcan the African remains offstage in Racine's *Bajazet*, he will operate from the margins of representation, subversively affecting the outcome of the onstage characters' desires and motivations. In Duras' *India Song: texte-théâtre-film* (1976), the disjuncture between sound and image is produced by off-stage voices that destabilize representation. The offstage voices evoke an untraceable trauma while images reveal a reception in colonial India (the year is 1937). The setting is the French embassy in Calcutta[191]. What is eschewed from the scene is voice itself, for "aucun mot n'est prononcé sur scène" (Ricouart 121). Voices 1, 2, 3, and 4 speak from a strangely absent place[192]. They are disembodied voices. The absence of their bodies causes the spectator to focus on a testimony that comes by way of hearing – or not[193]. The offstage plays on

[191] "Les images et les sons sont exilés les uns des autres, tout comme les colons et les colonisés présentés dans le film" (Ricouart 123).

[192] To further underscore the disembodiment of the voices, let us recall that at a certain moment in *India Song* (end Act III), the stage indications call for *Noir*, yet voices 3 and 4 continue to speak: *Les voix parlent dans le noir*.

[193] The dialogue falls silent at many moments in this '*texte- théâtre- film*' as the stage directions call for: *silence; temps; attente, pas de réponse; arrêt; effort de mémoire; hesitation;* and a 'trailing off' as indicated by recurring sets of ellipses. The voice levels are also modified by an indication of: *Très lent ; à peine ; lointaine ; bas ; à peine dit ; bas, presque murmuré ; presque crié ; comme lu*. Affective nuances

the ear with a destabilizing affect as a sudden silence of Voice 1 causes Voice 2 to fearfully ask "*Où êtes-vous?"* (Duras *India Song* 49). The voices are paired off and call only to each other, questioning, reminding, fearing, beckoning. Oftentimes, the voices try to recall the details of the story of Anne-Marie Stretter[194], yet the testimony is broken. At an attempt to repair memory, the voices read from another source. This reading of a reading only pushes representation further up against the margins – to the point that the content can no longer be recaptured. The gaps in memory and in voice constantly produce new, incomplete versions of the story as they seek supplementation from beyond the margins of narration. In her introduction to *India Song*, Duras writes:

> Une raison suffisante de l'écrire [….] c'est la découverte du *moyen* de dévoilement, d'exploration, faite dans *La Femme du Gange :* les voix extérieures au récit. Cette découverte a permis de faire basculer le récit dans l'oubli pour le laisser à la disposition d'autres mémoires que celle de l'auteur : mémoires qui *se souviendraient* pareillement de n'importe quelle autre histoire d'amour. Mémoires déformantes, créatives. (10)

Indeed, what is most central to the representation of the story is vocalized from the exterior – an unknown, unnamable, and untraceable elsewhere.

Duras' *India Song* presents a world that is cut in two, for the setting is divided between the colonized and the colonizer. Yet "l'horreur indienne" (Duras *India Song* 148) penetrates both sides of the equation. This horror is embodied by the inarticulate, untranslatable cries of the (leprous) beggar-woman who represents "toutes les tares dont

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are further indicated by emotive cues such as: *Temps, accablement ; épouvante ; effroi, bas ; peur, très bas ; souffrance, terreur*.

[194] The story of *India Song* is based on a death that has already occurred. The subject – or rather the (dead) body – in question is that of Anne-Marie Stretter. At all moments, she is under the gaze of the men who love her, the onlookers at the reception, or the spectator. Although she lends her body to our desire and view, she resists representation. The spectator is reminded that this woman is dead. The specter-like quality of her presence alludes not only to her drowning at the end of the piece, but also to her cross-cultural trajectory, for as the wife of the French ambassador, she has moved from Europe to Asia – that is, from Venice to India. In her death, she blends with the fluidity of the Indian Ocean, for in an interview with Porte, Duras speculates on the question of the Anne-Marie Stretter's suicide: "Je ne sais pas si c'est un suicide. Elle rejoint comme une mer… elle rejoint la mer indienne, comme une sorte de mer matricielle […] elle meurt comme empoisonnée par l'Inde" (78).

le monde occidental essaie de se débarrasser en le refoulant et en le tenant à l'écart, dans des institutions ou derrière des grilles de toutes sortes" (Ricouart 49). This marginalized character is at a distant, indiscernible location: "Cris au loin, de joie, appels dans cette langue inconnue: l'hindoustani"(Duras *India Song* 22). Concerned with the source of these cries, Voice 1 suggests, "Quelqu'un cri… une femme…" (22) – to which Voice 2 responds, "Une mendiante" (23). Voice 1 then asks : "Folle ?" (23). Voice 2 answers : "C'est ça" (23). And later, "Le chant de Savannakhet, au loin, innocent" (28) precedes a blackout in which gunshots ring: "Le chant de Savannakhet s'est arrêté avec les coups de feu. Comme si on avait tiré sur le chant de Savannakhet" (28). Indeed, the non-position of the beggar-woman within the colonial setting parallels her non-position with regard to communication. Furthermore, her non-position threatens the stability of the narrative that other voices attempt to speak. Her marginalized voice subverts – while also contributing to – the narrative: By virtue of her impenetrability, she is a figure of the intermediary position of the voice and of the liminality that one faces within cross-cultural or colonial relations. Her voice emerges as a gateway to otherness[195], for the beggar-woman both engenders and aborts cultural and linguistic alterity:

> L'Autre, que ce soit l'autre côté de l'individu, ou l'autre couleur de la race humaine, est rejeté, dénié, réprimé. Les images du film tendent à accentuer cette dichotomie et soulignent la vision durassienne d'une bourgeoisie coloniale blanche qui exploite les colonisés par sa présence même, bien que cette exploitation elle-même ne soit pas directement représentée sur l'écran, mais plutôt suggérée. L'Autre dans le film (mendiant ou lépreux) est totalement extérieur, hors-scène, au-delà de la représentation. Il est ainsi exclu de la société et de la représentation dans le film, sans statu, ni dans la société, ni dans le film, autre que la négation. L'originalité durassienne apparaît dans cette non-représentation de l'Autre. (Ricouart 123).

[195] "La musique s'empare des personnages à part entière pour devenir la seule expression de leurs sentiments intraduisibles en langage, par là, impénétrables aux autres. Quant aux héroïnes, elles deviennent interprètes au sens étymologique du terme, *interpres*, c'est-à-dire intermédiaire. Leur musique leur défend d'exprimer leurs sentiments, ce qui leur confère une certaine animalité (la mendiante) ou insensibilité (Anne-Marie Stretter)" (Ogawa 168).

Interestingly, Ricouart situates Duras' originality in a non-representation of the other that she may have first perceived in Racine's work: For as Blot-Labarrère suggests, "En Racine, Duras s'est choisi un ancêtre totemique" (23). Furthermore, if the two words that are significant for Duras are "l'*off*, c'est-à-dire ce qui se situe derrière, dans le retrait, et l'*outside*, ce qui est entre deux mondes, de l'autre côté de la marge" (Vircondelet *L'Emergence* 13), then her affinity with Racine is all the more substantiated. One can intuit Duras' appreciation of Racine in her own inclination to allow the margins and the *hors-scène* to overtake representation. As Vircondelet asserts: "Elle aime Pascale, Racine, Bach. Tous des artistes de la tension mystique, du livre, de la partition, bandés comme un ressort et qui, dans leur détente, font entrer dans ce lieu qui échappe au sens commun, quitter l'identité pour 'se perdre dans ce qui existe en même temps' qu'elle, 'ailleurs ou à côté, ou perdu ou mort'" (*Biographie* 237-28).

In looking at *Eden Cinéma* (1977), Duras' adaptation of her own semi-autobiographical novel, *Un Barrage contre le Pacifique*, the questions raised by Winston in her postcolonial study of Duras seem relevant, namely: "What self-image does Duras reflect back to the French 'community'? What history does it permit that community to tell itself? What history does it prevent from being told? What truth claims does it support? What exclusions does it sustain?" (12). Although *Eden Cinéma*[196] is the story of the mother's struggle against the French colonial agents who oppressed the colonized peoples of French Indochina, she herself cannot tell her story. This point is elaborated from the start of the play:

[196] "A l'intérieur de chaque partie, les épisodes de *L'Eden Cinéma* répondent à ceux du *Barrage* : histoire de la mère, histoire du cheval, apparition de M. Jo, etc. [….] Les échanges classiques passent à l'arrière-plan. Ils deviennent pour ainsi dire des parenthèses dans le récitatif des enfants. Celui-ci occupe, en effet, la majeure partie de l'œuvre et n'est coupé que par quelques dialogues traditionnels" (Rykner *Théâtre du Nouveau Roman* 184-85).

> *La mère restera immobile sur sa chaise, sans expression, comme statufiée, lointaine,* séparée – *comme la scène – de sa propre histoire.*
> *Les autres la touchent, caressent ses bras, embrassent ses mains. Elle laisse faire : ce qu'elle représente dans la pièce dépasse ce qu'elle* est *et elle en* est *irresponsable.*
> *Ce qui pourrait être dit ici l'est directement par Suzanne et Joseph. La mère – objet du récit – n'aura jamais la parole sur elle-même.* (12)

Detached from her own story and voice, the mother has no control over her own representation. Even her body – "*Cette montagne qui, immuable, muette inexpressive, leur prête son corps, laisse faire*" (14) – is entirely unresponsive to its telling. As indicated by the stage directions, the mother hears the telling of her story as "*le bruit des mots*" (17). The letter that she had written in protest of the injustice of the local French colonial administration is recited by the mother, yet in fact, it was never sent. In this letter, she refers to her dialogue with her indigenous neighbors as her only means, albeit useless, of fighting against the agents. In her writing, she repeats: "Je parle de vous" ; "j'ai parlé à tous" ; "je leur dis" ; "je leur ai appris" ; "je leur parle de vous" ; "je parle" (119-124). Yet the *destinataire* never receives or hers her message, for the letter is not sent: Consequently, the mother seems destined to *se taire* while others narrate her story. What is demonstrated before the French 'community' is thus the silencing of its own people, for the mother was French, yet oppressed by her nation's colonial code. It is with bitter sweetness that Joseph says of his mother: "Elle était sortie de la nuit de l'Eden. Ignorante de tout. Du vampirisme colonial" (20). What is perceived with the flash of this one word – 'vampirisme' – is a glimpse of the greed of the French colonial subjects who profited from the impoverishment of those whose blood (here, even French blood) they suck. The oppression of the other becomes an oppression of the self – a story that is contained within a letter that is never sent to those responsible. The fact that her voice had no affect on the giant colonial machine underscores the history of silencing to which she and the colonized many were subjected.

What is said of Marguerite Duras can be said of Maryse Condé, namely that the scope of her work "spans nearly the entire twentieth century, from the colonial to the postcolonial rule era, moves around and across French colonial geographies and borders, from lower-class and hinterland colonial borders to the most authoritative regions of France's intellectual and literary fields" (Winston 2). Condé was also a reader and an admirer of Racine; not only are we struck by this happenstance, but in an interview with Piaff, Condé states "Among French writers, I like Marguerite Duras" (46). Thus, it is not surprising that in her play[197], *Dieu nous l'a donné* (1972), Maryse Condé displaces language and cultural otherness in the silencing of Dieudonné[198]. A black man who has spent ten years in France, Dieudonné returns to his native Caribbean island – "Un explorateur qui débarque dans un pays inconnu" (26) – only to perceive and be perceived as a white man. Condé insists upon the impotence of speech of the male protagonist who assumes that he can speak to and for the people. As in the theatre of Racine and Duras, silence becomes a means to represent – and to contest – the injustice of hegemonic relations and representations.

With the audience of a few who will listen to him, Dieudonné argues incessantly for a revolution without establishing what that revolution would be based upon. Not only does he no longer speak like a Caribbean man, but he also views the Caribbean man as the colonizer would – in need of mastery. His words thus fall silent, like 'white' noise.

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197 Although Maryse Condé does not consider herself a playwright (Lewis 550) as much as she considers herself a novelist, she has nonetheless published the following plays: *Mort d'Oluwémi d'Ajumako* (1973), *Le Morne de Massabielle* (1974), *Pension les Alizés* (1988), *An Tan Revolisyon* (1989), *Comédie d'amour* (1993), and *Comme deux frères* (2007). Her theatre has been relatively untreated within scholarly circles; this may be due to the unavailability of some of her plays. The play with which we are concerned, *Dieu nous l'a donné,* is a prototype of the problematic of silence and of cultural alterity which resounds in her work.

198 Perhaps only anecdotal, it is worth mentioning that the name of Condé's protagonist, Dieudonné, resonates with Marguerite Duras' family name, Donnadieu.

The empowerment afforded by the language of the colonizer, however, implies a fundamental loss, that of no longer being able to speak to one's people: As he says, "De retour chez moi, je m'aperçois que je ne sais plus parler à mon peuple. Je ne sais plus son langage, ses mots de bonheur ou de chagrin ! Quand j'ouvre la bouche, on rit ! Il parle comme un Blanc ! D'ailleurs, c'est un Blanc!" (27). This Caribbean man has 'othered' himself by adopting the discourse of the colonizer. Furthermore, he can no longer recognize the error of his affected speech[199].

Rather than adhere to the paradigms of West Indian novels in which, as she states, "Writer and reader implicitly agree about respecting a stereotypical portrayal of themselves and their society" (Condé "Order, Disorder" 164), Condé pushes Caribbean literature towards what she hopes will be "a permanent questioning of text and context" (164). If Dieudonné burns from what he cannot convey – "Et ce que j'ai appris, ce que j'ai compris, ce que je brûle d'expliquer, je ne peux pas, je ne peux pas" (27) – is it not because he unconsciously mimics the French colonial manner of speaking about the formerly colonized? A black man who acts as a ventriloquist for the white man – here, we find yet another cultural hybrid who will seek supplementation of the voice that he has lost. Disconnected from himself, he can no longer be heard and must ask Mendela, the local witch doctor, to be an artificial supplement through which he can transfer a revolutionary message to the people. Believing in the effect of ventrioloquism, Dieudonné recounts the moment in which the village was assembled and listened to the words of Mendela (which were in fact the words that Dieudonné was whispering to him):

[199] Dieudonné does not see what the villagers see – namely, that his assimilated speech reflects an assimilated way of thinking. He is ignorant of the fact that in his "dix ans de souffrances et d'humiliations" (27) in France, he has in fact digested the perspective of the colonizer.

"A un certain moment, Mendela, je me suis cru Dieu…" (63). In this theatrical scene[200], Dieudonné is a *souffleur* who believes himself to be an actor. His speech is doubly removed from him as his ideas are influenced by the formal colonizer and as those ideas are vocalized from a mouth other than his own. Caught between two identities – black and white – he insists that his speech, when transposed by Mendela, will fool the crowd as to who is speaking: "Il faut simplement qu'il apparaisse à tous que toi c'est moi, moi c'est toi. Que si ma bouche parle, c'est la tienne… Que si je commande, c'est que toi, c'est-à-dire les dieux ont ordonné… Tu me suis?" (64). Due to the French colonialist discourse which Dieudonné imitates, this scene of ventriloquism marks these two black Caribbean men as cultural others and reveals the protagonist to be estranged from himself.

The *hors-scène* of foreign lands and peoples is 'staged' in the theatrical narratives, ventriloquisms, and silences of Racine's *Bérénice*, *Bajazet*, and *Phèdre*. In Duras' *India Song*, the disembodiment of voice is effectuated in the *hors-scène*, from which one hears a ventriloquized soundrack of "des signes de folie, des rapports de mort et de suicide" (Ricouart 120). Similarly, in Condé's *Dieu nous l'a donné*, the French *metropole* haunts the speech of the protagonist who foolishly succumbs to the colonization of his own manner of speaking and being. Thus, what is undone in the mimicry of imperial discourse is the dichotomy of self/other or black/white long upheld

[200] In the end, the theatrilization of speech, which Dieudonné directs in the name of revolution, is suddenly cut off as the play unravels and as the punishment of his farce doubles back upon him. Unable to converse with his people, Dieudonné has remained deaf to the rumors of incest that circulate regarding Mendela and his daughter, Maeva. In his ignorance, he brazenly speaks of Maeva's sexual desire for him to Mendela. Not long after, Dieudonné is found dead at home, murdered. Thus, in 'othering' himself, Dieudonné becomes deaf and dumb to his own people, impotent to bring about the theoretical revolution of which he wants to speak, but cannot. In the scene in which Dieudonné asks Mendela to continue to deliver his lines, one has a deeper sense of theatre's unique concern with the silencing and 'othering' of speech in the face – or farce – of cultural otherness.

during (and following) colonization: As Condé states, terms such as 'bâtard' and 'métis' "sous-entendent tous deux l'opposition binaire: pureté/impureté. Pureté/impureté des êtres. Pureté/impureté des races, des institutions [….] Aussi, c'est cette structure binaire qu'il convient de frapper à mort, de détruire" ("Métissage" 212-13). Indeed, in Condé's play, a black man speaks as a white man, revealing a truism that Titus' Rome and Hippolyte chose to ignore: "Aucune culture n'est pure" (217).

Racinian theatre is a precursor to postcolonial thought insofar as he interrupts colonial binaries of self/other, inside/outside, and speech/silence. His tragedies offer an intertext for postcolonial readings of silence. In the work of Racine, Duras and Condé, silence points to the inefficacy of any dominant culture's desire to represent the marginalized other. In this way, Racine introduces the concept of hybridity within French Classical representation, even before it was theoretically conceptualized by postcolonial writers:

> Revealing that contamination is essential to a colonizing culture's self-identification, hybridity also provides the resources for an active challenge to colonial rhetoric by throwing into sharp relief both the exclusions that are central to determinations of national character and the unsustainability of those determinations. (Leonard 135)

As the illusion of cultural purity breaks down, the effects are heard in a collapse of discourse. As we have seen, the cross-cultural encounter in *Bérénice* leads the Oriental characters to discover alternate forms of expression, while Titus' self-estrangement seems to only increase no matter how much he tries to control his identity through his speech. Indeed, Racine was already exploring the effects of cultural and representational hybridity on discourse as a means of demonstrating the collapsibility of binary divisions. Thus, we can apply a summary of hybridity, as penned by Leonard (a postcolonial critic), to our readings of Racine's *Bérénice*, *Bajazet*, and *Phèdre*:

> Just as the colonizing culture finds its narcissistic image dislodged during the act of self-enunciation, so the colonized culture loses its status as a wholly disavowable alien object: 'The paranoid threat from the hybrid is finally uncontainable,' Bhabha argues, 'because it breaks down the symmetry and duality of self/other, inside/outside.' (Leonard 135)

Indeed, the potential destabilization of French or Western dualities was clearly touched upon by Racine in a period which marks the beginning of French colonialism. Within the theatre of Racine, Duras, and Condé, it is the muting and destabilization of voice rather than its command that is privileged. Dignity shifts from the imperial subject (and his clamorous push for self-coincidence) to those that must carve out a voice in the face of social or cultural oppression. Our analyses of *Bérénice*, *Bajazet*, and *Phèdre* draw out an important key to postcolonial thought, as outlined by Leonard – that is, an "exorbitant reversal of discrimination because the colonized subject can no longer be seen as the foreigner who is utterly disempowered, disenfranchised, or disarticulated by colonialism's authoritative discourse" (Leonard 136). A germ of postcolonial thought thus resonates from within Racine's theatre. At the height of French seventeenth century classicism, Racine surprisingly paved the way to postcolonial discourse on otherness through his use of silence. Indeed, Racinian echoes within Duras' and Condé's theatre attest to the impact of Racine's legacy, for his questions regarding the representation of cultural alterity and the power of address continue to impact our world today.

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