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The Hidden Gaze of the Other in Michael Haneke's *Hidden*

ABSTRACT

In his 2005 French production *Hidden* (*Caché*), Michael Haneke continues disturbing his audience with poignant and stirring images. When Georges and Anne Laurent keep finding on their doorstep videotapes showing the exterior of their house filmed with a hidden camera, they do not realize that trying to trace the identity of the photographer will lead Georges back to his deeply concealed childhood atrocity and gravely affect their present life. With *Hidden*, Haneke presents a provocative case of Freudian return of the repressed and probes the uncertain grounding and pretentiousness of French national self-importance.

The article attempts an analysis of *Hidden* from two interconnected perspectives, provided by the use of the Lacanian category of the gaze in relation to film studies and by the application of certain categories derived from post-colonial theory (voiced here by Homi Bhabha). The discussion ventures to demonstrate that the camera-eye “hidden” in its impossible position can be interpreted as a gaze imagined by Georges in the field of the Other. The voyeuristic act of filming also suggests the question of colonial surveillance, which relates to the racial issue underlying the conflict repressed by Georges. Haneke investigates the way in which the symbolic power bestowed on the authority of the French state facilitates discrimination. Georges, a model representative of the civil/civilized society, is shown as rent by primal fears of imaginary savage “terror,” desperately trying to fortify his dominion against Algerian aggressors who are otherwise a necessary part of the structure.

ABSTRACT

“Stay seated as the credits roll”—the instructions are spoken off-screen as a television talk-show on literature comes to an end. The words, which will be muted in the editing process, are directed at the participants of the discussion, bidding them remain in their seats during the final shot of the programme. The host of the show is Georges Laurent, the main protagonist of Michael Haneke’s 2005 *Hidden* (*Cache*). However, the line “stay seated as the credits roll” might also be read for an extradiegetic, metacinematic function: the film demands of its audience not to leave the theatre too early, but to carefully watch the very last shots. Robin Woods, analyzing the film in *Artforum International*, seems pessimistic about the director’s chances here, when he observes that “half the audience . . . sensing the imminence of the end credits . . . typically gets up and leaves, missing the film’s ultimate and crucial revelation, registered characteristically in distant long shot.” One might perhaps argue that the “typical” audience of a Hollywood blockbuster is probably not the audience for this Austrian filmmaker.

Haneke deserves his reputation of a highly demanding and motivating director. He has repeatedly scorned Hollywood films for constructing their audience as passive, and emphasizes his own ambition for “active participants” who “make connections [and] solve enigmas [themselves] rather than have them explained” (Wood). As Jonathan Thomas notes, by means of his cinematic research into images governing the collective perception of humans, Haneke “revitalize[s] film spectatorship as a critical and pensive enterprise.” It has been generally observed—both by audiences and critics—that *Hidden*, following a certain Haneke practice of allusion and echo, bears a number of correspondences to Hitchcock, *Rear Window* being perhaps the most natural association, as both films involve the act of spying on others (cf. Yacowar, Woods). However, on the most basic level, Haneke does not finally identify the voyeur and thus “leaves the plot’s mystery unsolved” (Yacowar). On the one hand, it could be rightly assumed that leaving the enigma of the camera-eye unresolved is deftly postmodern, deconstructing the suspense of the whodunit genre. But Haneke’s strategy is not confined to such a local purpose, as I will try to demonstrate. *Hidden* gives us a chance to examine how the Lacanian category of the gaze interacts with the post-colonial problems of post-09/11 Europe.

Hidden does not disappoint those of Haneke’s admirers who value the inexpressible quality of the encounter with the uncanny which his other films provide. This time the eerie begins with the opening take: the tediously prolonged static shot of the exterior of a small urban house proves to be contained in a different reality than viewers might have initially assumed. It does not belong to the objectively seen world of the

film's main diegesis. We are not merely sitting in the cinema and watching Haneke's *Hidden* at this point; we are sharing the visual experience of its two main characters: the footage on the screen is of Georges and Anne's house, recorded on a videotape which someone has left on their doorstep. We watch by their side, as it were, or through them. Soon we register—as the image shifts into high speed search on a VCR¹—that the real status of the scene is not what we have presumed. This is further substantiated by the film soundtrack: the voices off screen turn out to be Georges and Anne commenting on what they have seen on the tape. This, again, has a disquieting effect on the viewer, or, as Thomas ironically puts it, provides “a talking cure to our emergent sensation of spectatorial confusion.”

This recourse to psychoanalytical jargon is very much in place. Haneke himself refers to obvious psychoanalytical roots of his films. In an interview concerning the making of *Hidden* he divulges that it is “the privilege of all artists to be able to sort out . . . their neuroses” through their creative processes (*Face “Caché”*). Doubtlessly, *Hidden* is a film about the repressed trauma which returns to haunt the main protagonist after forty years. It begins in the Hitchcockian manner: Georges and Anne Laurent repeatedly find on their threshold videotapes containing recordings of their house seen from a distance, the recordings made by an unidentified stranger (who, as we finally discover, has no declared identity). The protagonists' family name is hardly haphazard: its choice is a subtle allusion with which Haneke acknowledges the connection to Lynch's *Lost Highway*—Fred Madison and his wife find videotapes with similar content, too, and Fred hears a voice whispering into his intercom “Dick Laurent is dead.” But there are more tapes in *Hidden* and they are more articulate: they launch Georges on the voyage into the murky regions of his self, impelling him to probe the depths he would much rather leave unfathomed.

In this way *Hidden* seems to demonstrate a classical case of a Freudian “return of the repressed.” The scraps of haunting material—disquieting videotapes, foreboding child-made pictures, ghastly nightmares—accumulate to threaten Georges' conscious mind. He follows the clues offered by the tapes and explores a past he has assiduously erased. Obviously, his unconscious mind provides a solution to the enigma, and, obviously, the trauma lies in his childhood: as a little boy Georges deceptively

¹ An obvious cross-reference to Haneke's perhaps most famous metacinematic device: a scene in which one of the villains in *Funny Games*, dissatisfied with the way the plot has developed, uses a remote control to rewind *the very film itself*. In both cases the visual effect of VCR high speed search disrupts the ontological assumptions of the viewer.

eliminated a potential rival to his familial domination by throwing false accusations at Majid, an Algerian boy Georges' parents wanted to adopt after his family had perished in race riots. The repressed guilt finally re-surfaces when he makes a conscious but highly uncomfortable decision to reveal it. The film dramatizes this interrelation clearly in a scene when Georges announces to his friends: "I won't hide it." On the level of the story his words imply he does not want to conceal that he and Anne have been receiving mysterious videotapes. Deeper still, they signify his conscious decision to un-repress the ignominious trauma of the past. The result of the effort is instantaneous: the tape he plays immediately afterwards shows his childhood house, providing the first unambiguous hint for his soul-searching. Nonetheless, Georges is not ready to share the shameful and awkward results of self-exploration, even with his wife: only after his lies are denounced does he finally disclose the full story of Majid to Anne.

In *Hidden* Georges undergoes a self-expository ordeal during which the repressed trauma of childhood guilt re-enters his consciousness. However, it is difficult to unambiguously decide whether this process has a cathartic effect on him. The last time we see him, he comes back home, goes to his bedroom, carefully draws the curtains, undresses, and rests his naked body between the sheets, hiding in the darkness and silence. As he withdraws to his most intimate territory and assumes an embryonic position in this most womblike environment, he recedes into the deepest sleep. Darkness and seclusion prevent Georges from being seen, which lends the scene a symbolic dimension. As Karl Abraham's assertions are reinstated by Homi Bhabha:

The pleasure-value of darkness is a withdrawal in order to know nothing of the external world. Its symbolic meaning, however, is thoroughly ambivalent. Darkness signifies at once both birth and death; it is in all cases a desire to return to the fullness of the mother, a desire for an unbroken and undifferentiated line of vision and origin. (117–18)

Georges seems pervaded with resignation, withdraws and prepares for repose, but it may not necessarily give him relief. He has just comprehended that his inconsiderate childhood misdeed brought a momentous change to somebody's life; in the subsequent scene his mind replays the scene in which Majid is being taken from his parents' house (possibly the most poignant scene in the film). This situation finds theoretical expression in Todd McGowan, a critic using Lacanian categories for film analysis, when he says that "grasp[ing] the hole that exists within the symbolic order . . . traumatizes the subject, depriving the subject of the idea of ever

escaping lack” (203). Georges’ detective work on his past, climaxing in the overly dramatic, theatrical and possibly phantasmatic scene of Majid’s suicide, derails his conventional approach to both morality and reality; he is punctured with self-disillusionment and realizes an elemental lack in the superstructure of his civilized, Western self.

In exploring the Freudian theme of the return of the repressed Haneke effectively resorts to the use of dreams. In interviews the director acknowledges their immense potential, stressing, at the same time, that dreams are very hard to be represented cinematically (*Face “Cache”*).² For Georges, nightmares function as the reinforcement of the disquieting effect of the mysterious videotapes. The dream sequences are short, bleak and of a piercing intensity. They are filmed and edited into the main plot line in a disturbing manner, and provide no intelligible hints about their reference to the main film frame. Only much later do we understand that they show the perspective of the six-year-old Georges and are meant as the projections of his unconscious—picturing the wronged Algerian boy. As Yacowar articulates it, Georges’ “frozen conscience plays the scene[s] like a hidden video camera.”

The question of a *hidden* video camera is the cornerstone of Haneke’s vision. In point of fact, the source of video footage Georges and Anne watch is never revealed in the film. When Georges examines the alley from which their house is seen on the tape, he finds neither camera nor any other clue pointing to the identity of its operator. The scene of the first conversation between Georges and Majid is presented twice: the first time it belongs to the inner frame of the diegesis, filmed “objectively,” with conventional counter-shots of both interlocutors; the second time the frame has slipped and we watch it with Anne and Georges on their TV screen, as the scene filmed from a hidden camera. But both Majid and his son deny planting the camera in the apartment, and a careful examination of the “objective” shots does not reveal the place where it could have been mounted. Woods suggests that either Majid or his son must have known about the videos; this would seem logical, but it neglects Haneke’s metacinematic inclinations. The fact that video material is shot from an impossible perspective suggests its metaphorical dimension. Thomas sharply observes that “the initial camera set-up [is] positioned on the Rue des Iris—an unmistakable reference to the iris (or eye) of the . . . hidden camera that gazes upon [the Laurents’] household” and reasons that “a Lacanian would read the street sign as a reference to the gaze that is out there in the world,

² Haneke mentions Buñuel as one of few filmmakers who have succeeded at this. He is dissatisfied, for instance, with Bergman’s representation of dreams. Curiously, he does not mention Lynch.

unhinged from any particular subject position, looming, taunting . . . and thereby positioning Georges in a paranoid way.”

For Jacques Lacan, the gaze is a part of the subject as being watched, rather than a part of another subject watching it. Elaborating on Sartre’s definition, Lacan states:

As the locus of the relation between me, the annihilating subject, and that which surrounds me, the gaze seems to possess such a privilege that it goes so far as to have me scotomized, I who look, the eye of him who sees me as object. In so far as I am under the gaze, . . . I no longer see the eye that looks at me. . . . The gaze I encounter . . . is, not a seen gaze, but a gaze imagined by me in the field of the Other. (84)

231 Within the context of *Hidden*, the Lacanian category of the gaze appears to bear a significant resemblance to the content of video footage left on the Laurents’ doorstep. After all, Georges cannot “see the eye that looks at him” and imagines this gaze “in the field of the Other.” The camera-eye, placed in an impossible position, could well be apprehended as Georges’ own, and the audiences’, scotomized gaze directed at himself.

McGowan further notes that the “gaze . . . involves the spectator in the filmic image, disrupting the spectator’s ability to remain . . . absent” from cinematic experience (6). This clearly concords with Haneke’s conception of filmmaking, which provides a very active role for the audience. The inter-subjective gaze manifested by *Hidden* convincingly demonstrates the lack in the object: the disintegration of Georges’ symbolic order markedly illustrates it. However, as McGowan divulges, the consequence is momentous:

The nothingness of the object is at once our own nothingness as well. The gaze is nothing but our presence in what we are looking at, but we are nothing but this gaze. We are, that is to say, a distortion in Being. The direct encounter with the gaze exposes us as this distortion and uproots every other form of identity to which we cling. (210)

McGowan points to the critical potential this Lacanian category has to film studies, since in the cinema “the subject remains obscured in the dark while the object appears completely exposed on the screen” (8).

This contrast between the darkness of obscurity and the light of exposure is very effectively employed by Haneke in the last of Georges’ dream sequences: an acutely emphatic scene where the struggling Majid is taken to a car to be driven to an orphanage. The director films this in a long, distant shot, a technique which is one of his trademarks. The merciless camera is unmoved, mechanical, emotionless; the scene painfully

static and interminable. Although Haneke has to use the perspective of the six-year-old Georges, supplementing it with the ostensible detachment and callousness of the camera emphasizes the tragedy of the little Algerian boy. However, the composition of the frame in this sequence evokes other far-reaching associations. Most of the picture, comprising the centre and the top, portrays the bright, sunlit farmyard of Georges' parents' estate. The lower part of the screen, along with both sides, lies in darkness: the eye of the camera watches Majid's tragedy from inside an unlit farm shed. The dark area might be interpreted as the shadow engulfing Georges' mind: the shed has previously witnessed another ghastly scene, repeated in his nightmares—when Majid, beguiled by Georges, decapitates a rooster with an axe, which finally discourages the French family from adopting him. In the black outline of the frame we can still see the axe, a prop necessary for this phantasmal projection. Additionally, the starkness of contrast between blindingly bright centre and obscurely dark margins could connote the splitting of the subject into its conscious and unconscious part. What can be clearly seen centre-stage—Majid's hopeless struggle not to be taken away—is utterly controlled by what has already happened in the dark wings—the killing of the rooster. The brightly lit, colourful part of the screen provides the focus for our attention, but it is encircled by the area of impenetrable obscurity, which displays only some indistinct contours. Finally, if we are tempted to interpret this set of frames in their most basic graphical sense—the striking contrast between white and black—we approach a highly substantial dimension of *Hidden*: the racial dilemma.

To understand the correspondence between the Lacanian category of the gaze and the racial-colonial context we can turn to Homi Bhabha. As the post-colonial critic asserts, “one has to see the *surveillance* of colonial power as functioning in relation to the regime of the scopic drive. That is, the drive that represents the pleasure in ‘seeing,’ which has the look as its object of desire . . . and locates the surveyed object within the ‘imaginary’ relation” (109). Bhabha starts from the most basic Lacan's premise that “to exist is to be called into being in relation to an otherness, its look or locus,” and finds that its logical corollary is that “the very place of identification, caught in the tension of demand and desire, is a space of splitting” in the subject (63). Observing “the alienation of the eye,” he further concludes that “the subject cannot be apprehended without the absence or invisibility that constitutes it . . . so that the subject speaks, and is seen, from where it is *not*” (67), and ventures to interrogate “not simply the image of the person, but the discursive and disciplinary place from which questions of identity are strategically and institutionally posed” (68). This impossible place, where the subject “is not” and from which “questions

of identity are . . . posed” seems to be represented in Haneke’s film by the impossible location of the “hidden” camera. Rue des Iris metaphorically represents “the alienation of the eye,” the “space of splitting,” the estranging and yet defining gaze which is an inescapable dimension of Georges.

The six-year-old Georges is the narcissistic split subject which feels threatened by his colonial other—Majid. He appeals to the archaic stereotype of a “black demon” engraved in his parents, invoking in them the primal fear that the Algerian savage will harm their sweet, innocent child. This echoes the hysterical cry of the white boy from Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*: “Mama, the nigger’s going to eat me up” (qtd. in Bhabha 117). Georges subsequently represses the inconvenient awareness of the inevitable effect of his action which makes the Algerian boy “turn away from himself, his race, in his total identification with the positivity of whiteness which is at once colour and no colour” (Bhabha 109). Racial and cultural stereotypes and prejudices functioning in France ensure that the boy’s rejection also influences his social and financial standing: this is distinctly represented by the stark contrast between the elegant interior of Georges’ house and the plainness of Majid’s apartment.

Nonetheless, after forty years of repression, the racial phantoms have to finally resurface, as Georges proves to be what Bhabha might name the “post-Enlightenment man tethered to . . . his dark reflection, the shadow of colonized man, that splits his presence, distorts his outline . . . disturbs and divides the very time of his being” (62). Suggestively, Georges’ occupation situates him in a special ideological position: he is the host of a television talk-show which discusses literature, and he is thus linked both to the French intellectual elite and the opinion-forming power of the media. We could quite safely assume that his highly ambivalent repressed racial hatred towards the Algerians can be identified with a more general phobia of his own nation. Thomas claims that “the film mounts a critique of what France’s effectively dominant culture has constituted as its selective tradition, specifically insofar as its unresolved historical omissions erupt traumatically in the guise of pathological and even fatal disturbances.” In this manner, the return of the repressed motif relates not only to the main character of *Hidden*, but to the highly civilized post-Enlightenment society he represents.

Haneke portrays the essence of Western racial prejudice with astounding mastery in a crisp, blunt scene. When the Laurents leave a police station (a signifier of symbolic authority itself), Georges carelessly steps out in a street from behind a parked van and is almost hit by a young black man on a bicycle. Georges is furious—the biker was “going the wrong way down a one-way street”—and abuses him verbally, but the

234 black man refuses to take the blame and retorts harshly. The case is seemingly straightforward: the biker *was not* following the highway code, he is responsible for the situation. Yet the conflict can be viewed from another perspective: whereas it is true that the black man is not abiding by the rules, the rules themselves have been established by the white authority. Moreover, the regulation at issue is purely arbitrary: no natural law decides which way we can go down a one-way street, it is merely a matter of accepted convention. Declining to obey the white man's code is for the biker—the colonial—an act of self-righteousness. Regarded in this manner, the scene—which has no immediate connection with the plot of the film—becomes significant as a metaphor of post-colonial relations in France. The figurative dimension of the scene is additionally reinforced by the fact that immediately after the brawl Georges and Anne get into their *white* car. Thus, apart from using colours to accentuate the racial/cultural difference, *Hidden* juxtaposes the car—the signifier of wealth, technology and civilisation, against the bike—corresponding to simplicity and physicality.

The reaction of the black biker to Georges' aggression is also quite meaningful. He responds to the colonizer's invectives with a straightforward suggestion: "Yell at me again. Come on, yell at me again." The provocative irony is so effective precisely because of the centuries-deep inheritance of colonial surveillance and domination, the history of generations of the colonized who were unceasingly repressed and subjected to verbal and physical oppression: yelled at, beaten and unconditionally subjugated. A corresponding situation recurs twice more in the film: when Georges confronts first Majid and then his son. In the former incident, when he desperately urges the Algerian not to stir his conscience with videotapes, his threats stop with an enigmatic "if." Majid concludes the menace for him:

You'll kick my ass? That shouldn't be hard. You're a lot bigger than the last time. Kicking my ass won't leave you any wiser about me. Even if you beat me to death. But you're too refined for that.

Similarly, when Majid's son pays Georges a disquieting visit at his workplace, and he automatically assumes that the boy desires eye-for-an-eye retribution—"What do you want? A fight?"—the colonizer's aggression and demonstration of power is deflected with an ironic display of vulnerability: "You're probably stronger than me. Go ahead, hit me!" But even after all these hints, Georges is not able to learn his lesson: his conscious self is still not ready to accept the role of the oppressor and he dismisses the boy's suggestions as insane ramblings—"You're sick. You're

as sick as your father.” Nonetheless, the message has been dispatched, and Haneke’s audience absorb “the legacy of . . . colonial violence and the bewildering amnesia with which it has been hidden” (Thomas).

Typically, colonial violence is perpetrated by the governmentally authorized institutions of power. When Georges threatens his adversaries with the use of power, he has obviously much more to rely on than his own physical strength. Throughout the conflict with Majid and his son, with the anonymous operator of the video camera, with the impossible gaze watching him, and, ultimately with the ever-increasing feeling of guilt which he tries to cram back into his unconscious, he repetitively invokes to his aid the symbolic authority of the state, predominantly personified by the police. The wrangle with the biker takes place in front of the police station, where the Laurents have just reported the videotape hassle. When their son, Pierrot, stays at his friend’s for the night and they are worried, the police take Majid and his son into custody, locking them, as Georges puts it, “in a cage.” Apparently, the westernized perspective does not allow Georges to recognize the oppressive potential of the symbolic power, even though he acknowledges that Majid’s parents were killed in 1961 in “the police massacre.” The symbolic structure of the French state assures him the patronising position of master. When Majid’s son invades his territory in the TV company offices, Georges remarks in a sarcastic matter-of-fact tone: “you know you’re not allowed in here,” clearly marking the boundaries of his jurisdiction—the Algerian boy is not authorized in the building, but he is also not authorized in France, in the white man’s dominion.

Perhaps one of the most bitter dimensions of irony displayed in Haneke’s film pertains to the question of symbolic authorization bestowed upon the state. Several times in the film Georges complains about his family being “terrorized” with videotapes that encroach on his right to privacy and violate his domestic security. This is particularly devious in the general political context which *Hidden* subtly sketches for its viewer. The word “terror” is signalled a few times from the TV screen visible in the background of the main storyline, from news bulletins covering terror-related events in Iraq and Palestine, flashes from America’s “War On Terror.” Georges, undeniably a creature of TV habit, earnestly picks up the catchy media phrase “campaign of terror” and uses it in his attack on Majid’s family. This prompt usage of the “terrorist” label resonates with Homi Bhabha’s assertion that: “The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction” (101). Still, as Thomas notes, if the video footage raises the issue of surveillance, it becomes strikingly paradoxical at a time when “news of the government tracking and spying on

its citizens in the name of security has become routine in the nominal democracies of Europe and the United States.” In fact, Georges’ stance proves hypocritical: he is happy to renounce his civil rights, provided it will serve the functioning of the civil society which secures his illusory secure position of master. But, as Majid remarks, “What wouldn’t we do not to lose what’s ours?”

The issue of the security of the self is another Haneke preoccupation here; in fact, in *Hidden* protection is often achieved by hiding. Thomas enumerates the barricades separating the Laurents’ abode from the external world: a set of doors, a security gate, a “shrub that doubles both as a domestic barrier and as a signifier of a fortified ego (if not a fortified Europe).” Georges and Anne are quite seriously preoccupied with guarding their privacy and insulating themselves from the exterior: Haneke’s camera often focuses both on “signifiers of fortification” (Thomas) and the meticulous rituals of closing many doors. Precisely for this reason the Laurents are so vexed by the ubiquitous snooping camera-eye, as it blatantly undermines their hard-earned feeling of immunity. Unfortunately, what they overlook is that the camera gaze does not issue from any external subject: it is—like the Lacanian blind spot—an inherent part of Georges, a symbolic resurfacing of his long-repressed racist guilt. The videotapes, the metaphorically palpable dimension of the gaze, materialize exactly on the threshold of their “sanctuary,” the borderline between the outward world and the inward ego.

As *Hidden* relates to the issue of the threat of imaginary “savage terror” directed against an innocently white Europe, it is illuminating to investigate the menace with which the six-year-old Georges frightens his parents off adopting Majid. The diabolical scenario schemed by the envious boy is carved so deeply in his unconscious that it returns to him forty years later and is presented in one of the film’s dream sequences, where the Algerian boy decapitates a rooster. This moment is gory and estranging, but, apart from its direct effect, it has a supplementary impact on the parents’ unconscious: Georges arouses their dormant racial prejudice and fear. The act of beheading a rooster also functions on a symbolical level—Majid cuts off the head of the Gallic rooster, *le coq gaulois*—he is not only a threat to Georges, he is something much graver: the embodiment of the Algerian threat to France.

Returning to the opening paragraph, what happens if we “stay seated as the credits roll”? In the last shot of the film, a long stationary take, we contemplate the front view of Pierrot’s school, an everyday hustle and bustle of young people going to and fro, and for a moment we see (but cannot hear!) a conversation between Pierrot and Majid’s son. It is not clear whether the boys have met before, it is not revealed what they talk

about. Yacowar focuses in this scene on the “absence of children of colour” in front of school; for him, “the shot conveys white privilege. For all France’s passionate intellectual liberalism, the country’s imperialist past persists in the struggles of its huge disadvantaged Arab underclass.” Wood, who chooses to foreground the connection between the boys, would like to see in it “the possibility of collaboration, revolution, and renewal within the younger generation.”

While such interpretations do not exclude one another, we should view them through the prism of a detail that we have seen halfway through the film: among various posters on the walls of Pierrot’s bedroom is a picture of Zinedine Zidane. Zidane is a renowned French football player, the captain of the national team which won the first and only World Cup for France in 1998, a player who scored three goals in the final game in Paris. Curiously, Zidane, possibly the most recognizable icon of French sport at the time, is a son of Algerian immigrants; his parents are Muslim and one of his family members has even played for the Algerian national football team. The apparent paradox is not, in fact, so uncommon; Bhabha might call this a moment “in which the native . . . meets the demand of colonial discourse,” a demand for the Negro which has been spotted by Fanon:

It is recognizably true that the chain of stereotypical signification is curiously mixed and split, polymorphous and perverse. . . . The black is both savage (cannibal) and yet the most obedient and dignified of servants (the bearer of food); he is the embodiment of rampant sexuality and yet innocent as a child; he is mystical, primitive, simple-minded and yet the most worldly and accomplished liar, and manipulator of social forces. In each case what is being dramatized is a separation – *between* races, cultures [and] histories. (118)

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