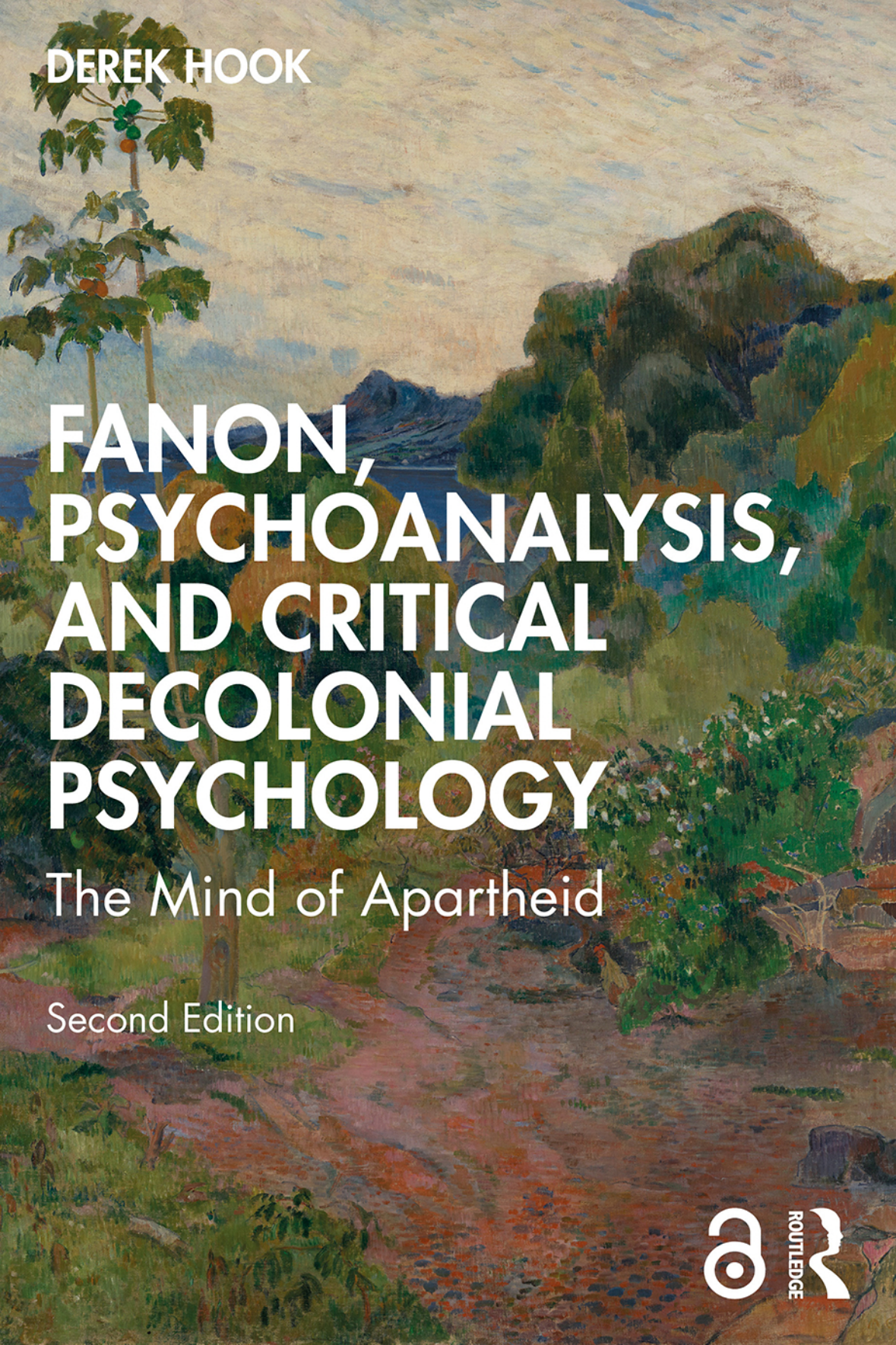
DEREK HOOK
FANON, PSYCHOANALYSIS, AND CRITICAL DECOLONIAL PSYCHOLOGY
The Mind of Apartheid
Second Edition
ROUTLEDGE

'…a powerful articulation of a critical psychoanalytic decolonial theory of racism. *Fanon, Psychoanalysis, and Critical Decolonial Psychology* will be indispensable for students and academics working around issues of race, social psychoanalysis, critical psychology and psychosocial studies.'

– Stephen Frosh

'An innovative and productive account of the role of the sexual, bodily and visceral realms of desire, fantasy and affect underpinning the dynamics of post-colonial racism.'

– Catherine Campbell, *London School of Economics, UK*

'*Fanon, Psychoanalysis, and Critical Decolonial Psychology* is unprecedented in its depth and nuance. It is certain to appeal to anyone interested in critical psychology and social psychoanalysis, and for anyone interested in the psychology of apartheid it is essential reading.'

– Ross Truscott, *University of Leeds, UK*

'There are a few good studies on psychoanalysis and racism, but this is an innovative text that stands alone, defining new lines of research while addressing contemporary social issues, foregrounding Fanon in this timely new edition.'

– Ian Parker, *Honorary Professor of Education, University of Manchester, UK*

'The second edition of Derek Hook's *Fanon, Psychoanalysis, and Critical Decolonial Psychology: The Mind of Apartheid* offers a profound exploration of racialized embodiment and affect through a psychoanalytic lens. This compelling work navigates the ideas of Frantz Fanon, Steve Biko, Slavoj Žižek, and Julia Kristeva, among others, while grounded by a sharp historical sensitivity to the lingering impact of colonial politics in post-apartheid South Africa. Groundbreaking in its theoretical scope and incisive in its historical analysis, this reissue underscores the enduring relevance of psychoanalysis in understanding the complexities of race and coloniality. A timely and essential contribution to critical psychology, postcolonial studies, and contemporary psychoanalysis of the more critical vein more broadly given its current decolonial interests.'

– Ahmad Fuad Rahmat, *Assistant Professor of Media and Digital Cultures, Nottingham University, Malaysia*

FANON, PSYCHOANALYSIS, AND CRITICAL DECOLONIAL PSYCHOLOGY

This groundbreaking book examines the psychological dimension of decolonial thought in reference to foundational texts. Previously published as *A Critical Psychology of the Postcolonial*, this new edition foregrounds the central role of Fanon's psychology.

Highlighting the contributions of anti-colonial authors to the theorization of racism and oppression, the book demonstrates the pertinence of postcolonial and decolonial thought for critical social psychology and psychoanalysis via an investigation of a series of key topics. It explores the psychology of embodiment and racialization, resistance strategies to oppression, "extra-discursive" facets of racism, the phobogenic and sexual dimensions of anti-Blackness, and the roles of desire, fantasy, and unconscious in ideologies of racism. The book makes a distinctive contribution through discussing the work of authors drawn from anti-apartheid, psychoanalytic, and critical social theory traditions, including Steve Biko, J.M. Coetzee, Frantz Fanon, Julia Kristeva, Chabani Manganyi, and Slavoj Žižek. This second edition continues to showcase a crucial set of critical resources for an anti-racist (decolonial) agenda, and is fully updated with new discussion, references, and images, with a new chapter on desire, fantasy, and apartheid ideology to strengthen the book's engagement with apartheid racism.

This is an invaluable text not only for students of critical social psychology, psychoanalysis, and sociology, but for students enrolled in courses on race, racism, or decolonial studies. It will also appeal to postgraduates, academics, and anyone interested in psychoanalysis in relation to societal and political issues.

Derek Hook is professor in the Department of Psychology at Duquesne University, United States, and an extraordinary professor of psychology at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. He is a scholar and a practitioner of psychoanalysis with expertise in the areas of Lacanian psychoanalysis, post-colonial theory (the work of Frantz Fanon in particular), the psychology of racism, and philosophical and theoretical psychology.

[T]here is no no-colonial society…the difference is not between colonial and non-colonial structures, but between different sorts of colonial structures.

(Derrida, 2001)

FANON, PSYCHOANALYSIS, AND CRITICAL DECOLONIAL PSYCHOLOGY

The Mind of Apartheid

Second Edition

Derek Hook

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For Merryn

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FOREWORD

Stephen Frosh

Apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa have provided a historical context for thinking about decolonization. It is a site that links with developments in other parts of the world and has ramifications for academics and activists (some of them the same people) everywhere. If such an apparently entrenched system of racist oppression can be challenged and overturned, then maybe there is hope for other struggles; conversely, if such a massive political upheaval does not root out racist ideologies and practices, then what can, and what is it that sustains this racism in the "new" postcolonial world, a world still in need of further decolonization? The decolonial turn is largely about this, in the sense that it is concerned with the ways in which colonialism forges patterns of social and psychological practice that persist into the postcolonial era, often as hidden chains still binding colonized and colonizers to their pasts. This interest in traces and transmissions is both political and psychological, and it calls upon numerous transdisciplinary encounters. That is, it cannot be pegged to any one discipline (it is not just politics, or history, or sociology, or cultural studies, or psychology), but has to articulate how these disciplinary structures, themselves colonial in origin, might reimagine themselves into productive tension with one another. Put simply, decolonial studies both draw on a range of disciplines to be found in the western university, and subverts them by running each of them up against the lapses and omissions in the others.

Derek Hook's book focuses on racism and on apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa read through the lens of several decolonial theorists, most notably Steve Biko, Frantz Fanon, and Chabani Manganyi. The book also draws on several other important writers – Julia Kristeva, J.M. Coetzee, Jacques Lacan, Stuart Hall, and Slavoj Žižek – who are used powerfully as

sources and foils for the main protagonists. The dynamism of the book lies in an attempt to read resources of decolonial thinking alongside psychoanalysis to forge what Hook calls a "critical decolonial psychology" that reflects the triangularly tense relationship between critical and discursive psychology, decolonial theory, and psychoanalysis. This results in a powerful articulation of a critical psychoanalytic decolonial theorization of racism and/or anti-Blackness that is rooted in an analysis of apartheid but is also of general importance. The device of interrogating psychoanalysis with decolonial ideas and bringing psychoanalytic formulations, ideas, and insights to decolonial agendas often creates tension, supporting Hook's claim that trying to reconcile alternative paradigms is less productive than exploring their essential irreconcilability. This means that the book traces a succession of impossibilities, impasses, and deadlocks. In Hook's own words, there is the impasse represented by the white, apartheid-educated intellectual drawing on Black Consciousness materials that he is almost certain to misrepresent; there is the issue of the "real" of social antagonism whereby there is no "colonial relation" between white and black that is not somehow mediated by fantasy along the lines Fanon puts forward of the problem of double narcissism ("the white man sealed in his whiteness, the black man in his blackness"); and there is the incommensurability of the ego–body conjunction that becomes socially mediated by forms of racism projecting corporeality onto blackness, grandiosely maintaining intellectuality, spirituality and culture as the basis of whiteness.

Hook revolves around these impasses with enormous skill, developing a profound account of how they fix the decolonial terrain as a seemingly impossible place for change, and hence how racism sustains itself. He does not *resolve* them; rather, he shows how the "antagonisms of the real" must be the starting point for analysis. There is no easy way to untie the knots that bind the racialized subject into place, but this book offers a conceptual vocabulary with which to approach the task. Because of this, and also for the clarity and depth of its account of the major thinkers with which it deals, *Fanon, Psychoanalysis, and Critical Decolonial Psychology* will be indispensable for students and academics working around issues of race, apartheid, social psychoanalysis, critical psychology, and psychosocial studies.

PREFACE

When I first published my article "A critical psychology of the postcolonial" in *Theory and Psychology* in 2005, there was little mention of Frantz Fanon within the discipline of psychology, certainly not within the global North. There was likewise little – if any – engagement with postcolonial theory by those in the field. These were two different worlds: Fanon – despite his work as a psychiatrist and the immanently psychological nature of a study like (1952/1986) *Black Skin White Masks* – had been allocated a place within cultural studies, in critical social and/postcolonial theory; psychology, on the other hand, remained unreceptive to a type of theorizing (Fanon's) that cut across disciplinary fields, invented unorthodox concepts, and that foregrounded racism as central *to any psychological theorizing* in colonial contexts. One might lament that not much has changed, certainly within mainstream psychology, where neither Fanon nor the history of anti-colonial thought has secured much of a foothold.

And yet, should we explore carefully enough, there were some significant historical exceptions to what I am asserting. Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan's seminal *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression* (1985) did bring Fanon to a critical examination of psychology, despite remaining a conspicuous outlier in the field. And there were murmurings of Fanon in some psychology departments (in South Africa at least, as part of the anti-apartheid struggle), even if this was decidedly not the norm. Moreover, the overlapping pursuits of critical psychology and psychosocial studies helped highlight the value of a series of theorists and critical frameworks (feminism, psychoanalysis, post-structural theory, Marxism, etc.) that might valuably inform a more politically aware and sociologically pertinent form of psychology. My own interest in developing a "critical psychology of the postcolonial" clearly did not spring from a void.[1]

The omission of Fanon and/or postcolonial theory from psychology should not strike us as particularly surprising. If we consider the nature of postcolonial scholarship – and much of the secondary literature on Fanon – it quickly becomes apparent that the literary, theoretical, and historical orientation of such work is starkly at odds with the more empirical, positivist, and a-historical nature of much mainstream psychology. And so, we might resign ourselves to the fact that we will not happen upon the signifiers "postcolonial" and "Fanon" in any undergraduate psychology textbooks from the Global North anytime soon.

Yet if we shift things somewhat – if we look South rather than North, and if we alter the key term signifying our critical orientation (*de*colonial as opposed to *post*colonial) – we might be surprised at just how much *has* in fact changed. Turning our attention to certain sites within the Global South – South Africa being the area of most familiarity to me, the socio-historical site anchoring the research in this book – we will see that the scholarship engaging Fanon within the broader remit of psychology is gaining in momentum. In South Africa, the signifier "Fanon" *does* feature among the key index terms of textbooks on social and community psychology. Just as colleagues are now insisting that Fanon should be recognized for the role he has played in the history of psychoanalysis and (critical) phenomenology, so, in Southern African contexts, Fanon is increasingly being accorded a position of prominence in the history of the discipline of psychology.

It is true that postcolonial theory remains largely absent from psychology. Yet, if we opt for "decolonial" as opposed to "postcolonial" as our mode of critique and political engagement, we find a renewed urgency and vitality in how anti-colonial and anti-racist agendas are being pursued even within the broader domain of psychology. There is now a wide range of articles and books in psychology – many of which are cited in the chapters that follow – that adopt a clear *decolonial* agenda, often, significantly, with a focus on methodology. While varying theorists and political activists obviously give different definitions and priorities to this key term (to the decolonial), what is important for the time being is that anti-colonial arguments and critiques have now been given a fresh impetus, a new voice (or, more appropriately, new *voices*), new conceptual and political priorities. This is itself exciting – a genuine moment of critical and radical promise – yet what is also significant is that the field of psychology today is far more open both to Fanon's work – as a quick online search of journals in the subdomains of theoretical, social, and community psychology suggests – and to decolonial methodologies and perspectives.

This new receptiveness within the field has played a major part in my wish to update and expand my book *A Critical Psychology of the Postcolonial* – first published in 2012, when the discipline was, as already noted, far less than receptive to Fanon's psychology and associated anti-colonial ideas.

This substantially revised version of *A Critical Psychology of the Postcolonial* – now entitled *Fanon, Psychoanalysis, and Critical Decolonial Psychology* to foreground central the role of *Fanon's psychology* – also includes new content. Not only have I updated the references – by citing and engaging recent scholarship in the field – I have also notably extended the book's first and third chapters ("Fanon, Biko, Black Consciousness" and "Fanon's decolonial psychoanalysis", respectively). In addition, I have added extensive footnotes and additional photographs (many of which celebrate the legacy of Steve Biko). This version of the book also adds a new chapter. Chapter 4 "Desire, fantasy, and apartheid ideology", did not appear in the first edition of the book. I have included it here to strengthen the historical dimension of the book's engagement with apartheid racism and to offer a further elaboration of Fanon's assertion that colonial racism involves the dimensions of desire and fantasy in a very fundamental way. (Incidentally, this book's subtitle – "The mind of apartheid" – stems from J.M. Coetzee's analysis of apartheid ideology, which is the single most important reference in the chapter).

While I have often had cause to highlight how postcolonial and decolonial perspectives have certain shared anti-colonial/anti-racist commitments – despite salient conceptual and scholarly differences – I was persuaded that one chapter included in the first edition of the book ("The stereotype, colonial discourse, fetishism and racism") could be omitted from the current edition. This chapter, while very much an exemplification of postcolonial scholarship (it involved a detailed exposition of the work of Homi Bhabha), did not, upon reflection, lend itself as well as other revised chapters to current trends in decolonial thinking and to the context of apartheid anti-Blackness.

While I am sympathetic to claims that elements within the history of postcolonial scholarship tend toward abstruseness, to hyper-intellectualism at the cost of practical decolonial political involvement, indeed, to a preoccupation with textuality, there is also a sense in which *Fanon, Psychoanalysis, and Critical Decolonial Psychology* connects themes and concerns of postcolonial scholarship to those within the emerging decolonial tradition. How so? Well, whereas postcolonial studies tended to utilize a post-structural focus on texts, discourse, and discursive practices and to do so to the end of developing theory, decolonial work is more concerned with how colonial conditions impact various aspects of *being*, with the present materialities of such conditions, and how they might be concretely addressed in the present (hence the frequent methodological focus of such approaches). In a sense, *Fanon, Psychoanalysis, and Critical Decolonial Psychology* traces a move from the former to the latter; it progresses from postcolonial questions about racist/colonial discourses to a relatively more decolonial attention to the "extra-discursive" aspect of racism in its embodied, visceral, and experiential forms. This book bridges, in other words, a postcolonial focus on the epistemic

conditions of the colony with a decolonial prioritization of how much material forces impact various experiential facets of being.

The way I take up these general thematic concerns – and do so from a historical starting points in critical psychology, apartheid South Africa, and Black Consciousness thought – might, of course, differ from how other scholars portray postcolonial and decolonial orientations. Ultimately, this book is more than anything an attempt to develop a Fanonian psychology, by highlighting key themes in his work – most particularly his analysis of racism in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Fanon remains one of the unquestionable common denominators joining postcolonial and decolonial approaches, and each of the chapters in this book takes form around a topic intimately connected to his psychological and psychoanalytic analyses of the colonial situation.

Note

1 I want to acknowledge the influence of several South African Psychology colleagues in this respect: all my co-researchers in the Apartheid Archive Project, but also: Anthony Collins, Norman Duncan, Peace Kiguwa, Leswin Laubscher, Nicholas Malherbe, Desmond Painter, Kopano Ratele, Puleng Segalo, Garth Stevens, and Martin Terre Blanche.

INTRODUCTION

What can psychology learn from Frantz Fanon?

"The ultimate racism in the world"

South Africa's regime of apartheid (1948–1994) is, arguably, the most-egregious site of institutionalized white supremacy still available to living memory. Yet while the term "apartheid" is frequently invoked – synonymous as it is, today, with segregation as such – the pervasiveness and scale of South Africa's legalized system of racial oppression is sometimes forgotten – or under-estimated – as this traumatic historical era recedes into the past. Given Jacques Derrida's (1985) characterization of apartheid as "the ultimate racism in the world" (p. 291) and historian Saul Dubow's (2014) assertion that "Nowhere else in the post-war world was racial rule justified and entrenched with such systematic thoroughness" (p. 293), we can conclude that this sobering history still has much to teach us. There is much to be learned, for a decolonizing agenda, from apartheid, particularly for those interested in the psychical dimensions of colonial racism and anti-Blackness.[1] An indication of the extensiveness of the structural apparatus of apartheid can be found in the description offered by one of apartheid's most ardent critics, the journalist Benjamin Pogrund. Describing the multiple ramifications of apartheid's Population Registration Act of 1950, Pogrund observes that

> every South African was put into a defined racial pigeonhole. Each person was given an identity number…[designating] a racial classification. [This classification was] intended to, and did, affect life from birth to death, with every detail specified and fixed by law: in which hospital you could be born; in which suburb you could live; which house you could buy; which nursery school and school you could attend and which university or

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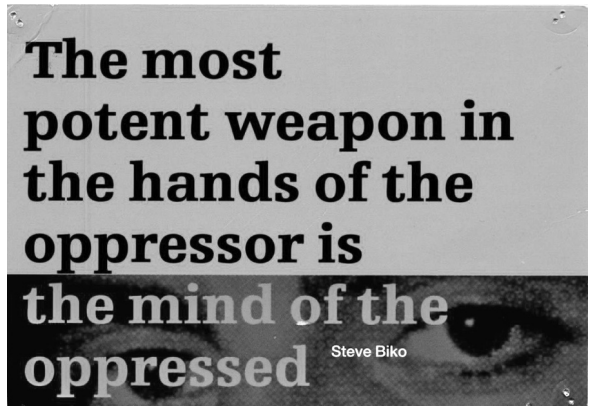

FIGURE 0.1 Postcard image of Steve Biko quote.

> technical college;…which buses, train compartments and taxis you could travel in; which bus stops, railways pedestrian bridges and platforms you could use…which park bench you could sit on;…which jobs you could hold and how much you could earn;….who you could legally have sex with and who you could marry; how easily you could get a passport for travel abroad; how much your old age pension, disability or war veteran's pension would be;…whether you could vote; which hospital you could go to if you fell ill and which doctors and nurses would attend to you;…and in which graveyard you would be buried.
>
> *(Pogrund, 1990, p. 79)*

Reading Pogrund's description, one cannot but ask: how might we account for this encompassing system that sought to saturate all dimensions of sociality from birth to death? How might we understand this "ultimate racism", whose ambition was to implement a kind of "segregation of the soul" that would impact not only all aspects of psychical and relational life (where one might attend school, whom one might have sex with, where one might be buried, etc.), but that constantly enacted categorical and *moral* attributions of superiority and inferiority on a fundamentally racial basis? What psychical mechanisms held this obsessional and dehumanizing system in place for so long? In respect of apartheid's white beneficiaries, we must ask: what, in addition to the obvious material, socio-economic, and symbolic privileges, were the libidinal gains, the unconscious rewards, that sustained their investment in such an obviously iniquitous system? Furthermore – turning our attention to the struggle against the apartheid regime – what psychological resources, what *modes of consciousness*, would inspirational figures like Black Consciousness Movement leader Steve Biko draw upon to articulate forms of resistance to a racist *weltanschauung* (worldview) that had conditioned all aspects of social and historical existence?[2]

Despite the particularity of apartheid, its unique position among other comparable systems of racism – such as the Jim Crow racism of the American South, the anti-Blackness of other colonial regimes – these questions have a global resonance. As Achille Mbembe and Deborah Posel argue:

> South Africa's political history [has been] … inextricably linked to global developments. The struggle against apartheid was always a global struggle, closely associated with the revolutionary ambitions and aspirations of the left all over the world. Apartheid … became a symbol of global oppression, as much as the liberation struggle became an affirmation of the courage to resist and the dream of a world beyond race.
>
> *(2005, p. 283)*

And it is true: the struggle against apartheid was representative of a broader international fight against white supremacy, one whose urgency extends into the post-apartheid or "un-decolonized" present. As the very notion of Black *Consciousness* suggests, this struggle is *psycho-political* in nature; it is not only the structures of racism that we need to attend, but the impact those structures have on conscious – and unconscious – experience. To paraphrase Frantz Fanon (1952/1986), the problem of apartheid includes not only the *objective historical conditions* but also *human attitudes* toward these conditions. So, while Pogrund's description is certainly sociologically informative, any account of the legislated forms of racism requires that we attend also to how such institutional or governmental forms condition subjective experience, how they take root within the interior life (the identities, desires, fears, bodily sensibilities, etc.) of those falling within its milieu. If we are to adequately engage the psychical dimensions of "the mind of apartheid" – the objective of this book – then Pogrund's account needs to be supplemented, perhaps discomfortingly so, by the granularity of individual experiences of apartheid racism, even by "internal" accounts of those responsible for the perpetuation of that racism. To this end, let me cite two narrative accounts of apartheid racism that were submitted to the Apartheid Archive Project (https://www.communityidentity.com.au/portfolio/the-apartheid-archives-project/), a cross-disciplinary research project that aimed to retrieve and amass a collection of just such quotidian accounts:

> *School … was for me, the epicentre of … my own experience of apartheid racism … [I recall how] blackness was tirelessly re-evoked in a setting where there were no black pupils … The fascination with … blackness was often evoked in bodily kinds of ways, in the repetitive games and gestures of adolescents. Certain facial expressions, affected accents, ways of talking, referring to others, played out this denigrated blackness … So, to mock a fellow student you repeated his words more slowly, in an affected "African" kind of voice, to make him sound…stupid. That was enough – a caricatured black voice speaking in English… There were also facial improvisations....*

flattening one's nose, spreading one's lips… sufficed to mimic blackness. By doing this at the same time as mocking a fellow student – sometimes, oddly enough, affectionately (?), one would again set up the association of them as somehow black. … [T]he oddity of the situation was that there were no black pupils, and very few black people present at the school. … Why then the repetitive ongoing need to invoke blackness …? ... [B]lack men were somehow more hardy: thicker skulls, tougher bodies, more robust … impervious to physical damage … [I have] fragmentary memories of seeing black men in damaged states (stabbed in one instance, hit by a car in another), whereby they seemed to endure despite the attack – almost as if the … assumption was that they were "more body" … stronger … I think the assumption … was that there is less psychological damage experienced by way of the injury … [There was an] inability to identify with the black suffering body.

(Apartheid Archive Project, N53)

A black man in blue overalls … walk[ed] towards me as I left [the store]… [This] was just across the road from a public toilet… a black man's toilet, built of sand-coloured brick, an intimidating…building where I never saw any whites go. The toilet was opposite a [liquor] store, which, in later years, I would frequent … Black men would buy milk stout beer there… a more traditional form of beer…. It looked toxic… I would never drink that…

This … "African toilet", which always smelled bad…. was [an] area that somehow existed below (but within) the… white suburb. … The bus that dropped me home from school stopped … a little way away … I always wondered what it looked like on the inside of those brick walls … this was a black man's place. I was frightened, a little disturbed … always too young … not man enough (not black man enough?) to go in there.

There was also an open-air barber nearby: a black man with a generator, playing township music on a radio … alongside the buzzing of his clippers …The question that sometimes presented itself … was whether I would ever get my hair cut … at a place like this; whether it would even be possible, whether these were different clippers for different hair… or that this was ridiculous because such unhygienic conditions – dirty clippers, unclean scissors … There were often bits of black hair scattered around this … dusty section of ground that I crossed between my bus-stop and home. These little…bits…bodily scraps…seemed always so different to my own.

He came towards me, heading into the cafe, in his blue overall. This was always a bit of an anxious moment, where one needed to obey the right rules of disinterest, to maintain a measured distance. The right balance to strike was this: to exude a limited apathy but to veer short of antipathy, to keep the rules of distance and superiority in place without offering anything by way of confrontation. … I only realized afterwards what had happened. He had moved his hand awkwardly, putting something away, obscuring something. His overalls had been open all the way down to the

waist, open too low, and he had tucked himself back in…. [W]hen you saw a black man's, a black woman's hands, the less dark side, their palms, their fingernails, there bodily difference was minimal. The lightened areas, fingernails, that zone of the body closest to pink, to pale, those places could have been the… possibility…that ("they"), black people, seemed similar – similar but different too, no doubt – that… was a kind of reassuring… That those parts of the body were more absent than present became the proof of difference. As a boy at school said … a Jewish boy who loved movies … "If you look carefully you'll see, Whoopi Goldberg's gums are black".

(Apartheid Archive Project, N59)

Fanonian dilemmas

The above extracts contain, in condensed form, many of the research challenges underlying the project of this book. They speak forcefully of the anxious bodily and sexual imaginaries of white racism; unspoken and typically unacknowledged facets of white apartheid sensibility are here explicitly narrated. Perhaps more strikingly yet: the prurient quality of white preoccupations with Blackness as an object of fascination is very clearly apparent. Conceptualizing these various facets of the mind of apartheid is a task that no single psychological theory is likely to achieve – hence the multiple theoretical perspectives gathered in this book. Nonetheless, several themes clearly deserve comment.

There is, firstly, the prominence of the body. I mean here more than just a bodily fascination with the physicality of the other as embodying markers, "proofs" of difference. I refer also here to the violent and sexual imaginings of Black bodies, bodily fantasies that need in turn to be connected to the phenomenological factor so emphasized by Fanon (1952/1986), namely that of *racializing embodiment* itself. We are concerned thus not only with anxious experiences of subjects of privilege, that is, with "physicality" of racialized fear that manifests in the abrupt visceral reactions to certain others, but with the shattering and dislocating experience of being fixed as *an object of racism*. Why is it, we might ask, that the body never "falls out" of racism, that, however advanced its (modern, symbolic, cultural) forms, racism never fails to return to, or resume a relation with, the body?

Two unexpected themes follow on from this fixation with the body of the other in the colonial field. I have in mind here – once again following Fanon (1952/1986) - the themes, or psychical operations, of identification and desire. In respect of the former, the above narratives exemplify an interest in what it would be like to be in the position of the other (to be inside the "Africantoilet"; to drink that beer; having one's hair cut with those clippers, etc.). Now, while many of these prospective identifications are held at bay by a sequence of border-anxieties (involving, not atypically for apartheid, themes of the unsanitary, the unhygienic, and so on, along with troubling bodily-boundaries related to ingestion, proximity, intimacy), this speculative interest is surely more than

a conscious racist mindset would admit to. Also apparent is the facet of bodily mimicking, the performative enactment of racist stereotypes – indeed, in the first extract, a continual conjuring up of "Blackness" in disparagements aimed at classmates – which in each instance indexes a preoccupation with what needs to be identified *against*. What the above extracts make perfectly clear is that there is considerable imaginative investment deployed in the making of others, a *fantasmatic* construction of others, which of course is also a a part of the construction of the subject's white self. Or, to cite Riggs (2005) paraphrasing Fanon: we are concerned not merely with how the white man constructs the Black man, but with how the white man constructs *the white man* through his construction of the Black man. If racism is, in part, a project of identification, it is clearly not an uncomplicated one, for it is marked by the concurrence of relations of curiosity, familiarity, even affection (that is, disguised modes of desire), alongside modes of denigration, objectification, and abjection.

How then to approach the relation between racism as a type of dehumanization – of a radical and often brutal sort – and the role it plays in substantiating, and consolidating identity? More challenging yet perhaps, what to make of the currents of desire and sexuality existing alongside casual, everyday indictments of racial difference? A notable feature of the second narrative concerns exactly this co-concurrence: disgust and desire exist in conjunction. A fixation with the sensual intensities, the particularized masculine enjoyment of Black men is here inseparable from repugnance. A host of further questions arise at this point: how to understand the modes of fascination, allure, and attraction that so often seemed concealed within racism; how to broach the topic of the libidinal potency of racism-as-repulsion without consigning racism to the merely psychological; how furthermore, might desire, in its less than conscious modalities, prove such a potent force in propelling racist invective and passions?

The psycho-political

Suffice to say, when I was initially confronted with these questions, during the period leading up to the production of the first version of this book (*A Critical Psychology of the Postcolonial*, published in 2012), they seemed far beyond the explanatory range of my training as a student of critical social psychology and discourse analysis. Nonetheless, these topics appeared to necessitate a psychological (or psychosocial) type of critique, an analysis, that is to say, not only of societal and structural conditions, but of the psychical formations that made this form of racism so tenacious and adaptive. A door was opened by Ronald Judy's (1996) remark that "*Peau noire, masques blancs* [Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks*] appears to be comparable to a social psychology of racism" (p. 55). Fanon's thought, more than any other collection of ideas and modes of analysis – and, more particularly, his

combinations of psychoanalytic, existential, phenomenological, psychiatric and literary resources – offered a mode of response to the above challenges of conceptualization, one that connected back to the discipline of psychology.

While the questions posed above are perhaps beyond the remit of mainstream (or "disciplinary orthodox") psychology, they will not be unfamiliar to all readers. Echoes of existing ideas and approaches will be recognizable to those schooled in psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic social theory, to those who have engaged in postcolonial theory, or, more recently, to students of decolonial literature and practices. However, none of these perspectives on their own arguably does conceptual justice to the difficult intersection of research concerns expressed above. Such trajectories of analysis – psychoanalytic and postcolonial and/or decolonial – could be said, on their own, to be inadequate to the task of offering effective forms of psycho-political analysis, that is, in fully engaging *the psychic life of colonial power*. In view of psychoanalysis, we are compelled to ask: how are we to grasp the quite evident psychological components of racism, the psychical complexity and obduracy of such phenomena, without falling prey to psychological reductionism, to the longstanding reticence of psychoanalysis to engage the political? How, to cite Paul Gilroy (2005), might we avoid the problem of looking always inward, focusing on "the depths of individual psychology rather than … social, cultural and historical patterns" treating racism thus "as a pre- or post-political phenomenon" (p. 291)?

This is a tension – indeed, a question – that this book grapples with: how might we utilize, learn from, and, ultimately *enable* critique by means of ostensibly psychological types of analysis without bracketing the political aspect of what is being examined? The book's various chapters offer different responses to this challenge. There is the prospect of a "vernacular" use of the psychological, discussed in Chapter 1, which refashions broadly psychological ideas so as to make them suitable vehicles of a Black Consciousness resistance to white supremacy. Chapter 2 attempts to contextualize a psychical/psychoanalytic mode of explanation – the idea of racism as abjection – by linking the register of the psychical to the registers of the bodily and the symbolic (the symbolic, more specifically, as grounded in a distinctive socio-historical location of power). More overtly yet, Chapter 3 highlights Fanon's imperative to involve a sociogenic dimension of analysis alongside existing ontogenetic psychological approaches that have historically, as in Freud's work, prioritized a focus on the details of individual subjectivity. The argument is made there, once again via Fanon, that we need always to think the subjective and inter-subjective in relation to the "third term" of the prevailing ideological and discursive symbolic norms, values, and identities of the colonial situation (i.e. with regard to the socio-political colonial order). This is a consequence of an overarching Fanonian imperative I advance in this book: designating our real focus of concern less as "the psychological" (narrowly defined) than the *psycho-political*.

From postcolonial to decolonial critique

What though of the limitations of postcolonial and decolonial approaches to the psychic life of colonial power? Before responding to this, it seems important to distinguish between these two terms in relation to psychology, a task that my colleague Sunil Bhatia can help us with. Bhatia (2017) begins by noting that despite differences in their respective intellectual genealogies and areas of focus (postcolonial studies being more concerned with colonization implemented by the British Empire, decolonial approaches being more concerned, for the most part, with colonial effects in the Americas) both such projects share the goals of social justice and social transformation. He goes on to observe the following:

> In the "decolonial turn," coloniality, along with systems of capitalism and particular forms of domination, emerges out of the "discovery" and the conquest of the Americas… Coloniality [here] does not merely refer to the colonization of indigenous culture[s]…[but] to a whole system of thought – a mentality and a power structure that constructs…[a] Eurocentered matrix of knowledge [Mignolo's (2010) phrase]. The "decolonial turn" does not reflect a single theory but… includes a family of scattered positions… Coloniality is seen as a product of European modernity and reinforced through racial hierarchies, gender oppression, and oppressive forms of labor, and it also shapes the current processes of globalization… Decolonization involves understanding the concrete experiences, stories, and narratives of people who confront poverty, racism, and gender discrimination… What is now known as the decolonial project is also inspired by the decolonizing struggles of leaders such as Waman Puma de Ayala, Ottabah Cugoano, Gandhi, Cesaire, Fanon, W. E. B. Dubois, and Anzaldua.
>
> *(Bhatia, 2017, pp. 7–8)*

As is perhaps already evident, it is the fifth of these figures, Frantz Fanon, who serves as the most significant and inspiring figure for the approach to decolonization developed in the pages that follow: his work provides the grounding conceptual coordinates for the various analysis developed here. Back though to Bhatia's commentary: I am thankful that he highlights the overlap between these (postcolonial/decolonial) domains of scholarship, emphasizing, as he does, the necessity of overturning the power structures, constructs, and knowledge systems resulting from multiple eras of coloniality. I say this because these areas of investigation and critique are sometimes portrayed as necessarily antithetical to one another. It seems worthwhile that scholars and activists may draw upon the resources of both, even if it is the case that the literary, textual and "high theory" (post-structural/psychoanalytic) concerns of the most prominent postcolonialists exist at something of a remove from the

typically more direct links espoused in decolonial projects between political action and anti-colonial thinking (see for example Maldonado-Torres, 2016). Part of what has been so invigorating and so necessary about the recent "decolonial turn" is the extent to which "being" has been foregrounded as a key problematic[3] *in addition to* the postcolonial concern with the epistemic/discursive/textual conditions of coloniality, which remains, I think, a crucial domain of conceptualization.[4] This was a large part of the reason that I opted to revise *A Critical Psychology of the Postcolonial* – to highlight the decolonialelements already inherent to the conceptual perspectives explored in the first iteration of this book. In fact, this shift in critical emphasis proved particularly apposite regarding my concerns with apartheid anti-Blackness, which, as I have suggested above, was so structurally pervasive and permeating in its influence that it not only constituted a kind of "pseudo-ontology" (a *weltanschauung*) but also seeped into virtually facets of self, social, inter-personal, and bodily experience – as the Apartheid Archive narratives extracted above demonstrate.[5] In this respect, *Fanon, Psychoanalysis, and Critical Decolonial Psychology* can be said to connect postcolonial and decolonial concerns, moving as it does from questions about racist/colonial discourses to questions of the "extra-discursive" aspect of racism in its embodied, visceral, and experiential forms. It bridges, in other words, a postcolonial focus on the epistemic conditions of the colony with a decolonial prioritization of the materialities of such conditions.

The neglected psychological dimension

While more, of course, can be said about the distinction between the domains of postcolonial and decolonial scholarship, it is worth noting – to return to the issue of the conceptual limitations of postcolonial and decolonial approaches – that, historically, postcolonial theory, like many of the key texts on Fanon, have tended to marginalize the psychological. If we harken back to the heyday of postcolonial theory, and to the literary, sociological, or cultural studies extensions of this scholarship, we find very little by way of focused engagement with the psychological, psychiatric, or clinical dimensions of Fanon's work. While the situation has changed over the last few years[6] the fact that it has taken the field of Fanon Studies this long to focalize the psychological/clinical aspects of the Martinican psychiatrist's work begs the question of why it has been hitherto neglected.[7] Fanon's texts such as *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952/1986) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961/1990) are thoroughly interspersed with psychological and psychoanalytic terminology, yet as Bulhan (1985) laments, many of the political scientists, historians or sociologists who have written on Fanon "deliberately de-emphasized his psychological contributions … [some] went so far as to regret the psychological component of his sociopolitical analyses" (p. 7). We might refer here to Sekyi-Otu's (1996) *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience*, an

important text that prioritizes the notion of political experience yet that nonetheless dismisses from the outset the value of psychological and psychoanalytic forms analysis. As the author himself notes: "[My] focus on the political [might be regarded]…as a serious neglect of what was, after all, the object of Fanon's professional work – clinical psychology and a psychoanalytically informed study and treatment of psychopathology" (p. 5).

Decolonial scholarship, on the other hand, has, with some standout recent exceptions (Beshara, 2019; Gaztambide, 2024; Guerra & Lima, 2021; Rahmat, 2025), tended to reject more psychoanalytically informed types of psychological analysis. This, of course, is not without reason. Psychoanalysis, like psychology itself, has, historically, tended to exert a de-historicizing influence on its objects of study, and to implement a strongly individualizing (as opposed to Fanon's preferred *sociogenic*) focus when approaching topics like racism. And like psychology, psychoanalysis has been complicit in extending Eurocentric knowledge systems, in racism (Richards, 2011) and in coloniality itself (Brickman, 2017; Frosh, 2013; Truscott, 2020). Just as Bhatia observes that "coloniality is deeply embedded in contemporary psychological science" (2017, p. 8), so we can remark that coloniality is likewise embedded in the history of psychoanalysis. While this embeddedness necessitates a critical approach to both psychoanalysis and psychology within the remit of a developing decolonial psychology (as I argue in Chapter 1), it is surely not reason enough to jettison critical – and Fanonian – uses of psychoanalytical and/or clinical modes of analysis and engagement? A distrust toward one-to-one clinical psychological engagements, and perhaps more overtly, toward psychoanalytic modes of conceptualization and treatment remains, in my experience, apparent in many decolonial approaches. This is lamentable, given that both featured so prominently in Fanon's own anti-colonial ambitions. One is tempted here to cite Fanon's insistence on a type of "combined action" in response to racism. If, says Fanon 1952/1986), the Black man or woman experiences difficulties because of their color, there is a clear need to "act in the direction of a change in the social structure", yet he adds, crucially, that "[a]s a psychoanalyst, I should help my patient to become conscious of his unconscious and abandon…[their] attempts at hallucinatory whitening" (p. 74).

It is not only, of course, that Fanonians have remained mistrustful of psychological and psychoanalytic discourses. We need here only invoke positivist psychology's long-standing aversion to critical and cultural theory, to confront the assumption that Fanon's ideas – like those of associated Black Consciousness intellectuals – are simply, as a senior colleague once told me, "Not psychology". Psychology has thus hardly embraced Fanonian perspectives, certainly not in so-called "First World" contexts, despite that such ideas have immediate pertinence and application for many in the global South.[8] And so, due to multiple forms of epistemic partitioning (the historical exclusion of

Fanon from psychology, the sidelining of Fanon's clinical work from postcolonial scholarship, the relative avoidance of Fanon's psychoanalytic conceptualization in much decolonial scholarship, etc.), the respective areas of Fanon's anti-colonial writings and the discipline of psychology remain still at a considerable distance from one another. If we were to imagine a Venn diagram plotting the relations between the discipline of psychology, Fanon's own explicitly psychological/psychoanalytic conceptualizations, and postcolonial/decolonial thought, we would, presumably, be presented with a very modest area of intersection. And yet, diminutive as this area might be – at least upon first glance – we will discover, as soon as we zoom in, that it is both conceptually rich and full of critical promise.

Anti-apartheid decolonialism and the promise of a sociogenic psychology

Fanon, Psychoanalysis, and Critical Decolonial Psychology aims to explore this area of intersection, by treating the work of a variety of anti-colonial/anti-apartheid authors – among them Steve Biko, J.M. Coetzee, Chabani Manganyi, and of course Frantz Fanon himself – as serious contributions to the *psychological* theorization of anti-Black racism. This enables us to highlight the distinctive contribution the current book makes to the ever-growing literature on decolonization: it draws upon and applies historical resources from the anti-apartheid struggle – among them Biko's Black Consciousness thinking, Coetzee's critique of apartheid ideology, and Manganyi's analysis of racializing embodiment – to the agendas of decolonization. One of the key objectives of the book is to demonstrate the pertinence of the above forms of anti-apartheid critique and thereby to contribute – hopefully in a unique way – to a growing critical decolonial impetus within the theorizations and practices of contemporary psychology and psychoanalysis alike. This impetus – a particularly vibrant variation of which stems from critical psychology in South Africa[9] – provides a means whereby we might reintroduce radical forms of critique into the various (social, political, community, clinical, psychoanalytic, etc.) subdomains of disciplinary psychology. This argument can be made more strongly yet: unless psychologists engage with and develop these ideas, they risk leaving unchecked precisely the pernicious facets of anti-Blackness that the above anti-apartheid writings aimed to identify and eradicate.

Given how frequently I refer to the "psychological", I should offer a few qualifying remarks on how I utilize this term in this book. This is especially important in light of the fact that any Fanonian reference to psychology is likely to depart from many of the in-built but unstated assumptions that typically accompany the term when it is used in natural science (i.e. positivist, empirical, experimental, etc.) orientations to the discipline.[10] The

psychological, as invoked here, should be viewed as a departure from the depoliticizing, de-historicizing forms that so often take precedence in US- or Euro-centric locations; as necessarily societal and sociological; as concerned with power, discourse, social and symbolic structures, and historical location; as sociogenic in its orientation; and as a materialist, "worldly" or vernacular psychology that also operates as a prospective means of critical social analysis. The approach adopted here, furthermore, stands in contrast to approaches which ignore the *psychical dimensions* of human experience (that bypass the role of desire, fantasy, libidinal investments, and the unconscious, etc.). It also differentiates itself from perspectives that neglect the bodily or corporeal aspects of subjectivity, that elide the phenomenological sensibility that comes with the realization that subjectivity is always in part a function of *bodily being*. All of these qualifications of the "psychological" can be found within Fanon's approach in *Black Skin White Masks*. The materialities of colonial racism, as Fanon demonstrates in his concept of epidermalization (discussed in Chapter 3), get "under the skin" and thereby exert their influence at the level of embodied experience just as they find their ways into the unconscious dimensions of our sexual desires and identifications. This psycho-political reconceptualization of the psychology is crucial because, as Robcis (2020) stresses in her discussion of Fanon's work, "The confiscation of freedom and alienation brought about by colonialism and by racism were always simultaneously political and psychic…the political and the psychic are intimately linked" (p. 49).

While it is apparent then that the Fanonian approach to the psychological adopted here strikes a critical distance from many of the presumptions of the discipline as it is taught and practiced globally today as a positivist natural science – or in its US psychology textbook instantiations – my aim is still to make a contribution to the broader field. This book is in many ways a dialogue with the historical traditions of critical social psychology and discourse analysis. In the case of the latter, the dialogue is explicit, as will be seen in Chapters 2 and 3 where I tackle the issues of "extra-discursive" racism and of how best to combine psychoanalytic and discourse analysis approaches. In many ways, the book is structured around key topics in the history of a broadly formulated social or political psychology, areas to which Fanonian and psychoanalytic perspectives can make vital contributions. This much is evident in a listing of the book's chapters, which address such topics as: resistance psychology; "aversive racism"; the psychology of dehumanization; the unconscious modalities of racism; the tenacity and hold of ideological systems; and questions of racializing embodiment.

Chapter 1, titled "Fanon, Biko, Black Consciousness: Resources for critical decolonial psychology" situates the book. It maps the historical terrain ofcritical psychology and argues for the importance of the Fanon's psycho-political register of critique. I present an extended discussion of the Black Consciousness

Movement in apartheid South Africa to demonstrate the value of a form of vernacular psychology for anti-racist political action. Black Consciousness thought, like that of Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, utilizes the idiom of the psychological as a strategic mode of decolonial engagement. The chapter argues that a critical psychology that is limited either to the critique of psychology itself, or, methodologically, to the tools of discourse analysis, remains unable to grapple with the psychical dimensions of colonial racism.

"Abjection as a political factor", Chapter 2 of the book, is concerned with the "extra-discursive" dimension of racism, with racism as it manifests at a bodily level, as an "operation of repulsion". Such a bodily focus directs us to the "sensuality" of racism that Fanon (1952/1986) understood all too well: the racism of fearful bodies, anxieties of racial proximity, the physicality of racializing fear that manifests in the racist's "psycho-visceral" reactions to the other. My agenda in developing such a conceptualization of racism is to make the case that discourse analytic approaches – analytical perspectives that prioritize the reproduction of text and talk, of meaning and symbolization – are not adequate to the task of apprehending racism in its ostensibly "extra-discursive" bodily and libidinal dimensions. So, while I share Fanon's concern with the apparent omnipresence of the bodily in racism, I extend his focus on the bodily phenomenology of those subjected to racism by exploring racism as a mode of reactivity that comes to be routed through the dreads and aversions of the body. Crucially, however, such a bodily logic is never simply "natural" or "instinctual" (even if it might be experienced as such); it is, by contrast, always sociogenic, grounded in a particular socio-historical and symbolic context. We must not, as such, make the mistake of isolating racializing/racist bodily phenomenologies from the colonial conditions that give rise to them.

Chapter 3 outlines a decolonial form of psychoanalysis grounded in Fanon's work (particularly his *Black Skin, White Masks*). The first section of the chapter makes a case for the decolonial significance of psychoanalysis by addressing some longstanding critiques of psychoanalytic approaches to racism. The second section explores Fanon's account of the sexual/libidinal components of anti-Blackness. One concern that runs throughout thechapter – which accords with Fanon's insistence that psychoanalysis needs to be altered when applied to colonial contexts – is how we might utilize psychoanalysis sociogenically, in a way that does not reduce colonial social structures to intra/inter-psychical dynamics. I offer two responses to this question. The first is to highlight the value of several linked psychoanalytic conceptualizations – the symbolic order, the trans-individual unconscious, and the symbolic ("big") Other – which enable us to conceptualize a "sociogenic unconscious". The second is the notion of libidinal economy, which I understand in a Fanonian manner, as referring to sociogenic frameworks of fantasy and their corresponding distributions of affect/libido. The notion of the libidinal economy provides a conceptual framework through which to view Fanon's pathbreaking

conceptualizations of both the *affective/libidinal intensity* of racism – so aptly captured in his notion of negrophobia – and its historical/symbolic forms – as described in his idea of the European Collective Unconscious.

Chapter 4, "Desire and apartheid ideology" examines a seminal (1991) text by the South African novelist and literary critic, J.M. Coetzee. Coetzee reflects on the inadequacies of existing theories when it comes to conceptualizing both the longevity and the *madness* of apartheid ideology. Two questions particularly vex Coetzee. Firstly, where should we seek to locate agency in respect of apartheid ideology, primarily on the side of the subject or primarily on the side of structure? Secondly, if the answer to this question is less than clear-cut, if, indeed, we need to appeal both to subject and structure by way of response, then how are we to understand the *relation between* these two factors in the workings of apartheid ideology? These questions beg a two-tiered response, and as a result, this chapter is composed of two parts. In the first of these, I supplement Coetzee's argument according to which the psychoanalytic notion of desire is central to understanding the spread and hold of apartheid ideology (which of course resonates with Fanonian conceptualizations discussed in the foregoing chapter). In the second part, I elaborate a psychoanalytic understanding of ideological agency which accounts for the relation between subject and structure (or, in Lacanian terms, subject and the big Other) and does so by thinking apartheid – and here a clear debt to Coetzee must be acknowledged – as *a transaction of desire* between the two.

Building upon themes introduced in previous chapters, Chapter 5 explores the cultural and political dimensions of the crisis of embodiment via both psychoanalytic and phenomenological perspectives. My focus, more particularly, lies with the issue of the incommensurability or the "real" of the body–ego relation. This is a relation that is never merely one of harmonious integration; it requires instead the mediation of various psychical, symbolic, and ideological mechanisms, each of which plays a role in the reproduction of forms of social asymmetry. For Black Consciousness psychologist Chabani Manganyi, whose work I discuss in some detail, bigoted social logic is one mode of response to the existential dilemma of the body–ego relation. A variety of racist symbolic articulations and fantasies may thus be said to hinge upon precisely this "irresolvability". I critically elaborate Manganyi's argument in relation to similar conceptualizations of colonial racism, including notions of differential embodiment, "epidermalization", the Manichean dynamics of colonialism, and Slavoj Žižek's notion of the "theft of enjoyment" and the bodily "real".

"Colonial racism is no different from other forms"

In concluding this chapter, let me anticipate a few foreseeable criticisms. The argument can be made that despite this book's grounding in the apartheid context, it does not pay enough attention to historical factors, that, analytically, it moves too

easily between various historical terms of reference (such as: colonial racism, apartheid, and anti-Blackness, terms which – admittedly – I often use interchangeably). In this respect, it is important to emphasize the project of this book, which is to explore facets of a particular historical modality of racism in order to sensitize us to how contemporary variations may repeat similar patterns, even if in somewhat differing forms. It may help in this respect to repeat Fanon's (1952/1986) insistence that we not be too distracted by differing historical situations and occurrences of racism: "All forms of exploitation resemble one another… Colonial racism is no different from other forms of racism" (p. 65). This is not to suggest that historical particularly should not be a factor in our analyses of racism, but simply to remind us that what we find in one socio-historical analytical domain of racism (apartheid/colonial racism), is likely to reappear in otherwise seemingly disconnected contexts (in contemporary sites where decolonization remains imperative). More bluntly put: as important as a historical frame is, my objective here is ultimately to produce a text on the psychical complexity of colonial racism rather than one primarily focused on the historical details of the contexts in which it emerged.

It might seem odd, particularly in view of a discipline as a-historical as psychology typically is, to be addressing a future-oriented decolonial objective by looking back to a history of anti-apartheid criticism and thinking. This history, as I hope is by now evident, is not limited to the historical circumstances of apartheid itself. These various critical psychological approaches to decolonization gathered here should be put to work in a *contrapuntal* manner – to draw on Edward Said's (2003) concept – as a way of opening new vantage points on the present. What Said has in mind with this concept is not only the productive frictions and aesthetic/political effects of *conceptual* juxtaposition (reading historical alongside more recent texts, for example), but also the role of temporal overlays, the often unexpectedly generative retrieval of past modalities of critique into more contemporary situations.

The process of exploratory analysis I undertake here – whereby the resources of Fanonian and anti-colonial thought are connected to ostensibly psychological types of analysis – does not leave the discipline of psychology itself untouched. That is to say, the "psychology" that we are left with at the end of this book – a vernacular and psychoanalytically-inflected decolonial psychology of critique – will no doubt be a very different "psychology" to what we may have had in mind at the outset.

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and Applied Social Psychology, 16, 207–232. Chapter 3 is a much extended and developed version of the 2008 article "Postcolonial psychoanalysis" that appeared in *Theory and Psychology*, 18 (2), 269–283. Parts of Chapter 4 appeared in 2023 as "The desire of apartheid" in Social Dynamics, 49, 1, 13–29 (a special thanks to Ross Truscott and Maurtis van Bever Donker). Much of Chapter 5 comes from Hook (2008a, 2008b), The "real" of racializing embodiment. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 18 (2), 140–152.

In reference to the photographs and graphics that I have used in the book, I am indebted to a variety of people and institutions for granting me copyright permission to reproduce material: the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg (and Jacqui Masiza in particular); the *Daily Dispatch* newspaper (especially Luke Charter); Sam Nhlengethwa along with Neil Dundas of the Goodman Gallery; the Steve Biko Foundation; Martin Terre Blanche and Khonzi Mbatha for photographs from the Voortrekker Monument; Corina van der Spoel (at Wits University Press) for her photograph of Chabani Manganyi; the Voortrekker Monument. Thanks also to the National Gallery of Scotland for permission to use Paul Gauguin's (1887) painting "Martinique Landscape" as the front cover of the book. As well as being a homage to Fanon – Martinique being of course Fanon's birthplace – this image of nature – which at first might seem an odd choice for a book on psychology – works to stress a Fanonian axiom: however pervasive and permeating the effects of colonial racism might be, *there is no racism in nature*.

Notes

1 The historical era of apartheid, despite being a paradigmatic example of colonial racism, was not, technically speaking, a "colonial" period. The Union of South Africa parliament had declared the country to be a sovereign independent state in 1934 (prior to the advent of institutionalized apartheid in 1948), and in 1961 South Africa declared itself a republic and left the Commonwealth. One appreciates thus how South Africa was already, in a qualified sense, a "postcolonial" state, despite installing a white supremacist regime which institutionalized a radical form of colonial anti-Blackness (hence debates within the anti-apartheid movement concerning apartheid as "colonization of a special type"). As is perhaps obvious, I use "colonial" in a descriptive as opposed to a strictly historical sense in this book. Suffice it to say that Frantz Fanon (1952/1986) clearly views apartheid as an example of the colonial racism he examines in *Black Skin White Masks*.

2 As Biko put it: "My friendships, my love, my education, my thinking, and every other facet of my life have been carved and shaped within the [apartheid] context" (1978, p. 27).

3 The key example I would highlight in this respect is Maldonado-Torres' (2007) text: "On the coloniality of being". I should stress both that Maldonado-Torres distinguishes between coloniality and colonialism and also that his philosophical concerns (with Heidegger, Levinas, and related questions of fundamental ontology) far exceed the everyday experiential facets of bodily being that I am highlighting here.

4 We can supplement Bhatia's brief above description of coloniality by referring to Maldonado-Torres (2007), for whom coloniality refers to:

> long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism…that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained… in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and every day (p. 243).

This book's focus on apartheid racism thus provides an insight into the colonial (or apartheid) roots of coloniality.

5 A decolonial agenda has also gained far more purchase in the discipline of psychology, certainly so, in the Global South, taking the form of strategic interventions to transform the disciplinary and methodological practices of psychology (Barnes, 2018; Decolonial Psychology Editorial Collective, 2021; Fernández, Sonn, Carolissen & Stevens, 2021; Malherbe & Ratele, 2022; Malherbe, Ratele, Adams, Reddy & Suffla, 2021; Seedat & Suffla, 2017, to name just a few standout examples).

6 I have in mind here a series of recent studies of the significance of Fanon's work to psychiatry and to psychological and psychoanalytic practice, including texts by Burman (2020), Chamberlain (Forthcoming); Gaztambide (2021, 2024); Gibson (2021), Gibson and Beneduce (2017); Laubscher, Hook and Desai (2021), Marriott (2018) and Turner and Neville (2020).

7 One obvious factor concerns the recent publication of Fanon's previously untranslated psychiatric writings (Khalfa & Young, 2021), the impact of which Lou Turner describes as follows:

> The recent resurfacing of an earlier and for the most part unknown Frantz Fanon who grappled with problems of ethnopsychiatry, the psychotherapeutics and research of traumatized populations, institutionalization, and medical ethics in marginalized communities under colonial domination compels a retracing, a reconnoitring, of the terrain he covered on his way to revolution (Turner, 2020, p. 41).

Turner does well to highlight a new trend in Fanon scholarship, although it must be admitted that the key themes listed above were already apparent in Fanon's work prior to the collection and translation of *The Psychiatric Writings* (Khalfa & Young, 2021), as is evident in studies such as Bulhan (1985) and McCulloch (1983).

8 For examples of how Fanon has featured in undergraduate psychology textbooks, see Hook (2004a) and Ratele and Duncan (2004).

9 For further examples of decolonial scholarship in psychology stemming from South Africa, see Canham (2018), Kessi (2019), Malherbe (2023), Malherbe and Ratele (2022), Malherbe, Ratele, Adams, Reddy and Suffla (2021), Ratele, Suffla, Seedat, France, & Maldonado-Torres (2021), Ratele (2019), Stevens (2023), to cite just a few. I am much indebted to this community of scholars.

10 For helpful distinctions between psychology as a natural science and as a human science see Brooke (2016) and Laubscher (2016), and for a variety of perspectives on this distinction, see Fischer, Laubscher and Brooke (2016).

1

FANON, BIKO, BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS

Resources for a critical decolonial psychology

> *There were often bits of black hair scattered around this … dusty section of ground … bodily scraps that connoted moral inferiority, a closeness to thingness …*
>
> (Apartheid Archive Project, N59)

> [T]he most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.
>
> (Biko, 1978, p. 92)

> The intervention on the level of consciousness – and consciousness was a key concept in his political approach and vocabulary – was at the essence of Biko's strategic brilliance.
>
> (Mandela, 2009, p. 75)

> To ask the right questions, to encourage a new consciousness, and to suggest new forms which express it, are the basic purposes of our new direction … Black Consciousness constitutes a revolution of ideas, of values and of standards.
>
> (Pityana, cited in Gibson, 2008, p. 145)

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The missing decolonial dimension in critical psychology

Of the theoretical resources taken as the underlying foundations of critical social psychology, elements, typically, each of Marxism, feminism, queer theory, psychoanalysis, and, perhaps chiefly, the "turn to text" characteristic of post-structuralism and discourse analytic approaches, one particular mode of critique has tended, historically, to remain notably absent, namely that of anti-colonial or decolonial theory.[1] What makes this omission so conspicuous is that a founding text of decolonial theory, Fanon's (1952/1986) *Black Skin White Masks*, is explicitly psychological, both in its concerns and its resources. Fanon's seminal text 1952 makes ample reference to various psychological and psychoanalytic formulations both as a means of grappling with the vicissitudes of colonial power and as a way of analyzing the intensity and tenacity of the psychical components of racism. While the conceptual framework of psychoanalysis is absent from the anti-apartheid and anticolonial writings of Steve Biko (1978), his approach to Black Consciousness likewise draws on the themes and language of psychology in articulating the aims of the liberation movement. J.M. Coetzee's (1991) diagnosis and critique of apartheid is also instructive here; while Coetzee is not typically thought of as a decolonial theorist, his utilization of Freudian psychoanalysis as a means of analyzing the more unexpected dimensions of racism proves equally critically incisive. The same can be said of the work of his countryman, the Black Consciousness psychologist Chabani Manganyi (1973, 1977), who makes recourse to both phenomenological and psychoanalytic varieties of psychology in describing the processes of apartheid racialization.

Each of the above intellectuals provides trenchant ways of thinking about the conjunction of the psychological and the political, the affective and the structural, the psychical and the societal. We have, as such, a vital combination of registers of critique that one would take to lie at the center of critical psychology's ostensibly concerns with the psycho-political – or psychosocial – dimension of psychical life (Hayes, 1989; Hook, 2004a). Why then have such decolonial thinkers not historically featured more strongly in the conceptual resources of critical psychology?[2] How might their work, and their characteristic concerns – the mechanisms of racist objectification and fantasy, the violence of cultural dispossession, the possibilities of effective psychical resistance, and so on – alert us to gaps in the critical psychology literature? To approach the question from another direction: what might be said to be the critical *decolonial* psychology of each of these theorists, particularly perhaps that of Frantz Fanon and Steve Biko? How might their use of the vocabulary of the psychological within the political domain, like their focus on the cultural dynamics of colonization, alert us to the possibilities of psychology as a resource of resistance? Furthermore, what do these critics have to tell us about the conditions and mechanisms of colonial racism,

a phenomenon that is, after all, as psychical as it is political, as structural as it is psychological, in nature? Further yet, how might these contributions urge us to reconsider the epistemological frame of psychology such that we might prioritize instead a materialist psychology, one which is far more worldly, "secular" in its concerns, and that plays its part in a wider vernacular of political critique? How, in short, might we make critical psychology a properly decolonial psychology, and how might we do it by including various seminal voices of an anticolonial theorist and revolutionary like Fanon, alongside scholars and activists from the Global South? Before turning to a brief discussion of the work of Fanon and Biko, it will be necessary to clarify what I mean when I refer to the historical domain of scholarship – unfamiliar to many U.S. students and scholars of psychology – known as "critical social psychology". I also need to provide a definition of the newly emerging area of "decolonial psychology".

Critical social psychology and the political

Critical social psychology has been defined in multiple ways (Gough, McFadden & McDonald, 2013; Gough, 2017). Gough and McFadden (2001), for example, speak of a critical social psychology that "challenges social institutions and practices – including the discipline of psychology – that contribute to forms of inequality and oppression" (p. 2). This is a version of social psychology, they suggest, in which practitioners situate themselves within society and its problems, a social psychology that "gets involved, which adopts particular positions in important debates on … issues such as prejudice, violence … crime, etc" (p. 2). Valerie Walkerdine (2002a) has similarly suggested a move away from the academy to politics, an understanding of critical psychology that expresses a pronounced commitment to the theories of post-structuralism, and that stresses the importance "not of psychology *per se*, but … of the subject and conceptions of subjectivity for politics" (p. 1). Critical psychology, she claims, is hence "an umbrella term which describes a number of politically radical responses to and differences from mainstream psychology … [including] perspectives of … feminism, ethnic and anti-racist politics" (p. 2). Tellingly, however, Walkerdine (2002a) comments on how the political commitment that has generated such anti-racist, feminist, and queer standpoints seems largely "to have been lost" (p. 2)

Hepburn (2003) thinks of critical social psychology as focused on issues of politics, morality, and social change, as being predominantly concerned with issues of oppression, exploitation, and human well-being. Critical social psychology, moreover, is also "critical of psychology itself … *its* assumptions, *its* practices" (p. 1). However, she notes (2003), this dual task of criticizing society and criticizing the discipline sometimes leads to these two factors working against one another. Parker (2002) understands critical psychology as the

systematic examination of how dominant accounts of psychology operate ideologically, and in the service of power. Importantly, though, this "heterogeneous process of critique" should ideally spread to forms of social action (Goodley & Parker, 2000). A tension again seems apparent here between intellectual undertakings against psychology, and the broader sphere of political activism.

This split between these two aspects of critical psychology is likewise evident in the preface to Fox, Prilleltensky and Austin's (2009a) *Critical Psychology*, which speaks of "the struggle to make psychology a tool for emancipation and social justice" (p. xx). The definition offered in the Introduction however, turns the focus more toward the critique of psychology itself: "[C]ritical psychology [is] a variety of approaches that challenge assumptions, values, and practices within mainstream psychology that … maintain an unjust … status quo" (Fox, Prilleltensky and Austin, 2009b, p. 18). It is only later in the text, apropos a description of critical community psychology, that the broader societal political role of critical psychology again comes to light:

> [Critical] community psychology offers a framework for those marginalized by the social system that leads to self-aware social change with an emphasis on value-based participatory work and the forging of alliances.
>
> *(Burton et al., cited in Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2009, p. 130)*

The juxtaposition of these definitions makes my point clearly enough: despite the potential of critical psychology as a means of engaging various social modalities of power, its agendas of political activity remain all too often delimited, narrowed by the preoccupation with *the critique of psychology itself*. While this remains an important facet of a decolonial agenda – Fanon's various critiques and attacks on ethno-psychiatric and how psychoanalysis has been put to de-politicizing and colonial uses by theorists like Octave Mannoni and Jung (see Bulhan, 1985; Fanon, 1952/1986; Fanon, 1965), it is very clearly only one part of a far broader and more encompassing political project.

My argument is that there is room to develop an element of critical psychology that often remains an underdeveloped facet of many of the above approaches: the potential – as can be historically demonstrated – of types of implicitly *psychological* theorization and critique. Critical psychology should thus be concerned both with the analysis of oppressive uses of psychology *and* with enabling potentially transformative psychological forms that disrupt imbalances of power and have social equality as their goal; this is crucial to the development of properly decolonial psychology.

Decolonial psychology

What then is *decolonial* psychology? Here it helps to refer to Adames, Chavez-Dueñas and Comas-Díaz (2024), who, in the introduction to *Decolonial Psychology* – a watershed text in the history of the discipline, published by no less than the American Psychological Association – offer a series of crucial definitional points. They start by highlighting that the era of colonization is typically ignored by psychology (which of course, often tends to be a de-historicizing discipline, largely uninterested in its own history, particularly those facets of its history which were complicit in racism (Richards, 2011)). While the attempt to bypass the history of coloniality is hardly unique to psychology, psychology is itself a formidable and ever-growing discipline and discourse, a hugely influential means of making sense of and intervening within the lives of people (Rose, 1991), a discourse, moreover, which has often tended to offer universalizing theories, and that has, historically tended to prioritize some voices over others. This is how Adames, Chavez-Dueñas and Comas-Díaz (2024) put it:

> A critical part of history that is often suppressed and ignored is the period of colonization. This historical era was steeped in destruction, exploitation, and genocide… Although colonization has ended in many countries, its ideologies and practices grounded in European colonialism, described as *coloniality*, are alive and thriving in contemporary society across the globe. Coloniality is responsible for policies and political systems that aim to control and erase Indigenous ways of knowing and being in the world…. In psychology, global Eurocentric voices, experiences, and methodologies are often centered and uplifted, and the narratives, realities, and practices from the Global South are devalued and suppressed.
>
> *(Adames, Chavez-Dueñas & Comas-Díaz, 2024, pp. 4–5)*

This is vital commentary; it highlights the importance of retrieving marginalized experiences, theorizations, and critical reflections concerning colonialism/apartheid/anti-Blackness. To this we might add a further goal: of retrieving also how such marginalized accounts *have experimented with and adapted intellectual frameworks and psychological conceptualizations*, taking them outside of accepted Eurocentric conventions, to the ends of a decolonial agenda. Adames, Chavez-Dueñas & Comas-Díaz continue:

> Decoloniality is a praxis—it is the process of constantly disrupting the legacies of inequities, dehumanization, domination, [of] racism, sexism, gendered racism, heterosexism, cissexism, nativism, ethnocentrism, ableism… [legacies] that maintains the global hierarchy of power.… [D]ecoloniality in psychology… aim[s] to create spaces and methods for oppressed and impoverished communities to radically imagine their

> existence outside of the superimposed borders of coloniality, neoliberalism, racism, and other systems of oppression. It also emphasizes how people's subjectivity and connections to diverse social groups are influenced by history, context, and oppression; how these populations actively resist and survive attacks on their humanity; and how knowledge production is shaped… by the nature of the questions asked and the individuals or entities posing those questions.
>
> *(Adames, Chavez-Dueñas & Comas-Díaz, 2024, p. 6)*

That Adames, Chavez-Dueñas and Comas-Díaz (2024) emphasize the factor of active resistance, of attending to modes of contestation, agency, alongside critiques of the dehumanizing impact of colonial practices and modes of knowing (i.e. the epistemic dimension of coloniality), is of paramount importance. The fact that they highlight decoloniality *as praxis*, as opposed to a project of theory, provides one way of distinguishing decolonial work from the postcolonial scholarship that preceded it. The critique has frequently been made that postcolonial theory often seemed to gravitate to abstruseness, and conceptual obscurity, that it was, and perhaps still is, divorced from the more grounded material concerns of committed decolonial activism. While this argument could be problematized – there are aspects of decolonial theory which are presumably rather scholastic in nature, just as there are facets of postcolonial scholarship that are wedded to political activism – what is important for the time being is to stress that a decolonial agenda is particularly oriented to considered forms of practice, social engagement, and action. Decolonial work opposes epistemic violence and erasure as it has affected marginalized groups; it challenges various modes of colonial mentality; it combats dehumanization, subjugation, and inferiorization as they occur in the aftermath and ongoing present of colonial domination.

While I agree with how Adames, Chavez-Dueñas and Comas-Díaz (2024) approach and define both coloniality and a decolonial agenda within psychology, there is a point of potential difference that is worth stressing, particularly so because it helps explain why I still retain reference to a critical (and "vernacular") psychology in what follows. (After all, one could ask: why does one even need critical psychology now that we are working within, or toward, the parameters of *decolonial* psychology?). I would suggest that it is important not only to turn to indigenous knowledge systems, but also to pay attention to how anticolonial and Global South voices have drawn upon, enlisted, utilized, and *rearticulated* ideas that attained currency in what we can call white/Global North/Eurocentric contexts. This is why I retain reference to critical psychology: both so that we insist on a critical or radicalizing perspective on psychological ideas and theorizations as such (after all, to incorporate indigenous ways of knowing into the institutional apparatus of mainstream psychology need not be a radical or progressive move, quite the

contrary) and also because there are psychological and psychoanalytic theories which despite their white/Global North/Eurocentric origins, can be called upon to do vital decolonial work.[3] A similar argument is made by Gaztambide, Feliciano-Graniela, Hernández and Escobar (2024) in a chapter entitled "Decolonizing psychoanalysis":

> Rather than presenting decolonial psychoanalysis as an alternative to traditional psychoanalysis, purified of oppressive tendencies, we argue that all psychotherapy… must engage in an ongoing decolonial process. We also resist making too neat a distinction between Western and non-Western intellectual traditions because this erases the fact that many categories seen as European – the individual, the unconscious and so on – have decidedly non-European origins…. [We reject] this tension as a false dilemma – a theory's demographic origins do not determine how colonial or decolonial they are. Instead, what is essential is whether the theory helps shed light on our world and serves a decolonial function.
>
> *(pp. 325–326)*[4]

With these definitions and qualifications in mind, let us now turn our attentions to Frantz Fanon and to those aspects of his more explicitly psychological writings that hold the greatest rejuvenating potential for critical decolonial psychology.

Fanon and the psycho-political

> [For Fanon] the most dangerous colonization is the one that descends upon a human being, the one to which this being yields inside of [themselves]… [the] metaphysical and ethical one that is found within the soul. As Alice Cherki writes… "His analysis insists on the consequences of enslavement not only for peoples but also for subjects: the conditions of their liberation, which is above all a liberation of the individual, a 'decolonization of being'".
>
> (Fleury, 2023, p. 160)

One way of grasping the importance of the inaugural moment of Fanon's critique in *Black Skin, White Masks* is by appreciating the extent to which Fanon was generating a new and hybrid mode of critical analysis where no pre-existing forms were sufficient.[5] If there is a fact that Fanon's writings impress upon us, it is that the colonial encounter is unprecedented; theepistemic, cultural, psychic, and physical violence of colonialism makes for a unique type of historical trauma. A psychological register is indispensable both in properly formulating these forms of violence – grasping them conceptually, and analytically – and in

providing a rudimentary basis for the critique of such dispossessions. This is, no doubt, a large part of why Fanon (1952/1986) takes up a phenomenological existential register in *Black Skin, White Masks*, offering a justly famous account of the embodied experience of the Black man in colonial conditions (discussed at some length in a subsequent chapter). Fanon, of course, also opens *Black Skin, White Masks* by insisting on the necessity of a psychoanalytic account of the racist colonial sphere, even if such a conceptualization needs ultimately to take its place alongside, and in conjunction with, analyses of the socio-political and economic factors. These two modes of psychological analysis (existential-phenomenological and psychoanalytic) are used in tandem throughout the book.

The type of psychology that Fanon appeals to and develops is of a particular sort. Perhaps Fanon's greatest source of originality as a theorist, as McCulloch (1983) has argued, is to be found in his combination of psychology and politics, his attempts to approach the problems of national liberation and social revolution from the perspective of psychopathology, and the problems of personal identity through a sustained focus on the violence of the colonial encounter. McCulloch (1983) argues:

> All of Fanon's work falls into that category where the sciences of personality and the sciences of society converge … [in an attempt] to traverse the distance between an analysis of the consciousness of the individual and the analysis of social institutions.
>
> *(pp. 206–207)*

Lebeau (1998) has aptly described Fanon's work as a "psycho-politics" (see also Marriott, 2018), which I understand, building here on McCulloch's above-cited remark, to be based on a kind of to- and fro- analytical movement, whereby the political is continually brought into the register of the psychological, and the psychological is likewise brought into the political. In this vein, we might think of the project of psycho-politics as a means of highlighting this two-way movement, as a means of stressing how social structures are constantly manifested in psychological life, on the one hand, and as a means of emphasizing how power is conducted psychologically, and psychically, on the other.[6] This idea provides us with a useful frame to understand the implicit yet radical psychology of critique that emerges from the work of Fanon, Biko, Manganyi and others – a decolonial psychology which is always in some way existential, grounded in the dimension of everyday experience, and which is always, necessarily, a response to anti-Blackness. Such a politicization of the psychological can take at least three related forms. Firstly, it may refer to the process whereby we place a series of ostensibly private psychological concerns and concepts within the register of the political (such is the case in practices of conscientization, described in more detail

below). We are thereby able to show the extent to which human psychology is intimately linked to, conditioned by, the socio-political and historical forces of its situation. Fanon's work is certainly emblematic of this trend; his refutation of Octave Mannoni's orthodox psychoanalytic interpretation of the dreams of colonized Malagasy subjects is a case in point.[7] Secondly, such a politicization may refer to the task whereby psychological and psychoanalytic concepts, explanations, and modes of experience are employed to describe and illustrate the workings of subjugation, dehumanization, and anti-Blackness. Fanon's work again makes for a benchmark here, although we might also call upon Coetzee's (1991) analysis of apartheid ideology as an example of how a psychoanalytic – and literary – approach enables rigorous scrutiny of unconscious aspects of colonial power. The hope here is that by being able to analyze the political facets of everyday life in such a way, we might be better placed when it comes to thinking strategically about how best to intervene within the psychic life of colonial power. Lastly, extending this idea, one might suggest that we can put certain forms of psychology to actual political work, that we can utilise both the concepts and understandings of psychology, *and* the actual terms of concrete, lived (psychological) experience, *as a means of consolidating resistances to power*.[8] This, in many ways, is the Black Consciousness strategy: the utilization of rudimentary psychological notions to enable forms of radical humanist critique, as an experiential basis for solidarity and resistance to power, as a means of giving form and focus to the liberation struggle. By examining the psychical effects of the colonized subjects' attempts to know themselves within the terms of an antagonistic (white European) colonial system of values – the phenomena of a "white mask psychology", socially induced "inferiority complexes", etc. – Fanon shows how what might otherwise be understood within a purely psychological framework is far better explained in psycho-political terms; that is, with reference to understandings of racialized power, colonial violence, and cultural subordination. In fact, one sees in Fanon an astonishing blend of theoretical figures, a kind of lateral movement across psychoanalytic, phenomenological, existential, psychiatric, and literary modes of conceptualization, all of which are put to use as means of expressing something of the physical, epistemic, and identity violence of colonial dispossession. A key problem that Fanon is concerned with is the existential and political dilemma of being the subject of cultural oppression/racism, and being in a situation in which one is incessantly fed colonial values and understandings that are hostile, devaluing of oneself and one's culture.

The colonized subject (or, in Fanon's terms, "the native") hence exists in what Sartre (1990) referred to in the preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961/1990) as the state of a "nervous condition", an anxious and agitated state (both politically and psychically) in which one's own cultural resources have been compromised, deformed, and distorted by the cultural imperialism of the colonizer. Fanon's attempt is to impart to his readers a

sense of what this might mean, an awareness not only of the effects of the continual dissonance *within* the colonized subject (between ego and culture, self and society), but also the inevitability of coming to think and act subjectively as *white*, of experiencing oneself as a "phobic object", and thus of hate "coming both from without and from within", as Lebeau (1998) puts it. This is a lesson very much at the basis of decolonial critique, a continual awareness of the dislocation between the ideals, the norms of the valorized Western culture, and those of the dominated culture, which comes to be demoted to the status of the *other* of all of these values. Such a constant and recurring slippage is properly pathogenic for Fanon, at least in the sense that it causes a deeply rooted sense of inferiority, a constantly troubled mode of subjectivity, that is split and at war with itself, causing "pathologies of liberty" as Fanon (1961/1990) calls them.[9]

Perhaps the key passage of Fanon's "psycho-politics" is the famous encounter with the white child– one I revisit several times in this book – that "materializes" psychological objectification. The racial petrification Fanon suffers at the hands of the white child ("Look, a Negro!" … "Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened! Frightened! Frightened!" [1952/1986, p. 84]) is that of being reduced to an object beneath a white gaze that dissipates his subjectivity, and destroys his ability to adequately represent himself. Fanon describes it as an "amputation, an excision, a hemorrhage that splatter[s] my body with black blood" (1952/1986, p. 85). This metaphoric conversion of psychic assault into the terms of bodily brutality makes apparent the violence – indeed the trauma – of institutional, epistemic, non-physical incidents of colonial racism. It speaks thus of a *materialist* psychology, by which I mean that it calls attention to how many forms of psychological analysis routinely elide historical, socio-structural, and overtly political factors, just as it – paradoxically enough – often side-lines everyday embodied experiences (hence the significance of the Black Consciousness prioritization of experiences of *being-black-in-the-world* (Manganyi, 1973)). Material, institutional, and structural relations of force that condition and underwrite psychological existence in colonial environments are in this way all too easily written out of analytic contention – as, in Fanon's eyes, is the case with Mannoni's psychoanalysis of colonization.

This consideration, of how decolonial critique pushes a given scholarly domain outside or, beyond, its traditional disciplinary axis, resonates with Edward Said's (1983) notion of "secular criticism". Said's assertion is that disciplinary purism and its concomitant preoccupation with an insular technical vocabulary systematically prevents a political mode of critique, functioning instead effectively to foreclose the asking of certain questions of power and injustice. The project of secular criticism hence should make the content of what is being studied reassume its "affiliations with institutions, agencies, classes, ideologically defined parties" (Said, 1983, p. 212). More

simply put, we can say that many scholarly pursuits in the humanities have invariably depoliticized what they study, be it texts, literature, art, or, moving to the domain of psychology, a variety of salient concepts and/or methodologies. A decolonial standpoint would seek to reverse this depoliticization, to constantly query how concepts, ideas, and theoretical frameworks work to support or to entrench an exclusionary, colonial, racist, or anti-Black agenda.

A further example of how the psychic impact of colonialism cannot be ignored, or "psychologized away", but is instead foregrounded within a fundamentally political frame of analysis, is apparent in Aimé Césaire's (1972) famous words on colonialism, quoted to great effect by Fanon: "*I am talking of millions of men who have been skilfully infected with fear, inferiority complexes, trepidation, servility, despair, debasement*" (1952/1986, p. 1). Fanon's linking of psychology and politics is at its most forceful here, in his understanding of colonialism not merely as a means of annexing land and territory, but of appropriating culture and history themselves, that is, as a way of usurping the means and resources of identity. The colonization of a land, its people, and its culture, is also, in short, a "colonizing of the mind", in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's (1986) famous phrase, which receives its echo in Mandela's (1994) characterization of apartheid as "moral genocide".

Psychological critique and racism

Not only does Fanon use politics to interrogate the psychological; but he also utilizes psychological and phenomenological concepts to extend his political analysis of racism. A rich psychoanalytic vocabulary of concepts emerges in *Black Skin, White Masks* as a means of demonstrating the logic and workings of colonial power: the "neurosis of blackness" and the related dream of turning white ("What does the black man want? … The black man wants to be white" [1952/1986, pp. 1–3]); the racial imago; the mirror-stage as the drama of racial difference; the idea of a "European collective unconscious"; the conceptualization of the Black man as a phobogenic object; whiteness viewed as "metaphysics of positivity"; the processes of projection, ambivalence, and scapegoating; each of these can be seen as component procedures of racist ideation. The aim of such conceptualizations is to subject the psychical apparatuses of racism to thorough – and hopefully disabling - forms of analysis and critique.

Fanon also considers how we might explore psychological concepts as instruments of political engagement. As has often been pointed out, Fanon had intended *Black Skin, White Masks* to serve as a kind of "instrument of liberation". The original intended title of the book was "Essay for the dis-alienation of the black man" (Julien, 1995). Many of the text's chief

ideas – the sociogenetic approach to psychopathology, the contortions of desire and identification brought about by anti-Blackness, the "massive psychoexistential complex" (p. 12), and its related "anomalies of affect" (p. 10) that are brought about by colonialism and which lead to the white man being "sealed in his [narcissistic] whiteness" and the Black man sealed in his Blackness (p. 9) – are oriented precisely toward ending the structural conditions of colonial racism. As psychoanalysis hopes to free the neurotic from his or her personal neurosis, so this text was intended, as Adams (1970) emphasizes, to offer the reader a means of *alleviating forms of racial neurosis*, effecting a "a complete lysis of this morbid body [of colonial racism]" (Fanon, 1952/1986, p. 3). Here, of course, one should not neglect the practical elements of Fanon's own clinical practice, his attempts at transforming conditions of psychiatric internment (well detailed by Bulhan, 1980, 1999; Caute, 1970; Marriott, 2018; McCulloch, 1983; Turner & Neville, 2020; Robcis, 2020). The psychological dimension of political existence must be addressed; such a critique must take its place alongside economic and social, indeed *revolutionary* struggles; and it must do so as a matter of urgency (Bulhan, 1985). Before one can create the conditions for solidarity among the oppressed, intimates Fanon (1961/1990) – anticipating the standpoint of Steve Biko and the philosophy of Black Consciousness to follow – there must first be the destruction of the *subjective* aspect of Black oppression.

This is the particular complexity of Fanon's psycho-politics: an awareness that psychology does feature in politics, and that we cannot willfully ignore psychology, subtract it from the political domain – reified andideologically skewed as many of psychology's primary concepts may well be – or allow it to fall out of the conceptual vocabulary of a radical, materialist, and politically committed form of social critique. Those forms of critical psychology content to critique the discourse and functioning of psychology, manage only half of Fanon's broader psycho-political project. It is not enough, to reiterate, to conceptualize how politics impacts the discipline of psychology; we need an awareness also of the psychological workings of power, of how subjectivity repeats, reiterates, and reinforces the political. These two categories are inseparabe. As Fanon makes clear, to adopt a psychological/psychoanalytic engagement with racism is not necessarily to imply that the denigrating racist imaginary of Blackness 1952 is in any way a natural, ahistorical, predisposed "archetype" (as is apparently the implication of Jungian psychoanalysis). To adopt a psychological engagement with racism is to assert the regularity, the frequency of such depictions; it is to assert that racist images of this sort feature strongly in the libidinal economy of racist/colonial societies. Fanon's point is that such images circulate widely across the affective and psychic channels of racist society; they occur within the contents of individual dreams,

phobias, symptoms, and neuroses of colonizer and colonized alike, taking root at the micro-political level of individual psychology, although *without being simply reducible to this psychic level of realization*. For Fanon, Fuss (1995) declares, the psychical operates precisely as a political formation.

It is worth stressing that discursive (i.e. text-based or social constructionist) approaches – typically the prioritized mode of qualitative research in critical psychology – are not necessarily incompatible with more psychologically/psychoanalytically oriented forms of analysis.[10] Failing to grasp the libidinal tenacity of racism/anti-Blackness leaves us curiously unable to account not only for the historical persistence of racism but also its irrationality, and its repetitive nature. We need, in other words, to grapple with the psychical operations that underwrite the discursive functioning of racism in its multiple forms. Historical forms of critical psychology thus need – if they are to be an ally to the project of decolonization – to confront the question of whether racism *as a psychical phenomenon* has slipped from its grasp, perhaps, ironically enough, precisely because this subdiscipline has not permitted itself access enough to *the conceptual domain of the psychological*.

We can conclude this section by calling attention to the role that psychological modes of critique and conceptualization can play within the political and emancipatory objectives of critical psychology. It pays here to refer to the objectives of critical *liberation* psychology, which, to quote D. Foster (2004),

> involves questions of the psychological processes, dynamics, capacities and practices through which people may achieve emancipation, freedom, liberation and escape from particular power structures of oppression and exploitation.
>
> *(p. 541)*

It is with this focus on the emancipatory potential of critical/decolonial psychology in the South African context, that we now turn to the writings of one of Fanon's most remarkable heirs, Steve Biko.

Biko, Black Consciousness

> Black Consciousness is a philosophy in that it articulates the lived experience of Blacks who are in the clutches of oppression, the very negativity of anti-Blackness. It is a philosophy born in the struggle in that the very same lived experiences and the testimonies that come with it, and.... the articulation that tries to understand the manner in which oppression is

> constituted, are the very basis on which this philosophy rests… [It] is not a philosophy that is detached from the lived experience of the subject, but [one] in which the subject makes sense of the world from where [they]… are located.
>
> (Sithole, 2020, p. 101)

Steve Biko provides another way of mobilizing the politics of the psyche. Biko, in fact, exemplifies a type of psycho-politics that utilizes the terms of psychological experience *as means of consolidating resistances to power*. As is the case with Fanon, the Black Consciousness Movement's emphasis on a *psychological* politics of resistance – or, to use slightly different terms, its existential appeals to the lived experience (i.e. the notion of *being-black-in-the-world* (Manganyi, 1973)) – is surprisingly undervalued in the history of critical psychology.

A few words of introduction are in order here. There are elements within Biko's writing that, from the standpoint of some postcolonial scholars, might seem to consign it to its historical location (the seemingly essentializing bent of an apparent form of identity politics that, in retrospect, may appear rigid, unaccommodating of modes of internal difference or of "cultural hybridity"). To such retrospective critiques, we should simply stress the target and site of his work was apartheid, a historical period of racism characterized by Jacques Derrida (1985) as "the ultimate racism in the world" (p. 291). We do well here to cite Sithole's (2016) brief contextualizing description of Biko's ongoing significance. Biko was born and became politically active in South Africa, which was

> overshadowed by apartheid and before it, colonialism and segregation – the brutal forms of subjection that continue to erase black people from the existential realm of life… It [was]…through his modes of critique of subjection and a clear grasp of black existential conditions and the deceit through which white supremacy works to inferiorize blackness that Biko became the leading figure of Black Consciousness philosophy. Black Consciousness philosophy reverberates at the ontological sites of blackness and also…[those of] the unconscious and the ego…to the extent of their obliteration. This obliteration is necessary to bring the ontological sites of *being-black-in-the-antiblack-world* and *being-white-in-the-world* to an absolute end.
>
> *(2016, p. 1)*

Against the tendency to dismiss Biko's writings as pertinent only to their specific time and place, as focused only on then-pertinent political strategies

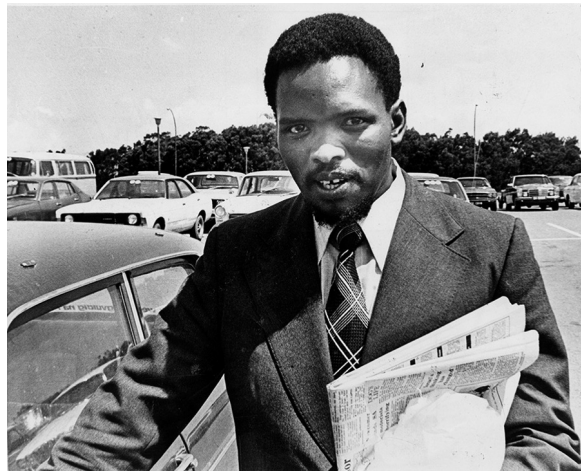

FIGURE 1.1 Steve Biko. (Courtesy *Daily Dispatch*).

and debates, I would argue, especially in light of Sithole's (2016) remarks, that the consigning of Biko's writing to history is to do an injustice to writer and ideas alike. There seems to me an imperative to reread Biko, perhaps in view of Said's (1993) suggestion of contrapuntal reading, as a way of interpreting and applying the text both within and outside of its original historical parameters, utilizing it outside of the context in which it was produced so that it might be put to work against a new set of political priorities. These are concerns I return to, in a somewhat different context, later in this chapter. For the time being my focus is on providing an overview of the Black Consciousness Movement (BC) not only because it is crucial to my argument in this chapter – and to framing my concerns in this book as a whole – but because it also points to a crucial resource for a decolonial psychology. Also significant, of course, is the fact that Biko's approach to Black Consciousness offers a distinctive set of existential and psychological strategies of resistance to racism.[11]

Revolution in psychology

Biko's view of Black Consciousness[12] called for the psychological and cultural liberation of the oppressed as a necessary prerequisite for political freedom – in his own words: "mental emancipation as a precondition to political emancipation" (Biko, 1978, p. 29). What was in question was "the psychological battle for the minds of the black people" in Arnold's (1979, p. xxi) phrase, which made up the "pivotal psychological dimension to Black Consciousness's

'pre-figurative' approach to emancipatory politics" (p. 172). For Halisi (1991), Biko was concerned with relating psychological liberation to culture: "Biko considered the transformation of consciousness to be a catalyst for mass action" (p. 109).

This emphasis on the *psychological subjectivity* of struggle is evident in a variety of different descriptions of Black Consciousness. Turner and Alan (1986) stress that "Biko … always centres the possibility for change within the subjectivity of the oppressed person, and not simply within the South African economy or the hierarchy of the system" (p. 22). Speaking of "self-consciousness as force and reason of revolution", Turner insists that Biko "brought forth the re-discovery of self-consciousness as an objective force within the process of liberation" (2008, pp. 77–78). Biko's position in this respect is clear: "The interrelationship between the consciousness of the self and the emancipatory programme is of paramount importance" (Biko, 1978, p. 49).

That the agenda here is in part psychological by no means dampens the revolutionary aims in question. Nolutshungu (1982) offers an incisive formulation in this regard, speaking of how Black Consciousness activated sentiments and ideas that would respond cognitively, operationally, in *militant* ways, to the various doctrines, structures, and agents of apartheid. The consciousness-raising of Black Consciousness, emphasizes Gibson (2003a), "is not merely a passing stage in the revolutionary process … [but] an actuality in which the transformation of reality is grounded" (p. 136).[13]

Instrumentalizing Blackness

The socio-historical backdrop to the Black Consciousness project was, as already noted, the "totality of white power" in apartheid South Africa. This was, and for many remains (albeit in post-apartheid forms), one of the most obdurate and intensive sites of anti-Blackness of the last century (Sithole, 2024). Black Consciousness thought needed to grapple with the historical impact of three hundred years of colonial rule, which for Biko (1978) – here clearly drawing on Fanon – had fundamentally *disfigured* the African past.[14] The violent force of apartheid oppression and the brutality of its devices had, for Biko, exercised a profound influence on the parameters of Black subjectivity. The systematic marginalization of traditional African cultural resources had, correspondingly, been extreme. A fundamental challenge for Black Consciousness lay with reversing the colonial imprint of a negative self-image, and replacing it with positive, more self-affirming forms of Black identity and culture. This was taken as the most vital and direct route to undo the paralyzing constraints of fear and resignation. Ramphele (1991a) underlines the importance of this goal:

> The … onslaught of political impotence … state repression … economic dependency … [and] poverty … wrought havoc on the self-image of black South Africans … [some of whom] even began to believe that they deserved the oppression they suffered because of innate inferiority.
>
> *(p. 156)*

It is thus no coincidence that the impact of Black Consciousness was greatest on urban youth, for, as Jeffery (2009) observes, "older Africans were widely seen as having to overcome years of conditioned subservience to white domination" (p. 17). By contrast, a younger generation, many of whom "might otherwise have developed feelings of inferiority resulting from their second-class legal status", began increasingly to "throw off the sense that race discrimination might be justified" (p. 17).

"Blackness" here – and this is a crucial point, particularly against contentions of essentialism – was not simply an issue of skin color, but was a form of solidarity, a collective form of hope and security, a way for Black people to "build up their humanity" (Biko, 1978). We are not thus speaking of a unified psychology of Black essences, but of a form of politics that utilizes the vernacular of psychological experience to articulate resistance to experiences of oppression and marginality. This is reflected in Biko's non-essentialist definition of Blacks as "those who are by law or tradition politically, economically, and socially discriminated against as a group in South African society, and [who] identify themselves as a unit in the struggle towards the realization of their aspirations" (1998, p. 360). It helps to refer to Manganyi (1973) here, who, as a Black Consciousness psychologist, offers a description of particular interest to our concerns regarding the underlying psychical basis of the type of solidarity we are considering:

> [Many] meanings of the word "consciousness"… [can be] given: "mutual knowledge"… "the totality of the impressions, thoughts, and feelings, which make up a person's conscious being". The first usage… is of the utmost importance. In our definition of black consciousness, there is an implicit recognition of "mutual knowledge"… From mutual knowledge to solidarity is a very short and logical step… Black consciousness should be understood to mean that there is a mutuality of knowledge with respect to the "totality" of impressions, thoughts and feelings of all black people.
>
> *(p. 18)*

Before we are erroneously led to conclude that this seems a rather a-historical or over-generalizing account, Manganyi (1973) adds a crucial historical and sociological qualification. The "mutual knowledge" that he is speaking of is, crucially, necessarily linked to perceptions of Blackness in racist contexts, or,

more directly – and the implicit links to Fanon and his notion of epidermalization seem here evident – to skin color, to "what skin actually signifies in sociological and psychological terms" (p. 18):

> The skin only becomes significant in these terms as body. It is precisely because of this reason that black consciousness has no choice but to start from the existential fact of the body. This is a recognition of the fact that it is the sociological schema of the black body which has in so many ways determined part of our experience of being-in-the-world… it has determined part of the totality of the experience we are being called upon to be conscious of… we are being called upon to experience our black bodies in a revitalized way… to challenge the negative sociological schema imposed upon us by whites.
>
> *(p. 18)*

This elegant set of formulations not only responds to the question of the underlying basis of the Black Consciousness solidarity. It also emphasizes the psychological/experiential dimension of this solidarity, which is necessarily linked to existential facets of embodiment in racist contexts (negative sociological schemas), that Manganyi aims to overturn, in part via grounded appeals to the experience of *being-black-in-the-world*.[15]

In opposition to self-negating ways of thinking, Biko called for solidarity among those whom apartheid labeled "non-white", emphasizing the need for oppressed groups to identify themselves as an autonomous, creative, and fully agentic group, and to advance the liberation struggle on this basis. As a kind of politics, "Blackness" was thus an intellectual and emotional foundation for the establishment of a militant collective resistance that would, in turn, enable a viable political unity between apartheid's *others*. It was on this humanist basis that Biko (1978) took up the mandate of emphasizing the importance of a robust, proud, and positive self-image as a means of empowering oneself to resist oppression.

Importantly, however, although Biko's notion of Blackness is non-essentialist – Biko "dispensed with the idea of race as a biological essence while continuing to embrace blackness as an emancipatory weapon", as Mbembe nicely puts it (2007, p. 141) – Blackness here cannot be reduced to a "free-floating signifier", or a voluntary marker of identity. Biko's conceptualization of Blackness has a more profound historical underwriting – that of successive generations of brutal (neo)colonial and anti-Blackness – than does a mere social construct. As Mngxitama (2009) emphasizes, "Biko's dictum that "being black is not a matter of pigmentation" has been abused by race denialists" (p. 9). As such, "It matters little to say race is a social construct" (p. 9), to reduce it, as social constructionist approaches often have, to a

contemporary mode of representation, understanding, and interaction. By contrast, "Blacks were created out of the violent processes characterizing the white/black encounter" of which we can identify at least three interfaced modes of dispossession, that of "land … of labour and of African being" (Mngxitama, 2009, p. 9). Sithole makes a similar point when he stresses that Black solidarity is "self-justified given that the positionality of the world is anti-Black":

> The structure and logic of antiblackness does not only attack blackness at the level of singularity, but as a collective identity. The collective response of black solidarity is necessary for blacks to confront antiblackness.
>
> *(p. 11)*

Radical humanist solidarity

We should read Biko's Black Consciousness as *a radical humanist politics of solidarity* that operationalizes Blackness and concomitant notions of Black identity and culture toward the political objectives of liberation. Two points of historical contextualization are immediately pertinent here. We need to bear in mind, firstly, that apartheid's dominance was in many ways due to its divide-and-conquer approach, which systematically cultivated in-group violence (often along ethnic lines) within Black communities, preventing – as an absolute strategic imperative – the forging of any overarching unity, and solidarity among the oppressed. It is for this reason that anti-apartheid Black Consciousness maintained the priority of a robust and unifying *group identity* of resistance. Biko:

> One of the basic tenets of BC is totality of involvement … we must resist the attempt by protagonists of [apartheid] … to fragment our approach. We are oppressed not as individuals, not as Zulus, Xhosas, Vendas or Indians. We are oppressed because we are black. We must use that very concept to unite ourselves and to respond as a cohesive group. We must cling to each other with a tenacity that will shock the perpetrators of evil.
>
> *(1978, p. 97)*

One should not underestimate the difficulty of the task that the protagonists of Black Consciousness set themselves. As Halisi (1991) puts it, "The … reconstruction of intra-black relations was … [Black Consciousness's] most radical and its most utopian vision" (p. 105). It was radical, he continues, "in its desire to abolish ethnic divisions among the victims of white racism", and utopian in its under-evaluation "of the tenacity of ethnicity and what was required to refashion social relations" (p. 105).

We also need once more to stress the nature of apartheid anti-Blackness: this was a system not merely of depersonalization and desubjectivization but of constant physical intimidation and brutality, objectification, and dehumanization. It is for these reasons that Mzamane, Maaba and Biko (2006) call particular attention to the fact that "Biko advocated a grass-roots build-up of Black Consciousness tocounteract denigration and self-abasement" (pp. 123–124). This factor of dehumanization must be stressed when considering those forms of critique, such as that made by Butchart (1997) (following Foucault), that Black Consciousness might itself be classified as a self-subjectivizing system that manufactured "a new and essentialist African personality … wherein each African was his own overseer, exercisingsurveillance over and against himself" (p. 104). As already stressed, Black Consciousness entails no necessary essentialist leanings; the basis for solidarity is a *communality of oppression*, not, as in some readings of Négritude, that of an African essence (see Gibson, 2003a).[16]

Biko's attempts to raise oppressed subjects beyond the abject status of racial objectification should not be taken as a kind of bland moral humanism. Such efforts need rather to be understood as part of a political project that acknowledges the degree to which negative (and actively *negating*) forms of identity can be central features of oppression.

Biko insisted that

> The first step … is to make the black man come to himself … to infuse him with pride and dignity, to remind him of his complicity in the crime to allow himself to be misused and thereby letting evil rule supreme in the country of his birth. This is what we mean by an inward-looking process. This is the definition of Black Consciousness.
>
> *(Biko, 1978, p. 149)*

Crucial again here is an awareness of the double direction of racism, of the fact that racism may be anchored, as Fanon (1952/1986) had argued, both subjectively, "within" the individual, and in the "objective" structures of a racist society. Biko's point is that the internalization of self-damaging identities – what is often referred to today as a condition of "colonial-mentality"[17] – is a key political tactic of oppression; hence his famous remark that "the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed" (1978, p. 92). What follows from this, to paraphrase Mbembe (2007), is a commitment to independent collective development and self-reliance as enabled through reflexive self-examination and self-scrutiny.

FIGURE 1.2 Popular image of Biko.

Agency above protest

It is important not to overlook the forms of self-critique operationalized by Black Consciousness thought. Far from an unquestioning valorization of Blackness, Biko's Black Consciousness involved self-interrogation as a vital component, and was particularly critical of Blacks who endorsed the white value system of apartheid, hoping to attain such privileges for themselves.[18] One of the bitter truths that needed to be confronted in this respect was the collusion of the oppressed with the oppressor, the fact of Black people "bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity" (Biko, 1978, p. 43). To miss this element of self-evaluation is to miss an essential facet of Black Consciousness. Mzamane, Maaba and Biko:

> [The] dimension of introspection and the capacity for self-criticism [were] … characteristics which distinguished Black Consciousness from the politics of the purely protest tradition, which had hovered dangerously close to identifying everything evil with the white supporters of government

> policy and had turned a blind eye to the socio-political ills emanating from black people themselves. Black Consciousness castigated black people whenever they saw the need to do so. They examined the black community critically, pointing out those social maladies that were self-inflicted. … [Biko] taught that black people should see themselves for what they really are; their hope for emancipation from mental slavery should be a prelude to their political liberation and this ultimately rested upon their ability to diagnose their psychological problems correctly.
>
> *(2006, p. 127)*

Mda (2009) and Ndebele (2009) both develop the idea that Black Consciousness was more than a culture of protest, a politics of complaint. To remain stuck in the latter, to resign oneself to the status of the subjugated, is,

FIGURE 1.3 Popular image of Biko.

so Ndebele (2009) suggests, to risk re-instantiating the status of the oppressor. As Ndebele explains:

> complaining may confusingly look like a psychological submission to "whiteness" in the sense of handing over to "whiteness" the power to provide relief. "Please, stop this thing!" seems to be the appeal.
>
> *(2009, p. 11)*

It is for this reason that Mda (2009) is at pains to qualify Black Consciousness as a philosophy of *resistance* rather than of protest. Protest theater, for example,

> made a statement of disapproval, but did not go beyond that. It addressed itself to the oppressor, with the view of appealing to his conscience. It was therefore a theatre of complaint, of weeping, and self-pity. It did not offer any solution beyond the depiction of the inhumanity of the system on passive victims.
>
> *(p. 25)*

In not dissimilar terms, Manganyi remarks that while "part of our consciousness of being black people amounts to a 'mutual knowledge' of… suffering under the hands of white domination… this consciousness must not be mistaken for self-pity" (1973, p. 19). The sharing entailed by the solidarity of Black Consciousness involves "not only the sharing… of suffering…[but of] the possible joys of being black-in-the-world" (p. 20). Mamphela Ramphele's (1991a, 1991b, 1993, 2008) writings on Black Consciousness stress the imperative of inculcating a sense of agency within the oppressed. In light of the above comments on the trappings of a protest tradition, it is not difficult to see why this is the case. To view Blacks solely as victims of racism and exploitation, potentially reinforces a self-image, as Ramphele (1991a) says, of "those acted upon" rather than those who are active agents of history. So, although, as Pityana et al. (1991) warn, certain short-term rewards may come with the label of "victim", such a position ultimately exerts a powerfully disempowering influence, one that undercuts and disenables a purposeful sense of agency. Hence the need within Black Consciousness philosophy to replace "the paralyzing image of the victim [with] … an active agent of history in all spheres of life" (Pityana et al., 1991, p. 10), and the importance of drawing attention also to "the creativity and resilience which underpinned strategies of survival under apartheid" (Ramphele, 1991a, p. 161). Or, as Ramphele (1993) puts it elsewhere, "People with pride in neither their past nor present are limited in their capacity to believe in their own agency in history" (p. 9). For these reasons, even in the post-apartheid

era, it remains important to avoid allowing a "victim mentality" to creep into anti-racist thought (Pityana et al., 1991). The reflexivity of self-critique, one might say, underpins viable forms of agency; it cuts insidious ties of dependence and avoids the tacit reification of a victim class.

Black consciousness *conscientization*

Given its importance as a political instrument, and its resonance with approaches to critical pedagogy often cited by community psychology (Campbell & Jovchelovitch, 2000; Malherbe, 2023; Stevens, 2023), it is worth mentioning the use Black Consciousness made of conscientization. Conscientization – described by Jovchelovitch (2007) as the "gradual awakening to the full determinants of one's psychological and social circumstances" (p. 153) and by Malherbe (2023) as "consciousness-raising whereby different groups work together to understand society's contradictions so they can take action against oppressive social contradictions" (p. 459) – was, of course, a notion derived from Paulo Freire (1990).[19] It involved what Biko spoke of – referring here to the pseudonym he adopted in his political writings – as *Frank Talk*, that is, protest talk, talk about circumstances of oppression that links everyday experience to a set of political antecedents. Conscientization involved the repeated attempt to

> make reference to the conditions of the Black man and the conditions in which the Black man lives. We try to get Blacks in conscientization to grapple realistically with their problems … to develop what one might call an awareness, a physical awareness of their situation … to be able to analyze it, and to provide answers for themselves.
>
> *(Biko, 1978, p. 114)*

Warning against a view that would consign such activities to mere exercises in mental liberation, Mngxitama (2008) reiterates that in all articulations of conscientization " 'action' or 'struggle' is key … BC is about total liberation, from material, spiritual, cultural, political power. … BC is certainly not some meditative process outside real existence" (p. 4). Malherbe (2023) similarly warns – in a critique of psychology – how "psychologists sought to use consciousness-raising as a therapeutic mode of self-reflection", adding that for the most part "[p]sychology…individualized consciousness-raising and drained it of its political content" (p. 459). By marked contrast, the introspections of Black Consciousness conscientization were never simply the predilections of isolated individuals; this project entailed a profound cultural and political awareness, one that necessitated the component of historical redress. Turning again to Biko:

> Black Consciousness [has] … to do with correcting false images of ourselves in terms of culture, education, religion, and economics … There is always an interplay between the history of a people … the past, and their faith in themselves and hopes for their future. We are aware of the terrible role played by our education and religion in creating amongst us a false understanding of ourselves.
>
> *(Biko, 1998, p. 363)*

Mabogo Percy More (2017) offers an inspired interjection here. Speaking of conscientization as a politicization of the mind, as a "coming into consciousness" of oppression, he notes how "a similar articulation of conscientization is…. provided by Fanon in terms of his practice as a psychoanalyst" (p. 266). He has in mind of course Fanon's memorable remarks in respect of clinical psychoanalytic practice in colonial settings:

> As a psychoanalyst, I should help my patient to become *conscious*… to act in the direction of change in the social structure… my objective, once his motivations have been brought into consciousness, will be to put him in a position to choose action (or passivity) with respect to the real source of conflict… that is, toward the social structure.
>
> *(1952/1986, pp. 74–75)*

Conscientization had to make a new vision of reality viable, just as Black Consciousness needed to enable a new social imaginary. We can put it this way: if belief in change is a precondition for committed political action, then a different world must come into view if one is to extract one's self from the fatalisms engendered by the political present. Hence Moodley's (1991) characterization of the self-empowering, reconstructionist worldview of Black Consciousness, and Welsh's comment that Black Consciousness connotes "a more complex process than having the scales removed from one's eyes" (Welsh, 2009, p. 151). For this very reason the process of "correcting false images" must be undertaken by Black men and women themselves. "Whites … from the outside … can never extract and analyze the ethos in the black community" (Biko, 1978, p. 363).[20]

Affective solidarities

As in Pityana's oft-quoted slogan "Black man you are on your own", Black Consciousness entails not just a fueling of the political imagination – enabled via various forms of conscientization – but a marshaling of affect, a rallying of passions. This dimension of political activity, the making of certain libidinal investments, and commitments of love, is a crucial facet of Black Consciousness; recourse to the notion of Black *pride*

would be meaningless otherwise. This provides a means of thinking about how Biko extends Fanon; Biko obliges us to provide a complement to what, in his biography of Fanon, David Macey (2000a) nominates as "perhaps the most basic political emotion" (p. 503), that of anger. What is arguably the "most basic political emotion" in Biko's writing is courage. Here then is a distinctive and yet sometimes neglected factor of Black Consciousness – something exemplified in the persona of Biko – namely that it engendered precisely a politics of bravery. Or, to refer to Biko's own words, "We must remove completely from our vocabulary the concept of fear" (1978, p. 97). Biko's thoughts on fear, it is worth noting, as concerned whites as well as Blacks. Paraphrasing Biko, Buthelezi (1991) asserts, "It was out of fear of repression that blacks acquiesced in oppression, whilst whites, from fear of black domination and loss of privilege, gave support for racist policies" (p. 126).

The consolidation of such affective attachments – pride, courage, and let us not forget, love – are enabling in the face of oppression; they allow the oppressed to (re)assume their dignity and to bring further conviction and courage to a political cause.[21] Such a consolidation works also to refute the abject status to which racism consigns its others to disrupt the libidinal economy of racism whereby "white humanity" is protected and elevated precisely by means of consigning Blackness to the abyss, as Wilderson (2008) puts it. The affective facet of Biko's politics comes to the forefront perhaps most poignantly in his thoughts on the political function of death, which of course were to prove prescient: "You are either alive or you are dead, and when you are dead, you don't care anyway. And your method of death can itself be a politicizing thing" (1978, p. 152). Barney Pityana's description of Biko's death makes the same point: "Dying, as he lived, he thereby expressed to many young blacks a fearlessness that helped change the face of the country" (1991, p. 256).

In fact, one finds in Biko not only a constant awareness of death, but something approximating a political ethics of death, that is, the acceptance of death as a constant condition of one's political existence. Referring to the torture that many political detainees had to endure during imprisonment, Biko describes a situation in which the security police

> go on and on with a towel around your neck saying "Speak" – and you say nothing – … and the bloody brutes are not trained well enough to realize when enough is enough. So by the time they release the towel you have been dead for a couple of minutes.
>
> *(Biko, cited in Wilson, 1991, p. 65)*

This choice of words, with the past continuous sense, that is, the conjunction of a seemingly present condition ("you have") with a description of the past ("been dead"), is telling.[22] It connotes an unusual proximity between death

and life, a constant overlapping whereby death is already in everyday life – a result of the constant subjugations and abjections of apartheid oppression – but also a persistence of life beyond death apparent in the conviction that the cost of one's life will not end the life of the struggle. This is a point made in different ways by both Boehmer (2008) and Mbembe (2005), the idea that given the oppressive brutality of colonial existence, resistance was most powerfully embodied by the oppressed when they brought themselves into a confrontation with – or indeed, a kind of *living proximity to* – death.[23] Biko spoke about the courage of the dissident township youth in the following terms:

> The dramatic thing about the[ir] bravery … is that they have … discovered, or accepted … that the bond between life and death is absolute. … your method of death can be a politicising thing; so you die in the riots. For a hell of a lot of them, in fact, there's really nothing to lose. … So if you can overcome personal fear for death … then you're on your way.
>
> *(Biko, cited in Wilson, 1991, p. 73)*

Psychological resources of transformation

For most adherents of Black Consciousness, political action had to approximate a "way of life" or a "gut reaction", in Halisi's (1991) words. There was a shared preference for every day "micro-political" community activities above a preoccupation with formulating abstract intellectual theory. Black Consciousness was not so much, to quote Pityana, "a political philosophy or ideology, but a strategy for action" (cited in Badat, 2009, p. 110). Biko similarly warns:

> One must immediately dispel the thought that Black Consciousness is merely a methodology or a means to an end. What Black Consciousness seeks to do is to produce at the output end of the process real black people who do not regard themselves as appendages to white society.
>
> *(1978, p. 362)*

Mzamane, Maaba and Biko (2006) hence identify what they take to be a common misreading in the literature: the assumption that Black Consciousness was principally an intellectual movement that focused more on changing self-image than on organizing Blacks for action. Such a false dichotomy, they say,

> overlooks the revolution in organisation … that came about as a result of the skills it taught, directly and through the multiplier effect, to thousands of people, especially the youth and students.
>
> *(Mzamane, Maaba & Biko, 2006, p. 157)*

For Mda, the driving objectives of self-esteem and self-respect could not but be part and parcel of meaningful forms of community action; these were inseparable aspects of the Black Consciousness project. "Steve Biko and his colleagues", he says, were hands-on practitioners "who established practical community-development projects … they made their hands dirty … building health-delivery centres and running them" (2009, p. 25). For some, however, this drive to immediate practical real-world intervention came at the cost of developed textured socio-economic and class analysis. This contention, along with the claim that Black Consciousness maintained no definitive, long-term macro-political program, were formidable aspects of the critiques mounted against Black Consciousness.

There have, of course, been multiple criticisms of Black Consciousness, ranging from arguments that the movement duplicated patriarchal patterns in its organizational structure and leadership (Mangena, 2008; Moodley, 1991; Ramphele, 1991b), to claims that it tended to "treat blacks as a homogenous group" and as such failed to recognize that "various sections of the black 'community' might have very different interests" (Badat, 2009, p. 61). "A serious error of the BCM" reflects Ramphele,

> was its failure to recognise that not all black people are inherently committed to liberation and that the poor are not necessarily egalitarian … differentials of power along the lines of class, gender, age and geographical location … need to be taken seriously in development strategies.
>
> *(1991b, p. 178)*

There were, in addition, the arguments mounted by communist critics according to which Black Consciousness was lacking in scientific social analysis; that it did not adequately appreciate the dynamics of class, or the role of economic factors; that Black Consciousness did "not adequately address working-class interests and was the ideological expression of the black petty bourgeoisie" (Halisi, 1991, p. 102). Aligned with this was the concern that prioritizing race as the single dominant factor of politics was to undercut the prospect of important inter-racial alliances and go against the African National Congress's credo of non-racialism (Welsh, 2009). Some – including even Nelson Mandela (2001) – perceived Black Consciousness's "exclusivist" policy as reinscribing a "racialistic" tendency, as indeed running the risk of aligning progressive forces with the apartheid logic of the enemy.[24]

One critique that particularly misses the mark, given the above emphasis on the role of practical activities in building solidarity of resistance, is the argument that the Black Consciousness movement lacked the institutional infrastructure of a real prospective political party such as that of the African National Congress (ANC). Mzamane, Maaba and Biko (2006) offer a blunt

response to such a position: "Activity, not activism as such, marked BC strategy … Its most astute exponents understood that if they formed a rigidly structured organization the police would immediately destroy it" (p. 100).

This draws attention to the advantages of the (in part) psychological form of Black Consciousness politics. Not only was it the case that "being principally a state of mind made communicating the essential tenets of BC to a wider audience easier", as Welsh (2009, p. 151) avers. Furthermore, as Stubbs (1978) underlines:

> Given the circumstances he found [himself in] of a strongly entrenched, powerfully armed minority on the one hand, and a divided, defeated majority on the other, perhaps the political genius of Steve [Biko] lay in concentrating on the creation and diffusion of a new consciousness rather than in the formation of a rigid organization.
>
> *(Stubbs, 1978, pp. 205–206)*

That Black Consciousness existed as a form of consciousness, which, as such, could not be reduced to the confines of organizational structure, meant that it was impossible for apartheid authorities to decimate its institutional infrastructure. That had been the fate that had all but crippled the efficacy of the ANC at the time. In fact, the opposite was the case: the more Black Consciousness activity was greeted with violent repressive means, the more such measures affirmed the injustice of apartheid and thereby strengthened the moral case of resistance to it. As Biko emphasized, these factors underpinned the mounting solidarity of the oppressed.

The flexibility and open-endedness of Black Consciousness also, importantly, afforded a breadth of interplay in how proponents might link the micro-political domain of their own everyday practices – virtually all of which could be enthused with a political ethos – to the broader shared objectives of macro-political and structural change. Multiple forms of political awareness, resistance, and agency were thus made possible. This is evident in Mpumlwana's (1989) anecdotal comments on the role of Black consciousness conscientization:

> The main thing that we saw ourselves as doing was to raise consciousness … And with conscientization people would do all kinds of different things. Some people's conscientization will only lead them to stop using skin lighteners. … it would give … [some a] commitment to political activism. And for yet others it would give them the commitment to the armed struggle. But there was no way of controlling what people would do with their consciousness once it was raised … [O]ne could not say therefore that BC

> was a particular programme for a specific political direction. But … it definitely had the intention of transforming people's minds to think more of themselves and to take on themselves their own identity and destiny.
>
> *(p. 26)*

Ultimately, however – and here the critics of Black Consciousness do perhaps have a point – the open-endedness, the personal latitude within which Black Consciousness sentiment and activity could be taken up, was also a prospective weakness of the movement. As Howarth's (2000) commentary suggests, that there comes a time when party structure, discipline, organization, and a codified ideological line – referring here of course to the hegemonic dominance that the ANC eventually attained in the South African liberationstruggle – do have their place. It was in part due to these apparent failings that Howarth attributes Black Consciousness's inability "to transform itself from a purely oppositional movement into a force for the construction of a new and political order" (p. 172).[25] This points us to a conclusion about the use of politics as a psychological form (i.e. as a mode of consciousness) already anticipated in the literature cited above: at some point a mentality of resistance, a consciousness of activism, needs to be translated into material and organizational forms.[26]

Having reached this conclusion, conceding that the political can never be reduced to the psychological alone, it remains nonetheless crucial to stress the indispensable role Black Consciousness played – precisely as a psychopolitical instantiation of resistance – in providing the subjective foundations for liberation. For the same reason, it is vital that we extend our understanding of the psychological resources that underlie – and often indeed function as *conditions of possibility for* – effective forms of political resistance. Black Consciousness'splatforms for resistance discussed above include the politically enabling psychological operations of consciousness-raising; the solidarity of resistant group identity; appeals to the experience of the oppressed; modes of introspection and self-critique; the marshaling of affects; the development of agency and positive (Black) self-image; the production of a new social imaginary. To this list, we should add the psychological imperatives advanced by Mzamane, Maaba and Biko (2006) as among the most essential tasks that Black Consciousness set itself, the need

> to uplift flagging spirits; raise battered self-esteem; affirm identity and assert human dignity; fight off apathy and stagnation; turn racial stereotypes on their heads; exorcise the arsenal of complexes that haunted and kept down individuals and communities; instil self-confidence and self-reliance; and reinvigorate the masses in their struggle for emancipation.
>
> *(Mzamane, Maaba & Biko, 2006, p. 158)*

Black Consciousness thought hence utilizes the idiom of the psychological as a strategic mode of combating the various dehumanizing modes of anti-Blackness. To be clear: by the idiom of the psychological I mean to refer both to psychology's array of concepts (potentially repurposed, rethought in a psycho-political manner, to be deployed in politically strategic and effective forms) and, more importantly perhaps, to its uses in a more existential manner as a means of reflecting upon lived experience and identity, that is, to psychology as providing both vocabulary and form of resistance.[27] This utilization is consistent in many ways with how Fanon utilized the conjoined psychological registers of the psychoanalytic, the psychiatric, and the phenomenological[28] so as to enable a psycho-existential examination of racism, that is, as a means of analyzing and refuting anti-Blackness.

Vernacular psychologies of resistance

In drawing this discussion of Black Consciousness to a close, it remains simply for me to insist once again that we should resist codifying Biko's politics in exclusively or narrowly psychological terms, a point repeatedly insisted upon by Sithole (2016).[29] Black Consciousness, says Kros (1999), is not merely an exercise in positive thinking, an attempt to build self-esteem; the determination of the Black man or woman to rise and attain the envisaged self cannot be reduced to a kind of self-help psychology. The drive to overcome political oppression through collective effort, she insists, is not simply a psychological "formula of identity" (Kros, 1999). The project is rather to connect psychological reflection to the political realm, to link a reflexive mode of identity, a form of political *subjectivization*, to the material world of power, oppression, and resistance, and to do so via activity, practical involvement, facets of cultural rejuvenation, pride, and, as emphasized above, a politics of courage.

If then we are dealing here principally with *political* identity, with the use of identity as an instrument of solidarity, resistance, and cultural restoration, then we might advance that the psychological means of articulating Black Consciousness's "envisaged self" are useful precisely inasmuch as they further these (anti-racist) ends, and not necessarily beyond. This assertion is affirmed in much of the literature. Mnguni (2000), for example, argues that the key texts in Black Consciousness philosophy should not be seen as predominantly psychological in orientation. Rather than being delimited to a matrix of psychological concepts, Black Consciousness utilizes instead a spread of historical, cultural, and even theological revitalizations of Black identity. Ally and Ally (2008) affirm this position, quoting the Soweto Action Committee's 1978 resolution that Black Consciousness needed to be more than merely an "attitude of mind". What we find in Biko then is something tantamount to "vernacular" critique, that is – and here I take inspiration from Gilroy's (2000, 2010) use of the term – the juxtaposition of a variety of vocabularies and discursive styles that enable vigorous forms of cultural identity and

resistance. Here idioms and terms of everyday psychological language are customized, brought side by side with motifs and expressions derived from liberation theology, and combined in turn with Black power themes of masculine heroism and courage.[30] These various "dialects of affirmation" are blended, and conjoined in a seemingly spontaneous manner to respond to the urgent political imperatives of the racist apartheid/decolonial situation. There is something ad hoc but nonetheless vital about these discursive conjunctions, which have been pulled together out of necessity, under extreme conditions, by way of offering a serviceable form of critique where none other existed (or where what did exist, such as the ANC's "Charterist" discourse of oppositional non-racialism, failed to capture the imagination of the youth).

Biko demonstrates an absolute commitment to anti-apartheid opposition, to the ends of Black solidarity and the overcoming of white supremacy. His writings begin and end with these overarching objectives; they are thus anchored in, and express fidelity to, the necessity of structural transformation; they aim to bring about the end of the world of anti-Black racism. While some forms of social psychology would align themselves broadly, thematically, with such goals, few would elevate such imperatives above the priorities – and epistemic boundaries – of the discipline they are working in. Fanon's texts, likewise, came into being in response to immediate contexts of oppression, a factor that sets their epistemological dimension apart from types of scholarly inquiry defined purely in scientific terms (or, indeed, by the epistemic parameters of the relevant academic field/discourse). Gibson (1996) helps us stress the point at hand when, drawing on Fanon, he remarks that in colonial contexts there is "a real difficulty in being 'objective'. There is no objective truth. There is no neutral standpoint; everything is touched by the colonial system" (pp. 274–275). Or, as Bernasconi extends the point: "Fanon believed that the conventional modes of thinking that most philosophers…. practice [has]…the effect of radically undermining attempts to challenge the status quo" (2020, p. 19).

It is here, I would argue, that a critical psychology of decolonization comes into view. The *raison d'être* of work of this sort is not principally that of the scientific imperative to *know*, to discover forms of truth that are in some way cleansed or removed from political questions pertaining to exclusion, privilege, and power.[31] A critical decolonial psychology is rooted, by contrast, in an avowedly *political* epistemology that produces operative forms of knowledge in response to injustice. Such a decolonizing epistemology works toward the agenda of challenging historical modes of exclusion and marginalization, interrogating a given discipline's ongoing complicity in forms of anti-Blackness, aiming ultimately to create the conditions of a genuinely more equitable social order.[32] This is one reason why, despite the necessity of a decolonial approach to psychology, it is also worthwhile to maintain a minimal critical distance to the disciplinary orthodoxies of psychology (its standard methodological procedures, etc.) insofar as they attempt to isolate the discipline from the social, political and ideological circumstances in which it is practiced and taught.

Now while this distinction between scientific and political epistemology is not always absolutely clear-cut, it should not be understated. It concerns not only different approaches to what counts as the truth (i.e. an interrogation of truth conditions), but a succession of subsequent decisions as regards the most appropriate objects, domains, and criteria of research (with particular attention to what has been deemed as less than "pure" or legitimate in terms of the historical orthodoxies of particular disciplines); relevant ethical questions and problematizations (which invariably need to be widened, questioned, critiqued); and differing methodological and analytical priorities and possibilities.[33] Furthermore, the division of traditional scholarly areas means that certain topics, such as the various psycho-political categories of Black Consciousness thought, are not afforded disciplinary legitimacy, and cannot thus easily be broached within the mainstream social sciences or even philosophy.[34] An awareness of these issues is implicit in the vernacular approach I accredit to Biko, within the emphatically materialist psychology propounded by Fanon, in the "secular criticism" – to utilize Edward Said's phrase – of a critical psychology of the decolonial. We might even say that such a trend of critique could not but be out of place, that it necessarily cuts across discrete disciplinary localizations, violating longstanding "boundaries of practice" precisely so as to make new categories of societal, political, and psychological thought conceivable, and, ultimately, practicable. One area where we see an efflorescence of a distinctive type of contemporary Black Consciousness knowledge – one which while never being reducible to the psychological clearly engages the dimension of libidinal economy – is that of Afro-pessimism (Marriott, 2021; Sexton, 2016, 2019; Sharpe, 2016; Warren, 2018; Wilderson, 2010, 2020). We find here an invigorating attempt – to again call upon Sithole (2016) – to develop "analytical tools through which to affirm the register of Black Consciousness through the assemblage of the epistemic register" (p. 17).[35]

"White writing": on re-representing Biko

An important qualification needs to be addressed before this chapter is concluded. A white South African author writing on apartheid racism and engaging the writings of Biko and Fanon is automatically subject to the claim of misrepresenting this material. More than once I have been made aware, by students and colleagues, that my reading of Biko is perhaps necessarily skewed, distorted by my own background, as if there is an epistemological break present simply because of my historical background of being a white South African grappling with Biko's writings. There are in fact two pitfalls here. Firstly, the danger of replicating precisely what Biko warns against, the liberal white subject's re-representation of Black critique, that is, the situation of my speaking for, or over Biko, of using him to my own ends. Secondly, and perhaps more insidiously, there is the prospect of my

own performative attempt – in expressing fidelity to Biko – to demonstrate, to implicitly prove, my own non-racism.

In terms of the first of the above charges, that of re-representing Black critique, it is perhaps worthwhile reiterating that my reading of Biko is, as hinted above, of a contrapuntal sort. In other words, while I have attempted to contextualize the Black Consciousness struggle by means of reference to the apartheid context, I have also attempted to apply it to a different time and situation, to locate it as a valuable historical resource that may enable the revitalization of a decolonize psychology of critique. It is worthwhile here turning to Said's own description of his contrapuntal method:

> My approach tries to see [the work of extraordinary writers and thinkers] in their context as accurately as possible, but … I see them [also] contrapuntally … as figures whose writings travel across temporal, cultural and ideological boundaries in unforeseen ways … Thus later history reopens and challenges what seems to have been the finality of an earlier figure of thought, bringing it into contact with cultural, political and epistemological formations undreamed of by … its author … [T]he latencies in a prior figure or form [can] … suddenly illuminate the present.
>
> *(Said, 2003, p. 24)*

Clearly then, the use I have made of Biko's Black Consciousness thought has not been of a "purist" sort, at least in the sense of being strictly delimited to its given historical context. My agenda here has been to ask how such ideas may engender further and future forms of critique. I would hope, in this way, to honor Sithole's (2016) call that we need to turn to Biko precisely as a *decolonial philosopher*. Biko's writings clearly emerged from a precise historical and existential site – apartheid white supremacy – and as such they can never be fully separated from that context or from their abiding aspiration to see the end of this and related situations of anti-Blackness. Yet they should also not be written off as merely historical curiosities, as details pertaining to Biko's biography. "[A]s long oppression continues to exist, the spectrality of Biko will continue to exist" (Sithole, 2016, p. 3). Ultimately, it is for the reader to decide whether my representation and elaboration of Biko's Black Consciousness thinking have been critically illuminating (or not), and whether it opens viable opportunities for critical decolonial psychology. While a recontextualization of Biko's writings might run the risk of diluting the force and urgency of his historical critique of white supremacy and whiteness, such a recontextualization might also, importantly, serve to further disseminate his ideas. This prospect of faithful applications and redeployments seems in line perhaps with Said's notion of "travelling theory", that is, the hope that radical ideas might find novel creative release in future locations.[36] One further important point to note in respect of moving on from

the overview of Biko's Black Consciousness as supplied above: when it comes to the development of situated and contemporary Black Consciousness critiques of racism, this is a task for Black men and women themselves. Black Consciousness is, after all, a philosophy/psychology of the lived experience of those subjected to racism; "Biko's position is clear", says Sithole (2020) "racism affects blacks and it should be confronted by blacks themselves and on their own terms" (p. 101).

Fanon and Biko's "psychologies" of critique

We have, by now, spent a fair amount of time outlining both the historical domain of critical psychology and the emerging field of decolonial psychology. We have likewise offered thoughts, particularly via reference to Fanon and various theorists of Black Consciousness, in respect to what a critical decolonial psychology might look like as informed by those who fought – and continue to fight – white supremacism in its various forms. By now my argument is clear: despite its value in opening a greater political sensibility within psychology, critical psychology – particularly in its more textually-focused/discourse analytic/post-structuralist forms – has often fallen short in its radical agendas by neglecting the role of vernacular psychologies of resistance, critique, and solidarity.

In the work of Fanon and Biko, we have two inspiring examples of how decolonial/anti-apartheid critique and analysis offer a means of closing the gap not only between intellectual and political activity but also between insular critique and the impetus to broader social action. In commenting on the legacy of such writings, Gibson (1999a) notes:

> What remains a philosophical project is how one begins to articulate the meaning of mass action, expand the new social consciousness derived from the cultures of resistance and solidarity into new directions.
>
> *(p. 38)*

Gibson thus highlights the shortcomings of types of critical scholarly activity which, in its preoccupation with forms of textual scrutiny and analysis, has seemingly given up on the larger political goals of mass action, of fostering solidarity, resistance, and social consciousness. Fanon and Biko, by contrast, provide an impetus towards developing a decolonial psychology of resistance, a psychological – or, more aptly perhaps, a *psycho-political* – means of thinking the effects of marginalization, discrimination, and racism. They provide the impetus for a decolonize psychology that moves beyond an accentuation of psychic damage, beyond the limitations of mere protest discourse, towards a strategic consolidation of psycho-political resources, be those communal (as in Black Conscious solidarity) or practical-intersubjective (conscientizing appeals to the existential details of concrete lived experience).

As in the case of Fanon's materialist psychology, what I have called Biko's "vernacular psychology" is never or a purist sort, never an instance of orthodox adherence to a discipline, but remains always, instead, attuned to the imperative of extending a de-colonial consciousness. In each case, we have a creative and generative means of reflecting upon and changing the historical circumstances and modes of being that Manganyi (1973) refers to as being-black-in-the-world and being-white-in-the-world.

I have suggested that one way of bringing together the decolonial critical psychologies of Fanon and Biko is via the notion of the psycho-political. By this I mean a reciprocal form of critique in which we not only situate the psychological within the register of the political, but, perhaps more challengingly, in which the political is also – strategically – approached through recourse to the psychological. What the writings of Fanon and Biko make plain in this connection is the degree to which the narratives and concepts of the psychological may be reformulated so as to fashion a mode of resistance which is simultaneously a consciousness, a mode of solidarity, and a galvanizing type of inter-subjectivity of practice and action.

Fanon's thought clearly opens multiple perspectives for decolonial critical psychology, many more than we have been able to do justice to in this chapter (we resume our engagement with Fanon in Chapter 3). Nonetheless, decolonial psychology developed on the basis of Fanon's work, and on the basis of *Black Skin White Masks* in particular, brings with it an important reminder, namely that psychology and psychoanalysis – despite the limitations and history of these disciplines in respect of racism and racial exclusion – should not be summarily abandoned as a means of conceptualizing anti-Blackness and oppression (Gaztambide, 2024; Gaztambide, Feliciano-Graniela, Hernández & Escobar, 2024; Rahmat, 2025; Swartz, 2019). This is so, even if these disciplines need to be critiqued and, in very significant ways, refashioned, and repurposed. Racism and anti-Blackness, after all, are conditioned as much by psychical as by political processes, as much by libidinal as political economy. As Fanon's psychiatric work testifies, despite that in many instances we need to prioritize broader social-historical-political (or sociogenic) factors over merely individual and intrapsychic (or ontogenic) factors, what we might call the micro-political psychological aspect of power – the psychic complexities of desire, ambivalence, identification, and sexuality – cannot simply be ignored in decolonial projects of liberation.

Biko's Black Consciousness formulations also have important implications for decolonial critical psychology, one of which is that we should not summarily abandon the psychological – understood here both conceptual and experientially – as a means enabling modes of solidarity, community-building, humanization, and strident opposition to the near-ontological force of anti-Blackness. Black Consciousness utilizes the psychological, not only as an instrumental language, but as a form of reflexivity and subjectivization that is able to engender modes of agency and solidarity, and to

thereby challenge and overturn the denigrations, abasements, and abjections sown by cultures of racism and anti-Blackness.

Let us again note the role of conscientization. The reflexive dimension of psychological reflection whereby everyday experience is opened to political recontextualization (a form, as we might put it, of "extrospection"), this turning "inside out" of the psychological into the political and "outside in" of the political into the subjective, features among the most crucial contributions of Biko's Black Consciousness to vernacular psychology of resistance.

There is, of necessity, an *affective* dimension to Black Consciousness philosophy and praxis: challenging the libidinal economy of racism requires not only the solidarity of a consolidated group identity, but a marshaling of passions, the consolidation of courage, pride, and conviction; it requires, in other words, the investments that hold such an identity, such a cause, together. Black Consciousness reminds us that the revolutionary potential of *subjectivity itself* should not be lost if, ultimately, our goal is to bring about precisely, to use a phrase of Nigel Gibson's, a *radical mutation in consciousness*. With this in mind, we turn now to a series of more psychoanalytically oriented critiques and analyses of colonial anti-Blackness. If this seems, at first glance, a departure from the topic of consciousness-raising that has been so central to this chapter, we might, following the lead of Malherbe (2023), remark that one way of extending this crucial decolonial work is "unconsciousness-raising".[37]

FIGURE 1.4 Street art portrait of Steve Biko (Gauteng, South Africa).

FIGURE 1.5 Street art portrait of Steve Biko (Gauteng, South Africa).

FIGURE 1.6 Steve Biko Garden of Remembrance (King Williams Town, South Africa).

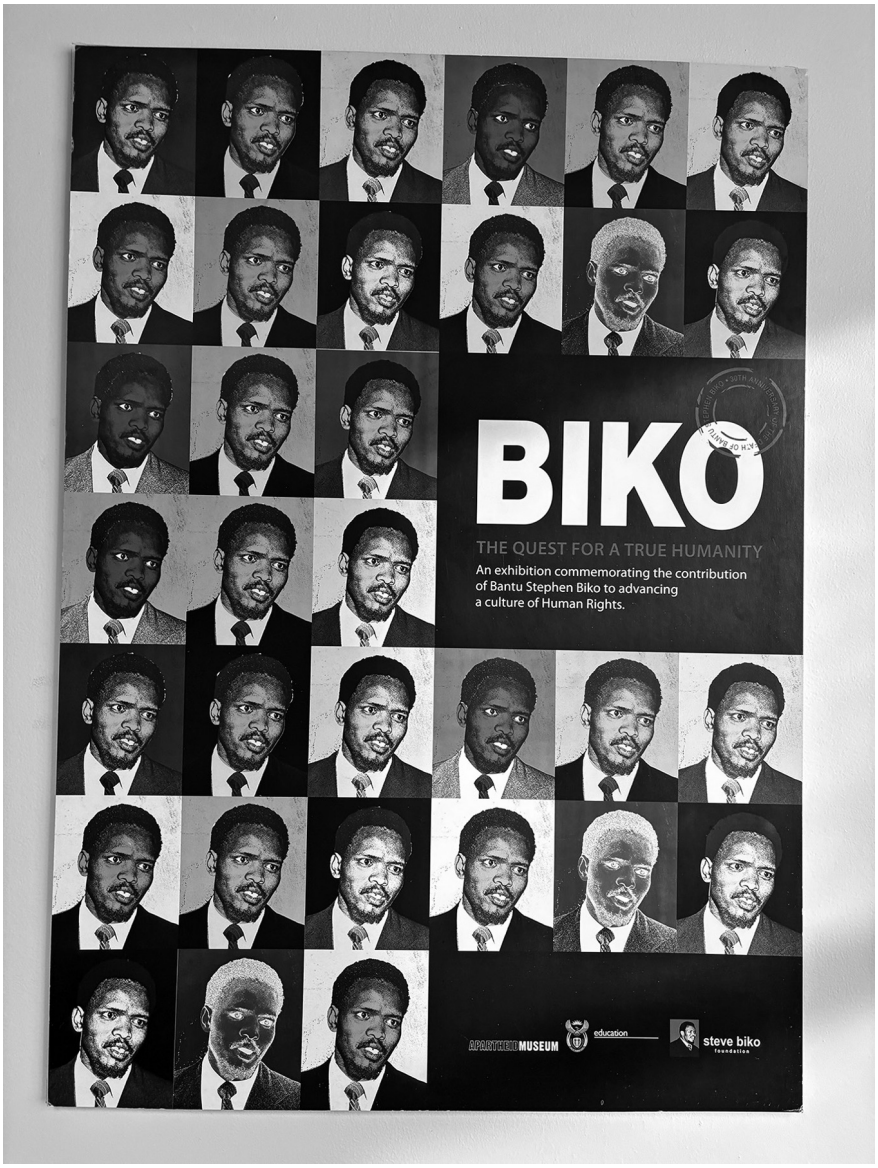

FIGURE 1.7 Exhibition poster for: Biko: The Quest for a True Humanity.

FIGURE 1.8 Attendee at Biko: The Quest for a True Humanity Exhibition.

Notes

1 It is perhaps telling that the landmark volume, *Decolonial Psychology: Toward anticolonial theories, research, training and practice* (Comas-Díaz, Adames & Chavez-Dueñas), was published only in 2024. This is not to detract from this volume – it is an essential resource for a decolonial psychology – but simply to note that critics such as Bulhan (1980, 1985) had been arguing for just such an approach to psychology since the 1980s. See also Bhatia's (2017) *Decolonizing Psychology: Globalization, Social Justice and Indian Youth Identies* and Boonzaier & van Niekerk's (2019) *Decolonising Feminist Community Psychology* as examples of this emerging area of scholarship.

2 There are, of course, exceptions, Bulhan's (1985) *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression* being a prime example. For more recent examples of critical psychology texts that foreground Fanon, see Burman's (2019) *Fanon, Education, Action*, Beshara's (2019) *Decolonial Psychoanalysis*, and Gaztambide's recent (2024) *Decolonizing Psychoanalytic Technique: Putting Freud on Fanon's Couch*.

3 We might call on Fanon here. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, he remarks that anticolonial resistance "does not give back to the national culture its former values and shapes; this struggle which aims at a fundamentally different set of relations between [subjects]… cannot leave intact either the form or content of the people's culture" (1961/1990, pp. 245–246). Camille Robcis (2021) extends this argument: "Fanon", she says, "was equally harsh against the many intellectuals and politicians who preached a return to 'tradition' and who sought to rehabilitate and revalorize precolonial civilizations… [t]he naïve glorification of a past untained by colonialism…was as politically dangerous as the cooptation of the European canon" (pp. 71–72).

4 While not pulling their punches in critiquing the more colonial dimensions of psychoanalysis (for example, Freud's reference to "savages" and his example of how people of "colored descent" are illustrative of preconscious processes, etc.) Gaztambide, Feliciano-Graniela, Hernández and Escobar (2024) nonetheless make the intriguing point that Freud "left behind an unfinished decolonial project" (p. 322). For further elaboration of this argument, see Gaztambide (2024).

5 One may care to moderate this claim, for comparable texts – like Césaire's (1972) *Discourse on Colonialism* – were in existence. What I have specifically in mind here is the novel, bricolage quality of Fanon's critique, his innovative bending of literary, existential, psychoanalytic, phenomenological, and psychiatric modes of commentary into a unique critical vocabulary.

6 For discussion of how the notion of psycho-politics might be developed into "psycho-political validity" see Prilleltensky (2003), and also Prilleltensky and Fox (2007).

7 In one oft-cited instance – nonetheless worth quoting because it is as blunt as it is effective – Fanon remarks, "The rifle [in the dream of a Malagasy man] is not a penis but a genuine rifle, model Lebel 1916" and "The enraged black bull is not the phallus" but is instead nothing "more nor less than the Senegalese police torturer" (1952/1986, p. 79).

8 For an illuminating discussion of why reference to the *concrete* details of embodied lived experience is so essential to a revolutionary politics, see Bernasconi's (2020) discussion of the role of phenomenology in Sartre and Fanon's thought. Briefly put, for Bernasconi, "a one-sided focus on the abstract individual removed from the concrete conditions in which he or she finds him or herself is characteristic of contemporary society and deprives that society of the resources it needs to identify and stay focused on the problems created by systemic racism" (2020, p. 20). That being said, Bernasconi also warns, via Sartre, and in a way which is instructive to our

broader project here, that "one cannot go straight to the concrete, but one must work one's way there in part with tools provided by abstract analysis" (p. 20).

9 Fanon's sociogenetic approach to psychopathology also finds its place here, particularly his insistence, via the idea of "pathologies of liberty", that a wide range of psychopathological symptoms in oppressed/colonized groups need to be grasped as the outcome of a double process, primarily socio-political, and only subsequently internalized. In colonial contexts, "[t]he neurotic structure of the individual is simply the elaboration, the formation, the eruption within the ego, of conflictual clusters arising in part out of the environment and in part out of the purely personal way in which the individual reacts to these influences" (1952/1986, p. 59).

10 Admittedly, the turn to discourse on the part of some critical psychologists was taken in conjunction with an interest in psychoanalytic concepts. The landmark example of such an approach – which has just celebrated its 40th anniversary – is *Changing the Subject* (Henriques et al., 1984a). We might likewise cite Homi Bhabha's work here. While clearly more postcolonial than decolonial in orientation, Bhabha's critical standpoint nonetheless offers much of value. Never dismissive towards post-structural or discursive forms of analysis, Bhabha views these as necessary complements to his particular brand of psychoanalytic theorizing. His project involves extending those attempts, like that of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), to understand formations of colonial knowledge and/or racism in predominantly discursive terms. Indeed, the latter text provides the initial coordinates for Bhabha's own project of postcolonial critique; the challenge of conceptualizing the structure and functioning of colonial discourse remains an imperative across his work. However, the knowledge and power of colonial discourse, like the everyday persistence of racism, cannot for Bhabha (1994) be resolved in purely epistemological terms. Part of the resulting corrective that Bhabha aims to deliver to Said, as Moore-Gilbert (1997) notes – and this is the point we need to apply to the critique of critical psychology – is the awareness that the utilization of discourse is not unaffected by psychical dynamics of desire and ambivalence.

11 For useful historical contextualizations of Black Consciousness in South Africa, see also Ahluwalia and Zegeye (2001), G. Couve (1984), Mzamane (1991), Nengwekhulu (1981) and Sono (1993). For collections of essays on Biko's ongoing political and intellectual legacy, see Pityana et al. (1991), Van Wyk (2007), and Mngxitama, Alexander and Gibson (2008). See also Hook (2014) for a description of Biko's relevance today, alongside a biographical account of his life, an interview with Biko (conducted by Bernard Zylstra) and series of influential essays. Especially noteworthy is Mabogo Percy More's (2017) *Biko: Philosophy, Identity and Liberation*, which provides an excellent explication of the existential ontology of Black Consciousness. Xolela Mangcu's (2012) biography of Biko is also a useful resource.

12 Black Consciousness thought in South Africa is quite clearly not reducible to the influence of Biko alone, as the writings of Fatton (1986), Mnguni (2000), and Manganyi (1973, 1977, 1981) testify. It is also important to locate BC in the context of student politics. Harry Nengwekhulu, Strini Moodley, and Barney Pityana were, along with Steve Biko, among the founder figures of the South African Students' Organization (SASO), which, as Badat (2009) emphasizes,

> was instrumental in establishing the Black People's Convention and youth and cultural organizations, and the Black Community Programme … it gave birth to the Black Consciousness movement, headed it, assumed the responsibility of being the vanguard of internal black political opposition to apartheid.
>
> (p. 118)

13 Or, in Moodley's terms:

> Psychological liberation is very important … we are fighting for physical liberation but what physical liberation is it where you are psychologically unprepared to handle [it]?
>
> (cited in Gibson, 2008, p. 149)

14 Fanon puts it this way in *The Wretched of the Earth*: "Colonialism is not satisfied with snaring the people in its net or of draining the colonized brain of any form or substance. With a kind perverted logic, it turns its attention to the past of the colonized people and distorts it, disfigures it, and destroys it" (1961/1990, p. 149).

15 Of all Black Consciousness theorists active in South Africa during apartheid, Manganyi (1973) was perhaps the most explicitly psychological in his thinking and conceptualization (unsurprisingly perhaps, given that he was a clinical psychologist). In respect of how best to conceptualize human freedom within Black Consciousness, Manganyi referred to "phenomenologically and existentially oriented psychotherapies", citing the value of "[Jean Paul] Sartre's… *Being and Nothingness*; [Viktor] Frankl's *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*; [Rollo] May's *Psychology and the Human Dilemma*; Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology and Perception* and [Erik] Fromm's *Escape from Freedom*" (1973, p. 22).

16 One also needs to remember that Foucault's (1977) critique of self-subjectivizing modes of power occurs within the context of (neo)liberal, democratic Western societies, and in reference to individualized, personalized subjects, who constitute a very different set of referents to the dehumanized positioning of Black men and women in apartheid. In terms of the latter, subjectivization is itself a progressive political, and properly *liberatory* aim, given that it entails a programme and definition of identity that responds to apartheid as a system of dehumanization.

17 Rebadulla, Guerrero and David (2024) define colonial mentality as "a specific type of internalized oppression wherein colonized individuals find themselves suffering from internalized negative views, a loss of dignity, and an overall sense of inferiority toward their colonizer" (p. 16).

18 The Black Consciousness Movement here went so far as to retain the negative apartheid appellation of "non-white" to refer to "black" collaborators with the apartheid regime who hoped to advance their own interests through the support of apartheid structures. "The fact that we are not White does not necessarily mean that we are all Black. Non-whites do exist and will continue to exist" (Biko, cited in Buthelezi, 1991, p. 121). Biko states elsewhere, "Any black man who props the system up actively has lost the right to being considered part of the black world … These are colourless white lackeys who live in a marginal world of unhappiness" (Biko, 1978, p. 78).

19 Wilson (1991) notes that Biko had read Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and that he, along with a series of other Black Consciousness stalwarts (including Barney Pityana, Bokwe Mafuna, Saths Cooper, Strini Moodley, and Deborah Matshoba), attended a series of intensive training workshops on Freire's methodology. Crucial in this respect was the notion of teaching as a fundamentally political act directed at the goal of transforming society. "The trainees … needed to be able to submerge themselves in the context of the learners … to be able to listen while encouraging listeners to unveil and unpackage their lives and experiences and problems" (Wilson, 1991, p. 35).

20 This should not be taken as representing a crudely segregationist viewpoint; rather, Biko's (1978) concern is that Blacks should not always be interpreted by whites.

21 Although I am focusing here on courage as a basis of affective solidarity, it is worthwhile introducing the important argument Erasmus (2009) advances on the ethical importance of political love, a theme she develops by drawing together Fanon's various references to love as a means of recovering the human. Although Erasmus is fully conscious of the ongoing necessity to combat racism, she also points to the critical humanist imperative of establishing new "solidarities based on affinities of social concern and of practice" (p. 8). Such solidarities necessarily exceed the parameters of racial categorization. The new communal ties she has in mind, that is to say, the particular form of political love, would be necessarily "broader than loving blackness" (p. 8). In other words, rather than a retroactive reading of Biko that advocates a potentially separatist agenda, the political objective today is that of "open closure", the challenge, differently put, of establishing new post-apartheid solidarities that disregard affiliations of racial membership:

> Black consciousness advocated … an emancipatory, defiant posture … for black people as active social agents. This is the challenge Biko's thought poses for us today: to live outside of conventional "race" postures of this time.
>
> (2009, p. 2)

22 Elsewhere I have developed the implications of Biko's pronouncement via a reading of Fanon's idea of the zone of nonbeing alongside a Lacanian account of the revolutionary subjectivity of the drive (Hook, 2020). For a discussion of "Biko and the *problematique* of death", see Sithole (2016).

23 Such a political ethics of death is likewise described in an anecdote Wilderson tells of a mass meeting held in 1992 in preparation for a march on the "homeland" border of Ciskei. When the room of a hundred or so singing comrades was informed that their planned actions would be met by a violent military response, they erupted in singing and applause. This apparently incongruous reaction – incongruous at least from the perspective of the small minority of white colleagues present who had a less unconditional relation to the struggle – exemplified something of crucial importance for Wilderson. The dramatic affective discrepancy between joy and anxiety connoted for him two

> divergent structures of feeling … a contrast in conceptions of suffering [that was] symptomatic of irreconcilable differences in how and where Blacks were positioned [in apartheid]. … in relation to non-Blacks.
>
> (2008, p. 97)

24 Mandela also had reservations, as Boehmer (2008) rightly points out, that Black Consciousness thought was overly influenced by African American and European existential ideas of self-determination, when it could have done more to explore indigenous South African histories of African resistance to white European rule.

25 Some would view this less as an internal shortcoming of BC than as a debate contested within the movement itself. Buthelezi (1991) notes:

> Long and heated debates were conducted amongst BCM adherents about the advisability … of establishing a political movement … to mobilise the oppressed into a united force. … One side argued for the formation of a political organisation with a strong political programme … [This side was] impatient with the notion of conscientising people outside of a clear-cut political programme … Those on the other side of the debate maintained that Blacks had to learn from their past experience and not just respond in a predictable way which would expose them to a ruthless repressive system … [They] felt that it would be

> better to invest in conscientising Blacks through non-threatening vehicles such as existing community, church, youth and cultural organizations.
>
> (p. 125)

26 Before reaching the conclusion that the ANC's organized party politics necessarily represents a more realistic or superior option to that of Black Consciousness, we should consider the words of Gibson (2008):

> Politically the ANC became hegemonic but as a pragmatic, multi-tendency organization it was at best strategic and always limiting and limited in terms of ideas and discussion. It never … matched the philosophic potential of Black Consciousness. It was never interested in a radical humanist program based on lively discussion with Black South Africans but remained a pragmatic amalgam of a leftist rhetoric.
>
> (p. 131)

27 Interestingly, for some, the same might be said of the provisional uses that Black Consciousness makes of the "idiom" of Christianity. Pityana for one considered Black Theology and BC to be inextricably linked, notes Jeffery (2009), describing the one as "the genus of the other" (p. 16). Biko's (1978) writings do make strategic appeal to the ideals and values of Christianity. "Black theology … is a situational interpretation of Christianity" he says (1978). "It seeks to relate the present-day black man to God within the given context of the black man's suffering" (p. 59). For more on Biko's strategic use of religion, see Maluleke (2008).

28 While mainstream phenomenology has for decades failed to adequately recognize the importance of Fanon's contribution to phenomenology, a series of scholars within the field of critical phenomenology have explored the multiple implications of Fanon's uses of phenomenology – see for example the edited collection *Fanon, Phenomenology and Psychology* (Laubscher, Hook & Desai, 2021) but also Karera (2020) and Ngo (2017). Fanon is now credited with being a forefather of critical phenomenology.

29 Much of the same problem arises in connection with Fanon's use of the notion of alienation, which in its economic/materialist/Marxist resonances cannot be reduced to a psychological notion (see Bulhan, 1985; Zahar, 1969).

30 Why then the apparent absence of Marxist terminology within the varied conjunctions of such "vernacular critique"? Moodley (1991) emphasizes that Marxism was often viewed as a white ideology, and therefore rejected by proponents of Black Consciousness. Another reason, noted by Nolutshungu (1982), was more circumstantial: Marxist literature was banned at the universities to which Black students were permitted entry. The predominance of "existentialism, phenomenology and philosophical psychology" in Black Consciousness thought was in part due to the fact that these were amongst the interests of the "European-oriented faculty" at the time (Moodley, 1991, p. 146).

31 The call to decolonize various knowledge systems has become a widespread rallying cry within the academy and associated institutions over the last ten years (and has been particularly important in the South African context). A significant body of literature now exists on this topic, one particularly pertinent example of which – given our current concerns – is *Fanon and the Decolonization of Philosophy* (Hoppe & Nicholls, 2010).

32 There is a recent yet burgeoning literature on decolonial methodologies within psychology, see particularly the (2019) volume *Decolonial Feminist Community Psychology* (edited by Floretta Boonzaier and Taryn van Niekerk) but also Barnes (2018), Fish and Gone (2024), Neville, Lee and Moghsoodi (2024) and Seedat and Suffla (2017).

33 A crucial reference here – and for decolonial theory, scholarship and action more generally – is Mignolo's (2000, 2007) idea of border thinking: "border thinking is not directed toward 'improving' the disciplines, but toward 'using' the disciplines beyond the disciplines themselves, aiming and building a world without….coloniality" (Mignolo, 2000, xvii).

34 Sithole speaks of the exclusion of Biko's Black Consciousness philosophy from the scholarly realm in terms which apply equally well to Biko's reception in the discipline of psychology: "Even though decolonial philosophy qua Black Consciousness is stigmatized as 'not philosophy' or 'not philosophical enough' by both analytical and continental traditions, it is philosophy, and it does not need any legitimization from these traditions. For being decolonial in intent and action, it is a philosophy that aims to undo the legacy of oppression" (2016, p. 23).

35 I have considered how Afro-pessimism might be – cautiously, strategically – linked to psychoanalytic theorizations (particularly those pertaining to notions of *jouissance*, drive and psychical repression) elsewhere (Hook, 2019, 2022a, 2022b).

36 Things become a little more complicated, however, if we pause here to draw the conceptual distinction between the content of a statement and the enunciative or declarative use of this content. Applied to our current concerns, this would be the distinction between the *content* of Black Consciousness thought and the *declarative use* to which white authors put it as a way of positioning themselves. (What is thus potentially performed, as S. Ahmed (2004a) has argued, is the pretense of a distancing of white subjects from their own whiteness). In my own case, what might be claimed is that my professed fidelity to Biko performatively enacts the evidence of my own apparent anti-racism just as it obscures the issue of my own historical complicity in apartheid.

This is a seemingly intractable problem, one that I have discussed at some length elsewhere (Hook, 2011). Suffice for now to say that this – the declarative attempt to maintain the image of an anti-racist, anti-apartheid subject – is not a charge I can fully separate myself from. What is called for here is in fact neither a defence of my subjective position, nor the *mea culpa* of the guilty racist subject. After all, acknowledgements of historical racism, as S. Ahmed (2004a) intimates, work all too often as an easy – if not calculated – means of (anti-racist) redemption. What is more useful here is an acknowledgment of an impasse, one of several that we will discover in subsequent chapters, an impasse that may itself prove an important halfway point in an ongoing project of critique.

37 In his important critique of how mainstream psychology has historically depoliticized consciousness-raising "so that it reflects little more than a therapeutic mode of self-help", Malherbe (2023, p. 456) coined the term unconsciousness-raising. His hope is that those "working within the psychoanalytic tradition of liberation psychology" might helpfully expand "the political capacities of consciousness-raising process" by using it to "recognize how the unconscious structures emancipatory political organizing" (p. 456). He argues that "psychoanalysts who are situated within the liberation psychology paradigm can contribute to a suitably emancipatory configuration of consciousness raising" (p. 460).

2

ABJECTION AS A POLITICAL FACTOR

Racism and the "extra-discursive"

Black men would buy milk stout beer there… It looked toxic… I would never drink that … [There was an] "African toilet", which always smelled bad … [it] was [an] area that somehow existed below (but within) the… white suburb. … There was also an open-air barber nearby … The question that sometimes presented itself … was whether I would ever get my hair cut … at a place like this; whether it would even be possible, whether these were different clippers for different hair… or that this was ridiculous because such unhygienic conditions – dirty clippers, unclean scissors… There were often bits of black hair scattered around this … dusty section of ground that I crossed between my bus-stop and home… These little… bits…bodily scraps … seemed always so different to my own.

(Apartheid Archive Project, N59)

Steve Biko walked tall in a land where black men and women were expected to have bent backs … He died strong in body, sturdy in conviction, full of unbending belief, the subject and owner of his own death. He suffered a terrible death at the hands of a grotesque and brutal power – Biko's captive's body locked up, tortured, injured, stripped down, chained, the object of mutilation, a human waste that had been utterly disgraced before being lynched. … [The apartheid security police] wanted his death to be the epitome of indignity and abjection, the symbol of a derisory and superfluous humanity, in the manner of a slave's death.

(Mbembe, 2007, p. 137)

Sealed into that crushing objecthood, I turned beseechingly to others … my body suddenly abraded into non-being … I burst apart … The black man

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> has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man … In the white world the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema … The body is surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty …
>
> (Fanon, 1952/1986, p. 82)

> The custom, it appears, is that after a person of colour has drunk from a cup the cup must be smashed.
>
> (Coetzee, 1997, p. 157)

Chapter 1 outlined the necessity of a vernacular psychology of decolonial critique. It described the basic elements of a Black Consciousness stance as premised on the objective of overturning the multiple dehumanizations, denigrations, and abjections of colonial racism. We turn now to an adjacent yet distinct task – unavoidable in any adequate engagement with the apartheid/colonial context of anti-Blackness – that of confronting precisely these dehumanizing features of racism. Both such tasks are Fanonian. Whereas the first draws upon the existential, phenomenological facets of Fanon's work – where appeals to lived experience are crucial – the second utilizes psychoanalytic theories and conceptualizations to think through the psychical underpinnings and operations that make anti-Black racism so tenacious.

Once again, Fanon's (1952/1986) *Black Skin, White Masks* provides an invaluable – even if frequently disturbing – resource. This latter quality is not a feature of the text, I would argue, that we should overlook. It is not so much the historical distance of its key scenarios or even the brutal colonial context of the racism that it investigates that makes Fanon's book such a disconcerting read. It is perhaps something of the body-in-pieces of this text – its uneasy *bricolage* of different voices, differing theoretical and literary influences – this aspect of *traumatic assemblage* that ensures that the book replicates in its *form* something of the phenomenon studied: the facts of psychic violence and bodily destruction, of body–psyche alignments broken down and troublingly reassembled.

What we might term the "Fanonian real" – a "real" of racism apparent in the disjunctions of a phenomenology of the body overwritten by the various materialities (and mentalities) of colonial racism – is what informs my concerns in this chapter. The reference to Lacan's notion of the real, namely that *which troubles the structures of the symbolic and exceeds discursive capture*, seems justified in this respect. This is not only because Fanon highlights the essentially *traumatic* quality of racism – after all, the traumatic, as rupture of bodily and ego boundaries, as a failure of symbolic processing, provides an exemplary instance of the real. The notion of the real is also relevant in view

of Fanon's emphasis on the seemingly unbridgeable antagonism evinced in the colonial encounter (in which "one's blackness or one's whiteness [exists] in full narcissistic cry, each sealed into his … particularity" (1952/1986, p. 31)).[1] Crucially also, Fanon's writing routinely evokes the bodiliness of racism, reminding us that however advanced its forms, racism never fails to return to, and resume a relation with, the body.

This chapter is thus concerned with colonial racism as it manifests, in Judith Butler's (1993) phrase, as an "operation of repulsion". An operation that relies on what we might term a *body–ego–symbolic* series of expulsions in which a rudimentary logic of exclusion is retraced and reiterated at physical, psychological, and symbolic levels. We have thus a sequence of registers of denigration that would appear to be both ascending and descending, operating in *body–ego–symbolic* and *symbolic–ego–body* directions, a routing that links the visceral, the subjective, and the societal. My agenda in developing such a conceptualization of racism is to make the case that discourse analytic approaches – analytical perspectives that prioritize the reproduction of text and talk, of meaning and symbolization – are not adequate to the task of apprehending racism in its ostensibly "extra-discursive" bodily and libidinal dimensions. As I will argue, a supplementary form of analysis is required in this respect, one better able to grapple with the traumatic "reals" – excesses of affect, impossibilities of bodily and societal harmonization – that condition colonial racism. Nonetheless, I am also aware of the danger of naive appeals to the ostensibly primal realm of the affective, or to a supposedly extra-symbolic domain lying beyond the horizon of all discursive forms. This provides a sense of the challenge that lies ahead: a critique of the limitations of predominantly *textual* approaches to the analysis of racism that does not overstep the mark by dismissing the importance of the structural and symbolic parameters that necessarily bind social life.

Here, as in other chapters, the body is of central importance. The body itself presents a mode of the "real", by virtue of the disjunction between corporeal experience and symbolic means. There is, as Bryson (1996) puts, drawing on Wittgenstein, no sign that adequately conveys my pain; pain exists "beyond my powers to represent it to others" (p. 219).[2] One of my aims in what follows is to show how the phenomenological terrain of the body operates as something of a "dormant register", that is, as a vessel of (corporeal, libidinal, "extra-discursive") experience that is never completely domesticated by discourse. This bodily register – a seemingly inactive dimension within instances of so-called "new", "modern" or "symbolic racism" (Kinder & Sanders, 1996; McConahay, 1986; McConahay & Hough, 1976; Sears, 1993; Sears & Henry, 2003, 2005)[3] – can, under certain circumstances, be reactivated, operating thus as the grounds for exclusionary logics and sentiments.

This is the "sensuality" of racism that Fanon understood all too well: the racism of fearful bodies, anxieties of racial proximity, the physicality of racial fear that manifests in the racist's abrupt "psycho-visceral" reactions to the racial other. Such a preoccupation with bodily containment and the avoidance of physical intimacies was characteristic of apartheid racism, as was the case in the separation of eating places and toilets; in the use of different eating utensils for Blacks (typically, in most white households, tin plates, and cups); and in contamination anxieties (white concerns about Black cooks handling food; the township as the problem of sewage management, disease).[4]

While sharing Fanon's concern with the apparent omnipresence of the bodily in racism, I extend his focus on the bodily phenomenology of those subjected to racism by exploring racism "in the real" as a mode of reactivity that comes to be routed through the dreads and aversions of the body. My focus, in short, is on an embodied form of racism that is played through, and substantiated by, the body's economy of separations and distinctions. Importantly, however, such bodily logic is always of a contextualized and political sort; it connects to and supports both psychological and symbolic exclusions and segregations. We must not in this respect make the mistake of isolating the question of bodily (or, seemingly *affective*) phenomenology from the coordinates of its socio-symbolic and historical location. There is thus a double objective in what follows, not only to examine those facets of racism that elude the analytical grasp of discursive/symbolic approaches, but to offer a conceptualization of a mode of racism that takes hold and is constantly reiterated via a series of (corporeal, psychological, symbolic) border anxieties and expulsions that defy rational and discursive mediation, and that assume the façade of a seemingly natural or instinctive reaction in the process.

Given the complexity of this task and its importance to my concerns in this book, I have opted to divide this chapter into two sections. In the first – which provides the necessary context to my discussion of abjection as a political factor – I draw attention to the benefits of certain critical psychology perspectives on racism and also pinpoint a series of limitations to discourse analytic approaches. I focus, briefly, on a series of attempts to combine discourse analysis and psychoanalysis. I also outline the problem of the "extra-discursive" and discuss the issue of racism beyond social construction. The second section introduces the idea of abjection as an operation of repulsion, one that allows us to understand the full implications of the Fanonian real, that is, the violence of an "extra-discursive" form of colonial racism that impacts bodily, libidinal and symbolic registers. I use this section of the chapter not only to critique many standard applications of the theory of abjection itself, but also to assert a series of key distinctions (between the symbolic and the socially constructed; between imaginary and symbolic dimensions of racism), advancing also important arguments regarding the

depoliticizing tendency of explanations by way of affect, and the shortcomings of conceptualizing racism merely as an ego–to-ego phenomenon. I close by advocating the analytical use of the notion of abjection as a means of connecting the various facets of the Fanonian real of racism, and as a prospective means of linking discourse analytic and psychoanalytic frames in the context of apprehending racism.

The critical psychology of racism and the problem of the "extra-discursive"

Racism-in-words

My concerns in this chapter should be contextualized within the frame of critical social psychology, and with respect to what the conceptual tools of psychoanalysis might offer us such that this form of psychology might respond to the imperatives of a decolonial agenda. In what follows, I make the case for a conceptualization that complements historical discursive/constructionist approaches to racism, which significantly supplements the critical instruments that this perspective has supplied us, yet that also directs our attention to its potential blind spots. *A decolonial approach must go beyond deconstructing problematic representations of racial/cultural otherness; it must grapple with the experiential domain of bodily being and how racism invades this ontological realm.*

Critics such as Bulhan (1985), D. Foster (1991, 1999), and Howitt and Owusu-Bempah (1994) have argued that attempts within psychology to isolate racism to the aberrant subject or to faults of cognition effectively turn a problem of social power into a problem of individual psychology. Social cognition and self-categorization theories make for two cases in point; these are theories that, by contrast to discourse analysis, have come to "portray prejudice as an inevitable outcome of human cognitive structure" and have thereby "excused racists from being accountable for their attitudes and behaviours" (Augoustinos & Reynolds, 2001, p. 21). As Leach (2002) has pointed out, much classical social psychology views racist activity as "a function of weak personality, biased perception or ethnocentric categorization. … [ultimately locating] prejudice in the individuated person rather than in societal practices and institutions" (p. 440). The discursive conceptualization does not convert the social and political dimensions of racism into a set of internal psychological processes, it thus avoids transforming them into the information processing mechanisms of individuals, as Henriques (1984) puts it – and as such avoids abstracting racist ideation and behavior out of their immediate social, structural, and institutional environments (Condor, 1988; Edwards, 2003; Rapley, 1998, 2001; van den Berg, Wetherell & Houtkoop, 2003; Van Dijk, 1987, 1992; Wetherell, 1996; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Not only then does

the perspective of discursive psychology endeavor to show how racism is linked to processes of social, political, and economic domination and marginalization; it also sheds light on how such phenomena come to be naturalized within society at trans-individual and extra-personal levels (Billig, 2001; Durrheim & Dixon, 2000; LeCouteur & Augoustinos, 2001; Verkuyten, 1997, 1998). The discursive approach to racism is thus a valuable means of combating reductive and overly psychologizing understandings of racist phenomena. It enables us to grapple with the repeatability, the conventionality of racism as a "regularizing collectivity" of meaning and social practice that confers resources of dominance – be it in the form of "interpretative repertoires" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) or "flexible positional authority" (Said, 1983) – to select groups while denying them to others.

These benefits notwithstanding, it remains crucial to explore the limitations of such an approach, limitations that center on its inability to conceptualize racism in its least "signifiable" aspects. This is a type of racism not primarily representational or institutional in form, a sort that is often less than conscious or intentional in nature. We are dealing here with a modality of experience that need not take verbal form and that is realized in impulses, played out in aversions and reactions of the body, a racism that appears to remain as of yet unconditioned by discourse.

This challenge, I should emphasize, is as theoretical as it is political. It is theoretical inasmuch as racism is a complex and over-determined set of phenomena that elude easy, or intuitive, conceptualization. And it is political in as much as we cannot properly apprehend racism if we have failed to understand adequately what sustains it, what lends it potent affective qualities, and what supports its most visceral aspects. One might refer to Miles (1989) in this respect, who, speaking of the relation of theory and practice in the fight against racism, notes, "if the analysis is wrong, then it is likely that the political strategy will not achieve the intended objectives" (p. 5).

Discursive capture: racism as text

In order to demonstrate the limitations of discourse analytic conceptualizations of racism I will need to provide a brief impression of the distinctive preoccupations of such approaches. In this respect, I mean neither to provide an extensive overview nor simply to lump together a variety of discursive perspectives that maintain important differences from one another (for an extensive review, see LeCouteur & Augoustinos, 2001; Rapley, 2001).

From the perspective of discursive psychology, racism is to be approached "as an interactional, language-based practice" (LeCouteur & Augoustinos, 2001, p. 230). The analysis of discourse affords us the opportunity, in Rapley's (2001) terms, to inspect talk, and to thus study how "issues of race and racism are confected, constructed and contested in actual social

practices" (p. 236). The discursive framework enables us to scrutinize the ways in which "realities are constructed and warranted around issues of race and ethnicity in … elite, institutional, and everyday, informal talk and texts" (LeCouteur & Augoustinos, 2001, p. 230). "In this view", says Margaret Wetherell,

> the derogatory categorizations and group descriptions which form the basis of racist talk are best seen as rhetorical and communicative acts rather than as perceptual or cognitive phenomena.
>
> *(1996, p. 220)*

It is important here not to lose sight of questions of social and institutional practice. An important analysis of racism within South African psychology, for example, views racist phenomena as elements of "a set of ideas and discursive and material practices aimed at (re)producing and justifying systematic inequalities between races" (N. Duncan et al., 2001, p. 2). Similarly, Wetherell and Potter's important (1992) study defines racist discourse as that "which has the effect of establishing, sustaining and reinforcing oppressive power relations between those defined as racially or ethnically different" (p. 70). While their analytical focus is "on meanings, conversations, narratives, explanations, accounts and anecdotes", Wetherell and Potter (1992) are careful to acknowledge that the study of racism should not be equated merely with the study of certain statements of talk and writing:

> [R]acism is [not] a simple matter of linguistic practice. Investigations of racism must also focus on institutional practices, on discriminatory actions and on social structures and social divisions.
>
> *(p. 3)*

Van Dijk, another prominent proponent of discourse analysis (1984, 1987, 1993b, 1998), is similarly cautious not to reduce racism to the analytical domain of the textual. Discourse, he advances, is one type of discriminatory practice among others. He provides a delimited definition of discourse as "a specific communicative event, in general, and a written or oral form of verbal interaction or language use, in particular" (2002, p. 146). It is clear from his approach – an approach that favors the technically sophisticated analysis of structures of discourse and linguistic devices – that racism is a larger phenomenon than discourse alone:

> Theoretically my approach to the discursive reproduction of racism analyses discourse as an interface between macro and micro levels of racism (i.e. between racism as a system of ethnic group dominance and racism as everyday discriminatory practice), between social actions and cognitions

> (again at the micro and macro levels, namely as actions and ideologies of groups or institutions, and as actions and attitudes of social members) … such insights should contribute to a broader multidisciplinary study of contemporary racism.
>
> *(Van Dijk, 1993a, p. 98)*

As is apparent from this quote, Van Dijk's approach allows for a broader consideration of cognitive functioning – memory processes and other social cognitions – than does the approach of, say, Wetherell and Potter (1992).

Miles (1989) provides an important benchmark within the broad range of discursive approaches. He defines racism as "a process of signification" (p. 3) that works by attributing meanings in a way that creates rigid systems of categorization. Here, racism is understood as a specific discourse that involves (1) particular representations of real or imagined somatic features and (2) attributions of negatively evaluated characteristics. These processes are supported by "racialization", a dialectical process in which social relations between people have been structured by the signification of certain human characteristics in ways that construct differentiated social collectivities. Miles (1989) insists that "the concept of racism should be used to refer only to what can broadly be called an ideology" (p. 3), ideology here is understood as referring to any discourse that represents human beings and the social relations between them in a distorted manner: "ideology is a specific form of discourse" (p. 42).

By limiting the concept of racism, which he asserts must be "defined as [a] representational phenomenon" (p. 79), Miles runs the risk of a type of textual reductionism whereby all racism is viewed as amenable to the analysis of representations. This problem stems from his concern that "the concept of racism has come to refer not only to imagery and assertions, but also to practices, procedures and outcomes, often independent of human intentionality and specific ideological content" (p. 3). In such a potential over-stretching of the concept, we are, for Miles at least, left with a vague and under-defined term. Miles is thus motivated by the question of analytical accuracy – "the analytical value of [the] concept [of racism] is determined by its utility in describing and explaining societal processes" (p. 77). He is, in addition, concerned with the dangers of insidiously reifying exactly those discursive entities (race, attributions of "whiteness", "Blackness") that a critical analysis of racism should attempt to deconstruct. As regards the first of these reservations, one can only suggest that a different analytical framework needs to be devised exactly so that those practices, symptoms, and behaviors that seem to be independent of intentionality and ideological content can be brought into critical visibility. Regarding the second reservation: yes, we must remain constantly vigilant that our frame of analysis is able to deconstruct the idea of race, and that terms like race are often insidiously essentialized even in our critical analytical use

thereof. However, the fact of the *constructed* nature of such categories does not mean that we should foreclose supplementary forms of analysis that do not focus only on the representational domain and its powers of reification. Such different explanatory routes may, after all, have much to offer as regards how a given set of discursive constructions are consolidated and substantiated at prepropositional or "extra-discursive" levels.

Clearly then, not all discursive conceptualizations are as prone to reducing racism to the textual, that is, to acts of representation and rhetoric, to patterns of language use, to symbolic and communicative acts. Nevertheless, there remains a tendency within much discourse analytic methodology to reduce racism to talk, an overwhelming analytical prioritization of words and significations over and above contexts, institutions, and associated social practices. That is to say, whether the frame of discourse analysis is extended "outwards" so as to include issues of social structure and material practice, or "inwards" to consider more carefully the role of cognitive functioning – each of which, one might argue, cannot be directly accessed through the *critical scrutiny of texts* – there are at least three fundamental factors of racism that remain conspicuously absent.

These are factors, emphasized in my opening reference to Fanon, that remain fundamental to the lived experience of racism, to racism in the real: embodiment, the affective (or, indeed, the *libidinal*), and that experiential domain that we may refer to as the "extra-discursive", namely that which evades symbolic mediation, discursive capture. In what follows, I will refer to each of these three factors collectively, with the tentative label of "extra-discursive racism". Each of these factors remains crucial in Fanon's pained and frequently lyrical attempts to illustrate the more visceral devices of racism. They remain, however, absent from the analytical work of the above analysts, precluded from an epistemological frame that prioritizes textual data. It would seem then that there are serious limitations to a mode of critical social psychology that (1) hopes to analyze social phenomena exclusively within a textual/discursive frame, and (2) neglects those insidious factors of racism that I have highlighted above, preferring to grapple only with those phenomena of racism that can be accessed with the tools provided by discourse analysis.

We may extend these concerns by posing a series of questions to discursive approaches to racism. Does such a mode of analysis adequately explain the intensity of the racist's subjective/affective investment in his or her racism, that is, the "psychical density", the passionate attachments, the libidinal enjoyments, exemplified in racist phenomena? Is the extraordinarily affective dimension of racist behaviors and identifications – its nervous and seemingly reiterative or repetitive quality – best captured within the terms of textual frames of analysis? A related consideration: does such an

approach enable us to fathom those crucial elements of identification that might differentiate the degree of one subject's racism from another?

What is perhaps evident here is my concern that the complexities of subjectivity cannot be reduced to discursive subject positions or interpretative repertoires alone. Despite then that discursive explanations are able to grapple with covert or censored forms of racism, with contradictory or unintentional views and actions on the level of expression, one may nonetheless ask whether they are able to account for how racist phenomena may in fact be *constitutively ambivalent* – involving the factors of desire, attraction, and/or sexuality in their formation – such that they remain fundamentally paradoxical, taking the form of unconscious identifications, defenses, and repressions? Can they, furthermore, understand the virtual omnipresence of *the body* in racism, by which I mean to reiterate not merely the socially constructed body, but the fact, again as intimated by Fanon (1952/1986), that racism may be a "mode of reactivity" routed through the charges and viscera of the body? Lastly, and perhaps most bluntly: why is it that one could (theoretically) change the concerned social constructions of race, transform the terms of public discourse, and change even the material and structural conditions of society such that there are no longer any material rewards for being racist, and still expect that racism would nevertheless persist?

Racism beyond social construction

It helps now to turn to the psychoanalytic literature on racism, a body of work typically neglected within the domain of social psychology. Something is lost by way of explanation, by way of critical analytical engagement, by such an elision. As a series of authors have recently cautioned, we cannot explain prejudice and bigotry merely as sets of representational content, as solely the effects of asymmetrical social structure, the outcome of purely conscious beliefs and political effects (Cheng, 2000; Seshadri-Crooks, 2000; Žižek, 1998). Racism's irrational forms for Lane (1998b) "elude explanation by sole reference to either conscious precepts or social history" (p. 2). Shepherdson (1998), similarly concerned with the limits of constructionism and historicism, questions whether issues of race can be adequately grasped as only a matter of "discursive effect or … purely through symbolic formation" (p. 44). The full significance of the concept of race, he (1998) argues, remains irreducible to the analysis of historical and discursive context; to understand racism we need an awareness of the psychical representations of race; only then can the peculiar tenacity of this concept be addressed. Winnubst (2004) extends this observation by noting that psychoanalytic theory provides the tools with which to answer "what social constructionist approaches assume but never adequately account for", namely the fact of

"how race attaches to individual bodies and psyche … while simultaneously operating through a trans-social logic" (p. 43). Her criticism of social constructionist/discursive approaches is blunt:

> [I]f it is through the embodiment of race that racism works, then the conception that race is socially constructed is, in its inability to articulate the complex processes of embodiment, insufficient to diagnose the mechanisms and structures of racism.
>
> *(p. 43)*

Psychoanalysis, she proclaims, provides opportunities to articulate how race is historically and socially constructed and yet, nevertheless, individually embodied. Clarke (2003), similarly expresses reservations over the recent preponderance of sociological/discursive analyses of racism, many of which fail, in his estimation, to address a series of core issues:

> [F]irst, the ubiquity of forms of discrimination and the affective component of hatred; second … the sheer rapidity, the explosive, almost eruptive quality of ethnic hatred … Third … the visceral and embodied nature of racism … Finally, the *psychological structuring* of discrimination … the psychological mechanisms … [of] hate.
>
> *(pp. 2–3)*

One of the problems of sociological accounts that view racist discourse as a self-perpetuating system is that we are left with a rather bloodless image of racism, a form of racism *sans* the participation of passionate human subjects. As Coetzee (1991) intimates, the risk taken in pursuing such a line of analysis is that the factors of desire, irrationality – and, we might add, libidinal enjoyment – are elided within accounts of historical change. In an overview of various sociological and psychological attempts to theorize racism, Foster (1991) concurs with such a view, observing that psychoanalysis has been more successful than many other attempts "at explaining the symbolic and emotional intensity, the apparent 'madness' and the deep resistance to change which are all so characteristic of racism" (p. 72).

The factor of passion is not something an adequate analysis of racism can forego, certainly not for Jacqueline Rose (2007), who reminds us that hate provides us with an intense mode of pleasure. Hate, indeed, is "one of the psyche's most satisfying emotions" (p. 20), and the pleasure it provides – a point she makes with reference to Christopher Bollas – more often than not far exceeds our interests in befriending the world. These comments are consonant with a Lacanian perspective (Miller, 1994; Žižek, 1993, 1997, 2005), which emphasizes racism's links to *jouissance*, that is, to the intensities of the

"obscene" libidinal modes of enjoyment that exceed symbolic encapsulation. This may be the case in the negative pleasures of racist hate itself, that is, the envious hatred of the other's (incomprehensible, foreign) way of experiencing *jouissance*. It may likewise be evidenced in the aggressive defensiveness of the perception that such enjoyments are attained only via the theft of what is most precious and irreplaceable about one's own unique forms of enjoyment (those facets of one's traditional cultural way of life that exceed symbolic registration).

The above critics are thus all in agreement with Lane (1998b): conventional emphasis on racism's material and discursive history tends to ignore this phenomenon's impalpable forms. To consider racism simply as the outcome of "cultural fixation or residue of historical prejudice is not sufficiently helpful", he advances, "It remains for us to interpret this phenomenon's astonishing intransigence", to understand something of "the complicated relationship between subjects and their symbolic structures" (Lane, 1998b, pp. 2–3). The attempt to grasp racism beyond the terms of its discursive capture is thus propelled by an urgent imperative: to grapple with racism's uncanny logic of return, as Žižek (1998) puts it, with the fact of apparently growing levels of hostility and hatred toward minorities even in societies where equality and democracy have become enshrined political ideals.

Historicist, discursive, institutional, or sociological accounts of racism seem, in other words, to beg a complementary theorization. Aware that previous psychoanalytic attempts at understanding racism have sidelined the "sociosymbolic context of cultural values and identifications that generate racist reactions to the experience of ethnic otherness", Žižek (1998) nonetheless contends that socio-economic and culturalist accounts of racism "simply return to each other their own lack" (p. 154). In other words, when socio-economic analysis fails to account for some key feature of racism, such critics evoke a need to supplement it with an analysis of the cultural context, a situation that occurs also in the other direction. Neither approach thus provides a complete account of the analyzed phenomenon. What is required is a more careful designation of the link between social structures and psychical consequences, a link that psychoanalysis can help illuminate.

The sequence of questions I asked above may now be supplemented by another series, which will, I hope, make it clear that my intent is not simply to displace the scrutiny of racism's symbolic forms, but to understand how racism-as-representation *necessarily* functions in combination with "extra-discursive" elements. So, for example, how might we account for the disproportionate grip that certain orders of representation (as opposed to others) exercise over us? What is it that locks racist patterns of depiction into such insistent cycles of repetition? Why is it that such patterns typically prove so

resistant to change and rational interrogation? Why, furthermore, are some signifiers and ideas so "sticky", historically persistent, and difficult to shake? Lastly, how are we to understand the affective patterns – the libidinal economies – underscoring racist discourse itself?

Faulty combinations: Psychoanalysis and discourse analysis

The call to maintain the perspective of discourse analysis alongside a psychoanalytic engagement with the "extra-discursive" does pose the question of how one might manage the relation between these two analytical frames. This has proved a point of contention and much debate in British Social Psychology and Psychosocial Studies alike, as a series of critical exchanges in these respective domains demonstrates.[5] These debates have arguably done more to highlight the limitations of applying psychoanalytic procedures outside the clinic – and indeed, of a discourse analytic frame apropos the psychical intensity of racism – than to attaining a workable rapprochement between such frames of analysis. It is important here to highlight a neglected historical backdrop to these debates so as to point the way forward to a more viable intersection of these apparently incompatible approaches.

As regards such a prospective conjunction, there is one strategy I would warn against from the very outset: the attempt simply to assimilate the conceptual categories of psychoanalysis into a rhetorical or discursive frame of analysis, as is the case in Billig's (1999) reformulation of the idea of repression within the theoretical vocabulary of discursive psychology. In contrast to such an approach – characteristic of the discursive turn in psychology – we might draw inspiration from Venn's (1984) comments in motivating for a "theory of discourse which recognizes the investment of … desire in the discursive process" (p. 151). This, unfortunately, has been a line of approach almost completely neglected by mainstream social psychology. Two further insights from the critical social theory of this era – likewise bypassed by social psychology – are similarly worth retrieving. There is, firstly, N. Rose's (1982) contention that social regulation is frequently managed via the register of desires and through the *instrumentalization of pleasures*. To this one should add the insistence of Adams (1982) that the analysis of desire and its passions must remain a crucial facet of social critique, a vital explanatory category in the attempt to grasp the functioning of social power. What is required thus, following these accounts, is not merely the historical contextualization of psychoanalysis – or indeed, its reconceptualization in terms of rhetorical analysis – but speculation about "how particular discourses set parameters through which desire is produced, regulated and channelled" (Henriques et al., 1984a, p. 220). Clearly, the content of desires – like that of particular anxieties, libidinal investments and phobias – must be viewed as neither timeless nor arbitrary, but rather as historically specific, contingent upon a backdrop of particular discursive practices. However, such a

discursive-historical frame must not simply dominate the analysis; to do so relegates the unique explanatory potential of psychoanalysis merely to a descriptive role within discursive theory. As Henriques et al. (1984b) argue, the positioning produced through the force of such discursive practices will in itself provide only a partial answer to how power intersects with subjectivity:

> [T]he relation between the workings of the unconscious of any particular [subject] with respect to positions in any particular practice is not one of simple recognition and acceptance. That is, we need to understand the motivational basis through which such an uptake [of discourse within unconscious desire] is produced.
>
> *(p. 222)*

Important thus is an explication of how discursive relations enter, and become reciprocally intertwined with, the production of the faculties of desire, fear, and fantasy in the first place (Henriques et al., 1984b). The double imperative here, to reiterate, is to appreciate how power and *libidinal investments* are produced in tandem – bearing in mind that fantasy is always connected to discursive formations within a given social sphere – and to remain aware that such productions occur at least partly within a machinery of a subjectivity that is not entirely accessible to rational discursive means. This provides a guiding objective for what follows: the need to balance symbolic, psychological, and "extra-discursive" considerations in the analysis of racism, to grapple, simultaneously, with affective, bodily, and discursive components. What is called for here is a more sophisticated understanding of the intersection of these three components, a theoretical basis, in other words, that will allow us to satisfactorily connect the analytical registers of body, psyche, and the symbolic. This would require an answer as to how to articulate the relation between discourse and affect, libidinal components and the symbolic, and to do so in a way that neither reduces these components to a purely symbolic frame nor over-eagerly exceeds its boundaries.

Before we turn to investigate an appropriate theoretical model for the task at hand, we need first to briefly explore the problem of the "extra-discursive". Psychoanalytic theory is not, of course, our only option, and it benefits us to make brief reference to a series of other theoretical resources with respect to this problem, so as to better illustrate the spontaneous and seemingly "unmediated" aspects of racism that I am concerned with.

"Unmediated" racism and "discursive consciousness"

I.M. Young (1990b), like myself, is concerned with mechanisms of oppression that "lie beneath discursive awareness and hence cannot be addressed by law or social policy" (p. 11). Her concern is with forms of racism that

manifest in what we might term a symptomatic manner, in patterns of habitualized dislike, avoidance, discomfort, or aversion. This, in many ways, is a racism of reflex and "unintention", more felt than spoken, often exhibited "by liberal-minded people who intend to treat everyone with equal respect" (I.M. Young, 1990b, p. 11). The phenomenon in question is perhaps better known to readers within social psychology as aversive racism, defined by Gaertner and Dovidio (1986) as a particular type of ambivalence "in which the conflict is between feelings and beliefs associated with a sincerely egalitarian value system and unacknowledged negative feelings and beliefs about [minorities]" (p. 61).[6]

In order to elaborate on the disparity in question further Young draws on a distinction made by Giddens (1984) between discursive and practical consciousness. Discursive consciousness, as the term implies, is made up of those details of my current situation and action that are immanently verbalizable, indeed, propositional, which is to say that they are either founded on explicit verbal formulas, or are easily speakable, converted into words. This concept is useful in emphasizing how much of our conscious awareness is accessible to us in a predominantly discursive form, that is, in a form filtered through and conditioned by the various forms of everyday knowledge that supply the horizon of social intelligibility. Practical consciousness, by contrast, exists at the periphery of focused conscious awareness. It is that which has not yet come to the foreground of deliberate discursive attention or taken properly propositional form. Here we are concerned with procedures of routine, with what we might take to be automatic awareness, the backcloth of implicit understandings needed in the case of purposive actions. Implied here is not only a relational sense of one's self apropos other subjects and one's environment – the reflexive monitoring of the subject's body relative to other subjects and objects around him or her – but also a rudimentary awareness of the immediate objectives of task-oriented activity; although, to reiterate, this is a consciousness that has not as yet been formalized in the codified terms of acceptable public discourse. This is clearly a non-psychoanalytic distinction – a distinction, we might say, that does not go far enough; it evokes the conscious–preconscious divide without adequately evoking an "extra-discursive" element. It does, nonetheless, point to the prospective dissonance between *acting* and *speaking*. It makes apparent the discordance between the physicality of *doing* (practical motor sensory thinking) and the discursive coherence underlying what can take expressive or predicative form.

Although he resorts to a very different set of conceptual tools, Habermas (1998) also theorizes an "extra-discursive" type of consciousness. Less concerned than Giddens with operational types of action that elude explicit discursive awareness, Habermas draws attention to the "lifeworld", that which

"denotes a terrain of the immediately familiar and the unquestionably certain" (p. 237). This is a "phenomenological domain of implicit knowledge of the pre-predicative and the precategorical"; it "accompanies processes of reaching understanding without itself being thematized" (p. 237). Essentially what Habermas is driving at here is the "forgotten foundations of meaning underlying everyday life-practices and world-experiences" (p. 237), the role, in other words, of unthematic and presupposed ideas that function as the "grounds" of our everyday experience, and that retain the qualities of immediacy, totalizing power, and holistic constitution. The problem thus highlighted is that of an apparently "pre-ideological" (or "extra-discursive") ground of comprehension that is never itself discursively thematized but that nevertheless functions as a potent (bodily, libidinal, experiential) means of consolidating ideological values.

Now while there is something virtual about the distinction in question – in practice, it would seem very difficult to trace the dividing line between those elements of consciousness that are explicitly discursive and those that make up the "extra-discursive" backdrop of lifeworld or *savoir-faire* knowledge forms. However, it does help, in an illustrative capacity, to draw attention to the problem at hand, namely that of the operation and influence of forms of racism that are not as yet *primarily* representational and that appear to occur in a largely unmediated and hence apparently "extra-discursive" manner. In this respect, it is worth noting that both these accounts in their own way lend support to Balibar's influential (1991) differentiation between *theoretical* (or doctrinal) racism versus *spontaneous* racism (or racist prejudice).

So although neither of these conceptualizations goes far enough – they do not adequately engage the "extra-discursive" dimension, but simply acknowledge the existence of a layer of unthematized psychological reality underlying explicitly discursive consciousness – they do enable us to advance an important analytical distinction. They make it apparent that the (bodily, affective, prerepresentational/prepropositional) aspects of racism in question may be "extra-discursive" *without being extra-symbolic*. Such "unmediated" forms of racism may, momentarily, elude the capture of discourse – at least in the sense of the network of systematic articulations that characterizes *hegemonic discourse* – without evading the broader context of symbolic functioning. It becomes evident then that we can speak of the "extra-discursive" only in a speculative fashion. Even that which exists in an ostensibly "extra-discursive" form – undomesticated by the codifications of prevailing discursive sensibilities – nonetheless occurs within a societal domain structured by the symbolic, by the operation of language and discourse, and is never as such "extra-discursive" in any absolute sense.

A spontaneous racist sentiment may, for example, occur outside the parameters of sense-making of a given historical discourse without being

outside symbolic meaning entirely. It is for this reason that I.M. Young (1990b) is careful to evoke a historical dimension in her discussion. Today, she claims, we frequently encounter an awkward overlap between the nineteenth- and twentieth-century forms of racism. In the first instance, we have discourses of race based on social structures that explicitly sanctioned inequality and domination; racism here existed at the very surface of discursive consciousness, and could be unrepentantly stated at this level. In contemporary neo-liberal societies, by contrast, *explicit* racial objectification has receded; ideologies of natural inferiority and legitimate group domination no longer receive widespread sanction, and a discursive commitment to equality has emerged (I.M. Young, 1990a). The "extra-discursive" here thus often marks the discomforting resurgence of an earlier mode of understanding, or indeed, the dissonance between discourses, a neo-liberal discursive consciousness and earlier racist presuppositions that have now been relegated to the level of pre-predicative practical consciousness or lifeworld understandings. A Lacanian perspective would emphasize this: even the most pre-reflexive or unmediated forms of racism are already necessarily based on crucial symbolicidentifications – they are not, after all, natural, instinctive – there are symbolic grounds upon which such primal responses are based. They should thus be considered symptomatic, in a broad Freudian sense of being located within a domain of symbolic meaning. The symbolic, as such, underlies even the most immediate reflexes of bodily- and ego-separation. This is precisely why the analytical category of the "extra-discursive" is so vital: it gives the lie to what would appear to be the truth of racist affect, to the "proof" of nervous physicality or of negative "instinctual" reaction.

This line of discussion also affords us the opportunity to discern how such ostensibly "extra-discursive" forms of racism might relate to the Lacanian notion of the real. They are not real simply in the sense of a materiality that exceeds discursive formulation, in terms of a brute physicality, or a primordial, pre-linguistic, or "unmediated" experience – although all of these have been understood as facets of the Lacanian real (Bryson, 1996; Gross, 1990b; Ragland-Sullivan, 1992). They are real, more fundamentally, by virtue of a certain gap, disparity or incommensurability that is introduced into the experience of reality. We might use the two above attempts to understand the "extra-discursive" to point to two modalities of this gap. In one instance we have the affect of the real that arises as a result of the failure of the symbolic to effect closure. There is something – like the backdrop of Habermas's lifeworld of unthematized understandings – that eludes discursive capture and that becomes caught up in a circuit of pre-propositional reactivity (bodily reflexes, "instinctual" responses, etc.). This might be related to the example of trauma: something occurs within the jurisdiction of the

symbolic but nonetheless escapes full or stable symbolic registration; it evades thus the formalization of discourse. In the second instance we have the real disjuncture between modalities (sensory-motor and socio-symbolic), or, as in Fanon, the phenomenological disjunctions of the material conditions of racism damagingly subjectivized, turned "metaphysical", along with the effects of psychical racism materialized, violently physicalized. The attempt to theorize these facets of "extra-discursive" experience is, of course, an abiding concern of this chapter, one we will shortly return to.

Delimiting the "extra-discursive"

We have a clearer view then of what is required if we are to grasp the Fanonian real: a theory of embodiment, subjectivity and affect that entails a strong socio-symbolic element and that nonetheless enables us to grapple with the ostensibly "extra-discursive" dimension of racism. The theory which I think promises the most by way of critical exploration is Kristeva's (1982) the notion of abjection, a psychoanalytic account that has been-utilized precisely as a means of challenging the explanatory limitations of social constructionist/discursive accounts of experience (H. Foster, 1996; Hook, 2002). The body is clearly of central importance to this theory. The ego is, after all, never wholly autonomous in respect of its corporeal basis, certainly not in Freud's view that the ego is a mental projection of the surface of the body. The body, as such, provides the parameters not only of the earliest physical experiences, but also of the most rudimentary forms of subjectivity. Kristeva's account is well attuned to the difficulties of establishing the stability of such corporeal boundaries. For her, it is the ongoing and provisional attempts to mark such bodily demarcations that provide a template for subsequent divisions of the ego and the societal domain. Put as succinctly as possible, corporeal experience is here thought to provide a primal means of staking out divisions that make identity possible.

By virtue of its bodily focus, the theory of abjection is able to offer an extraordinary set of insights not only into the physicality of the phenomenon of racism – the visceral quality of its most primal reactions and anxieties – but into how the physical operation of repulsion appears to be extended into both imaginary (or identity-making) and symbolic functions. Given that this is a theory that takes the threat of formlessness as its starting point, we may appreciate how it casts light on the intensities of that "extra-discursive" range of affects that Fanon and others have associated with racism. Based, as it is, on a constitutive form of fear, on a type of dread that is always an anticipation of incoherence and dissolution, the notion of abjection enables us to think of a theory of racism that is based on boundary threats, on threats to physical, ego- and symbolic wholeness.

I should add also that this conceptualization seems appropriate to the particular historical type of racism that I am interested in apprehending, namely the unreconstructed racism(s) of colonial and apartheid contexts. This was a racism of the sensory field, where fixations on visible markers of bodily difference were omnipresent; where the belief that others not only looked, but sounded, and even smelled essentially different was commonplace; where the seemingly incidental details of everyday social exchanges indexed the proof of differences of racial *being*. That such extreme forms of racism may seem remote to us today, in some instances hard even to believe, is perhaps unsurprising, typically neglected as they are in discussions of the textual subtleties of symbolic racism.

In bringing this section to a close, I would like to return to, and refine, some of the qualifications offered above, so as to give as clear an indication as possible of what I mean by the "extra-discursive" and the Fanonian real. Let me start with a perhaps obvious point. None of what has been said above denies that there is much to be gained from a line of scrutiny that recontextualizes the ostensibly non-discursive – apparently trans-historical factors such as the notion of race itself for example – through a discursive lens, thus demonstrating their constructed nature, the specificity of their particular historical grounding. Clearly, as Foucault (1981a, 1981b) advances, the demonstration of the discursive qualities of the supposedly "non-discursive" remains an urgent critical exercise.

This question of the non-discursive helps introduce a crucial qualification: the fact that "extra-discursive" must necessarily remain a provisional term and for two further reasons than those already offered. Firstly, what appears to be "extra-discursive" may simply be outside the parameters of a given discourse, remaining well within the confines of another discursive system. We know this from Foucault: what to one worldview is completely nonsensical, mad, is the categorization system of choice for another. The following question provides a further means of refining our analytical reference to the "extra-discursive": is what we assume to stand outside discourse (i.e. discourse in its entirety) not merely oppositional discourse, the case of an objectionable – and hence seemingly nonsensical – counter-discourse that appears "extra-discursive" only from our own particular ideological location?

A further consideration, which extends the point made above: to refer to the "extra-discursive", as in the case of the Lacanian real, does not mean that one assumes a radical exteriority to the symbolic domain as such. As will become clear, the "extra-discursive" only ever exists *in relation to the symbolic*; the "extra-discursive" as unfathomable, unthinkable, and inexpressible is always an outcome of *the failure of the symbolic itself*. It is in this respect that Judith Butler (1997) draws on Derrida, invoking the expression of the "constitutive outside" in order to argue that "discourses not only

constitute the domains of the speakable, but are themselves bounded through the production of … the unspeakable, the unsignifiable" (p. 94). There is an important awareness here of the reliance of the discursive on that which it cannot adequately contain, formulate, or comprehend, but that nonetheless vexes it, and prompts it into symbolic activity. What is outside the explicit parameters of symbolization nonetheless makes symbolic conditions of speaking possible. The unexpected death of someone we hold dear, for instance, is an inexpressible and traumatic event before which words can only fail; then again, the meaninglessness of such an event provokes a great deal of symbolization, and much attempted meaning-making (gatherings of friends and associates, religious ceremonies, obituaries, memorials, the laying to rest of the person, etc.).

Useful as such an approach is in asserting that the discursive always needs to be read in view of the (external, opposing) force of the "extra-discursive", the reference to an outside does entail the potential risk of reifying the "extra-discursive" as an inexpressible some*thing*, as a substance beyond symbolization.[7] Now, while this remains a valuable conceptualization – certainly so in view of how the corporeality of the body exceeds the sublimating properties of language – it does, in its emphasis on the recalcitrance of such a thingness lose sight of the fact that no outside is necessarily required for effects of the "extra-discursive" to appear.[8] It neglects the possibility that the "extra-discursive" may be immanent to the symbolic itself, a byproduct of symbolic processes, the logical impossibilities, the knots, the holes, the anomalies, and impasses that occur simply from the workings of symbolization. Leader (2003) makes this point with reference to Freud: for the early Freud, there are two forms of impossibility, the impossibility of symbolizing an unprecedented traumatic event, and "the impossibilities generated by the network of representations themselves" (p. 37). As an instance of the latter one might cite Freud's (1933) reference to Epimenides's logical paradox of the man who says "I am lying" (the paradox being that if he is lying, he is speaking the truth; if speaking the truth, he is lying). The latter facet of the real is prioritized by Leader (2003), and traced back to Lévi-Strauss's influence on Lacan: "As Lévi-Strauss's work on myth showed, the real is only present as the result of a signifying combinatory of opposites" (p. 47).

With this qualification of the "extra-discursive" in place, it helps to return to my reference to the Fanonian real, and to offer a few further descriptive comments on each of these three modalities, so as to be as specific as possible in how I am utilizing the notion of the "extra-discursive". The first modality concerns *the factor of embodiment*: we are concerned here with the issue of disjunctions in the coordination of body and experience, with the fact that psychological and corporeal experience are never fully aligned: they never

fully match up. As such, the troubling physicality of Fanon's descriptions of the corporeality of racist objectification is to be taken literally, at least in the sense that they describe the fragmentation of the bodily rootedness of experience. The traumatic aspect of this experience is crucial: this disruption of the body in its relation to the psyche is one way of understanding the violence of the Lacanian real, which precisely disturbs the wholeness of the image of the body, the delicate balance between ego and body. (I develop this line of analysis, an engagement with the phenomenological real of body–ego dislocations, in more detail in Chapter 4.)

The second modality concerns what we might refer to as *the affective* – more specifically perhaps, *the libidinal* – component. The focus here is on those intensities of the body, those extremities of experience never fully captured by language, that lies precisely *in excess of words* and that are not fully amenable to social translation. We might note Judy's (1996) remark here that "Affect has a definite epistemic status in Fanon's thought as the expression of an order of consciousness that is extra-representational" (p. 55). Hence the frequency of reference in psychoanalytic writings to the residue, the *stain* of those types of surplus enjoyment – one's passions, sufferings, excessive libidinal investments – that can never be satisfyingly pinpointed by the use of signifiers.[9] The passions of racism – a consideration I have already raised – make for an obvious example in this respect.

Thirdly, in speaking of the "extra-discursive" real of racism, we need to consider that there are deadlocks within the ideological and fantasmatic domain of the colonial situation itself, impasses of conceptualization that cannot effectively be thought. This is not simply an instance of a residue of experience that resists symbolization, but of what is effectively impossible, practically inconceivable within a given ideological location.[10] As regards such an impasse of colonial ideology, I noted above the Fanonian example of the Black subjects "sealed in their blackness", whites "sealed in their whiteness". The seeming impossibility of bridging this gulf provides a case in point, as in the nonrelation, or impasse of communicability installed by apartheid, whereby Black and white worlds would continually overlap – existing indeed often in considerable proximity – but never join, where the prospect of any meaningful subjective integration was effectively foreclosed.

We come close here to the societal real, apropos of which it is useful to refer to Žižek, who, developing Lévi-Strauss's position, often refers to the impossibility of society fully realizing itself, to the real of an underlying antagonism that ensures that the social body is never whole, never harmoniously integrated. As in Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents*, this is not the case of an external impediment disrupting the functioning of an otherwise cohesive system, but a constitutive fault line that underlies culture as such. No doubt the massive asymmetries of colonial racism reflect something of this societal real, but we must tread carefully here. Although the colonial

context may well be viewed as a variation or outcome of the constitutive split which defines society itself – a real for which class struggle remains the most suitable name for Žižek – the antagonism of colonial racism is not itself a constituent form of the real. To make such an assumption is to essentialize and reify a historically contingent mode of antagonism, to imply that it is an ontological given which must thus be in some way unavoidable. We arrive thus at the conservative position, in which an ostensibly universal deadlock – society's inherent incapacity ever to be wholly unified – is displaced onto a particular and contingent societal conflict. A case in point here is the use of the "clash of civilizations" thesis to mask the internal impasses of Western capitalist globalization. This is for Žižek an example of fascist logic: the targeting of a group of social/cultural others, as the reason that social harmony has not been achieved, obscures the fact of the deadlocks written into the given society itself. An instance of the societal real in Fanon might be located in *A Dying Colonialism* (1970); Fanon (1956/1967) speaks there of "the impossibility of finding a meeting ground in any colonial situation" (p. 165).[11]

In each of the above cases, then, there is a disjuncture, be it between body and experience, affect and symbolic means, or by virtue of deadlocks within the symbolic/societal apparatus itself. These are modes of disjuncture exacerbated, and grievously extended by various forms of social asymmetry. In each such instance of the real then, we confront a rupture, a *non-harmonization of elements*, which is at the same time an inescapable aspect of the human condition – a psychological experience never maps perfectly onto the body; affect is never fully domesticated by symbolic means; language can never say it all, just as society is never wholly unified – that is exploited, intensified by the pathological elements of a given social structure. Žižek (1994b) puts this well: "if the "original" trauma of the Real is to become effective, it must hook on to, find some echo in, some present deadlock" (pp. 31–32). This provides a useful way of conceptualizing the relationship between the socially constructed and the trans-historical. More than this, the idea of an echo between underlying irresolvables and contingent socio-political circumstances sheds light on how social constructs come to be so easily essentialized, and read as "universal".

Racism as abjection

> When I look up the woman is … staring at me, her nose holes and eyes huge. And suddenly I realize that there is nothing crawling up the seat between us; it is me she doesn"t want her coat to touch. The fur brushes past my face as she stands with a shudder … Something's going on here I do not understand, but I will never forget … Her eyes. The flared nostrils. The hate.
>
> *(Lorde, 1984, pp. 147–148)*

> "Look, a Negro!" … "Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened!"…
> [I] knew that there were legends, stories, history, and above all historicity … Then, at various points, the corporeal schema crumbled, its place taken by a racial epidermal schema … Nausea …
> I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors … I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency … racial defects, slave-ships …
> [C]ompletely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white man … I took myself far off from my own presence … and made myself an object. What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a haemorrhage that splattered my whole body with black blood?
>
> *(Fanon, 1952/1986, pp. 84–85)*

> [S]lavery was the manifestation of a corrupted and impenitent despotism, one that rested on the abject degradation of those whom one had enslaved.
>
> *(Mbembe, 2019, p. 18)*

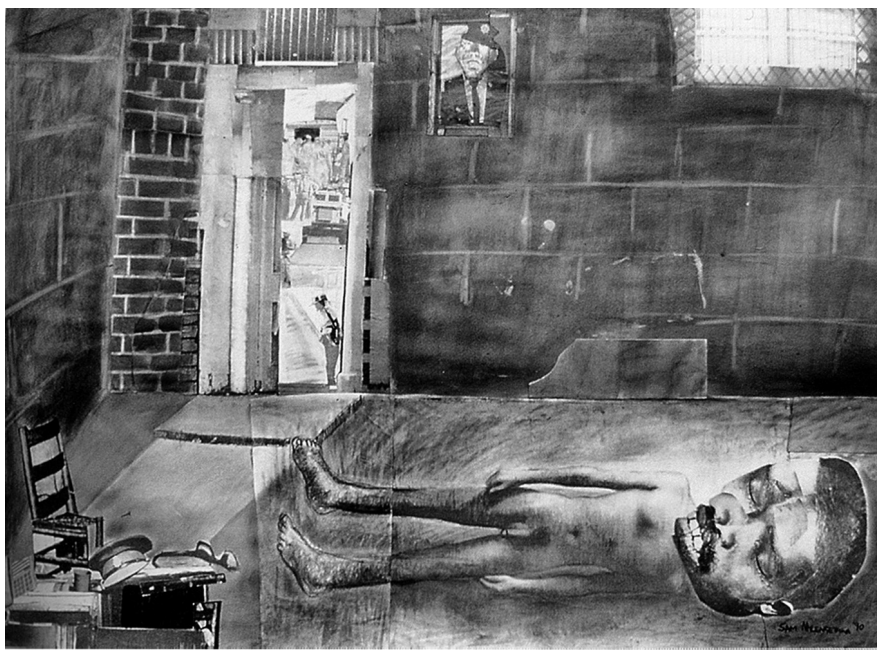

FIGURE 2.1 It left him cold – the death of Steve Biko (Sam Nhlengethwa).

The sociality of dehumanization

A few contextualizing comments are in order before turning our attention to the concept of abjection. Firstly, the concept of abjection as applied here is not intended to provide a total theory of racism. There is, importantly, no direct one-to-one correspondence between racism and abjection; the notion of abjection casts light upon certain (and primarily "extra-discursive") features of racism. More specifically, the notion of abjection provides a means of understanding the sociality (indeed, the psychology) of dehumanization; as such it is helpful in elucidating the societal functioning of racism at its most brutal, denigrating, and objectifying.

Secondly, it is important to signal that this is a theory that attempts to avoid the pitfalls of those historical applications of psychoanalysis that prioritize individual complexes over the consideration of history, culture, and social forces. Kristeva's (1982) elaboration of the notion, it is true to say, presents us with an interesting confluence of influences: it is based as much on Freudian/Lacanian psychoanalysis as it is upon Mary Douglas's groundbreaking study of cleanliness and defilement, *Purity and Danger* (2002), a text whose anthropological insights Kristeva rearticulates, as Grosz (1994) notes, within a psychological and subjective register.

Kristeva's theorization of abjection, furthermore, much like Fanon's own strategic use of psychoanalysis, might be said to be concerned with how classical psychoanalysis has tended to elide questions of social asymmetry, racism, and anti-Semitism. Neither Fanon nor Kristeva develops an orthodox version of psychoanalysis; both, in fact, depart from key psychoanalytic tenets and do so to such an extent that many would question whether their resulting theoretical productions could even be labeled psychoanalytic.[12] The efforts of both writers make us aware that despite crucial unconscious facets, racism and/or anti-Semitism are not adequately understood solely at this level, or, according to the mechanism of repression; both insist that the repudiations and aggressions of racism are also, perhaps obviously, also powerfully *conscious* phenomena.[13]

Surprisingly, given the prominence that Kristeva affords the topic of anti-Semitism in *The Powers of Horror* (1982), her seminal treatment of abjection, this theory has been historically underutilized in theorizing racism – with the notable exception of Oliver (1993, 2000) and more recently Davis (2023) and Vitus (2015). While it is true that I.M. Young (1990a, 1990b) makes some useful comments connecting abjection to racism, she, like others who draw on the term in a chiefly descriptive capacity (as in the case of McClintock, 1995), offers no sustained analysis of the overall utility of this combination of theoretical perspective and political problem. This is part of my objective in what follows: to offer a critical exposition of the notion of

abjection that goes beyond the descriptive, and that opens new possibilities for critical decolonial psychological analyses of racism.[14]

The "extra-discursive", the imaginary, and the symbolic

A refined analysis of this theory requires that we clarify a number of conceptual distinctions that will prove crucial in any attempt to speak of racism beyond social construction. The first concerns the elementary point, deserving of reiteration, that any ostensibly "extra-discursive" facets of racism need to be grasped in tandem with symbolic and imaginary psychical dimensions. As resistant as the real is to imaginary and symbolic assimilation, it is not, as it were, a stand-alone dimension; it remains always knotted up with components of meaning and symbolization, even as it ultimately eludes the domestication of such processes. The second involves the error of assuming that the domain of social construction is one and the same as the Lacanian symbolic, a crucial mistake in view of the fact, asserted by Glynos (2000), that social construction *straddles both the imaginary and symbolic orders*.

Let me offer a few additional points of clarification regarding Lacanian notions that I will be utilizing in what follows. Until this point, I have relied on a provisional understanding of the imaginary as the psychological, the domain of ego–other identifications. We can augment this outline – that of narcissistic (ideal) mirror-image identifications, reciprocities, and aggressivity – by affirming the ego's proclivity for (mis)recognition, its tendency to produce meanings, and effects of immediate comprehension where what is known of the world is typically a refracted image of the ego itself. This egocentric terrain of identifications is as much characterized by self-love as it is by the limitless potential for rivalry and conflict. The ego's "like others" provide the images that are identified with and loved – they form the basis of imaginary subjectivity – but are simultaneously hated inasmuch as they undermine the ego's claims to an original, authentic existence.

This imaginary register of experience should thus be clearly differentiated from that of the symbolic register, which can be grasped via anthropology's emphasis on social convention and the codification of social relations (bonds, exchanges, kinship structures) that structure experience. The symbolic order is the "extra-psychological" realm of differential systems, language, law, and prohibition. It is a non-subjective social grid in which subjects must necessarily assume a position, a role, a place, which, despite the ego's imaginary reassurances, is never merely spontaneous, natural.[15] So whereas the imaginary is content-rich, continually producing images with which to identify – and constantly prioritizing the terms of its own ego experience as primary – the symbolic is essentially empty. The functioning of the symbolic does, of course, enable forms of hierarchy, establishing

apparent master-signifiers, a system of places that gives coordinates and reference points, thus making distinctions and differentiations possible.

We are now better placed to appreciate why the symbolic should not be conflated with what is socially constructed. To do so treats the symbolic as a collection of sorts, a set of contents. It thus ignores the insistence of Saussure's linguistics that there are no positive or substantial entities within language, which, by contrast, is a system of differences; effects of signification are produced only via a differential interplay of signifiers. Conflating the socially constructed and the symbolic hence loses sight of the crucial distinction between *signified* and *signifier*, that is, the difference between the *imaginary function* of *meaning* and the *operation of a symbolic framework* that *structures meaning*.[16] In the first (imaginary) instance, we have an operation of identification with a signified or an image that provides a temporary means of containment, a moment of fixity, that is, the captivation of an identity. In the second (symbolic) instance, we have the operation of a framework of *signifiers* that provides a means of intelligibility, and more than this, a set of coordinates that allows us to place and compare these meanings (these signifieds).[17] What this means then is that although the terms of ego experience appear (and are experienced) as immediate, primary, it is in fact the symbolic that comes first and that operates as a prerequisite for imaginary meaning. The above discussion may seem a rather technical digression, but it is vital. It enables us to distinguish the preoccupations of these two prospective lines of analysis – outlining, in other words, the analytic priorities for attempts to investigate the imaginary and symbolic facets of racism. These facets are themselves to be distinguished from an analytics of the real that, as above, is concerned with those points of non-harmonization, non-integration, deadlocks, and libidinal intensities that exceed symbolic mediation.

It is illuminating in this respect to refer to Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks's argument in *Desiring Whiteness* (2000) as regards the pitfalls of fixing racism as simply an imaginary phenomenon, that is, within the dialectics of inter-subjectivity. It is commonplace within cultural studies, she claims, to view racism along such lines, as an opposition between self and other approached without adequate attention to the surrounding symbolic frame. She advances a Lacanian position in this respect, asserting that the symbolic not only pre-dates the activities of imaginary identification and rivalry, but in fact makes them possible. To relegate the symbolic dimension to secondary importance and concentrate on only the imaginary dynamics of racism leads to a series of skewed observations when it comes to analysis. As she warns, notwithstanding Fanon's (1952/1986) important contribution in speaking of the mirror hallucinations of racism, we need to remain constantly aware of the risk of reducing racism to the effects of misrecognition and ego-identification. These concerns inform the more general argument I am developing here: it is not enough, to show the limitations of symbolic/ discursive

approaches to racism, merely to invoke how racism is instantiated within the psychological mechanisms of identification and otherness. Or, rephrased: the shortcomings of a discursive approach to racism are not overcome merely by means of supplementary psychological forms of analysis.

Now, to be perfectly clear, referring to the dynamics of imaginary relationships remains useful in the analysis of racism. We see this in the case of the two ideological positionings of Blackness identified by Fanon: the disavowal of Blackness in the Black child, and the white child's phobic inability to introject the image of the Black other. These are phenomena that we need to grasp, operations crucial to racism as it is perpetuated at an imaginary level, even if they cannot be analyzed on the imaginary level alone. Such imaginary activity must itself be located in reference *to a symbolic frame* that brings a hierarchical interplay of values into operation. The danger in prioritizing the imaginary register lies in "confining race to a notion of the ego as false consciousness … [to] an illusory, narcissistic construct, and racism … [to] an ego defense" (Seshadri-Crooks, 2000, p. 32). This also presents a problem for anti-racist strategy; if the overriding motivation for anti-racism is to engender a likable (ideal) image of one's self, then anti-racism can remain, perhaps unexpectedly, a fundamentally narcissistic project in which others are strategically utilized in order to bolster one's own (tolerant, anti-racist) sense of self.[18] In neglecting the symbolic, furthermore, we lose the opportunity of adequately "interrogating the structure and constitution of the subject of race" (p. 31), foreclosing thereby for Seshadri-Crooks the question of how subjects effectively *become raced*.

Abjecting, being made abject

The literal meaning of abjection (in Latin *ab-jicere*) is to cast off, to repulse. In speaking of the abject, one refers to the contemptible, the repugnant, the wretched, that which is unwanted, unclean, viewed as contaminating, a danger to the moral societal order. *Abjection* then, as a verb, should be understood as an operation: the powerful visceral reaction toward a given object that is then denigrated, or reviled. The *abject*, on the other hand, as a noun, should be understood as the apparent source of such reactions; abhorrent, sickening, it elicits fear, and moral repugnance, and is known by the physical responses, the palpable anxieties, it elicits. To be *abjected*, as is the case in the Fanon extract above, is the condition of *being made abject*. It is vital to stress here that abjection, as both process and condition, occurs in unison with, and as a means of, recapitulating the existing societal order:

> The process of abject*ing* [an operation] … is an active one in which one party rejects, banishes, degrades or in some way denigrates another party; the state of *being* abject [a condition] … is what follows an act of

> abjection: it is a disposition, a place of exclusion … Without exception, the party that does the abjecting is the one in a position of power … while the one degraded is robbed of power and the right to societal inclusion.
>
> *(Herbst, 1999, p. 16)*

The interchange between psychoanalytic and anthropological notions here is instructive. In Butler's (1990) terms, the abject, at its most literal, designates "that which has been expelled from the body, discharged as excrement, literally rendered 'Other'" (p. 169). For Douglas, in *Purity and Danger*, the irrationality of such compulsive exclusions is enacted at the societal and symbolic level, in the form of ritualized practices, rites of cleansing and avoidance, which, importantly, are never merely practical – adequately explained away, that is, by reasons of hygiene or health – and that bring to bear the full force of social taboo. It is the political dimension of such a response that Butler (1993) insists upon when she refers to abjection as an operation of repulsion. A form of both recoil and response, of repugnance and reflex, abjection, it should be remembered, is always activity, *action* as much as it is revulsion. Self-protection, or escape, is immanent in the subject who experiences the border-anxiety of abjection; there is immediate recourse to offensive action, to violent forms of response – even if primarily symbolic or psychological – that aim to keep the source of abjection at bay.

Given the diffuseness of the above parameters, we might ask what it is that unites all the many conceivable instances of abjection. What particularly characterizes this unpalatable mode of experience? Chisholm (1992) provides a response: those moments in which one undergoes the pronounced anxiety of not being able to distinguish "me" from "not me". Abjection, more than anything else, or so it would seem, is the threat to the integrity of the ego's borders; it is the prospect of their violation, the disturbing awareness that these borders are ultimately neither sacrosanct nor impermeable. The original and primary "surface" of the abject's realization, however, remains that of the body. As in Freudian psychoanalysis, the body here forms the multi-zonal site for the earliest instances of cultural exchange and socialization; it is the surface of experience, the template, for the developing ego. "The boundaries of the body", as Butler (1990) puts it, "are also the first contours of the subject" (p. 169). Among the most primal (and powerful) abject objects are those items that challenge the integrity of one's own physical parameters – feces, blood, urine, and so on – those discarded bodily products once a part of one's subjective substance that becomes loathsome, repugnant as soon as they become separate. These detachable parts of the body retain something of the cathexis and value of a body part even when they are separated from the body. There is still something of the subject bound up with them – which is why they are objects of disgust, loathing, and repulsion, as well as envy and desire (Grosz, 1994, p. 81).

Unexpectedly then the repugnant abject entity retains a desirable aspect; as in the case of Freud's notion of the uncanny, there is always a strange intimacy, a disavowed force of attraction at work here. The abject is always "of me", it keys into a prohibited mode of enjoyment, hence the strength, the desperation, of the reflex to expel it, to confirm it as separate. In Lacanian terms we are dealing with the extimate, the intimate outside, an element that confuses the inside–outside distinction, implicating the subject's desire (and envy) to the same degree to which it is extruded, considered foreign. This provides one of the clearest connections to Fanon's psychoanalytic theory of racism, in which the phobogenic object – in this case Blackness itself – a target of fear and loathing, conceals qualities that are not only secretly desired and envied (here, unrestrained sexual appetites), but that reflect intimate capacities of the phobic (racist) subject himself or herself. The phobogenic object, indeed "must arouse…both fear and revulsion" (1952/1986, p. 119).[19]

Boundary relations

The abject, insists Kristeva (1982), is not directly knowable. One detects its presence by means of the visceral responses it induces, by means of palpable anxieties of discomfort, avoidance, and repulsion. Cleary then, this is not a primarily discursive sensibility; we are not here concerned with racism as a form of knowledge, but rather with an ostensibly unmediated mode of response that pre-empts or over-rides discursive responses. Furthermore, importantly, there is no single category of the abject, no primal or original abject. Weiss (1999) drives this point home: the abject is that intolerable, historically variable "entity of threat" that can include "other people … an infinite number of phenomena" (p. 57). No one object (or subject category) can thus totalize the abject, or indeed delimit its threat. To miss this is to fail to grasp something essential to the process of abjection: the elusiveness of the abject, its persistence, and the fact of its perpetual return in a variety of different relations of contact and division.

As Kristeva reminds us, nothing that appears as abjection in the symbolic domain is abject in *essence*; dirt and putrefaction might *image* the abject, but they – like any quantifiable objects – cannot definitively localize it, or exhaust its charge. Always an ineffable quality then, transferable along the lines of family likeness, the abject can never be mastered, finally eradicated or destroyed. This fact, that any number of objects, features, or environments may manifest the abject, proves a useful consideration in grasping the generalizability of racist sentiment, in conceptualizing the proliferation of bigotry across such an extraordinary range of characteristics associated with cultural others. The logic of hate, thus understood, requires no static referent;[20] there is no one epitomizing feature but rather multiple, shifting elements of Blackness, to take Fanon's (1952/1986) example, each of which

can be denigrated, made objectionable for the racist subject. For Oliver, we thus do better to think of the abject as a border, or a *border relationship*, than as any entity or feature of an object. So, not a quality in and of itself, the abject is instead a relationship to a boundary, a disconcerting proximity, an unsustainable separation (Oliver, 1993). Clearly, the underlying grid of such boundary relations and/or associations is not itself "extra-discursive" but is instead necessarily supplied by a given social sphere of symbolic values and norms. This is not, of course, to neglect the apparent immediacy of the response of abjection, which is nonetheless experienced in an "extra-discursive" manner, routed as it is along channels of reflex and spontaneous repulsion. Here again, we encounter the difficult distinction between, on the one hand, the discursive *contents* of racism that occur within the structure of a given historical and symbolic frame, and, on the other hand, the affective, bodily, and prepropositional forms of those *processes* that inscribe its values in a seemingly "extra-discursive" capacity.

The historical variability of the abject is key to the compatibility of the theory of abjection with constructionist/discursive approaches. Put bluntly: there can be no abject other than that which is socially designated. This much is evident in Butler's (1993) comments that "the notion of abjection designates a degraded or cast out status within the terms of sociality" (p. 53). She uses the notion of abjection, more specifically, to designate those "uninhabitable" and "unliveable" zones of social life – zones populated by those who do not qualify as full subjects of that particular social order[21] – whose function is to circumscribe the domain of those who do. This societal dimension is evident in Kristeva's (1988) declaration that abjection is an extremely strong feeling "which is at once somatic and symbolic" (pp. 135–136). Further yet:

> Abjection is coextensive with the social and symbolic order, on the individual as well as … the collective level … one encounters it as soon as the symbolic and/or social dimension of man is constituted … abjection assumes specific shapes and different codings according to the various "symbolic systems".
>
> *(Kristeva, 1982, p. 68)*

We return thus to a suggestion made above, the idea that the "extra-discursive" bodily rationalities of abjection provide us with a series of "instinctive" reactions upon which particular political logic may be transposed. Apparent here then is the fact that the abject – at the level of content – is in this sense socially constructed, a sociopolitically generated *product* of denigration, even if the processes by which it is consolidated are not. That is to say, if we were to trace the (seemingly natural) order of divisions and distinctions that occur along the parameters of the body and ego we should be able to discern the imposition

of a series of constructed differentiations between subject and abject, differentiations that attain a kind of lived immediacy and obviousness. This would seem to tell us something about the pernicious and deep-seated qualities of the colonial forms of racism encountered by Fanon: what we have here is a form of racism that has been encoded in a set of "extra-discursive" bodily responses, racism, put differently, that has been written into a "natural" series of physical reflexes and divisions.

"Transitional abjects"

It helps in appreciating the societal role – and indeed the *dynamic fluidity* – of abjection to make reference to the lengthy extract from the Apartheid Archive Project with which I opened this book. The experience of abjection there (the subject's near voyeuristic fascination with the "black man's toilet", the apparently disgusted interest in "black man's beer", the perception of Black bodily difference) was by no means anchored in a single or static entity of threat. As might be expected in any experience of abjection, the vocabulary of the unclean (the dirty, the unsanitary, the unhygienic) is omnipresent in the example, as are anxieties of ingestion, proximity, intimacy, each of which, importantly, connotes a potential relation. Also of interest – and here we have a corrective to erroneous assumptions that may be extrapolated from a purely theoretical discussion of the concept – is that the experience of abjection was not realized in a single dramatic instance of repulsion. That being said, there were several boundary relations that indexed the subject's sense of revulsion and that functioned as powerful affective barriers blocking any prospective interaction (not only in terms of the unpalatable beer, but the toilet building itself, the barber's hair clippers). Another notable consideration – an interesting intersection of the Lacanian notion of *jouissance* with Kristeva's idea of abjection – is that a subliminal type of questioning is present, a prurient inquiry precisely into the enjoyments, the bodily intensities of others.[22]

So, rather than delimiting the analysis to a series of ostensible "abject objects", the extract impresses upon us the importance of thinking about abjection relationally, via a series of thresholds, intermediary activities, and places, via the mediations, as we might put it, of transitional abject objects and spaces. What this means then is that although the subject's abjections no doubt retain a visceral element, they cannot be reduced to an overpowering, guttural experience that simply bypasses social structure. These moments of abjection involve the factor of negotiation, of social mediation. The transitional abject spaces, objects, and activities in question all maintain a powerful symbolic density. In short: the most forceful instances of abjection consist precisely in boundary relations that simultaneously mark out territories of desire and of the abject; they thus perform a locating function, the task of symbolic placement.

Founding repudiations

The ontological slipperiness of the abject provides understandable complications for the ego. The abject "thing" is not to be subsumed into the dialectics of self–other, ego–object identifications; it is that which disallows the prospects of any correlative objects, of any stable supports – symbolic or otherwise – through which "I" might assume a relative detachment and autonomy. That is to say – a point that casts a critical light on approaches that view racism as "otherization" – the abject is not some otherness, some correlative of my ego through whom, by a process of negative reflection, I become separate, individuated. Whereas the object, through its opposition, settles me within a given position – one in which I am "ceaselessly and infinitely homologous to it" – the abject, on the contrary, is the radically jettisoned and excluded property that "draws me toward the place where meaning collapses" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 2).

Grosz (1994) alerts us to another facet of abjection, the fact that the experience of abjection is necessarily ongoing, never complete. The ego's attempt to achieve autonomy through a type of separation-individuation is always a struggle against exactly those borderline objects that defy me/not-me categorization, that threaten to dissolve the integrity and separateness of the self and the symbolic system of identity of which it is part. Importantly then, abjection necessarily involves a type of *self*-confrontation; abjection is an act of *self-expulsion*, the purging of troubling aspects of the ego that reiterate, in profoundly anxiety-provoking ways, that which is most based on the corporeal substance of self. In vomiting out food, for example, I also "expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which 'I' claim to establish myself" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 3). The troubled boundary line separating the subject from external phenomena is thus passable in *both* directions by the abject: "the abject can be perceived outside of the subject – in other subjects and objects. … and within the subject" (Herbst, 1999, p. 118). Not only then does abjection carry with it the element of crisis – subjectivity here convulsing on those attributes and desires it cannot own or admit to, assimilate – it is also underwritten by a fundamental impossibility. As Kristeva (1988) comments, abjection is "a revolt of the person against an external menace … a desire for separation, for becoming autonomous and also the feeling of impossibility of doing so" (p. 136); hence, one might remark, the incessant repetition, the never-finished aspect of abjection.

The affective epicenter of the abject, for Kristeva (1982), is always the threat of death. Abjection necessarily entails a relation to deathliness; it is precisely the nausea of such an underlying fear, that of the ultimate dissolution of the ego. This gives us an appreciation of the volatility of such phenomena and of the affective stakes at play in processes of abjection: what is being threatened is an effective wiping away of the contours of the subject. Why this potential line of explanation is so pertinent is that it allows us to grasp what often seem the most difficult qualities of racism to comprehend:

the unswayable irrationality of its convictions; the degree of vitriol marshaled against its target group; its apparent desperateness; and the fact of the contagious spread of racist affectivity. Unfortunately, a prospective strength of the theory here goes hand in hand with a weakness: the more convincingly the notion of abjection explains the ferocity that racism is capable of, the more it risks failing politically. In what sense might this be the case?

Explorations of the concept routinely take the perspective of those *experiencing abjection* rather than that of those *who are made to be abject*. The perspective of that (inevitably privileged) class of subjects who experience abjection and practice social forms of exclusion becomes thus, however tacitly, reaffirmed. This is in part the imperative of reading Kristeva *through Fanon*, through Fanon's prioritization of those he calls the "Wretched of the Earth", those who are *made abject*, so as to prevent the situation whereby the theory re-enacts what we had hoped it would call into scrutiny: a privileging of the dominant over those who are excluded.[23] This is not to suggest that only the privileged experience abjection. For Kristeva abjection is an integral aspect of identity formation that is experienced by all human subjects. It is what one "thrust[s] aside in order to live", "what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 3). How then are we to understand the role that abjection is said to play in the making of human subjectivity?

Abjection and subject-formation

Butler (1988) here makes an important contribution in her Foucauldian critique of Kristeva's theory – which at times, she claims, drifts toward a solely negativist conception of power – emphasizing that within any given social formation abjection must function as a vitally *productive* aspect of identity. So abjection, for Butler, even while always associated with the threat of dissolution, is always equally concerned with a project of self-definition, with the tasks of ego-construction, the substantiation of identity, processes that take place within and are advanced at the level of social and symbolic structure. So, in understanding abjection we need to prioritize not only the threatening outside, but also the role of a loathsome inside, those elements *of the self* that must be ejected. The productive processes by which subjects are formed, she insists, require the "simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings … who are not yet 'subjects,' but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject" (Butler, 1993, p. 3). This zone of uninhabitability

> constitute[s] the defining limit of the subject's domain; it will constitute that site of dreaded identification against which – and by virtue of which – the domain of the subject will circumscribe its own claim to autonomy and

> to life … the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside, which is, after all, "inside" the subject as its own founding repudiation.
>
> *(p. 3)*

Abjection here, to be sure, is understood as a *constitutive* facet of human subjectivity, at least inasmuch as the subject in question has acquired the parameters of bodily and ego distinctness, and has found a place – a point of registration – in the symbolic domain. Gross (1990a) advances an important qualification in this connection. Abjection, she claims, is the body's acknowledgment that the boundaries and limits imposed on it are really social projections, effects of psychological (imaginary) construction rather than of nature. The abject moment "testifies to the precarious grasp of the subject in its own identity"; it is an assertion "that the subject may slide back into the impure chaos out of which it was formed" (Gross, 1990a, p. 90). As much as we might gloss abjection as an undoing of identity, this would understate the case. Abjection is closer to the sickness, the self-defiling desperation that preempts the descent into formlessness, into the inchoate state of the *corps morcelé*, the body in pieces. Here, extending the point made above, we should depart from a focus on *abjecting* subjects – a focus that seems always to chance a recentering of the dominant, to risk their valorization (via the implication of heroic suffering) – to the *abjected*.

The dimensions of the psychical violence that Fanon endures at the hands of colonial racism correspond to these three modes (bodily, psychological, and symbolic) of *being made abject*. Each of these factors – the subjects' relation to their body, to their own subjectivity, and to their socio-symbolic-history – is traumatically fractured in colonial racism. In the terms of Fanon's (1952/1986) own description offered at the beginning of this section of the chapter, the "corporeal schema" that organizes the subject's social, experiential, and bodily location in the world is broken apart and replaced by a (racist) "racial epidermal schema" (p. 84). One of the results of which is the feeling of bodily evisceration, or, as Fanon variously puts it, "corporeal malediction", "an amputation, an excision, a haemorrhage that splattered my … body with black blood" (p. 85). A second result concerns the obliteration of ego, the experience of being reduced to a thing: "I came into the world … [a] spirit filled with desire … I found I was an object in the midst of other objects … [that I had been s]ealed into … crushing objecthood" (p. 82). Thirdly, there is the fact of the symbolic damage thus perpetrated, the degradation of one history (that of the colonized) by another (the colonizer). The cultural, socio-historical and communal network that had grounded the vitality of Fanon's immediate everyday existence – that had provided the coordinates, the stability of his symbolic identity – is pilloried, reduced to a sequence

of stereotypes: "I … knew that there were legends, stories, history … I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency … racial defects, slave-ships" (pp. 84–85).

At the threshold of the symbolic world

A crucial context to the dynamics of subject-constitution described above concerns the developmental interplay between processes of abjection and the symbolic. The theory of abjection, that is to say, is also an account of the means by which a subject takes on a speaking position within the symbolic world of language, law, and signification. Although I prefer not to delve too deeply into the details of Kristeva's account of infant development (for authoritative accounts see Gross, 1990a; Grosz, 1989; also Lechte, 1990; Oliver, 1993), it is useful briefly to refer to her distinction between the semiotic and the symbolic. Each of these categories refers to a distinct dimension of subjectivity that Kristeva takes to be foundational to speaking subjects. The developmental progress of each such subject, she argues, involves the necessary transition from a type of subjectivity governed by the semiotic to a mode governed by the symbolic: it is in the course of this transition that the abject first arises.

The idea of the semiotic is best grasped as the realm of experience that occurs prior to the acquisition of language. Whereas the symbolic is the law-based and language-founded domain of structure and difference, the semiotic is the pre-verbal, undifferentiated, narcissistic realm that precedes it and that subsequently comes to be repressed. The semiotic is characterized by an absence of separations and boundaries; it is, by definition, inchoate, amorphous, and nondemarcated. In the earliest months of life, the infant is thought to form a syncretic unity with the mother, and is, as such, unable to distinguish between itself and its environment, possessing no awareness of its own corporeal boundaries. Given that there are no objects here, no ego–other differentiations, and no borders, this state implies the necessity of the mechanisms of abjection that will eventually make such separations possible. It is the primal processes of division, demarcation, and exclusion that abjection ushers in that are foundational to the formation of self–other relations, to the basic acquisition of language, and, ultimately, to the stabilization of identity in the symbolic. To enter the symbolic, to acquire language and thereby identity, a form of primal differentiation and separation proves imperative.

It is worth remarking that the ontogenesis that Kristeva plots, more particularly, the "extra-discursive" period of a semiotic stage of development, must itself occur within a symbolic frame. Presumably, it is only via the intrusion of a type of naming or law – no doubt the result of parent–child interactions that occur when prohibitions are instituted at a variety of boundary-tasks (eating, defecation, urination) – that the category of the

abject is even possible. It is on this basis that abjection succeeds in instituting rudimentary bodily boundaries, in demarcating inner and outer, and in differentiating ego and object. Such a marking of the body and its objects into acceptable and abject categories is only subsequently *physicalized*, given a forceful corporeal experiential dimension through the bodily processes of expulsion. Kristeva treats such processes as of foundational importance in the making of the subject: the expulsion of the abject – in whatever form threatens the nascent distinctness of the infant's body, ego – is a necessary precondition of any existence as a differentiated, individual being in the symbolic domain.

Abjection thus provides "a sketch of that period which marks the threshold of the child's acquisition of language and a relatively stable enunciative position" (Gross, 1990a, p. 86). The implication of this is that language, and perhaps most pertinently, the subject's position within a designated symbolic world, is continually problematized by its previous existence, by an existence *prior to an order of differentiation* that a particular instantiation of the symbolic has come to treat as primary. Always a denied aspect of the subject itself, a function of desire and the prohibited *jouissance* caught up with it, the abject is an intimate part of the subject that must be unceasingly dispelled, ejected, and repudiated. It is the specter of subjective dissolution, the omnipresent prospect of an erasing of demarcations, an undoing of the structures and unities of identity that will result not only in a collapse into incoherence, but in a regression to the inanimate and undifferentiated terrain of objects without subjectivity. As Herbst (1999) emphasizes, the abject is only "peeled away" from the developing subject as a result of exclusions and prohibitions set in place by others.

Clearly, then, it remains an error to situate the abject in an exclusively external manner, to accord it the capacity of – or indeed *conflate it with* – those objects that have come to occupy the role of the abject, to take on the function of abjection. Despite that this category remains historically contingent, a "carrier" of varying discursive values (as discussed above), it nevertheless functions, in an "extra-discursive" manner, as an intrinsic aspect of the formation of subjectivity. Effects of abjection are as such necessitated by the coherence of an identity, which means that such effects pertain as much to the structural integrity of the individual ego as to the larger structural symbolic order in which that individual is located. Although contingent upon the symbolic frame in which they are rooted, "extra-discursive" affects of abjection are nonetheless felt in – reverberate across – different (bodily, ego, symbolic) registers of experience. Such affects are internal to processes of social subjectivity, whether that-subjectivity is primarily *corporeal* in nature (in which the abject is a menace to the rudimentary demarcations of the body), *psychological* (where the abject is an affront to the structural integrity of the ego and its

identifications), or *symbolic* (in which the abject presents as a destabilization of the social and linguistic structuring systems of the subject).

What is becoming increasingly clear then – and where I differ from critics who use the concept in a predominantly psychological manner – is that abjection cannot be delimited to the imaginary domain of ego-functioning. The "powers of horror" of the abject are most violently exerted at that point of conjunction between ego and moral social law that we recognize as the superego. For Kristeva it is this moral-political nerve center – which she takes to be each subject's personalized instantiation of the symbolic – that is most troubled by abjection. She expresses this point succinctly: "To each ego its object; to each superego its abject" (1982, p. 2). It is this factor that enables her to argue, toward the end of *Powers of Horror*, that the "orb of abjection" spreads across the broad social spheres of morality, religion, politics, and culture. Given this last consideration, one should not be surprised that the highest productions of a given culture, that which is sacred, sacrosanct within it, remain always shadowed by the abject. Such practices and artifacts – the greatest and most valorized of a culture's sublimations – harness the unclean, the improper; they constitute themselves precisely through them, through the repulsion of its threat. In this way, one can understand why the prime operation of abjection is that of *exclusion*, and why the most basic responses to abjection are those of ejection, separation, division, and the drawing of boundaries. In a passage that strongly evokes Fanon's account of the divisions of colonial space, Kristeva (1982) remarks, "A deviser of territories, languages, works, the *deject* [the subject in the state of abjection] never stops demarcating his universe" (p. 8).

De-naturalizing abjection: The "primal symbolic"

We are now well placed to raise a series of objections to the theory of abjection. Despite the clear benefits of this theoretical approach – many of which have been signaled above – the viability of its ongoing analytical use as a means of understanding racism will depend on how able it is to respond to these objections.

The first, and perhaps most obvious, charge is that of essentializing the bodily, the idea that the register of physicality is somehow primary, foundational. There is a risk here of taking a physical mode of response as a template for violent demarcations of ego and symbolic territory. The danger, to offer an example, is reading a politics of segregation as merely the psychical and symbolic articulation of bodily modes, as an extension of naturally occurring operations (repulsions, aversions, exclusions) through which bodily singularity is attained. The likely result of such an assumption is a (not so) subtle naturalization of various forms of social and spatial division. The degradation of a given abject class can thus be understood – and implicitly

justified – as little more than the outgrowth of an instinctual endowment. This dovetails with a concern noted above, that the theory of abjection could potentially be utilized as an "explaining away", or worse yet, as an implicit justification for, racism. These objections are worth highlighting because, from a Fanonian standpoint, such a theorization of racism runs the risk of potentially universalizing and thereby rationalizing racism, treating it as an unavoidable, "natural" phenomenon, which is thus dislocated from the socio-economic and historical circumstances of colonialism, which of course play a fundamental role. Differently put, generalizing applications of the theory of abjection that do not foreground the symbolic and socio-cultural coordinates of its specific historical instantiations, can be accused, in a properly Fanonian moment of critique, of ignoring the sociogenetic dimension required of an adequately decolonial analysis.

What is worth reiterating in this respect is that the bodily reactions in question – the disgusted, defensive postures of abjection – are never *merely bodily* but are learned, acculturated responses that occur within very precise socio-cultural coordinates of value. The abjecting of human populations, of types of people, is necessarily socially and historically conditioned. This is what a Fanonian perspective would remind us: any application of the theory of abjection to the phenomenon of racism, must, of necessity, highlight the sociogenic/symbolic conditions underlying abjection. If we fail to do this, then the theory could be said to play its part in "ontologizing" racism as an inevitable factor of human social existence, a position that would clearly be anathema to Fanon.

Aside from Fanon, there are also important psychoanalytic reasons for stressing the significance of the sociogenic and symbolic dimensions of abjection. The body, one should insist, remains irretrievably entangled in the symbolic. Even a cursory reference to Freud's most elementary understanding of psychosomatic symptoms confirms this: an impairment (a paralysis, a peculiar physical pain) for which no biological reason can be found typically gives expression to, acts as a cipher (a signifier) for, a symbolic message. In the case of abjection, the paradox is that the domain of the "extra-discursive" (in this instance the bodily) still occurs within the frame of rudimentary symbolic values that remain prepropositional in form but that are nonetheless operative. The "extra-discursive" here, we might suggest, is that minimal gap, the space of separation between a framework of symbolic values and the "gentrification" of discursive formalization. The symbolic, as such, already underlies the primal terrain of values, which makes such violent separations and expulsions meaningful, and does so despite such affects pre-empting the articulations of explicit propositional form. So, to be sure, although the body remains a physical vessel, a corporeal ground of sensation that is never fully retrieved into rational comprehension – never indeed totally domesticated within symbolic intelligibility – its experiences are never "more primal" than the symbolic frameworks of associations within which they occur.

We are not just dealing with a prospective essentialism of the bodily, but also with the issue of psychological reductionism, with a prospective essentialism of the *ego*. Kristeva's psychoanalytic theorization appears all too often to slip into a predominantly subjective (which is to say psychological, *imaginary*) register. The implication here – a recurring problem also in interpretations of her work – is that the ego is more than a nodal point in the interlinked (bodily, ego, symbolic) dimensions of abjection, but is its very basis, its point of substantiation. (Even the move to emphasize that it is the superego that is most troubled by the abject does not escape this problem: the superego bears most forcefully down upon no other object than the ego itself.) I alluded above to the pitfalls of reducing racism to the effects of ego-identification, misrecognition, and aggressiveness. To delimit one's account of racism to the processes and dynamics of imaginary identification – however important such factors are – is to fall prey to the depoliticizing tendency that has for so long plagued psychoanalytic thought. Racism will not be overcome merely by means of psychological analysis.

It is therefore crucial that we warn against those applications of the notion of abjection which localize its effects largely to the personal, as in Cohen's (2002) description of "the diffuse narcissistic anxiety experienced in the case of what cannot be symbolically represented in and by the self" (p. 195).[24] This is a point worth stressing again: the abject cannot be delimited to an object that vexes and disturbs the ego. In instances of abjection, what is in question is not primarily the border anxiety that emerges when the separation-individuation of the ego is made difficult. Nor is it principally an issue of the symptomatic emergence of bodily anxieties, reflexes, and repulsions as isolated, seemingly "pre-symbolic" factors. Abjection is more than a disruption of imaginary and corporeal fixity, more than a threat to a psychic and symbolic body breaking up into incoherence. It is a capsizing of symbolic means, a disabling of the apparatuses of differentiation and separation. Its true disturbance involves the potential collapse of societal and symbolic structure; we are concerned with the breakdown of the efficacy of symbolic activity itself.

A related problem comes into view here, that of focusing upon – and thus tacitly reifying – particular imaginary objects, and doing so at the cost of attention to the underlying symbolic processes that make such objects intelligible. In this respect, we are able to introduce a Lacanian inflection to an argument advanced in the feminist psychoanalytic literature. As is perhaps already evident, the antiessentialist potential of the theory of abjection – which critics like Butler (1993) and Weiss (1999) clearly want to hold on to – is compromised by the insistence on what appears to be the inaugural object of abjection: the mother's body. Not only does this point to an apparent contradiction within the theory itself, in reference to the idea that there is no original or essential object of abjection; it also leads, seemingly inevitably,

to a degradation of the maternal. Baraitser (2009), for example, points to the damaging effects on the feminine of the insistence on the abjection of the maternal body and psyche – referred to by Kristeva as "necessary matricide" – for successful separation to take place.[25]

The theory of abjection then veers toward a number of essentialisms, each of which entails its own naturalizing tendency, be it an essentialism of the body, of the contents and role of the ego – or as we shall go on to see – of the affective. The only way to escape this problem is to ground abjection in the symbolic, a move that would avoid the trappings of reductionism by virtue of the fact, already discussed, that the symbolic has no essential contents. To draw again on the distinction Glynos (2000) offers apropos the imaginary and symbolic, an analysis from the perspective of the imaginary produces a sense of already subsisting positive essences; an analysis from the perspective of the symbolic, by contrast, shows how such positive properties are an effect of the exchange systems that frame a series of social relations. It is for this reason that one should remain wary of Winnubst's (2004) seemingly reasonable request that we specify, localize and historicize the symbolic, by referring instead to the "cultural symbolic". The hope is that we thus avoid generalized descriptions of the universal structure of language that pay no attention to cultural particularity. There would appear to be obvious historicist advantages to such a move: it provides a context of enculturation able to tell us how subjects come to be differentiated in precise historical locations. Moreover, such an empirical frame would presumably tell us much about the dynamics that lend fixity to the positioning of subjects within particular discursive regimes as opposed to others.

What such an approach overlooks, however, is the Lacanian insight that a preoccupation with contextualization often ends up neglecting the underlying operations of structures themselves. We end up caught in the imaginary lure of prioritizing contents under the assumption that we are simply outlining a series of contextualizing elements. The shortcoming of such an approach is that the details it provides are all too easily themselves "imaginarized", given a meaning, a psychological significance, an object status that is then reified. Precisely this has occurred in the case of fixing the maternal body as the primary object of abjection. It would have been far more profitable in this respect to examine the *regularly occurring structural features* of a differential system evidenced *across contexts*. To relegate the symbolic to secondary importance, to treat it merely as the backdrop to current affective dynamics, is to over-emphasize an *analysis of comparable objects* at the cost of attention to *the comparable functioning of differential systems* in a variety of domains. The latter provides a type of analysis that would enable us to see abjection as a symbolic function that requires no definitive or set contents, but as a disruption to the framework of social relations that will be experienced and felt in a variety of bodily and psychological forms. As such, one can insist upon the

logical priority of the symbolic and underline the methodological warning voiced above, of not reducing the functioning of signifiers to meanings, or the symbolic to specific, contingent sets of socio-historical contents.

Structure before Affect

The argument offered above apropos the symbolic necessarily underlying, *preceding*, the terms of bodily experience can also be made in reference to the ostensibly primal quality of affect. Given the prominence of the contemporary "affective turn" in social theory (Ahmed, 2004b; Massumi, 2002; Terada, 2001; Ticineto Clough & Halley, 2007; Sedgwick, 2003) this is an argument worth developing here in some detail. It is worthwhile drawing on a series of historical contributions to contextualize this debate. The problem in question, to paraphrase Lévi-Strauss (1963), lies with the naive attempt to reduce observable aspects of human activity to inarticulate emotional drives. For Lévi-Strauss one should, by contrast, vigorously reject any explanatory recourse to vague emotions, to the murky realm of the "field of affectivity". Commenting on Lacan's thought, Jean Hyppolite concurs, "There is no pure affective on the one hand, entirely engaged in the real, and the pure intellectual on the other" (in Lacan, 1988, p. 293). Lacan (1988) is no less biting in his own invective against the idea of affect as unmediated channel of expressivity:

> The affective is not … a special density which would escape an intellectual accounting. It is not to be found in a mythical beyond of the production of the symbol …
>
> *(p. 57)*

This pronounced distrust toward an analytics of affect is perhaps surprising coming from a psychoanalyst, particularly so for those who subscribe to the narrow view of psychoanalysis as primarily concerned with the regulation of affects (as preoccupied with archaic drive impulses, passions that cannot be admitted to consciousness, etc.). Here, however, the opposite contention comes into view, the charge that such structuralist theories elide or simply ignore affect, excluding it from their respective analytical frames in such a way that their final analyses remain incomplete. This would seem a pertinent issue; after all, for the anthropologist and the psychoanalyst alike, intensities of affect surely feature as an omnipresent component of human sociality. The question then is not whether affect is simply ignored in a way that makes a given analytical frame incomplete. It is rather that of how affect might be adequately accommodated within a frame that remains *attuned to the structuring role of the symbolic* and that is not considerably weakened as a result.

The structuralist aversion to explanation by way of affect thus provides us with the challenge of how we might think of racism as abjection. The challenge here is twofold: firstly, that of how affective force might be factored into types of analysis that take seriously the role of symbolic/discursive systems in determining the parameters of experience, and secondly, that of being wary of the depoliticizing effects of explanations by way of "natural passions". That is to say, the dismissal of explanations based solely on affect is well founded: a delimiting of the explanatory role of the affective will prove crucial if we aim to maintain a degree of epistemological rigor in our engagement with the theme of "extra-discursive" racism.

We may develop this line of critique by questioning Kristeva's developmental account. By drawing on such a developmental narrative, Kristeva commits herself to a pre-symbolic domain, adhering to a series of concepts that, under scrutiny, beg a series of critical questions. Lacan's opposition to such developmental narratives is fairly straightforward, and is of value in pinpointing a series of routine errors within how much psychoanalytic developmental thought is deployed. First of all, a rudimentary point: even the most primal "pre-verbal" experiences occur within a social domain, within a world in which symbolic functioning (language, roles, social exchange) is ubiquitous. Neonates are thoroughly immersed in this world, surrounded by the signifying attributions that are continually made of their behaviors and apparent needs. What this means then – my second point – is that we have already made an error by slipping into an egoic/imaginary register by prioritizing the terms of singular experience over and above the frame of *inter-subjective symbolic interaction* that, for any sophisticated form of psychoanalysis, is its necessary logical precondition. To this we must add the further qualification that, simply put, there is no purely insular individual experience prior to the advent of an ego that requires a dialectic interchange with others.[26]

One might here resort to a maxim shared by both symbolic interactionism and Lacanian thought: there is no such thing as an isolated "intra-subjectivity" that is cut apart from the field of sociality. Despite the ego's convictions to the contrary, one never simply "exempts" oneself from the social, one never steps outside the jurisdiction of symbolic mediation. By elevating affective and ego disturbances, by treating such registers of experience as somehow able to stand apart from the socio-symbolic network that grounds them and grants them rudimentary intelligibility, the theory of abjection all too easily exaggerates the agency of subjects (and of affect), to give voice to something beyond symbolic parameters. In such an emphasis on *experience*, on subjective dynamics that cannot but recenter the ego, we risk losing sight of the fact that the abject is symbolically determined, that is, of the *trans-individual* dimension proper to affects of abjection. Abjection, one should insist, is more a case of matter out of place, of violations of the symbolic (of the ongoing network of social transactions), than it is a case of the subjective affects or powers of horror.

This then, for Lévi-Strauss and Lacan alike is a cardinal error: the implication that affective force bypasses or exists prior to the symbolic, that the affective represents a primal, pre-verbal or archaic means of basic attachments or aversions and hence warrants distinctive analytical attentions potentially set aside from symbolic and imaginary axes of scrutiny. It is crucial that we address this point if we are to appreciate the political complexity of various intersections of discourse, affect, and emotion.[27] An example: I may express myself in a discourse of nonracist, multi-cultural tolerance; I may well *feel* genuinely emotionally committed to such values – identifying with such ideal-ego values at a imaginary level – yet I might, nevertheless, experience a set of anxious, affective, bodily reactions in relation to the physical proximity of certain others. Such affective responses remain conditioned by a symbolic horizon, by a (pre-reflexive) backdrop of historical values, meanings, roles, and similar symbolic designations. Affective force as such is never a "pure outside". Although it exceeds the gentrification of prevailing discursive norms and eludes *full* symbolic mediation, it remains nonetheless within an imaginary and symbolic frame, within the ambit of ongoing (if unsuccessful) attempts to domesticate its excessive, potentially traumatic quality by designations of meaning, identity, and symbolic value. One should thus wholeheartedly endorse Hemmings's (2005) critique of "the contemporary fascination with affect as outside social meaning, as providing a break in the social" (p. 550). The warning she sounds, in response to Massumi's (1996, 2002) assertion of the autonomy of affects and Sedgwick's (2003) notion of "affective freedom", is that

> affect [typically] manifests precisely not as difference, but as central mechanism of social reproduction in the most glaring of ways. The delights of consumerism, feelings of belonging attending fascism … are affective responses that strengthen rather than challenge a dominant social order.
>
> *(p. 551)*

The frame of abjection

Kristeva, we might say, is not *anthropological* enough in her attention to the role of the symbolic. This is a point best made via a comparison between her theorizations and those of her precursor, Mary Douglas, who views experiences of defilement as foundationally trans-individual. Recourse to the latter's account of ritual avoidance is here informative. While for Douglas there most certainly is a relation between individual preoccupations and societal practices of exclusion and boundary-making, such a relation is not to be approached from the perspective of singular ego needs. Such rituals of demarcation and separation do draw on individual experience, but they cannot be

said to be circumscribed by it; the phenomenology of abjection thus never exceeds the boundaries of societal framing:

> The analysis of ritual symbolism cannot begin until we recognize ritual as an attempt to create and maintain a particular culture, a particular set of assumptions *by which experience is controlled*. Any culture is a series of related structures which comprise social forms, values … knowledge … through which experience is mediated … The rituals enact the form of social relations … [They] work upon the body politic through the … medium of the physical body.
>
> *(Douglas, 2002, pp. 158–159, emphasis added)*

As hardly needs reiterating, structure is the pre-eminent variable here, experience, and indeed bodily phenomenology, is secondary, reliant upon the symbolic (i.e. social relations, structure). Douglas's emphasis is decidedly on matters out of place, on crises of placement within the symbolic network, rather than on individual (ego, bodily) reactions. What though – to be sure we understand the term in this context – does Douglas (2002) mean by the symbolic? Her answer concurs with the Lacanian account advanced above: the system of social links held in place by exchanges; a broad pattern of social relatedness; the "structures which comprise social forms" and that necessarily mediate everyday individual experience (p. 158). It is for this reason that she maintains, "there is no such thing as dirt; no single item is dirty apart from a particular system of classification in which it does not fit" (p. xvii). Furthermore:

> [A]ll margins are dangerous. If they are pulled this way or that the shape of fundamental experience is altered. Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins. We should expect the orifices of the body to symbolize its especially vulnerable points. Matter issuing from them is marginal stuff … Spittle, blood, milk, urine, feces … simply by issuing forth have traversed the boundary of the body … The mistake is to treat bodily margins in isolation from all other margins. *There is no reason to assume any primacy for the individual's attitude to his [sic] own bodily and emotional experience, any more than for his cultural and social experience.*
>
> *(p. 150, emphasis added)*

Defilement, the unclean, indeed the operation of repulsion of abjection itself, following Douglas's (2002) logic, is ultimately and necessarily *a crisis of the symbolic*, however profoundly the reverberations of such effects are felt at other levels of the real.[28]

This poses a question: if the symbolic is not exceeded, how is it that we are talking about crises *of the symbolic*, a real of the symbolic? It helps here to

emphasize again the distinction between the *imaginary function* of *meaning* and the *operation of* a differential system, that is, *a symbolic framework*, that structures such effects of meaning, and makes them possible.

So, in the case of abjection with its contraventions of order and category, we no doubt experience violent effects on the imaginary level; there is a "seizing up", a capsizing of imaginary functions. The ability of discourse to produce meaning, to generate temporary forms of fixity, and indeed, the captivation of identity, is severely compromised. Effects of fragmentation occur here (we have a falling back into the body, the ego in pieces) by virtue of the fact that the discourse in question has been transgressed, and subverted. This by no means equals a collapse of the symbolic, even though it most certainly will cause disruptions to symbolic operations (categorization systems, role designations, the affirmation of societal structure via modes of exchange, etc.). We have a useful corrective thus to the presumption that abjection is capable of overturning the symbolic. The process of abjection is not tantamount to psychosis; neither abjected nor abjecting subjects have slipped into a world where consensual reality no longer holds. By the same token, abjection is not revolutionary: the hierarchies, roles, and system of relationships that make up the symbolic network may have been, for the time being, interrupted and challenged, but the symbolic order with its system of places and differential values has by no means been disenabled. If anything, one might wager, it has been strengthened.

The very fact that the subject is feeling the effects of abjection (in *abjecting* or in being *abjected*) is proof that the given symbolic order is still in place. The very vigor of the response – like a force field that violently repels attempts at intrusion – evinces the fact that symbolic operations are alive and well despite the discourse(s) in question has failed, their imaginary capacities having been pre-empted, or overcome. Crucially then this trans-subjective network, the basis of consensual reality, will persist; the impact of such disturbances will be defrayed, rebounding violently and being felt most intensely at imaginary and bodily levels. This is the (*body–ego–symbolic*) series of expulsions that I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter; this echoing sequence of denigrations is exactly the result, the knock-on effect, of such contraventions of order and category. If we recognize the symbolic as the epicenter of such disturbances, then we understand not only the *social force of racism* – the reaction of a set of social networks and value systems reasserting themselves – but also the multiple channels of response that follow on, as symptoms of this challenge. Moreover, once we have ascertained the primacy of the symbolic frame, we have no difficulty in appreciating that such chains of denigration may occur in both descending and ascending directions, with structural, psychological, and somatic instantiations of racism following on from and reciprocating one another.

"Non-psychological" racist subjectivity

What is in question here is not only the sequence but the issue of different possible combinations of such registers of racism; the complexity of the inter-reliance and interaction of these modes needs to be addressed. The above discussion enables us to cast light on an earlier postulate, the idea that the phenomenological terrain of the body might operate as a "dormant register", a ground of rehabilitation whereby latent exclusionary sentiments become *somatically* manifest. There is, it would seem, a correct intuition here, even if the emphasis in this formulation is perhaps misleading. While somatic and affective domains may prove a basis of rehabilitation for what is prohibited within discourse, it is rather the case – following the arguments outlined above – that the symbolic itself provides the "dormant register" of racism.[29] So, to retrieve elements of the Habermasian language utilized earlier: racist sentiments may re-emerge, in a subliminal capacity, in a prepropositional form – in the reactivity, the impulses and automatic behaviors are grounded in implicit lifeworld knowledge – despite that they may have been long since rejected at the level of "discursive consciousness".

True enough then, symbolic values and distinctions of racism may be re-routed, given alternative expressive form, may be re-enacted, and consolidated in sensible states of the body. Or, to paraphrase Hemmings (2005): the body has the capacity to interrupt social norms, to "go its own way", to embarrass the subject in reactions that transgress prevailing discursive values, even though the affective force in question never escapes the broader parameters of the symbolic. We must affirm I.M. Young's (1990b) warning that the censure and analysis of racist discourse will, in and of itself, prove an inadequate strategy for anti-racist politics. We should, however, take this argument one step further. If the operations of the symbolic frame may itself reproduce racism (as in the case of structural or so-called institutional racism), and if the imaginary dimension of everyday discourse/ego-intentions can be pre-empted or bypassed altogether, then this opens up the possibility of an unholy alliance between racisms of body and of structure. The prospect of this short-circuit between visceral and symbolic dimensions leads to a surprising conclusion: there need to be no *psychologies* of racism, no explicit racist identities for racism nevertheless to occur within subjectivity.

This calls to mind Žižek's analysis of inter-passivity in ideological belief, in which believing occurs in an *extra-psychological* manner via the role of external objects or others – the idea, in short, that I need not personally believe for there nonetheless to be a believing of which I am part. In the same vein, we might contend that I need not be "psychologically" racist, that is, in any way personally invested in or consciously identified with racist values, *for there to be racism of which I am a part*. One should be attentive to the

nuance of Žižek's point; he is not simply eliding the category of subjectivity: the believing subjects *do* effectively (indeed, for Žižek, *objectively*) believe, just not in an overtly personalized manner. They believe instead at one step's remove, with the comfort of cynical distance from their belief. The same would appear to be true of racism: subjectivity – taken in the broad sense of being comprised of bodily, ego, and symbolic elements – is by no means exempt from racism simply because there is an absence of an overtly racist imaginary. In such circumstances the symbolic and bodily registers have effectively superseded "individual psychology"; they have taken the place of the subject's personal reaction; more strongly put, such responses effectively "objectively" *are* the individual's subjective disposition.

Symbolic operation, imaginary meaning, embodied passion

We are now, by way of conclusion, able to return to our point of departure, our engagement with the Fanonian real and the problems it poses for discursive accounts of racism (the breakdown of bodily and ego coherence, the disjuncture of affect and symbolic means). The arguments assembled above all lead us to the same conclusion. The "extra-discursive" – understood as the domain of pre-reflexive responses that over-ride the norms and delimitations of discourse – does indeed exist as a meaningful and *necessary* category in the analysis of racism, even though the "extra-discursive" itself must be located within the frame of the symbolic. So, while there is no doubt a series of real effects occurring at these sites – as Fanon shows, racism is often experienced in a profoundly visceral and psychological (imaginary) manner, as a threat to the structural integrity of body and ego alike – these sites provide neither its point of origin, nor the best perspective from which to grasp the interlinked cascade of affects that racism is capable of. One should not, therefore, view these modalities of racism as grounded in naturalism of the body, as initiating in natural reflexive responses of the ego, but as arising from disruptions to the ordering force of the symbolic network itself. Why this is so crucial is that it gives the lie to racism as a primal retort, as an automatic, ostensibly "instinctual" reaction to otherness, and it does so without fixing racism as merely socially constructed (discursive, textual, rhetorical) in form.

Contrary then to the suggestion that we discard the notion of abjection, it would seem apparent that this theory provides a valuable analytical means of linking the violent exclusionary reactions of bodily, ego, and symbolic reals.[30] This is what is needed when it comes to the force of anti-Blackness which is never confined merely to one of the foregoing dimensions of experience. As I hope is by now clear, the threat, and the prospective *fragmentations* of racism cannot be consigned to any one of these (somatic, psychological, or symbolic) dimensions of sociality; we are concerned with a type of (bodily,

existential, metaphysical) boundary-anxiety which extends to multiple dimensions, that reverberates across interlinked registers. An analysis of abjection thus exposes the prospective shortcomings of standard psychoanalytic and discourse analytic approaches alike. These traditions have tended to focus their analyses on isolated registers (the prioritization of ego-level disturbances in the first instance,[31] a fixation on text and talk in the latter), at the cost of examining the *prospective combinations between these registers*.

We need to cast our analytic net widely enough to identify a series of distinct but overlapping modalities of racism. Our earlier discussion of the various facets of the Fanonion real proves helpful in this respect. We have, firstly, a visceral racism of the body comprised of a somatic array of affects, sensitivities, reflexes, and anxieties that give expression to underlying presumptions concerning the attributes of certain others.[32] Secondly, an imaginary or *inter-subjective* racism is rooted in the processes of ego-identifications, misrecognition, and aggressivity. This is a racism of ego and other, the realm of Fanon's "mirror hallucinations" of racism, and it entails a mode of subjectivity in which the extremes of narcissism and rivalry collide and combine in the desperate attempt to secure for the subject a likable self-image always tethered to the images of other. Given the importance here of shoring up imaginary, defensive identifications, this modality of racism is often best grasped with reference to a series of psychological mechanisms (the standard psychoanalytic defense mechanisms – projection, denial, splitting, displacement, disavowal, reaction formation – are usefully applied here). Thirdly, racism is sustained at the extra-psychological level of differential systems (language, societal transactions, role designations) that structure experience. This is the a-subjective social grid of the symbolic; racism here can be approached as a function of the social links held in place by symbolic exchanges, by the conventions and codifications of the historically specific operations of such systems. Crucial here then is not only the play of the signifier, the functioning of language viewed as devoid of any essential contents, but the broader field of societal transactions, role designations, encompassing patterns of social relatedness. Our priority here lies in tracking racism as it is perpetuated in the operation of various forms of social practice and symbolic interaction, with racism as it is manifest in the value systems, subject positions, categories, and structures generated by symbolic means.

This is not simply to make the routine observation that racism can be analyzed at a variety of different levels of sociality. It is rather to suggest that critical decolonial psychology requires a theoretical perspective that is able to conceptualize how such dimensions of racist subjectivity may work in combination – in differing arrangements of symbolic operation, imaginary identity, and embodied affect/libido – so as to produce something of the persistence that makes racism such an obdurate social formation. A pressing research agenda comes to the fore: accounting for the intertwining of these registers of

racism, explaining the combinations of racism at the levels of symbolic functioning, imaginary meanings and identifications, and the libidinal investments of embodied passions. Fanon's work does this; Fanon, never a disciple of any one theoretical language, blends modes of existential-phenomenological, psychiatric, psychoanalytic, and philosophical analysis in *Black Skin White Masks* in order to grasp how colonial racism entraps not just discourses and identities but the "metaphysical" dimensions of coloniality. His inventiveness remains an inspiration for us to continue diverse theoretical resources in continuing such a crucial decolonial task.

Racist discourse and libidinal economy

We return now to the question of the rapprochement of discursive and psychoanalytic approaches to the analysis of racism. As I hope the above argument makes clear, what is required if we are to grapple with the complex relationship between passionate subjects and their symbolic structures is not merely a more historicized version of psychoanalytic critique. This is not simply a case of aligning psychoanalysis and discourse analysis such that we are better able to track psychological mechanisms in talk, or to view psychoanalytic processes as enacted in the language (Billig, 1999; Georgaca, 2005; Riggs & Augoustinos, 2004). What is called for, by contrast, is a theory of the operation of discourse within a broader analytical realm inclusive of non-discursive elements. More specifically, the challenge posed for discourse analysis is that of apprehending the hold of "extra-discursive" factors (somatic, affective components) *in conjunction with* the discursive power of accompanying symbolic and imaginary constructions. It is this overlap between orderings of knowledge and arrangements of affective force, this intersection of social practice and libidinal investment, that we need to explore further in order to better appreciate how the discursive and "extra-discursive" facets of racism stack up together.

At least two prospective lines of inquiry open up here. A first crucial contribution in this respect would be *a psychoanalytic theory of the functioning of racist discourse itself*, that is, an awareness of the libidinal economy of racist discourse and how it is held in place, conditioned by, and always involved in a dynamic relation with those prepropositional, bodily, and affective/libidinal aspects that I have referred to above as "extra-discursive". Now, although, such a theory would need to be attentive to the political dimension of discourse, to the power-knowledge conjunction so stressed by critical discourse theory, it would nonetheless attend to what Alcorn (2002) refers to as

> the libidinal power of language … in its potential for attachments, attractions, organizations, repulsions and bindings that create relatively stable sites of identification.
>
> *(p. 105)*

An invaluable resource for this line of inquiry is to be found in the work of Homi Bhabha (1994) who has rightly emphasized the *anxious* condition of colonial discourse; colonial discourse inevitably fails; it must, as such, repeat its attempts at objectification in the endlessly repeated forms of the stereotype, the racist slur, racial categorization. Discourse as such, in the regularity of its categories, in the surety of its reiterated demarcations, is an ally in the attempt to fend off and objectify the abject, even though its efforts never prove completely effective. This is why discursive forms of engagement are both necessary to the analysis of racism and why they are, in and of themselves, inadequate to the task. They are necessary because such symbolic attempts at containment – in language, in the codifications of a particular discourse, or in reference to the norms, values, and positions of the symbolic – are elementary responses to the experience of abjection. On the other hand, such discourse analytic approaches are, as we have by now seen, unable to apprehend those "extra-discursive" processes that condition and augment every discursive action, which escape its codifications and drive the urgency of its attempts at containment.[33] Importantly then, unless we are able to take such "extra-discursive" factors into account, to see how they underwrite and exert a driving influence upon racist patterns of signification, we do not appreciate the full complexity of racist discourse. We will not adequately understand the ways in which racist discourse combines with forces of the body, or the ways in which it links to most mechanisms of subjectivity and ego-constitution. We do not, in short, adequately understand the libidinal economy of racist discourse itself. We turn our focus to this libidinal dimension of racism in the following chapter.

Fanon's language of the bodily

Where does this leave us then when it comes to the analysis and contestation of racism and anti-Blackness? One of the conclusions noted above is that it is crucial to take the "extra-discursive" factors of racism into account; we need to grasp how anti-Blackness takes root in the domains of prepropositional, "quasi-instinctual", visceral, and *bodily* experiences. This, as a series of Afropessimist scholars are increasingly making us aware, is necessary given the extent to which anti-Blackness saturates and effects not merely the ideological domain of representation and discourse, and not only longstanding social and historical structures of dehumanization, but the realm of being itself. We need, accordingly, to consider how various dimensions of the real come to be invested with its animosities. Wherever there is a disjunction or deadlock, a type of incommensurability, trauma, or non-resolution, be it in the various interlinked registers of bodily experience, ego-relatedness and socio-symbolic order (i.e. the realms of somatic-affective experience, in respect of the ego's relation to itself and to inter-subjective others, or in the remit of sociality and symbolic law), there we will find racism. This is not to give racism a primal

or ontological form, but simply to stress how these fundamental discontinuities of human experience are so often responded to – or afforded an explanation by means of – the racial other, that abjected entity, who has come to be positioned outside the bodily/egoic/symbolic parameters ensuring the identity of the human.

In closing then, let us return to Fanon, or, more directly perhaps to Mbembe's comments on the final line of *Black Skin White Masks*: "O my body, make of me always a man who questions!" (1952/1986, p. 181). How does this enigmatic line shed light on what we have discussed above? Well, Fanon seems here to confer upon his body a critical and interrogative form of agency. Mbembe's (2019) speculations on this line remind us of earlier comments on the experience of reading Fanon, while pointing us also – suggestively, intriguingly – both to the paradoxes of embodiment and to how a type of *reinvention of the body* might be crucial in the wake of the dehumanizing abjections of anti-Blackness:

> [I]t is practically impossible to read Frantz Fanon and come out unscathed. It is difficult to read him without being interpellated by his voice, by his writing, his rhythm, his language, his sonorities…
>
> In the era [to come]… we will effectively require a language that constantly bores, perforates, and digs… Each of the fragments of this terrestrial language will be rooted in the paradoxes of the body, the flesh, the skin, and nerves. To escape the threat of fixation, confinement, and strangulation, as well as the threat of dissociation and mutilation, language and writing will have to… rise up and loosen the vice that threatens the subjugated person with suffocation as it does his body of muscles, lungs, heart… [T]hat dishonored body…[is] made of several bodies… the body of hatred, of appalling burden, the false body of abjection crushed by indignity… [a body] stolen by others… disfigured and abominated… [Hence] the matter is literally one of resuscitating it, in an act of veritable genesis.
>
> Rendered to life and thereby different to the fallen body of colonized existence, this new body will be invited to become a member of a new community. Unfolding according to its own plan, it will henceforth walk along together with other bodies and, doing so, will re-create the world.
>
> This is why, with Fanon, we address it in this final prayer:
>
> *O my body, always make me a man who questions!*
>
> *(Mbembe, 2019, p. 189)*[34]

Notes

1 It is worth noting – and this will become clearer as we continue – the trauma is real in the Lacanian sense not only in view of the fact that it escapes the capacities of language; it also upsets ego and symbolic boundaries, and threatens contraventions of category and order.

2 As he elaborates:

> "the constructionist understanding of the body has always had a problem with pain. [P]ain marks the threshold at which the signifying contract and the language games that make up my social reality come up against an absolute limit … Others … are unable to know this pain of mine, which belongs to me alone and cannot be converted into signifying currency of any kind"
>
> (Bryson, 1996, p. 219).

3 "Modern" or "symbolic racism" refers to forms of racism in which racist effects are realized not in terms of explicit or manifest prejudice, but rather through a championing of traditional values that come to be asserted in an anti-minority manner. See Leach (2005) for a useful critique of this notion.

4 Stevens (2010) evokes precisely this facet of apartheid racism underlining the fact that such anxious bodily encounters also brought with them the prospective-realization – unthinkable to a racist mentality – of an undeniable sameness:

> It is … when naked bodies get to touch each other in the surf at the beach, where there is the possibility of sharing food, cutlery and crockery, where ablutions may be performed together, where enjoyment can be commonly expressed, where arms may rub up against each other in darkened cinemas, that the potential for this binaried and embodied practice that is racism … [can] be undermined, and for our common humanity to be experienced.
>
> (p. 14)

5 In the case of the former see the flurry of papers published in the *British Journal of Social Psychology* (Frosh, 2002; Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2003; Gough, 2004; Hollway & Jefferson, 2005a, 2005b; Wetherell, 2005). In respect of the latter, Burman (2008); Frosh and Baraitser (2008); Jefferson (2008); Hoggett (2008); Hook (2008a); Hollway (2008); Rustin (2008); and Walkerdine (2008).

6 There is a broad literature on this topic within experimental and social cognitive psychology (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1998, 2000; Durrheim & Dixon, 2005; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986, 2005; Son Hing, Li & Zanna, 2002). As is no doubt apparent, my objective here is to approach this problematic via a different and underutilized set of theoretical resources.

7 Although, in fairness, this is a point Butler anticipates, it is nonetheless a recurring tendency in how the "extra-discursive" is thought of, even in early Lacan, as "prior to" the symbolic, a kind of excess materiality. Hence Ragland-Sullivan's (1992) reference to the real as the recalcitrance of nature, Gross's (1990b) description of the "extra-discursive" as a "continuum of 'raw materials'" (p. 34).

8 Žižek (2008) points out that such an understanding of the real, the "extra-discursive" is present in the early Lacan, whilst adding an important qualification:

> [T]he early Lacan … sometimes uses "the Real" to designate pre-Symbolic reality; however, this Real is the pure positivity of being without lack – as Lacan repeats again and again … lack is introduced only by the Symbolic. This is why, for Lacan, negativity is not the Real undermining the Symbolic from outside, but the Symbolic itself, the process of symbolization with its violent abstraction … [its] reduction of the wealth of experience … [T]he Real remains immanent to the Symbolic, it is the emergence of the Symbolic which introduces into reality the gap of the Real.
>
> (p. 319)

9 As is no doubt apparent, I am drawing on Lacanian terminology to describe this facet of the real of *jouissance*, the real of excess enjoyment/stimulation that eludes

phenomenological registration and over-runs the containment of discourse. This resistance to symbolization, taken in conjunction with the factor of excess – enjoyment involves contravention, either the transgression of the bounds of moral-discursive law, or the painful excesses of "too much" – means that the libidinal enjoyment in question maintains an essentially traumatic quality.

10 This "systems failure" element – the presence of a factor that is irresolvable, irreconcilable, incapable of integration – characterizes all symbolic systems inasmuch as they are "not all", never complete in the attempted symbolic registration of all of reality.

11 A crucial clarifying distinction can be made here. This concerns the difference between the fact that *anti-Blackness has ontological effects* – in the sense that it very profoundly impacts experiences of being (as our discussion of Black Consciousness in the previous chapter has highlighted) – yet anti-Blackness, like race, should not be viewed as attaining the ontological status of a universal, transhistorical, and essentially unchangeable aspect of all conceivable human realities. Gibson (1996) offers a similar qualification. Taking up Fanon's remarks in *A Dying Colonialism* according to which "being" and "nothingness" operate along color lines during colonialism, Gibson remarks that this divide "was not an ontological absolute but a definite social and psychological reality which characterized two 'species' of men and women: the colonizer and the colonized" (1996, pp. 273–274).

12 Fanon (1952/1986) flatly denies the Oedipus complex (at least in so far as it might be applied to the Antilles). Kristeva, as will soon become apparent, questions the explanatory priority Freudian psychoanalysis places on sexuality, emphasizing instead the factors of death, decay, and the unclean.

13 Abbott (1979) offers a valuable distinction in this respect:

> [W]hereas repression banishes its object into the unconscious, forgets and attempts to forget the forgetting, discrimination must constantly invite its representations into consciousness, reinforcing the crucial recognition of difference which they embody.
>
> (p. 15)

14 It is worthwhile noting Moruzzi's (1993) concerns regarding the under-acknowledgement of "racial configurations" in Kristeva's work. Moruzzi is likewise apprehensive of the fact that Kristeva's work on abjection exhibits something of an over-balancing of, that is, an emphasis on, the psychoanalytic at the cost of the political.

15 Bowie (1991) adds a useful gloss to this understanding:

> "the Symbolic is inveterately intersubjective and social … a res publica that does not allow any of its members to be himself, keep himself to himself or recreate in his own image the things that lie behind him".
>
> (p. 93)

16 Glynos (2000), makes this distinction very effectively:

> Imaginary misrecognition involves taking the positive properties of an essence rather than an effect of symbolic play, while the assumption of symbolic identification entails a shift away from the capture in a certain image or signified. … On the imaginary side, we have the idea that the signifier simply names an already subsisting positive essence; on the symbolic side, we witness how the positive properties are an effect of the play of the signifier.
>
> (pp. 98–99)

17 The functioning of the symbolic order makes possible the establishment of a particular perspective, a point "from which I might be looked upon", a location thus for a series of cultural ideals and priorities. These two lines of imaginary/symbolic identification of course replay the Freudian distinction between the "i" of the ideal-ego and the "I" of the ego-ideal, nicely described by Žižek (1989) as the difference between the identification of "what we would like to be" and identification from where we look at ourselves.
18 Several years ago, a professor at my then-university published a paper containing a series of implicitly racist claims. In debates with colleagues as to how best to respond to the public backlash that followed, an uncomfortable realization came to light. The most pressing motivation to address the situation was not how best to extend a fundamentally anti-racist agenda, it was how to defend against the public perception of being seen as racist.
19 While Fanon does highlight both fear and revulsion – going on to insist on the dimension of sexual revulsion – his account seems to focus more on the erotic/alluring qualities of phobic affect than upon the dimension of nausea, sickness, and bodily recoil emphasized by Kristeva.
20 Jolly's (2010) analysis provides an insightful discussion of the mobility of the abject, detailing the constant negotiation and struggle between oppressed groups. Denigrated men often abject women to avoid the status of abjection themselves; abjected women in turn often abject other women (sex workers, for example). Jolly's account thus emphasizes how abjection typically occurs in chains of (typically hierarchical) social relations whereby subjects successively attempt to transfer the status of the abject to others.
21 This conceptualization can interestingly be seen to coincide with what Fanon (1952/1986) refers to the zone of nonbeing in the opening pages of *Black Skin White Masks*. A further Fanon reference is likewise pertinent here, namely the well-known description of the contrast between the colonist's sector and that of the colonized, in *The Wretched of the Earth*: "The colonist's sector is a sector built to last, all stone and steel…of lights and paved roads… The colonized's sector, or at least, the 'native' quarters… is a disreputable place… You are born anywhere, anyhow. You die anywhere, from anything. It's a world with no space, people are piled one on top of the other… a famished sector.… a sector that crouches and cowers, a sector on its knees" (1961/1990, p. 4).
22 Perhaps surprising here is the degree to which sexuality appears to be a consistent factor in all of the various blurred modes of enjoyment mentioned here. Now while Kristeva clearly allows for the factor of sexual abjection in her theorization, the dominance of sexual fascination in the example does complicate the ascendancy that theorists such as Kristeva and Manganyi (see Chapter 5) want to give to the register of death and decay over and above that of sexual enjoyment.
23 An aligned charge concerns the contention that Kristeva's poetic style lends a strange grandiosity to experiences of abjection, that her means of evocation tacitly romanticizes abjection.
24 Cohen (2002) comes closer to the mark – at least in terms of my reading of the theory of abjection – in gesturing toward the ambit of symbolic interaction in his emphasis on "socially anchored … habits. … habits of those living on the margins of society" (p. 195). The mistake in many such accounts of the abjection – perhaps largely an error of emphasis – is an implicit privileging of *subjective experience*, namely that of the "gut feeling", the revulsion, nausea, the "ego-suffocation" arising from the intrusion of the abject. This phenomenological array of symptoms needs to be read as strictly secondary to the societal force of abjection as a threat, a potential disruption, to prevailing symbolic norms, prohibitions, laws, and boundaries.

25 There is some debate as to whether there needs to be a founding traumatic moment that inaugurates the experience of abjection. Kristeva suggests that there is indeed such a moment, and that that point of experience is the end of the child's undifferentiated relation to its mother. This inaugurating experience of abjection is said to establish bodily boundaries. It sets in place the earliest distinctions between inner and outer, ego and non-ego, although it never completely supersedes what went before. "Abjection" insists Kristeva (1982) "preserves what existed in the archaism of the pre-objectal relationship, in the immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be" (p. 10).

26 None of this is to suggest that there is no "pre-symbolic" existence. Lacan's mirror stage is precisely an attempt to outline the end of this time before an ego that, as a result, can be only retroactively posited. So, while "what happens at the level of the first symbolic articulations" (1993, p. 81) certainly raises questions – ontogenetically the fact of a pre-verbal period cannot, surely, be denied – we should be wary of treating what happens here as a means of thinking of later forms of human sociality. After the advent of speech, of imaginary and symbolic forms of inter-subjectivity, there is no simple return to what went before. It is for this reason that Lacan prefers to think in terms of logical as opposed to temporal sequence, and structural rather than developmental precedents.

27 I draw on Stavrakakis (2007) here in distinguishing between affect and emotion. Such a distinction, Stavrakakis notes, is apparent in the social constructionist literature, in terms of a differentiation between energetic affect and the more delimited, discursive factor of emotion (Billig, 1999). This important differentiation is also evident in psychoanalysis. "[I]f affect represents the quantum of libidinal energy", say Glynos and Stavrakakis (2008), "we could say that emotion results from the way it gets caught up in a network of signifiers (or 'ideas' in Freudian terms)" (p. 267). Any properly psychoanalytic engagement with affect needs to be aware of the libidinal aspect of this notion, of the fact that such intensities involve a paradoxical libidinal enjoyment-in-excess (Stavrakakis, 2007).

28 I am not suggesting that the earlier work of Douglas (2002) should simply supplant that of Kristeva. Douglas has herself been the subject of a series of historical critiques, listed by Duschinsky (2011), which allege that her account lacks adequate attention to individual subjectivity; and that it fails to attend to how the social world feels for individual subjects. So, while Douglas's prioritization of the cultural and socio-symbolic is certainly correct – it enables one also to account for variations across contexts as regards what counts as abject – the whole point of introducing the Lacanian imaginary, symbolic and real distinction is to insist that ultimately all such registers of analysis need to be taken into account within varying relations of combination.

29 Malone (1999) makes a similar point – albeit in a different context – when she comments that "[one] encounter[s] … in the interstice between representation and its remainder, particular structures" (p. 460).

30 It is worth noting that the three dimensions of the real that I have attributed to Fanon (disjuncture between body and experience, affect and symbolic means, deadlocks within the ideological societal apparatus itself) correlate only imperfectly with the body–ego–symbolic triad that emerges from Kristeva's theory of abjection.

31 For critiques of the typical ego-to-other lines of analysis that many psychoanalytic applications have attempted to reduce the economy of racism to, see Cohen (2002), Dalal (1998, 2001) and Frosh (1989). For accounts of the shortcomings of psychoanalytic perspectives that neglect the structural and constitutive role of discursive practices see Lane (1998a), Rustin (1991) and Žižek (1998).

32 As I touch on in Chapter 5, it is not only psychoanalysis that helps us grapple with such states of embodiment, but those – principally phenomenological – approaches that aim to track bodily experience as grounded socio-political contexts (for an excellent phenomenological perspective on such issues, see Ngo's *The Habits of Racism,* 2017).

33 Vighi and Feldner (2007) make this point succinctly: the problem with discourse analysis is that it fails to consider the crucial non-discursive element upon whose disavowal every discursive/ideological practice relies.

34 Mbembe's poetic reformulation of Fanonian ideas is at one evocative and elusive, no doubt intentionally so. It leaves us wondering how these two decolonial priorities – a rescuing of the body otherwise consigned to a colonial abjection and the consolidation of a "terrestrial language" or voice of the colonized – might be brought together. This is, of course, a dilemma for which there can be no one answer, and Mbembe's expressive description seems motivated in part by the desire to prompt us to come up with new responses to this imperative. One intriguing response to this challenge can be found in Sibertin-Blanc's (2017) reading of Fanon's essay "This is the voice of Algeria" in (1970) *A Dying Colonialism*. In this essay, Fanon discusses how anti-colonial radio broadcasts during the time of the Algerian war of Independence, despite being jammed by French authorities (i.e. distorted and obscured by static, fuzz, rendered largely unintelligible), nonetheless "played a fundamental role… in the training and strengthening of the Algeria national consciousness" (Fanon, 1970, p. 72), i.e. in extending a revolutionary sense of solidarity and subjective agency. In Sibertin-Blanc's reading, Fanon analyzed the "incorporation of the voice into the process of decolonial subjectivation by focusing on its excessive and complex materiality… that affects the enjoying body" (p. 80). To be clear here, Sibertin-Blanc has here in mind the broadcast radio voice from the program *The Voice of Fighting Algeria* in which the complex materiality of the voice is emphasized. Because of the noisy jamming procedures of the colonial authorities, this voice could not be clearly made out; the message being conveyed needed to be pieced together via a "task of reconstruction…[in which e]veryone would participate" (Fanon, 1970, p. 69). This process would involve a great many subjective – although, crucially, *group-mediated* – inputs, interpretations, discussions as to its contents – the end result of which was that listeners "would compensate for the fragmentary nature of the news by an autonomous creation of information" (Fanon, 1970, p. 69). It is on this basis – a voice of the colonized "whose presence was felt, whose reality was sensed" (Fanon, p. 70), and, more precisely yet for Sibertin-Blanc, on the basis of *the technologically-mediated yet also excessive phonic materiality* of this voice – that a mass mobilization against the colonial regime was substantiated. For Sibertin-Blanc, such an instantiation of voice was important in making colonized bodies more than just racialized (or indeed abject) bodies largely because it underscored also how each such colonized subject was also a *speaking body*, a subject of political enunciation. This voice thus played its part in in "the transformation of forms of corporeality central to the position of a decolonial subject" (Sibertin-Blanc, 2017, p. 77).

3

FANON'S DECOLONIAL PSYCHOANALYSIS

> *A black man in blue overalls … walk[ed] towards me… This was always a bit of an anxious moment, where one needed to obey the right rules of disinterest, to maintain a measured distance. The right balance to strike was this: to exude a limited apathy but to veer short of antipathy, to keep the rules of distance and superiority in place without offering anything by way of confrontation.*
>
> (Apartheid Archive Project, N59)

> [O]nly a psychoanalytic interpretation of the black problem can lay bare the anomalies of affect that are responsible for the structure of the complex.
>
> (Fanon, 1952/1986, p. 3)

> [A]n account of racism which has no purchase on the inner landscape and the unconscious mechanisms of its effects is, at best, only half the story.
>
> (Hall, 1996, p. 17)

> [D]ecolonial politics arises from…the subject's *unknown* relation to itself in the histories and mediations of its desires and resistances.
>
> (Marriott, 2018, p. 49)

This chapter outlines a decolonial form of psychoanalysis grounded in Fanon's conceptualization of colonial racism in *Black Skin, White Masks*. The aim is both to supplement the conceptualization of racism as an abjection offered in

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the previous chapter, and, by highlighting the distinctive analytical perspectives opened up by psychoanalysis, to indicate further directions for critical decolonial psychology.[1] Accordingly, the first section of the chapter makes a case for the political importance of psychoanalysis by addressing some long-standing critiques of psychoanalytic approaches to racism, paying particular attention to Fanon's call for a sociogenic approach. The second section of the chapter turns directly to the details of Fanon's psychoanalytic understanding of racism. Given that decolonial psychoanalysis is still something of an emerging field,[2] I adopt a rather expository approach here, one which both highlights the key contributions of Fanon's approach and builds upon these ideas with a series of Lacanian psychoanalytic conceptualizations. Doing so provides a framework that stresses the crucial psycho-political and sociogenic dimensions of Fanon's work.

One concern that runs throughout the chapter – and which accords with Fanon's insistence that psychoanalysis needs to be altered and critiqued when applied to colonial contexts[3] – is with how we might utilize psychoanalysis sociogenically, that is, in a way that does not result in psychological reductionism (that does not, in other words, reduce social structures to intra/inter-psychical dynamics). We have thus a very Fanonian challenge: what conceptual tools and perspectives best allow us to grasp the crucial psychical dimension of coloniality while remaining mindful of the sociogenic basis of the "Manichean delirium" and the various "anomalies of affect" it gives rise to? I offer several suggestions by way of response to this challenge. The first is to highlight the value of several linked psychoanalytic conceptualizations – the symbolic order, the trans-individual unconscious, and the symbolic ("big") Other – which prove crucial in enhancing and extending a series of corresponding Fanonian notions, namely, the force and influence of the colonizer's language and culture, the European collective unconscious, and the role of a governing third term of colonial inter-subjectivity, respectively. This conceptual augmentation, works, I argue, to strengthen the sociogenic aspect of Fanon's psychoanalytic analysis; it enables us to conceptualize a "sociogenic unconscious" – a necessary conceptualization for any decolonial form of psychoanalysis.

My second response to the need to prioritize sociogenesis comes with the notion of libidinal economy which I focus on in the chapter's concluding section. I understand the libidinal economy in a Fanonian manner, that is, as referring to sociogenic frameworks of fantasy and their corresponding distributions (or patterns) of affect/libido – such as those of phobia, obsessional neurosis, melancholia[4] – which necessitate the constant reiteration of both treasured and feared libidinal objects as a means of anchoring symbolic identifications. The notion of the libidinal economy provides a conceptual – and, potentially, a methodological –framework through which to view Fanon's pathbreaking conceptualizations of both the *affective/libidinal intensity* of

racism – so aptly captured in his notion of negrophobia – and its historical/symbolic forms – as described in his idea of the European Collective Unconscious.

The psychic life of colonial power: The importance of psychoanalysis for decolonial critique

Fanon, for, and against, the psychological

Perhaps the most influential historical figure in the endeavor to apply psychoanalysis to the colonial domain – despite the earlier contributions of Macrone (1937) in South Africa and of course Mannoni (1950/1990) in Madagascar – is still Fanon, particularly so in view of the psychoanalysis of racism he develops in *Black Skin, White Masks*. My aims in what follows are not merely expository: I hope to elaborate upon many of Fanon's most crucial insights and to make these ideas readily accessible for purposes of decolonial critique. I have chosen a particular text, Chapter 6 of *Black Skin, White Masks*, "The Black Man and Psychopathology", to expand upon in a way that articulates a series of concerns that run throughout this book. There are of course multiple different references to racism throughout Fanon's work, many of which are far less receptive to such a psychological perspective. Take for example the following comments, scattered across his later, important, essay "Racism and culture":

> Racism … is only one element of a vaster whole: that of the systematized oppression of a people … Psychologists, who tend to explain everything by movements of the psyche, claim to discover this behaviour on the level of contacts between individuals … […] … The habit of considering racism as a mental quirk, as a psychological flaw, must be abandoned … […] … It is not possible to enslave men without logically making them inferior … And racism is only the emotional, affective, sometimes intellectual explanation of this inferiorization.
>
> *(1956/1967, pp. 33–40)*

Such remarks may be read in conjunction with those of Adams (1970): the majority of human problems were, for Fanon, he says, reality problems, not fantasies:

> The poor are plagued by poverty … blacks by exploitation … Fanon rallied against a "psychologism" that dealt with all of these estranging afflictions as if they were … mere states of mind.
>
> *(p. 811)*

These points are well taken, particularly in a political climate where – as Žižek (2008) notes – racism is often couched as a problem of *intolerance* rather than

that of structural inequality. Such remarks significantly extend the critique provided in the foregoing chapter regarding exclusively psychological/psychical accounts of racism that centralize the ego and sideline the role of symbolic/structural/historical factors. An explicitly psychological engagement may not have been the first or most important mode of critique for Fanon by the time he wrote "Racism and culture", but it still has its place given that racism remains "the emotional, affective … intellectual route of 'inferiorization'" (1956/1967, p. 40).[5] While the psychiatric, psycho-diagnostic, and psychoanalytic elements of Fanon's thought may seem most prominent in the earlier *Black Skin White Masks*, they are present also in his later writings and conceptualizations of coloniality. In short, we do a disservice to Fanon to dismiss the "psycho-affective" dimension of his work. Suffice it, for now, to say that warnings against the perils of psychological reductionism too often provide the excuse to dismiss from serious consideration the *psychical* dimensions of colonial racism.

I emphasize this issue of divergent approaches to racism not because I aim to resolve it, but because it speaks to a twofold problem that we will confront in what follows: how psychoanalytic theorizations of the colonial might bridge the gap between the socio-symbolic and the subjective, firstly, and how to think of the psychical mechanisms of racism as applied to larger formations – such as those of discourse, symbolic identity, social fantasy, ideology – than that of the isolated subject, secondly.

The unconsciousness of the oppressed

Let us turn again to Biko:

> I have lived all my conscious life in the framework of institutionalized separate development. My friendships, my love, my education, my thinking, and every other facet of my life have been carved and shaped within the context of separate development. In stages during my life I have managed to outgrow some of the things the system taught me … [W]hat I propose to do now is to take a look at those … in opposition to the system, not from a detached point of view but from the point of view of a black man, conscious of the urgent need for an understanding of what is involved in the new approach – "black consciousness".
>
> *(Biko, 1978, p. 27)*

In his commentary on the above passage, Sanders (2002) describes Black Consciousness as a political and intellectual-historical formation that engendered an awareness in its proponents of "the historical and psychical dimensions of [their] … own oppression and active participation therein" (p. 163). Such a consciousness-raising led to an awareness of how one may have been an unwitting collaborator in the cause of one's own oppression, a contributor in the processes of one's own "voluntary servitude". "The acknowledgement

and negotiation of complicity" he reiterates, was "a basic impulse for Black Consciousness intellectuals" (p. 164).[6]

These remarks suggest a more multifaceted picture of apartheid than commonplace depictions which present the anti-apartheid struggle as played out between two mutually exclusive, clear-cut oppositional groupings. They likewise provide an important corrective to the view that the activities of political resistance begin and end with a focus on the oppressor. As Sanders (2002) makes clear: for Black Consciousness "talk of resistance has no meaning when [one's own] complicity is not negotiated" (p. 164). It is worth linking these comments to a telling remark offered by Hall (1996), who warns that all too often Fanon's first book is read as if it were entitled "Black Skin, White Skin". Despite that, the text "remorselessly returns to … binary oppositions, black/white, coloniser/colonised", one should not read him "as if binaries are the exclusive focus of his tale" (p. 18). So, although Fanon's subject is, of course, "the dichotomous and Manichean structure of racism as a binary system of representation and power", it is also "the split or divided self, the two sides of the same figure", that of the subject of colonization, "which… preoccupies him" (p. 18).

One should thus appreciate the extraordinary nature of Biko's reflections. These autobiographical comments testify not only to the pervasive influence of apartheid ideology, something that had come to saturate his education, his thinking, even the intimate domains of love and friendship – but to his own subjective struggle to rid himself of those aspects of apartheid mentality. The complicity Biko recognizes, and that enables his critique, is not only of the "conscious, analytical mind", but also of the psyche, one requiring "a psychic solution", a "coming to terms with the *unconscious*" (Sanders, 2002, pp. 178–179).

We might here reverse the obvious historical trajectory and see in Biko *the reason for Fanon*: the imperative to speak of and think about a Black *consciousness*, we might say, begs the question of the *unconsciousness of the oppressed*. This is of course a topic to which Fanon has much to contribute. Before turning to what he has to offer on this score, it is important briefly to signal a series of routine dismissals that come into play when one attempts to apply psychoanalysis to the political.

Psychoanalysis in the field of the political

To advance a psychoanalytic perspective on racism, certainly within the domain of mainstream psychology, is to bring a series of longstanding critiques upon oneself. I want to raise some of these critiques early on, because the debate concerning how to apply psychoanalysis and at what level (i.e. of psyches, of cultural conditions, modes of discourse, ideologies, group identifications, etc.) will be central to my concerns here. Let me begin by conceding

that the popular wisdom that opposes psychoanalysis as a vehicle of socio-historical critique has much importance to tell us. It benefits us to be reminded of the charge against psychoanalysis as "a discourse of modernist, bourgeois, European origins" that has often "tended to describe psychology in terms of universal frameworks … [ignoring] cultural and historical specificity" (Bergner, 1999, p. 222). By making universalizing assumptions of this sort, perpetuating Western presumptions, and remaining unaware of its own ideological complicities, psychoanalysis has certainly been applied in ways that legitimate versions of oppressive politics (Brickman, 2017; Cohen, 2002; Frosh, 2013; Truscott, 2020; Winnubst, 2004). This is particularly pertinent in the case of a decolonial psychoanalysis: witness Fanon's (1952/1986) angry dismissal of Mannoni's (1950/1990) *Prospero and Caliban*, a paradigmatic example of a psychoanalytic analysis that functions – often despite the better intention of its proponents – to perpetuate a series of ideological assumptions. Fanon of course takes particular exception to Mannoni's view that only certain groups can be colonized, just as only certain others can become colonizers, according to the psychical processes characteristic of each (i.e. the "inferiority complex" that drives colonizers to colonize, and the "dependency complex" that makes certain colonized accept colonial conditions).[7]

Critiques of this sort – against psychoanalysis as a universalizing conduit of particular ideological values – have been well documented, particularly in reference to postcolonial theory (Campbell, 2000; Khanna, 2003; Macey, 2000a; Moore-Gilbert, 1997; G. Younge, 2004) and critical studies of race, gender, and class (Abel, 1990; Bergner, 1999; McCulloch, 1983; Pajaczkowska & Young, 1999; Rustin, 1991; Spillers, 1996), two general domains of study in which the call for a "rehabilitated" application of psychoanalytic theory has been at its strongest. One problem that arises when critiques of this sort become totalizing, is that opportunities for genuinely culturally nuanced forms of psychoanalysis – which themselves offer opportunities for the critical refinement of psychoanalytic thought – are lost.[8] In this respect, we might say that the psychoanalytic theorization of the decolonial – and of colonial racism and anti-Blackness more particularly – remains an unfinished project.

One should also however note – as a counter to attacks on the depoliticizing nature of psychoanalysis – that the call for cultural specificity, like the insistence on historical relativism, can itself lead to the reification of problematic notions of cultural difference. Bertoldi (1998) for example, makes an argument for the political importance of *unifying universals* as they feature in psychoanalytic theory. Bertoldi's specific case is that of Wulf Sachs's (1996) well-documented psychoanalysis of John Chavafambira in apartheid South Africa. Rather than allocating to Chavafambira a different (that is to say *African*) unconscious, and conceding thus to a variety of racist presumptions, Sachs's reference to a more universalist set of Oedipal dynamics represents

nothing less – against the grain of apartheid racial/cultural differentiation – than the "attempt to write John's story into the universal narrative of mankind" (p. 114). Thus, in contrast to the particularism of historical relativism, he advances the political importance of a mode of universalism that can halt the articulation of categorical norms of cultural difference which – as Ernesto Laclau (1992) also warns – all too easily feed notions of hierarchical separation and integral difference.

Let me respond also to two further critiques – anticipated by Fanon's criticism of Mannoni (cited above) – that typically emerge with respect of psychoanalytic accounts of racism. To adopt a psychoanalytic perspective is by no means to relegate discussions of racism to the register of the (intra)subjective. Nor is it necessary to condemn the study of racism to the principles and mechanisms of a "depth psychology", or, indeed, to view racism as an outcome of various personality variables. It need not mean, furthermore, that we are obliged to fix the topic of racism within a vocabulary of deviancy – that is, to view racist phenomena as no more than psychopathological in form, as stemming from a few maladjusted subjects. This is not to say that earlier psychoanalytic engagements with racism have not been guilty of such reductive perspectives. Such approaches most certainly have conceptualized racism as an effect and expression of internal psychological dynamics; many have attempted the "pseudo-concrete" application of specific clinical categories (paranoia, compulsive neurosis, hysteria, etc.) to inter-subjective racist phenomena, as Žižek (1998) points out (see Dalal [2001] for a definitive critique of such trends in the history of psychoanalytic conceptualization; see also Cohen [2002] and Frosh [1989] for overviews of psychoanalytic conceptualizations of racism).

As a selection of some of the more innovative psychoanalytic engagements with racism makes clear, however (Barnard-Naude, 2023; Basu Thakur, 2020; Cheng, 2000; George, 2016; George & Hook, 2021; Khanna, 2003; Lane, 1998a; McGowan, 2022; Riggs & Augoustinos, 2004; Seshadri-Crooks, 2000; Winnubst, 2004; Žižek, 1993), psychoanalytic critique need not succumb to the pitfalls of decontextualization and psychological reductionism.[9] Such applications of psychoanalytic theory have remained attentive to the interpenetration of psychological and socio-historical factors, focusing on the "complex and often painful transactions between the psychic and the social" in the words of Pajaczkowska and Young (1999, p. 198), aware that the operations of the unconscious do not occur in a historical vacuum or beyond the reach of the structural factors of oppression. There are, once again, crucial lessons to be drawn from *Black Skin, White Masks* here, a text that, as Cohen (2002) puts it, focuses on "the interplay between the material and social as this is mediated through the psychic envelope that racism wraps around the body" (p. 186).

By prioritizing the *trans-individual* nature of the unconscious and the necessarily inter-subjective quality of identification and desire – along with the mutually reinforcing relation between subjective fantasy and social/symbolic structure – we may remain attuned to the historical and socio-economic contexts of racism. Such contexts may be taken to constitute a condition of possibility for the psychical operations in question, certainly, since the dreams, "neuroses" and symptoms of the colonized cannot – as Fanon makes clear – be understood outside the consideration of the material conditions of colonization. For House (2005), Fanon views racism as "being in articulation with and reinforcing the dominant and political economic structures: this domination … 'colonised' the … [European] unconscious" (p. 53). Fanon thus

> insists on the very impossibility of separating the "private" from the "public" since … intimate spheres [such as that] of sexuality … have also been colonised … [C]olonial discourses are mutually-reinforcing and multi-sited.
>
> *(2005, p. 57)*

More than just defending the use of psychoanalysis as a means of engaging the political, one should point to how an ethico-political sensibility is enlarged via a psychoanalytic conceptualization. If it is the case that responsibility-in-complicity is radicalized by psychoanalysis – psychoanalysis being a means of accessing hitherto unrecognized forms of accountability, "the site for a deepening responsibility" (Sanders, 2002, p. 182) – then "Addressing the psyche enlarge[s] … the field for political agency" (p. 165).

Where to locate the unconscious?

Given the nature of much of the (intra-psychically focused) psychoanalytic theory that Fanon was working with at the time of *Black Skin White Masks*, and taking into account the degree and pervasiveness of anti-Blackness in the colonial context that Fanon confronted, it is unsurprising that he placed an explanatory priority on socio-historical and political factors (sociogeny) as opposed to a predominant or exclusive focus on individual psychical and unconscious factors (ontogeny). Here is the oft-cited passage where Fanon makes this qualification:

> Freud insisted that the individual factor be taken into account through psychoanalysis. He substituted for a phylogenetic theory the ontogenetic perspective. It will be seen that the black man's alienation is not an individual question. Besides phylogeny and ontogeny stands sociogeny. In one sense… let us say that this is a question of a sociodiagnostic… Man is

> what brings society into being… The black man must wage war on both levels: since historically they influence each other, any unilateral liberation is incomplete, and the gravest mistake would be to believe in their automatic interdependence
>
> *(1952/1986, p. 4)*

Fanon is clear here about the need to engage "both levels" (i.e. both "man" and society) in a decolonial analysis. Crucial as this qualification was (particularly at the time of his writing) and crucial as *it still is* – it is of vital significance for decolonial psychoanalysis that we must remain attentive to the pathogenic dimension of coloniality – it has, unfortunately, led to rather unhelpful polarization between those readings of Fanon's work which prioritize the role of the socio-economic and those which, by contrast, elevate the role of the psychical dimension.[10] Fanon undoubtedly pursues both such avenues of analysis, hence the foregoing characterization of the psycho-political nature of his theorizations. Attempts to qualify exactly how Fanon's sociogeny best accommodates the psychical dimension of colonial "anomalies of affect" of course vary in the complexity and nuance.[11] We have those who view Fanon's engagement with psychoanalysis as little more than a dalliance (Sekyi-Otu, 1996) – a "demonstration by failure" as Gordon (1996) puts it – psychoanalysis here being eschewed in favor of a "demand for sociogenic explanations" (Gordon, p. 76). For such critics, as Bhabha (2004) notes, Fanon's reference to "the psycho-affective" goes almost completely unacknowledged. In respect of how Fanon's emphasis on sociogeny has been used as a means of dismissing the role of psychoanalytic theorizations of colonial phenomena, Marriott has offered what I take to be the definitive commentary:

> It would be seriously misleading….to read [Fanon's idea of] sociogeny as that which, confronting the absence of a specifically black meaning in the psychoanalytic discourse or text, must unfold as a crude proliferation of an anti-psychoanalytic conception of blackness…. More than merely opposing sociogeny to psychoanalysis, Fanon goes out of his way to connect them… it seems wilful not to see that connection occurring in… Fanon's reading of colonialism as psychopathology. With its phobias, fantasies distortions, and affects, Fanon's negrophobogensis [that is, his psychoanalytic/psycho-political account of racism] positively adds to the psychoanalytic project of interpretation…[it is] ridiculous… to speak of sociogeny as anti-psychoanalytic, since the term concerns how racism is unconsciously lived.
>
> *(p. 292)*[12]

It is striking to note that Hudis (2015), a critic who has published as much on Marxist theory as he has on Fanon, feels it necessary to defend the

psychoanalytic and psychological aspects of Fanon's analysis alongside Fanon's notion of sociogeny/sociogenesis:

> Fanon…does not deny the existence of the unconscious.… [A]s seen from his positive remarks on Lacan's theory of the mirror stage, he does not reject the idea of psychic structure. He only denies that it can substitute for a historical understanding of the neuroses. Fanon adopts a socio-genetic approach to the study of the psyche because that is what is adequate for the object of his analysis. For Fanon it is the *relationship* between the socio-economic and psychological that is… critical.… He makes it clear… that the socio-economic is *first* of all responsible for affective disorders… It does not follow, however, that what comes first in the order of time has *conceptual* or *strategic* priority. The inferiority complex is originally born from economic subjugation, but it takes on a life of its own and expresses itself in terms that surpass the economic. Both sides of the problem – the socio-economic and psychological – must be combatted in *tandem*… [T]he problem of racism cannot be *solved* on a psychological level. It is not an "individual" problem; it is a *social* one. But neither can it be solved on a social level that ignores the psychological.
>
> *(Hudis, 2015, pp. 36–37)*

There is still, in other words, considerable psychical complexity to the sociogenic. One of my objectives in what follows is to consider how forms of psychoanalysis more attuned to societal-political and symbolic factors might enable us to bypass this rather simplistic polarization between psychical and socio-historical factors. It is perhaps useful in this respect – given that the tension between the unconscious and the political will be a recurring theme in what is to come – for me to specify the notion of the unconscious that I adhere to. There is an interesting footnote toward the end of one of Slavoj Žižek's (1994b) essays on ideology in which he insists that

> the concept of the unconscious is to be conceived in the strictly Freudian sense, as "trans-individual" – that is, beyond the ideological opposition of "individual" and "collective" unconscious: the subject's unconscious is always grounded in the transferential relationship towards the Other; it is always "external" with regard to the subject's monadic existence.
>
> *(p. 33)*[13]

Unconscious fantasy, from this Lacanian perspective, is understood as existing "indivisibly between" the subject and the apparent "social objectivity" of language, symbolic structures, prevailing ideological norms, and political conventions of society.[14] The latter of these two poles of analysis (i.e. the "social objectivity" of presumed values, prevailing ideological norms, etc.),

refers to the symbolic ("big") Other so often referred to in Lacanian theory.[15] To state, as Lacan does, that "the unconscious is the discourse of the Other", effectively "socializes" the unconscious.[16] I develop these concepts more fully in the following chapter, for the time being, let us simply note this concept of the Other, and the phrase "transferential relation to the [symbolic] Other", for, as we will see, it has an important resonance with one of Fanon's formulations in respect of racism in *Black Skin, White Masks*.[17]

One begins then to appreciate why it is so important that Fanon takes up and radicalizes the Jungian concept of the collective unconscious. Rather than view this as a misadventure in psychoanalytic theory we should understand it as a legitimate and necessary push toward a more societal-symbolic conceptualization of the unconscious, even if this would arguably be better facilitated in a Lacanian trans-individual conceptualization of the unconscious. The point here is not to force Fanon's conceptualizations into a Lacanian framework – although there is much that facilitates a conceptual inter-change between the theorizations of both men (Chamberlain, forthcoming; Hook, 2020, Richards, 2021) – but rather to consider how both theorists direct us to the importance of what we might call a "sociogenetic unconscious".[18] These two notions then – the trans-individual unconscious and the European collective unconscious – highlight for us the imperative of a sociogenic sensibility in thinking about psychical life which remains a necessity for any decolonial psychoanalytic approach.

The psychopathology of colonial life

> The native's muscles are always tensed … He is … ready at a moment's notice to exchange the role of quarry for that of hunter. The native is an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become the persecutor.
>
> *(Fanon, 1961/1990, p. 41)*

There is another reason to involve psychoanalysis in any attempt to grapple with the vicissitudes of coloniality: it provides a means of conceptualizing the pathological nature of this domain. One surely fails to grasp the scale and breadth of colonial racism if one remains reliant on exclusively rationalist modes of conceptualization. For Mannoni (1950/1990), purely structural or economic accounts can never fully explain the complexities of colonial power. "The 'colonial' is not looking for profit only" Mannoni remarks, "he is greedy for certain other – psychological – satisfactions, and that is much more dangerous" (pp. 32–33). A variation of the same explanatory problem is present in Coetzee's (1991) attempt – discussed in the following chapter – to understand the malaise of reason that enabled apartheid to flourish: "If madness has a place in life" he argues, "it has a place in

history too" (p. 2). Coetzee is not alone in stressing the "psychopathology of colonial life" obtained in such conditions. Fuss (1995) credits Fanon with identifying the neurotic structure of colonialism, an acknowledgment that could have gone Mannoni's way given that the latter had first drawn attention to the nervous nature of the relationship between the native and the colonizer. This of course calls to mind Sartre's description of the "nervous condition" of the colonial world that features in his introduction to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961/1990).

The colonial situation sets in place a type of radical doubt, a questioning, even, for Fanon, a type of *de-subjectivization* on the part of the colonized:

> Because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: "In reality, who am I?"
>
> *(Fanon, 1961/1990, p. 200)*

Such breakdowns can lead to psychosis.[19] Aside from triggered examples of full-blown psychosis, coloniality also results in psychotic psychical processes. Consider Fanon's characterization of the colonial situation as a state of "Manichean delirium", a description which he insists "is not too strong" (1952/1986, p. 141). Indeed, the notion of "Manichean delirium" proves an important motif throughout *Black Skin, White Masks*; it provides the means by which, as Mercer (1996) insists, Fanon shows us how the paranoid-schizoid mechanisms of splitting and denial operate in colonial racism.[20] Likewise significant here is Fanon's attention to reveries of "hallucinatory whitening". The breakdowns in subjectivity brought about by the colonial situation also function at a neurotic level to fuel fantasy. We need only recall Fanon's (1961/1990) remark according to which "there is no native who does not dream, at least once a day of setting himself up in the settler's place" (p. 30) just as there is not one settler who does not fear, just as frequently, the prospect of the native's violent reprisals ("when their glances meet [the settler] ascertains bitterly, always on the defensive 'They want to take our place' …" [p. 30]). The destabilization that the colonial domain institutes effects not only the colonized but also the colonizer.[21] Steyn (1998) points to the tremulous situation of white colonial subjectivity in the Southern African context:

> The Africans, among whom these "whites" had come to settle, had a legitimacy on the continent (determinedly undermined by the successive "white" regimes) and a sense of connection with their ancient cultures (damaged, but never destroyed by colonial conquest and apartheid). And given the numerical superiority of Africans, their reserves could always be replenished, despite repeated defeats … Deep-seated feelings of alienation,

> personal threat and fear of being overrun were held in tension with an intense competition for resources and an absolute belief in entitlement to dominate people with whom one had daily contact in one's home.
>
> *(Steyn, 1998, p. 268)*

Pathologies of ambivalence

There is another psychoanalytic perspective on the pathological nature of the colonial sphere that we should briefly note here. I have in mind, of course, the work of Homi Bhabha and that of associated postcolonial scholars, for whom psychoanalysis was put to work to play up "the deep psychic uncertainty of the colonial relationship" (Bhabha, 2004, p. 63).[22] The concern here lay not only with the fraught position of the colonized subject, the detrimental internalizations of a "white mask psychology" – i.e. the damaging ego-ideal integration of the oppressor's racist cultural values – but also the uncanny doublings, splits, and ambiguous overlaps inherent to the *ambivalent* identifications of such a world. Bhabha remarks, for example, upon the native's impossible fantasy of simultaneously occupying two divergent positions. The native, he says, wants "to occupy the master's place while keeping his place in the slave's *avenging* anger" (2004, pp. 63–64). "Black Skins, White Masks" is not, he insists, a neat division but rather "a doubling, dissembling image of being in at least two places at once" (pp. 64–65). Or in the terms proffered by Mercer (1996):

> Once we see self and other not as two opposites that are mutually defined but as interdependent locations on a möbius strip of desire and identification, we come back to Fanon's profoundly disturbing insight that coloniser and colonised mutually constitute each other's identity.
>
> *(pp. 128–129)*

In those arrangements of colonial power which insist on the replication of the colonizer's language, culture, and modes of conduct, we have, for Bhabha, an oppressive imperial imposition that both affirms the colonizer's sense of superiority yet that also disturbs him. Far from being reassured by mimicked qualities of themselves – mimicry is understood here as simultaneously resemblance *and menace* (Bhabha, 2004) – the colonizer, in the words of Robert Young (1990) "sees a grotesquely displaced image of himself":

> the familiar, transported to distant parts, becomes uncannily transformed, the imitation subverts the identity of that which is being represented, and the relation of power, if not altogether reversed, certainly begins to vacillate.
>
> *(p. 147)*

Moore-Gilbert (1997) speaks in this respect – exemplifying the vocabulary typically associated with postcolonial literary theory of the time – in terms of the circulation "of contradictory patterns of psychic affect in colonial relations" which "undermine the assumption that the identities and positioning of colonizer and colonized exist in stable and unitary terms" (p. 116). The colonial relationship, he continues, is structured, on both sides, by forms of multiple and contradictory beliefs, hence the predominance of ambivalence in the colonial situation. Bhabha in fact utilizes this psychoanalytic term, ambivalence, – admittedly, a "sociodiagnostic" term introduced by Fanon himself – in such a central capacity that it becomes synonymous with the colonial condition itself.[23] This characterization, and Bhabha's overall approach, was subject to much critique.[24] More controversial yet – and this is understating the case – was Bhabha's remark that "In shifting the focus of cultural racism from the politics of nationalism to the politics of narcissism, [Fanon] opens up a margin of interrogation that causes slippages of identity and authority" (2004, p. 90). While this assertion need not be read as a necessarily de-politicizing move, as an attempt to focus exclusively on the intra-psychic dynamics of colonial forms of cultural/racial narcissism, it has often been taken as such, as a retreat from a more radical revolutionary program, indeed, as side-lining the brute materiality of colonial conquest and domination.[25] From a psychoanalytic standpoint, one might wish to object that the psychical intricacies Bhabha points to are worth considering, especially if they alert us to impediments to decolonial change. Then again, it is worth acknowledging that the political utility of Bhabha's theorizations remains questionable, that, for many, such postcolonial theorizations have effectively superseded properly decolonial issues of societal/structural change.[26]

Decolonial scholars focused on dialectical modes of analysis and concrete material forms of change would clearly see the above postcolonial theorizations as all too psychological – as overly preoccupied with psychoanalytic notions of desire, identification, and ambivalence, etc. From a decolonial perspective, the real priority lies with more substantive modes of social redress and transformation, with properly revolutionary change. To remain merely at the conceptual level of psychical ambivalence in our engagement with the colonial world, is, arguably, to fall short of a decolonizing objective. Without overly belaboring this point, let us conclude this section by making a critical observation. What postcolonial theorizations of colonial ambivalence seem not to have adequately registered is the full force, pervasiveness, and structure of anti-Blackness, in contexts such as apartheid South Africa. The conditions of apartheid anti-Blackness were not, I would suggest, facilitative of a play of effects of "ambivalent…split[s]… [of] mimesis…[of] 'open' textuality…[of the] display[s] of difference" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 153).[27] It was not a situation in which colonial authority was typically subject to breakdowns, ambiguities

of disjunction, or uncertainties of enunciation, certainly not in any way that would be genuinely subversive or dis-enabling of the structures of racist subjugation. One has the feeling in such moments that Bhabha's virtuoso intellectual engagements seem to float free of an awareness both of radical socio-political asymmetries and of the unceasing structural violence characterizing colonial anti-Blackness.

Fanon's psychoanalysis of colonial racism

> [P]roud, lazy, treacherous, thievish, hot and addicted to all kinds of lust, and most ready to promote them in others, as pimps, panders, incestuous, brutish, and savage, cruel and revengeful, devourers of human flesh, and quaffers of human blood, inconstant, base, treacherous, and cowardly; fond of and addicted to all sorts of superstition and witchcraft; and, in a word, to every vice that came their way … They are inhuman, drunkards, deceitful, covetous, and perfidious to the highest degree. It is as impossible to be an African and not lascivious, as it is impossible to be born in Africa and not be an African … [Their] faculties are truly bestial, no less than their commerce with other sexes; in these acts they are libidinous and shameless as monkeys, or baboons.
>
> *(Edward Long [1774], cited by Mbeki, 2009, pp. 111–112)*

The dream of turning white

Having presented the case for the political value of psychoanalysis for critical decolonial psychology, let us now turn to Fanon's own use of psychoanalysis. There are two precipitating dilemmas that have been cited as setting the critical energies of Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* in motion. Fanon's starting point, for Macey (1999), is the colonial reality of "the black man trapped in his blackness, the white man in his whiteness, both trapped into their mutual and aggressive narcissism" (p. 95). Mercer (1996) poses instead a question of desire – echoing of course Fanon himself – namely, "What does the black man want?"

Fanon marks out the parameters of his project in *Black Skin, White Masks* carefully. The book, he (1952/1986) declares, is a clinical study, one that will psychoanalyze not only race but various aspects of the colonial encounter, such as "the black-white relation" (p. 3). Two vital qualifications follow. The first concerns the socio-historical specificity of his domain of analysis and the injunction not to take up psychological questions outside the consideration of their specific socio-historical and politico-economic contexts. The second – extending the first – concerns the pitfalls of making sweeping psychological generalizations. So, although there is much to be learned here about the

broader mechanisms of racism that may occur also in other contexts, Fanon affirms "[m]y observations and my conclusions are valid only for the Antilles" (p. 14). It would seem thus that a balance needs to be struck here, between respecting the discrete historical coordinates of the colonial situation Fanon focuses on, and exploring how the analytical perspectives he considers might "travel", might shed light on the mechanisms and operations of racism elsewhere. After all, Fanon's analysis of racism would presumably have only a limited role to play in informing anti-racist decolonial politics if it was strictly limited to its historical context.[28]

The primary focus of Fanon's (1952/1986) psychoanalytic attention is the juxtaposition of white and Black in the context of colonization. The white colonizer and the Black colonized exist within the grip of a "massive psychoexistential complex" (p. 5), which, he suggests, has multiple detrimental psychological effects. Such effects are realized not only in the dreams of but also in the broader psychical life of the colonized, who, in many ways, thinks of himself or herself as *white*. In accordance with psychoanalytic theory, Fanon looks to the underlying desire motivating the dreams, the actions, and the personality of the colonized, and claims to find there a simple wish. "What does the black man want?" he asks (p. 1) mimicking Freud's famous "What does a woman want?", before offering the dismayed response: "The black man wants to be white" (p. 3).

This wish obviously needs to be properly contextualized; it emerges within the colonial domain, that is, a realm in which the white subject has – in terms of material wealth – everything, and the Black man or woman has very little. This desire is thus an outcome of a specific configuration of power, of real material, economic, cultural, and socio-political conditions. This makes for an important warning for decolonial psychoanalysis more broadly: in his recourse to a psychoanalytic interpretative approach, Fanon insists that such "pathologies of affect", despite being routed through the sexual realm, through unconscious processes, are ultimately derived from inequalities present in wider social structures and cannot – contra Mannoni – be linked to personality factors of the colonized, or reduced to the internal psychical workings of individual colonized subjects.

Fanon tracks the implications of this answer – of wanting to be white – across the domains of language, sexuality, dreams, and behavior, finding in each instance the persistence of this wish. He dubs this neurotic wish for types of whitening "lactification". This impulse, he thinks, underlies a variety of actions: from attempts to take on European language and culture, the desire for a white spouse or sexual partner, to cosmetic treatments of skin whitening, hair-straightening, etc. The centrality of this fundamental wish and its affects, the kinds of identity, conflict, and psychopathology (or socio-pathology) it leads to, inclusive of the so-called "inferiority complex" of the colonized, are, for Fanon, omnipresent in the colonial milieu. This constellation of problems,

along with the fantasy structures and libidinal dynamics of white racism, form two abiding preoccupations of *Black Skin, White Masks*, both of which he suggests, necessitate a psychoanalytic interpretation.

Colonial "neuroses"

The wish to be white, as an unconscious desire, is, presumably, one that is for the most part never stated as a (conscious) verbal proposition; it is closer to the fantasmatic urge that underlies a variety of behaviors; it can be deduced as a factor – a master signifier of desirability – underlying multiple facets of the life of the colonized. While this wish does not affect all of those who are colonized in the same way – the degree to which one has embraced, or identified with white French culture clearly being, as in Fanon's own case, a crucial factor here – the idea is that this is a sociogenic fantasy, a desire that is the necessary outcome of the colonial situation itself. The evidence that such a wish exerts such a force – whether directly manifest in dreams or in more oblique and/or indirect ways – is one of the reasons that Fanon draws inspiration from the clinical approach that Freud developed for the treatment of neurosis. As soon becomes apparent however, Fanon's critical relationship to psychoanalysis means that he revises and reworks, crucial Freudian conceptualizations – aware always of the potential of such concepts to transmit, reinscribe, and reify certain ideologically loaded Eurocentric ideas – even as he applies them.[29] The sociogenic dimension of the wish in question – as opposed to ontogenetic framework of Freud's approach to individual cases of neurosis – is a case in point.

Fanon's reworking of psychoanalytic concepts gains pace as his argument builds, so much so that the ostensible "neuroses of Blackness" he describes are better accommodated within the notion of "epidermalization" (the internalization of notions of inferiority). Gibson (2003a) insists on this: for Fanon there is a crucial difference between clinical neurosis and the internalization of racist notions promulgated by socio-economic reality. The process of "epidermalization" is "akin to an obsessive neurotic type", says Fanon (1952/1986), before going on to qualify that the colonized subject "puts himself into a complete situational neurosis" (p. 43). As Gibson (2003a) insists, it is simply colonial Antillean *society* rather than Antillean *individuals* that should be considered neurotic. While this is a crucial departure from a Freudian clinical approach to neurosis, it remains nevertheless the case that many related theorizations in *Black Skin, White Masks* cannot be easily separated from a Freudian understanding of neurosis, particularly so in view of the constituent factors of sexuality, trauma, and psychological disturbance that such a notion commits one to.

A minimal outline of the Freudian notion of neurosis will help us here in highlighting what is most distinctive about Fanon's approach. In classical

Freudian psychoanalysis, neurosis connotes a variety of irrational behaviors and symptoms that need to be understood as the outcome of the psychical conflict between unconscious urges and the social/cultural need to keep these urges outside the conscious mind. Or, in Fanon's (1952/1986) own description, neurotic structure is the result of "conflictual clusters arising in part out of the environment … in part out of the purely personal way … the individual reacts to these influences" (p. 59).[30] One appreciates then the intractability of the psychical dilemma that Fanon sketches, that of the "dream of turning white", that is, the wish to attain the level of humanity accorded to whites in racist/colonial contexts, as it comes into conflict with being *in a Black body, within a racist society*, which makes this wish impossible.

In searching for the cause, and thereby the potential cure, of neurotic disturbances, one is obliged – here still following Fanon's reading of Freud – to turn to the childhood history of the individual. The symptoms of neurosis, furthermore, will always be linked to a trauma of sorts, which lends these symptoms their own distinctive, individual character. Importantly, we are not necessarily looking for a single event, for the cause of the symptom is typically overdetermined, arising as it does out of "multiple traumas, frequently analogous and repeated" (Freud, cited in Fanon, 1952/1986, p. 111). Such traumas are expelled from the conscious mind as a means of saving the neurotic from further suffering. Significantly also, this trauma need not have been that of an objective, empirical reality, an "actual" event; it may just as well have been fantasized. It is this important conceptual leap which means that psychoanalysis can conduct a cure focused on "psychical reality" – on elements of fantasy – rather than constantly needing to separate the fantasmatic from the factual. Hence, the neurosis of the Black man or woman need not then have stemmed from actual experiences (witnessing the lynching of one's father, is the example Fanon gives [1952/1986]), but rather from fantasized experiences, or, more to the point, from indirect or cultural forms of oppression or trauma. Then again, one might argue, that traumatic examples of racist violence, abuse, and denigration would seem quite commonplace in the colonial domain. This gives us a basis for understanding Fanon's (1952/1986) claim that "A normal [black] child … will become abnormal on the slightest contact with the white world" (p. 111).

While Fanon agrees with Freud that the basis of neurosis must be some or other kind of infantile trauma, he suggests that this original trauma can be *shared* and *cultural*, that it may exist as a de facto aspect of racist culture. The colonial environment is so saturated by racism, by epistemic, psychological, and physical types of anti-Blackness that these material and cultural forms of trauma – as opposed to more individual circumstances posited by Freud – can act as the triggers of neurosis. In short: concrete social and political inequalities – structural causes – lie at the root of what may otherwise be seen as the more idiosyncratic or subjective constituents of (racial/colonial) neuroses.

So, although for Fanon (1952/1986) one must prioritize a "socio-diagnostic" approach, treat an appraisal of pressing "social and economic realities" (p. 4) as primary, much of the basic etiological course outlined by Freudian theory remains relevant, provided one remains attentive to the causative role of racist culture itself. The psychical dimension remains irreducible. As Fanon puts it, in a line that resonates strongly with the description of the wide-ranging discursive cultural hegemony detailed by Said (1978) in *Orientalism*:

> [T]here is a constellation of postulates, a series of propositions that slowly … with the help of books, newspapers, schools and their texts, advertisements, films, radio – work their way into one's mind.
>
> *(p. 152)*

Fanon demands more than just a tracking of such discursive contents, even though his attention to racist cultural and epistemic formations is one of the ways in which Hall (1996) views Fanon as anticipating subsequent priorities of post-structural and textual forms of analysis and critique. Fanon's analytical attention lies also, crucially, with understanding the libidinal (or affective) dynamics of racism. Fanon merges an account of scapegoating with what he calls "collective catharsis", that is, the historically variable process through which a given society vents its angers, and channels its aggressive energies.

Cultural forms of expression are one way in which this occurs; such cathartic modes of discursive violence in colonial contexts overwhelmingly take on a racist coloration, such that whether we are talking about the characters (or plots) of television, films, jokes, stories "the Wolf, the Devil, the Evil Spirit, the Bad Man, the Savage are always symbolized by Negroes" (Fanon, 1952/1986, p. 113). The field of identifications established in this way means that "the black schoolboy … identifies with the explorer, the bringer of civilization, the white man who carries truth to savages – an all-white truth" (p. 114). This is a toxic image, an appealing (and indeed, *masculine*) identification that leads to a pernicious type of damage – a violence of the imaginary – in which internalized depictions exert a corrosive, undermining influence. It also paves the way for a slew of symbolic (ego-ideal) identifications that have a cancerous effect on the truths and beliefs of one's native culture. It is for this reason that Bhabha (1994) counts the young Fanon's experience of racist Hollywood stereotypes of Black men as one of the key "primal scenes" of *Black Skin, White Masks*.

In understanding the pathogenic qualities of the colonial context, we need to engage with the psychical trajectories of desire and identification. In more grounded terms: the neurotic qualities of a "white mask psychology" entail not only the *desire for* whiteness but also pronounced *identifications with* it.

Fanon sketches this dilemma in the following terms: if it is the case that all that is repugnant and undesirable is Black, and that I, as a Black man or woman, order my life like that of a moral person, then I cannot but reach the conclusion that "I am simply not a Negro … I know only one thing, which is the purity of my conscience and the whiteness of my soul" (1952/1986, p. 149). Whiteness here functions as a moral category, as the fundamental basis of all that qualifies as good, as of value; Blackness, by contrast, amounts to the negation of all of that. To be Black within the context of such a metaphysics of anti-Blackness means to in some or another way live a negation. As Fanon (1952/1986) puts it: "I am a [Black man or woman] – but of course I do not know it simply because I am one" (p. 148). Further yet:

> As I begin to recognize that the [Black] is the symbol of sin, I catch myself hating the [black]. But then I recognize that I am a [Black]… this [is a] neurotic situation in which I am compelled to choose an unhealthy, conflictual situation fed on fantasies [that are] hostile and inhuman.
>
> *(p. 153)*

This process, of being locked into a system of self-negating recognitions is both pathogenic and difficult to escape insofar as race – and Blackness more particularly – is not, unlike other variables of discrimination such as religion and sexuality, easily hidden. It remains, by contrast, patently visible, especially so within colonial regimes. This means that even if I do have the "mind" of whiteness (that is, conscious and unconscious identifications with whiteness), the facts of my Blackness will be continually reaffirmed; I will be repeatedly confronted with this apparently pathogenic juxtaposition. It is for this reason that Fanon (1952/1986) states, reiterating the line mentioned above, that the Black man and woman "lives an ambiguity that is extraordinarily neurotic" (p. 148).

This situation is, however, more potentially pathological for some than others. As critics such as Hall (1996), Macey (2000a), and McCulloch (1983) have pointed out Fanon's analysis of such "pathologies of affect" is particularly significant in the case of the *évolué* class, namely those who, are thoroughly familiar with or invested in the colonizer's culture. There are presumably different degrees of identification and desire (with/of whiteness) here than in other colonized groups. McCulloch (1983) argues that Fanon's analytic conclusions are less relevant with respect to many of those rural and African populations that have been less influenced by such cultural forms. This helps underline the pertinence of the Black Consciousness arguments introduced in Chapter 1; one appreciates better now, psychoanalytically, the importance of such attempts to secure modes of identification and desire that do not re-instantiate the unconscious attraction of whiteness.

Colonial neurosis, the repression of racism, epidermalization

It is worth noting the paradoxical reversal of blame apparent within many forms of racism. This was a longstanding element of apartheid ideology: the people persecuted by a racist structural system are *themselves* viewed as dangerous, and deserving of punishment. Fanon makes an interesting reference to Gershorn Legman's writing on the psychopathology of culture produced for children (comics in particularl), especially the latter's attempt to explain why American popular culture of the 1950s and 1960s relied so heavily on the myth of the "bad Indian" despite – or perhaps, more aptly, precisely *because of* – preceding eras of genocide perpetrated against Native Americans. Legman's answer to this quandary, which Fanon endorses, is that "the punishment that we deserve can be averted only by denying responsibility for wrong and throwing the blame on the victim" (cited in Fanon, 1952/1986, pp. 113).

Moreover, the "cathartic" channeling of bigotry provides an outlet for "the child and adult's desire for aggression against the economic and social structure which, through their … consent, perverts them" (Legman, cited in Fanon, 1952/1986, p. 113). Clearly then, these paradoxes connote a process more varied and overdetermined than what is typically understood as the psychological operation of projection (that is, unacceptable desires, impulses, and attributes deposited in the figure of others rather than acknowledged as qualities of the self). Although the idea of maintaining a type of affective equilibrium – the avoidance of confronting discomforting truths about one's self by locating them in a punishable other – is crucial to Fanon's account, he is aware also of the odd (and partly unconscious) logic whereby one hates one's victims with a proportionate intensity to the guilt one feels for the injustices and violence one has subjected *them* to: I hate you even more for the costs (and guilt) of hating you. Or, to extrapolate further, conjecturing on the basis of Legman's argument: I, the white subject, may well hold the historical system of racism, and how I am situated within it, in contempt. Nevertheless, my fury at this system and my place within it are still directed at those oppressed by it – I hate you for the fact of the system which oppresses you, and for the fact that I, through it, hate you.

This reasoning does well to highlight the perverse element of racist thinking. However, while it seems to account for escalations in aggression, explaining how racism, via a spiral of hate, may breed more racist violence, it nonetheless appears somewhat tautological: it uses (a facet) of racism to explain (subsequent forms of) racism. Unable as such to provide a properly causative explanation, it begs the role of an additional antecedent factor. Fanon again looks to Freud here, who, as one might expect, seeks out a sexual dimension in the origin of neurotic symptoms. At first, this may seem a less than fruitful line of inquiry; racism may well appear to have

nothing at all to do with sexuality, or sexual desire. Nevertheless, Fanon (1952/1986) asserts that "If one wants to understand the racial situation psychoanalytically … considerable importance must be given to sexual phenomena" (p. 123).

Before we go on to discuss in more detail the sexual component of racism, it is important to emphasize that, for Fanon, many aspects and effects of colonial racism exist "on the surface" rather than in the unconscious, which is to say, *repressed*, forms. Fanon's point here is again to reiterate that it is the multiple devaluating "myths of Blackness", endlessly re-enacted in the everyday dramaturgy of colonial contexts, that cause potentially neurotic reactions. So, unlike the more commonplace development of neurotic symptoms, where the neurotic may temporarily forget the cause of his or her suffering, the Black man or woman faces the oppressive colonial reality that, every day, emphasizes his or her social inferiority. Such cultural traumas cannot simply be repressed into the unconscious:

> Since the racial drama is played out in the open, the black man has no time to make it unconscious … The [black man's] inferiority or superiority complex or his feeling of equality is *conscious*… In him there is none of the affective amnesia characteristic of the typical neurotic.
>
> *(Fanon, 1952/1986, p. 116)*

One appreciates the point Fanon is making even though it is worthwhile stressing that certain facets of an *internalized* racism – be it linked to the desire to be white or to unconscious identifications with whiteness – might, presumably, remain at least partially unacknowledged to the subject himself or herself. This is surely a point emphasized by Fanon's recourse to the notion of a neurosis: the full pathogenic impact of certain desires/identifications for/with whiteness might not be fully realized by the subjects who suffer from them even though their antecedents may be everywhere visible within surrounding socio-economic conditions. Hence the importance of conscientization in Black Consciousness philosophy.

Nonetheless, insofar as Fanon here is primarily concerned with public displays, with the "racial drama played out in the open", and with the dramaturgy of anti-Blackness, his point remains relevant. It certainly draws our attention to a crucial asymmetry that exists in his analysis between the white racist and the Black subject: the white man or woman does, to a certain extent, *succeed* in repressing elements of this racial drama. Fanon cites the emergence of guilt (in often less than fully conscious ways) as an indication of this. What is repressed is the full extent of their own racism, along with the enormity and violence of the structural modes of oppression with which they have been complicit, and which affirm their own supposed cultural superiority.

What this would mean is that while psychopathologies of colonialism affect both whites and Blacks, and that although there is an unconscious dimension in both such cases, the *repression* of everyday racism is clearly a more viable psychical strategy in the colonizer than the colonized. There is then a different relationship to an elision of the social injustice of racism in oppressor and oppressed; the true extent of the everyday inhumanities of white privilege are better masked for those who are the subject-beneficiaries rather than those who are the constant targets of anti-Blackness.

This further divergence from Freudian doctrine regarding the notion of neurosis – the inadequacy of the concept of repression when it comes to describing the impact of racism upon those who are targeted by it every day and who as such "do not have time to 'unconsciousnessize' it" (in Macey's [1999] translation) – is enough to suggest that Fanon is now offering a distinctive new conceptualization. Hence the value of the notion of "epidermalization", which I discuss in some detail below. We should however not be too quick to disqualify Fanon's reference to neurosis, or to insist that what he describes is definitively *non-neurotic*. True enough, the psychical results of oppression that he describes cannot be termed "neurotic" in the precise technical sense whereby repression is the primary psychical mechanism involved. Yet what Fanon speaks of maintains an individual locus of realization, and indeed, a minimally unconscious aspect, even though it is less the result of idiosyncratic personal history than of material and political factors. To deny this psychological facet of Fanon's account would be to misrepresent – and I think considerably weaken – the perspicacity of his analyses of neuroses of desire for, and identification with, the oppressor.

Fanon's adaptation of the clinical concept of neurosis, more especially, his development of this psychoanalytic notion into the more sociogenic concept of epidermalization, certainly widens his analytical scope. It brings new factors of social and psychical life into consideration. The concept of epidermalization prioritizes the visual register, providing an understanding not just of the stark visibility of race but of the effects of the racial gaze. So, while Fanon wants to retain a sense of the "internalization" of a set of racist values as they are powerfully projected in colonial settings – a process which could be likened to the onset of a neurosis – he is also clear that this process of being "over-determined from without" takes hold *via the body*, by means of how the body is scanned in racist regimes of visibility. I want to pause here to consider the inflections given to this notion of epidermalization by a number of Fanon's commentators.

First though, Fanon's own introduction of the term: "If there is an inferiority complex" he says, hesitant in utilizing a concept that had proved so central to Mannoni, "it is the outcome of a double process, primarily economic … subsequently the internalization – or better yet, the epidermalization – of this

inferiority" (p. 10). Epidermalization, offers Hall (1996), is "literally, the inscription of race on the skin" (p. 16). In the epidermalization of the racial look "exclusion and abjection are imprinted on the body through … [a] taxonomy of radicalized difference … [via] a specular matrix of visibility" (p. 20). Fanon's particular concern with this concept, adds Cohen (2002), lies with the way in which racist discourse "gets under the skin" and undermines the integrity of "the black bodily ego" (p. 187). Fanon is hence concerned

> with how rituals of racist misrecognition are introjected … so as to indicate a form of narcissistic trauma. Following on from Sartre's model of the "petrification" of the subject's desire in the look of the Other, Fanon suggests that when blacks discover themselves objectified in … the gaze of the white [racist], in so far as they recognize themselves in that structure of misrecognition, they can only become Other to themselves.
>
> *(Sanders, 2002, p. 183)*

The formation of "raced being" that follows, says Sanders (2002), takes place both at the level of psychic structure and socially. The white gaze denies the Black subject access to whiteness "and thus to humanity that has been defined in relation to phantasmatic whiteness" (p. 183).

The type of alienation that results is precisely that of "black skin white mask", a split, as Cohen (2002) usefully puts it, between "a real but bad black self" who seems fully embodied but is denied full access as a speaking subject to the ideals of the symbolic order, and "a good but false white self … [a] disembodied subject who can become active … speak … but only its master's voice" (p. 187). This split becomes active existentially "in the psychical interface between colonized and colonizer through the medium of the racist gaze" (p. 187).

Although the above cluster of ideas represents a significant departure from classical Freudian theory, an intersection of key factors means that the idea of "epidermalization" contains much that resonates with a Lacanian conceptualization of imaginary ego-bodily identity (as in the famed theory of the mirror stage): the strong emphasis on visuality (the role of the visual field in the assumption of an identification); the facet of bodily experience, of physicality being held together (or not, indeed, being disrupted) by modes of symbolic interaction and inter-subjectivity; the attention to the (imaginary) aspect of identification-from-without; an awareness of the basic structure of (mis) recognition in others (or the systematic denial of this recognition). Paraphrasing Fuss (1995) on the notion of epidermalization helps make the same point: "Fixed" by the violence of the racist interpellation in an imaginary relation of fractured specularity, the Black man, Fanon concludes, is "forever in combat with his own image" (p. 142).

The "Negro myth" as fantasy

One of the challenges confronting Fanon's psychoanalysis of colonial racism is the saturating influence of anti-Blackness as it pervades multiple registers of experience (i.e. bodily, egoic, symbolic, societal, and metaphysical levels of existence) within the colonial sphere.[31] The structuring force of such modes of ordering the world is omnipresent, and, seemingly, inescapable, itpervades being.

Why is it, asks Fanon (1952/1986), that "*In Europe, the black is the symbol of Evil*" (p. 145), why is it that "concretely or symbolically, the black man stands for the bad side character" (p. 146)? So widespread, so pronounced, so unyielding is this racist response that Fanon turns to Jung's notion of the collective unconscious. To accept Jung's conceptualization means that we commit to a series of postulates: all persons share a reservoir of innate ideas or archetypes; archetypes are genetically supplied and are spontaneously produced in the symbolism of diverse cultures; such universal motifs constitute the shared basic contents of religions, mythologies, legends, and so on. Despite the problematic nature of such assumptions, one can appreciate the appeal of this concept for Fanon. The concept of collective unconsciousness casts a harsh light on the deep-rooted quality of European cultural racism; it would appear to explain how racism may work in an unconscious and ostensibly genetically inherited manner shared by a wide historical and geographical constituency of (white) Europeans. The difficulty here of course is that the Jungian concept in question is itself arguably freighted with racist assumptions, and leads, as Bulhan (1985) avers, to a naturalization of racism. Not only then is Jung's model insensitive to the vicissitudes of racism and the destructive psychical violence of the colonial sphere; but it also tacitly imports a series of (bourgeois, European) cultural suppositions and racializing values. Jung viewed the primitivizing "downward pull" of uncivilized people as a contagion akin to a plague, Bulhan (1985) tells us, suggesting, furthermore, that the baser desires of all racial groupings are associated – in a genetically predisposed way – with Blackness.

While Fanon vigorously rejects the notion that there may be any innate, biologically predisposed devaluation of Blackness – that Blackness may be in any inherent way amoral, pathological, or inferior – he is cognizant of the quasi "instinctual" quality of such evaluations, of the seemingly prereflexive force with which such affective dispositions operate in the colony. So, for Fanon, there *does* seem to be something to the derogatory "Negro myth", as he calls it, as a racist system of representations and attitudes that is more substantial than individual psychological experience. Fanon (1952/1986) even goes so far as to refer to the European collective unconscious so as to describe how pervasive and systematic this

derogatory image of Blackness is: "the archetype of the lowest values is represented by the [black]" (p. 146).

The dynamic function of the "Negro myth" is afforded a straightforward psychoanalytic explanation by Fanon. It has a precise political and historically contingent function, and that is to act as a repository – *a figure in which whites symbolize all their lower emotions and baser inclinations*. There is a continual temptation to externalize, to displace, those repugnant or unpalatable images of a given subject's ego, "to ascribe [their] origins to someone else" (1952/1986, p. 147). It is in this way that in the colonial situation, the "black man stands for the bad side of character" (p. 146). White racism can thus be read as "an expression of the bad instincts, of the darkness inherent in every ego, of the uncivilized savage, the [black] who slumbers in every white man" (p. 144). In colonial settings, in other words, the Black man effectively personifies – or is made to personify – the id. We should locate this not simply at the level of singular psychological functioning, but as a consistent feature of imperial *culture*'s definition of itself. Steyn (1998) puts this nicely in reference to the African context: "As the psychological vortex of everything rejected as not European, Africa sucked in the deepest projections of the European unconscious" (p. 268). The benefit of this conceptualization is that it speaks of the investment of the racist culture in its object. Hate, that is to say – an axiomatic claim for psychoanalysis – always tells us as much – if not more – more about the hating subject (or *community*) than it does about the object of hate. "[P]rojecting his own desires onto the [black], the white man behaves 'as if' the [Black] really had them" (Fanon, 1952/1986, p. 127).

I developed the notion of a vernacular psychology in Chapter 1's discussion of Biko. As is by now apparent, Fanon's unorthodox borrowings from the history of psychoanalytic thought mean that this is a vernacular form of psychoanalysis, a strategic utilization of its conceptual means in order to produce a set of transformative theorizations. Clearly, this alliance between psychoanalysis and transformative politics proves more workable in some instances than others: Fanon's ambivalence about the political utilization of psychoanalysis is particularly heightened in the case of Jung, where the theoretical component in question is simultaneously both useful and yet also problematic. What I would suggest that we can learn from this state of affairs is not, obviously enough, that psychoanalysis should be summarily dismissed as necessarily depoliticizing, but rather that an adequately psycho-political/sociogenic psychoanalysis had not been adequately developed at the time of Fanon's work. Of course, one might contend that it has still not been adequately developed, which means that this remains the ongoing challenge for a still developing decolonial form of psychoanalysis.

Fanon's use of the notion of a "European collective unconscious" is best contextualized, I think, in view of the absence of a more overtly

societal-symbolic conceptualization of the unconscious. Attending carefully to how Fanon phrases his argument gives a sense of what he is reaching for, and of what he is pushing psychoanalysis toward: something akin to a trans-individual *societal* or symbolic unconscious freed of biological essentialism; something perhaps best designated – as suggested earlier – by the Lacanian maxim of the unconscious as "the discourse of the Other". Fanon insists, after all, that the collective unconscious he has in mind "is not dependent on cerebral heredity – it is the result of … the unreflected imposition of a culture" (p. 147), it is "purely and simply the sum of prejudices, myths, collective attitudes of a given group" (1952/1986, p. 145).

This conceptualization seems a foreshadowing of Said's *Orientalism*, although I would argue that it is perhaps better described as a political mode of *fantasy*, an obdurate yet mobile set of intersecting stereotypes and racist presumptions that come to function as automatic, as prior to conscious thought and/or rationality. This is a pre-propositional, latent type of social comprehension that supplies answers to vexing questions of otherness. Anchored in potent libidinal investments, it establishes the very parameters of how the other may begin to be known. The clue that Fanon is mapping racist fantasy in his description of the "Negro myth" lies in what seems the most outlandish examples, examples that one would tend to dismiss as exaggerations. It is in this sense also that we should take Fanon's associative tests (asking white men and women their immediate reaction to images of "the Negro") seriously, despite the impulse to dismiss them as empirically unsubstantiated: they tap into trains of thought, pre-reflexive presumptions that are not consciously acknowledged.

Now we may of course pick up aspects of this narrative logic via types of discourse and textual analysis. However, given that fantasy exercises its influence most potently when it is not openly stated but rather disavowed, when it remains implicit, avoided, unspoken, etc., then we will only approach it incrementally, in piecemeal fragments and intimations so long as we remain focused largely on the *content* of spoken discourse. What is required here is a move from the content of discourse to its broader structural *framework of intelligibility*. This is what Fanon offers in his attention to the "Negro myth": an *outlining of the fantasy frame*, the *configuring parameters* of racist ideation which are not themselves explicitly stated but nonetheless condition racial comprehension in the colonial sphere. This is what a libidinal economy will direct us toward: an outline of just such a framework.

Manichean symbolism/colonial automatism

As Fanon makes us aware, racism is not simply a question of distinctions made on the basis of different physical features and their immediate sociological and cultural extensions; the colonial world presents an ongoing alchemy

of social relations – reflected in Fanon's frequent mixing of physical with metaphysical metaphors – whereby psychical facets of human existence (i.e. the subjectivity of the colonized) are rendered in terms more applicable to objects, and where the materiality of anti-Blackness is experienced in modes of consciousness and being. Mbembe (2001) makes a similar point in remarking on the "delirium" of violence in the colony:

> The colony is primarily a place where an experience of violence … is lived, where violence is built into structures and institutions. It is implemented by persons of flesh and bone, such as the soldier … the police officer, and the native chief. It is sustained by an imaginary – that is, an interrelated set of signs that present themselves … as an indisputable and undisputed meaning. The violence insinuates itself into the economy, domestic life, language, consciousness. It does more than penetrate every space: it pursues the colonized even in sleep and dream. It produces a culture; it is a cultural praxis.
>
> *(pp. 174–175)*

What these comments emphasize is that the violence of anti-Blackness – obviously a fundamental factor in the delirium of colonial power Mbembe describes – utilizes racializations of the body and of the mind; racializations of material circumstance and of cultural production; racism of physical and moral qualities that occur in mutually-substantiating relations of support and enhancement. In racist Manichean thinking the continual splitting and separation of racial categories reaches the point where one is confronted with not only mutually exclusive groupings, but also mutually exclusive sets of ostensibly meta-physical values. The worldview presented by this kind of logic indefinitely sustains anti-Blackness; it suggests that two such groups are effectively unbridgeable, so radically different that they exist as different species or categories of being. Categorical divisions and racial significations are not only subject to continual social and material reinforcement; they are further substantiated in virtually any evaluative attribution pertaining to the social field as such. Symbolic activity here goes into over-drive. That is to say: it is not merely the case that racism affects how one sees and categorizes the world or that racism is projected onto objects and the differentiations we make between types of people, differing cultures, and so on. Once Manichean racism has taken root, any category distinction, any rudimentary symbolic differentiation (types of food, modes of social activity, forms of cultural expression, of enjoyment, etc.) comes to emanate, to "broadcast", and reinscribe racial categories. In the colonial domain anything can be "raced", be it mundane objects, psychological dispositions, or types of enjoyment. Any possible object or activity can be placed on one side of a symbolic line dividing the racial – and indeed "meta-physical" – categories of whiteness and

Blackness.[32] This was presumably part of the motivating agenda of racial segregation: that the constant re-inscription of racial difference in multiple facets of everyday life would become self-replicating, engendering thereby a type of colonial "symbolic automatism", that is, a constant and reiterative process of signifying, or re-instating, "essential" markers of racial difference such that they came to thoroughly saturate experience.[33]

This attention to symbolic potency in the colonial realm highlights a methodological imperative for us. We need to grasp the *colonial symbolic order* in the broadest possible sense, remaining aware of how it reproduces roles, subject positions, customs, rules, laws, historical practices, and relational structures, etc. in a kind of automated manner. We likewise need to understand the force of the great many signifiers of exclusion or denigration that characterize this colonial symbolic order, to grasp how its various symbolic demarcations, boundaries, and positionings are constantly reaffirmed in even the smallest of day-to-day interactions. There is an example of this – of the omnipresence of the colonial symbolic frame, its rules, and its performative enactment of roles – in the Apartheid Archive extract that opens this chapter: "This was always a bit of an anxious moment, where one needed to obey the right rules of disinterest, to maintain a measured distance … to keep the rules of distance and superiority in place". We need them to take seriously Fanon's (1961/1990) assertion that "The colonist is an exhibitionist" (p. 17). Tracing the contours of the colonial situation requires, in other words, an attention to the minutiae of everyday symbolic exchanges, and an attuned sensitivity to the dramaturgy of colonial life as a *signifying ensemble*.

This point about the prioritization of signifying and symbolic elements is perhaps best made not through another detour into theory but rather via a more straightforward set of anecdotes. Reading through the narratives collected by the Apartheid Archive Project (https://www.communityidentity.com.au/portfolio/the-apartheid-archives-project/) that solicited early experiences of racism, I was struck by the role of key signifiers in what was considered a formative memory of racism. Many of the signifiers in question took the form of disproportionately impactful performative gestures, enactments, demonstrative acts, signifying instantiations. What, in short, really brought home the experience of racism for most participants was a powerfully symbolic event of sorts. A few examples should suffice: a refusal on the part of a white miner to shake the hand of the Black co-worker who had saved his life; a white boy castigated for saluting a "colored" scoutmaster; the longstanding use of the term "boy" rather than "man" to refer to Black male workers; a Black woman directed to a toilet rather than a dressing-room to try on the clothes she wished to buy; the question "Is anyone here?" asked by a white man of a Black worker. It aids us here to make brief recourse to Lévi-Strauss's (1963) notion of "symbolic efficacity", a notion which emphasizes that the symbolic network constituted through

such various instantiations typically takes on a life and an apparent force of its own, assuming thus a momentum of structure that ultimately provides a scaffolding for beliefs and identifications that may not otherwise hold. Racism, in short, exists very much in the symbolic field, through a vast matrix of designations, role-allocations, interpellations, proscriptions, locations, and prohibitions which of course contain profound "extra-discursive" and psychological impacts.

"Negrophobia" as "structure of colonial feeling"

In relation to colonial notions of Blackness Fanon identifies a whole spectrum of derogatory values, values that European culture has wished to distance itself from. All that this culture considers undesirable, and all that it does not wish to acknowledge about itself, it projects onto others as a means of attaining its own "emotional equilibrium". The Black man is hence for white culture the "object capable of carrying the burden of original sin" (Fanon, 1952/1986, p. 148). It quickly becomes apparent – a methodological observation that will become important later on – that Fanon is utilizing a series of rudimentary economic terms in his discussion – relations of production and distribution feature, as do descriptions of the compensation and balancing of libidinal force. His immediate concerns lie with developing an account of "Negro-phobogenesis": one is Black "to the degree to which one is wicked, sloppy, malicious, instinctual. Everything that is the opposite of these Negro modes…is white. This must be recognized as the source of Negrophobia" (pp. 148–149).

It is of interest here that Fanon does not immediately qualify or explain phobia via recourse to a primal affective reaction: a symbolic operation underwrites what counts as phobic (whiteness is the opposite of "Negro modes", and all that is associated with such "Negro modes" takes on a phobic quality).[34] This is not to say that Fanon neglects the affective intensity of the phenomenon in question. He is clear that the phobic object arouses a pronounced sense of subjective insecurity. Such an object provokes anxiety within the subject who finds it – and here we find a link to the previous chapter's discussion of abjection – loathsome and repugnant. "The choice of the phobic object" is, significantly, "*overdetermined*"; this object "does not come at random out of the void of nothingness" (1952/1986, p. 119). It is instead the "latent presence" of a previously evoked affective association that has now become fixed, that now lies at the root of a given view of the world: "[T]here is an organization that has been given form … the phobic is governed by the laws of rational prelogic and affective logic" (p. 120). Fanon's phobogenic model of racism is thus clearly socially structured, "conventionalized"; it is what we might term a "structure of colonial feeling". This is a point worth reiterating: any affect that occurs within a given socio-historical

location, within the parameters of an ideological worldview, necessarily maintains a symbolic intelligibility; never naively spontaneous nor exclusively individual, such libidinal components always maintain what we might call, drawing on Fanon's vocabulary, a sociogenic basis, an elementary coherence or narratability. It is for this reason that Fanon's experiment with the trope of phobia must be introduced with the clear proviso that racism cannot be reduced to phobia. Racism is not to be seen merely as a subvariant of an affect more readily recognizable in other contexts (i.e. hate, envy, fear, jealousy, etc). This being said, it remains useful to pay attention to the dynamic interplay of affects involved in something like phobia. Attending to how racism takes on a relatively stable pattern of affect – as a libidinal configuration of sorts – proves useful analytically. It helps us break down the component elements of racism as an affective formation and grasp how its affective (libidinal) and ideational (fantasy) forms work in conjunction.

The phobic object, continues Fanon (1952/1986), induces a powerfully irrational reaction, a response that exceeds any reasonable fear or justifiable anxiety. "In the phobic", he insists, "affect has a priority that defies all rational thinking" (p. 120). The phobic moreover endows the object with "evil-intentions and … the attributes of a malefic power" (p. 120). In referring to the "laws of prelogic" and "affective prelogic", Fanon nicely designates the role of fantasy as a type of "pre-emptive structuring" of ideas and affects. The suggestive term that Fanon uses here – "affective prelogic" – alerts us to the presence of a type of social-discursive intelligibility that structures the affective intensity of the experience. The constellation of affective values Fanon pinpoints is thus extended: the fear we are concerned with possesses a markedly paranoid quality, which is to say that it lays the ground for an idea-system, a series of beliefs that one is being systematically undermined, compromised, undone, by a "bad object" intent on damage.

A clinical observation proves useful here. A phobia can be considered a domestication of anxiety, a means of stabilizing a free-floating and open-ended type of nervousness by binding such affects to a designated object. I mention this for two reasons. Firstly, to make the point that a phobia could be expected to *intensify* relative to the proportion of general anxiety a given subject or community is experiencing. Anxiety, for psychoanalysis, we should recall, often represents a defense against other potent affects, or, more accurately, a diffusion or *conversion* of troubling affects such as desire, guilt, aggression, and so on. Wherever there is a phobia, we could ask: what other anxious affects are being defended against in the formation and experience of the phobia? I mention the idea of the domesticating effects of phobia also for a second reason: to stress that a spiraling set of distressing ideas and suspicions – the paranoid quality of the idea-system in question – would be the likely result of anchoring so large a quantity of anxiety to a single object. The more a given object – in this instance Blackness – is scapegoated, that is, overloaded with negativity, made phobogenic, the more paranoia-inducing it is likely to be.

The key psychoanalytic move here is to read attributions made of a given psychical object – i.e. the phobogenic effects of Blackness – and consider what they tell us not so much about the anxiogenic object itself – which is clearly a vehicle of transference, to use Freudian language – but about the subjects who experience it as such.

The phobic object is not only a source of fascination and attraction but of prurient, desiring, or erotic interest, or, as Fanon (1952/1986) more accurately puts it, of "sexual revulsion" (p. 120). It is here that Fanon's theory of racism becomes properly psychoanalytic: his attention to the symbolic density of racism is now linked to that mainstay of Freudian preoccupations, *sexual drive*. The psychoanalytic notion of ambivalence alerts us to this possibility, namely that ostensibly contrary currents of affect exist in composite, dynamic conjunctions in which one exists as a precondition of the other. This is an example of psychoanalytic thinking at its most counter-intuitive and it has a clear bearing on the topic of racism.

So, while it is true, as Bollas (2003) notes, that the negative hallucination of treating the other as invisible is itself an instance of racism, it is nonetheless also the case that there is typically considerable affective investment by racists in their object. Never merely apathetic or indifferent, the hate of racism always connotes a more active involvement, a far greater imaginative and indeed *fantasmatic* interest. Ahmed (2004b) makes much the same point in her analysis of racism: hate, she says, is a form of intimacy that involves powerful negative attachments to others. She cites Holbrook: "where there is hate there is obviously an *excessive need* for the object" (p. 36). It is for this reason that we need to be wary of implying, as is often the case in more intuitive ideas about racism, that the racist maintains a kind of exalted exteriority from their object. Fanon's idea of the phobogenic object of racism makes this clear: the target of racism remains crisscrossed not only with relations of disgust, repulsion, and denigration, but also with potent relations of allure, exoticism, and desire. Each such aspect of this ambivalent object relationship needs to remain in place if we are to understand the volatility of racist affect. We must, in other words, grasp the counter-intuitive combinations of anxiety alongside attraction, contempt mingled with desire, and abjection blended with sexual curiosity. The anxious, fearful, paranoid, and hateful impulses of racism combine with unacknowledged attraction; this force of desire is so unpalatable to the subject that it must be fended off, denied, or repressed, at all costs.

Race in the field of vision

The topic of anxious sexuality lies at the heart of one of the most original contributions Fanon makes in reference to the analysis of colonial racism. This is a broad theme, but I want to focus briefly on the particular prioritization he affords practices of visuality in the colonial sphere and, more

specifically, the link he identifies between racism and the scopic drive (the gaze). One is reminded here of the "primal scenes" of racism in *Black Skin, White Masks* ("Look, a Black man!"), and of course Fanon's difficult allusion to Lacan's mirror-stage ("the real Other for the white man is … the black man" [p. 161]), both of which have been the subject of much subsequent discussion (Bhabha, 2004; Fuss, 1999; Khanna, 2003; Winnubst, 2004). We discover in the topic of the gaze a convergence of several key Fanonian themes: epidermalization, the violence of desubjectivizing racist objectification, and the role of desire and sexual anxiety in the etiology of colonial racism. As in my discussion of epidermalization I want again to overlay the formulations of different Fanon scholars to do justice to the conceptual richness of Fanon's idea.

Nigel Gibson (2003a) prefaces his description of the racial gaze by noting that the subjugating colonial subject has – even without realizing it – transferred domination into unconscious sexual fantasy. This white subject

> desires and fears the Black, who is perceived as the source of virility … The [racial] gaze is simultaneously haunted by hate, fear, anxiety, and sexual desire of the Black body. The racist gaze … suffers from double consciousness, the consciousness of superiority and the consciousness of inadequacy, incompleteness, an incompleteness that is manifest in the visual desire of the … Black Other … The racial gaze of the White seals the Black into a "crushing objecthood" … The White puts the Black together as a phobogenic object … The racial gaze is both a polymorphous perverse sexual desire, and sexual projection. The innermost repressed and sadistic and masochistic desires are externalized and projected onto the Black.
>
> *(pp. 22–23)*

Vital to stress here is that these twin libidinal poles of subjectivity, namely desire and identification (i.e. the questions of *whom I desire* and *with whom I identify*), unfold together, in an overlapping and often jointly problematizing manner. The gaze is thus a vehicle of both identification (or apparent counter-identification) and desire.

Stuart Hall is likewise attentive to this interweaving of desire and objectification. Hall (1996) emphasizes both the eroticization of the pleasure in looking and Fanon's recurring motif of the paralyzing "look" from the place of the "Other":

> It is the exercise of power through the dialectic of the "look" – race in the field of vision … which *fixes* the Negro from the outside.… by the fantasmatic binary of absolute difference … caught, transfixed, emptied and

> exploded in the fetishistic and stereotypical dialectics of the "look" from the place of the Other … he/she *becomes* – has no other self than – this *self-as-Othered*.
>
> *(pp. 16–17)*

Elsewhere Hall offers another treatment of this topic:

> [R]acism appears in the field of vision … [Fanon points to] the sexualized nature of the look. Looking always involves desire; there's always the desire not just to see, but to see what you can't see, to see more than you can see … The reaction in racism between black and white partly arises when the white looker becomes aware that he is … attracted to the black subject. The act of racism is a denial of that desire which is in the gaze itself.
>
> *(Hall, in Julien, 1995)*

The important qualification added here is that the desiring impulse within racism does not emerge in a recognizable form as such but remains repressed; it is the target of vigorous defensive energies, even though it nonetheless conditions the fierce disavowal of the racist act itself. The paradox at hand is that the presence of desire in the white onlooker often takes the form of *the violent repudiation of desire*.

Sexual anxiety

Fanon has forced us to consider the fraught relation between desire and racism. Notwithstanding the importance of this contribution, we are still justified in asking Fanon the obvious question: why the prioritization of sexuality, and indeed, of sexual threat, in the analysis of the colonial situation? More generally put: why is sexuality – or if not that, some desired and yet dangerous phallic attribute – so frequently at the heart of colonial racism? The psychoanalytic answer – one that Fanon at times appears to treat as self-evident – is that colonial racism has an irreducible sexual (or libidinal) component. Rather than merely relying here on psychoanalytic theory, let me offer three brief examples where this sexual dimension to racism seems evident.[35] Each of these examples demonstrates how racial/racist and sexual anxieties function as mutually reinforcing factors in the crowning motif of colonial anxiety, that is, the imaginary of inter-racial rape.

The Voortrekker Monument, a massive granite structure situated on a prominent hilltop just outside the city of Pretoria/Tshwane in South Africa, commemorates the pioneer Afrikaner farmers and trekkers (the Voortrekkers), who, between 1835 and 1854, opted to travel northwards to escape the

English rule of the Cape Colony. The Monument, which was inaugurated in 1949, a year after the formal implementation of apartheid, contains a series of reliefs, depictions of events endured by the trekkers during their northward passage. One notable relief depicts a Zulu attack. What is perhaps most immediately noticeable about the panel is the sexualized nature of this danger as it has been imagined. This relief stands out from the others in the Monument's narrative sequence because of the "explicit" content of a half-disrobed woman defenseless before a Zulu warrior, who, interestingly, seems resigned to her fate (see Figures 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3). Given the generally Calvinist ethos of the Voortrekkers, where matters of sexuality remained largely unspoken or repressed, this is a striking inclusion. Nothing else in the austerity of the Monument's grand "neoclassical" style permits for any sexualized content.

In his psychoanalytic biography of John Chavafambira, a migrant worker and African healer from Manyika, in Southern Rhodesia, the analyst Wulf Sachs (1996), describes a scene in the hotel in which Chavafambira worked:

> The hotel … was constructed like so many South African provincial hotels … [where b]edrooms and bathrooms opened on to [a central] quadrangle … [that] was dimly lit. John [was delivering] a cup of coffee from the kitchen to [a guest] … when a middle-aged spinster, resident in the hotel chanced to come out of the bathroom ahead of John … clad in night-clothes … As John drew near to her, her gown, thrown carelessly about her shoulders, slipped to the floor. Automatically John stooped to pick it up.

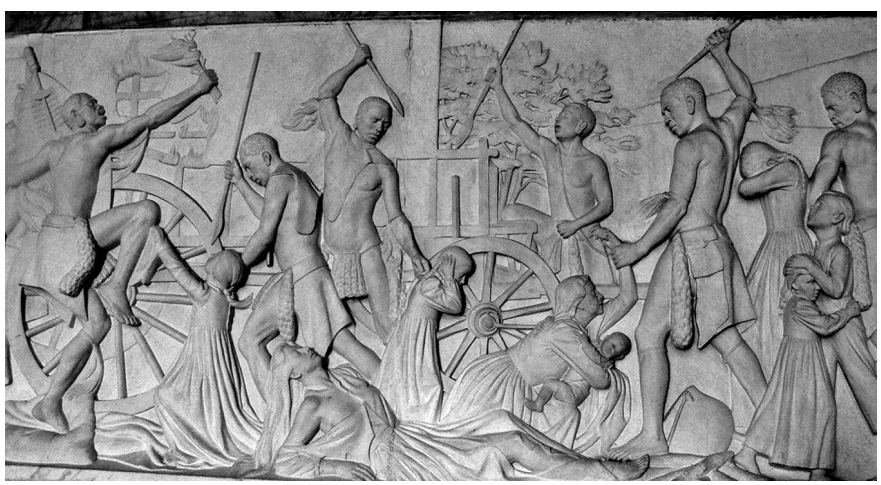

FIGURE 3.1 Voortrekker Monument relief: Zulu Attack on Laagers at Bloukrans (courtesy Voortrekker Monument).

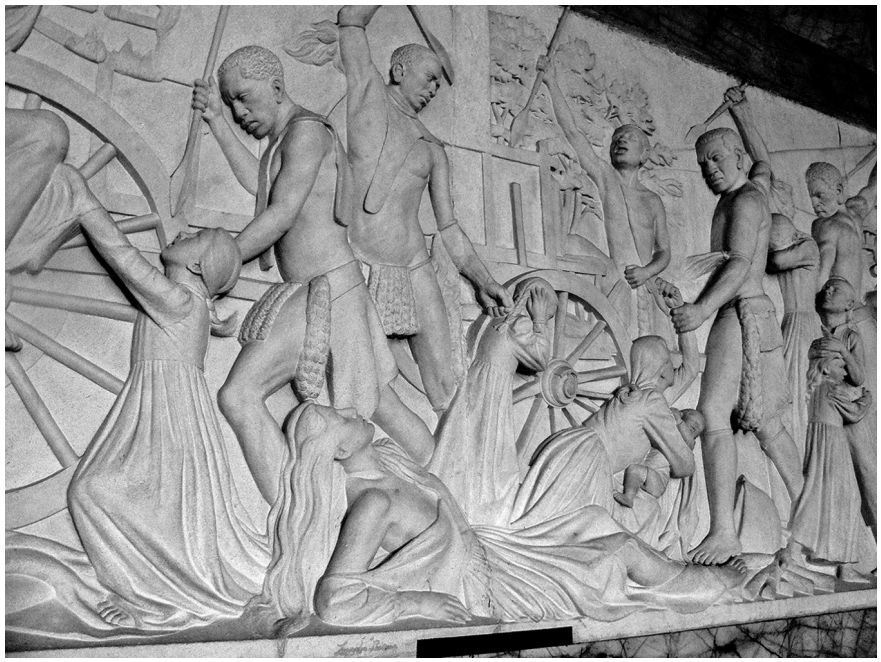

FIGURE 3.2 Voortrekker Monument relief: Zulu Attack on Laagers at Bloukrans (courtesy Voortrekker Monument).

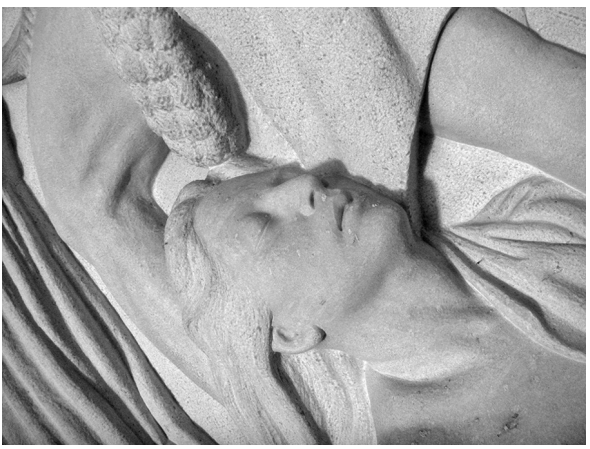

FIGURE 3.3 Detail of Voortrekker Monument relief: Zulu Attack on Laagers at Bloukrans (courtesy Voortrekker Monument).

> Only then did the woman become aware of his presence. Immediately she imagined that what she had always feared had occurred; she was being attacked by a native. She began screaming; utterly hysterical and uncontrolled. Doors were flung open; people ran to her; John stood nearby, the silk kimono in his hands, dumbfounded by the sudden pandemonium. The woman was sobbing out a story of assault. She had been conscious that John was stealthily following her, had felt his hands upon her, and felt him trying to drag her into her room. Loudly she demanded the police.
>
> *(pp. 131–132)*

The illustrative value of this extract – setting aside any quarrels we might have with Sachs's novelistic mode of depiction – concerns how the author invokes a scene in which the preoccupations of fantasy both overlay and override perceptions of actual events. Racial difference and sexual anxiety again seem indissociable in this example.

A third example stems from the U.S. context. In 2002, an exhibition entitled "Without Sanctuary" opened in Atlanta, Georgia. The exhibition was comprised of a series of documents pertaining to the harrowing history of lynching in the United States. The most harrowing aspect of the exhibition was the photographs of lynchings. Fanon (1952/1986) of course makes reference to such acts of racially motivated mutilation and murder, providing thus a sobering reminder of the extreme brutality of colonial/white supremacist racism. More disturbing than simply being exposed to such images was the fact that many of the pictures on display were postcard images – often stamped, annotated, posted – in which white spectators posed alongside the dead body of the victim. Attending such events was considered, by some, evidently enough, a recreational activity. The exhibition included lists of alleged offencss committed by those who had been lynched. Apart from the odd citations of violence, the offense repeatedly alleged, in what read like an increasingly implausible series of variations on the same basic formula, was that the Black man: threatened or carried out some form of sexual behavior toward a white woman; made inappropriate sexual overtures; showed undue interest or disrespect for a white woman; was caught in the white woman's house; had raped, assaulted, or acted aggressively toward a white woman, etc.

The white man's double difference

Fanon offers a further means of shedding light on the complex issue of sexual anxiety in racism. His initially puzzling pronouncement that "the Negrophobic man is a repressed homosexual" (1952/1986, p. 121) alerts us to an additional problem of desire in the colonial field. It is not only the case that the racial other may exercise some or other form of allure; such an

attraction might run across gender lines, posing thus the issue of homosexual desire. As noted briefly above, the issue of how prospective lines of identification and desire intersect proves instructive. Let us then, in a fairly deliberate fashion, play through the steps of the argument that would enable us to illuminate Fanon's pronouncement.

We have in the colonial environments the production of racial and sexual differences alike. These modes of difference are produced in tandem, and, typically, in a relation of opposition. Bearing in mind the psychoanalytic contention that (imaginary) identifications are often supported by types of physical likeness, we should be unsurprised to learn that in many racist societies, patriarchy is also powerful, that we have a reiteration of difference in the division of races and sexes alike. Differently put: if it is on the basis of categories of difference that white masculinity separates itself off from and objectifies other races, then – in much the same way – women are also made other, objectified, even if according to *sexual* as opposed to racial difference. Hence, and as Fanon was at pains to emphasize – the most feared or anxious of all relationships in patriarchal colonial settings is – for the racist patriarch at least – the sexual relationship between the white woman and the Black man.

Now, to follow a certain way of thinking, this seems odd, because from the perspective of the white man, this relation might be said to affirm his identity. His distinctness from each member of this relationship should thus be secured, the constituent elements of his identity reinforced: unlike the Black man he is *white*; unlike the white woman, he is *male*. As such, this relationship should leave him unconcerned. Unconcerned, of course, is the opposite of what occurs in situations such as these, where the very possibility of such a relationship comes to represent an influx of anxiety, a troubling of the white man's desire and identifications alike.

The problem with the explanatory route taken above is that it neglects the question of desire. More specifically, it neglects the ways in which desire problematizes the relation of difference. What in fact occurs, taking a psychoanalytic perspective, is that this relationship between the white woman and the man of color returns to the white man both his desire and his identification in albeit inverted forms. Let us trace here the perspective of the white male subject in racist/ patriarchal/heterosexual society: you, the Black man, must not desire the object (the white woman) of my (white man's) desire. Why? For if I understand that you also desire this category of object, then I am forced to admit a similarity between us, by virtue of our *shared* desire for this object. The fact that there might be a commonality of desire thus questions the distinctness of his white racial identification as separate, especially considering how important the white patriarch considers his desire to be in constituting his identity as a *heterosexual* man. The anxiety

uncovered here is that of the problematization of (apparently distinct) racial identifications through the undeniable similarity of (heterosexual) desire. There is more of a basis for identification with the Black man than the white man may care to admit.

There is a second and intersecting line of anxiety, which, by now, is easy to anticipate. If desire can problematize difference, then difference can likewise problematize desire. We return to the perspective of white male colonial subjectivity. Both the Black man and the white woman are, from this standpoint, objects of difference. They are – despite many apparent differences – alike, at least in this respect: *they are fundamentally other*. She, the female subject, operates as an object of desire, and does so, at least in part, on the basis of overt (physical/visual) difference. The Black man is also clearly an object of difference; they share this factor of unquestionable difference with me. Now, if the back man and the white woman are thus somehow aligned, and I, the white man, desire her, might I not also… *desire him*?

The racial other is thus able to problematize both the desire and the identifications of the white heterosexist colonial male by showing the fact that both these fundamental dimensions of his subjectivity (desire and identification) are potentially more inclusive categories than he might wish. Not only is it the case that prospective lines of identification and desire extend beyond the categories of appropriate objects as set by the terms of racist/patriarchal/heterosexist discourse. This state of affairs is further compounded by the fact that desire is typically amplified by attributions of difference. Given that the segregations, divisions, and underlying rationality of colonial power are premised upon the constant reiteration of difference, one can understand how the colony is also a domain where the conditions of unexpected desire are being continually produced.

Sexuality, enjoyment, and phallic loss

There is a further clarification that needs to be made as regards the relation of sexuality and racism, a clarification that will help set the scene for the next step in Fanon's exposition of negrophobia. The linchpin in the racist imaginary is not simply the *sexuality* of the other taken in the most conventional or normative sense. In most instances, as in the Edward Long extract above, it would serve us better to expand our scope to include traces of abhorrence, and pronouncements of disgust. Fanon, after all, is careful to qualify that it is "sexual *revulsion*" he has in mind when speaking of phobogenic attractions. The reviled reaction, the element of repugnance, indeed, the *abject* quality of the sexuality that Fanon describes, these are all crucial.[36] The litany of features cited by Long all have this in common: they are illicit enjoyments. It is more the obscene stuff of *jouissance* than sexuality alone that we are here concerned with, although, as always, sex

appears as its most privileged form, its most vital aspect. So, despite the variation evident in Long's catalog of evils, it quickly becomes apparent that the various vices to which Africans are prone (from criminality to baseness, savagery to immorality) are never fully separable from the sexual dimension.

This historical example of racist discourse helps us draw an important conceptual distinction. The threat to which the subject is beholden, and which brings his or her own lack to the forefront, is presented in two modalities. It is evident, firstly, in an *excessive* form: in the other's unacceptable enjoyments and libidinal excesses that appear to be unmarked by the renunciations and prohibitions that the "civilized" (white/colonizing) subject has themselves been subject to. (This feature is not without a certain psychological benefit: although such enjoyments are despised and resented, they enable the denigrating subjects to locate *jouissance* somewhere other than in themselves, to purify themselves of the stains of their own enjoyment). It is evident, secondly, in an experienced *absence*: in gazing upon the racial other, the same "civilized" (white/colonial) subject becomes aware that this other exemplifies something that they in fact hanker after; the racial other embodies some or other displaced element of their being that they experience as unjustly lost. If in the first case, we are dealing with the obscene enjoyment, the attributed *jouissance* of the other, in the second we are dealing with a phallic component, a precious quality around which the existence of the desiring subject pivots, a quality that defines their lack.

There are two fundamental aspects that must be noted as regards this phallic attribute. The phallic component is not merely a token, and it is always shadowed by loss. In other words, whatever it may be in a given socio-historical context, the phallus not only connotes but effectively *is* a kind of power, at least within the parameters of the prevailing social fantasy. Moreover, to invoke this phallic quality is simultaneously to evoke the potential loss – the castration – of the imagined attribute. In psychoanalytic terms, we can say: the phallus appears only on the horizon of a prospective castration. Bringing these two components together leads us to the following idea. Identify a prevailing signifier of power (of desirability) – be it wealth, sexual endowment, violence, etc. – and, insofar as this property is capable of engendering envy, and can viably be located in the figure of a (racial, cultural, ethic, sexual) other, then you will have, in this libidinal feature, the mainspring of a burgeoning form of bigotry.

The logic of racist fantasy

Fanon asserts that there is, perhaps unexpectedly, a set of positive, even *idealizing* associations to be found, albeit in distorted forms, in the logic of racism. I have in mind here Fanon's argument that a chief stereotype of Blackness is

unrestrained sexual appetite, a postulate he attempts to verify with reference to association tests he conducted with white Europeans: "The white man is convinced that the [Black man] is a beast … if it is not the length of his penis, then it is the sexual potency that impresses him" (Fanon, 1952/1986, p. 131). There is a certain concealed respect and/or jealousy at work here for Fanon, a "rapturous admiration of black … prowess" (p. 134). It is through the projection of sexual anxiety and/or guilt onto the figure of the Black, he claims, that Europeans avoid a neurotic sense of their own sexuality. There is, however, a "return effect" of this fantasy – the perceived sexual potency of the Black man is enough to engender a sense of inadequacy and insecurity within the white man as regards his own sexual abilities. A form of envy underlies this racism, reiterates Fanon: the white man wishes he possessed what he considers to be the Black man's primitivism, his joy for life, his unrivaled sexual capacities.

We might venture then the hypothesis that each variant of racism contains within it the identification of a highly valued (phallic) social trait. This trait is intensely desired – the racist subject or community covets this quality, wants to possess it – and yet, inasmuch as they have failed to attain it, it, or, more directly, *the racial other* associated with it, is hated and resented. The positive virtue cannot be rejected outright, certainly not if it has attained the status of a societal ideal. As such, not being able to attain this ideal necessitates the insertion of an object that justifies or explains how the subject was prevented from attaining the social ideal, the special libidinal treasure. Something is taken to stand in the way of the subject's realization of this ideal; there is some*one* who capsizes the possibility of the subject's ever fully possessing it.

The case of anti-Semitism serves as one of Fanon's examples. "The Jew" he says, drawing here on Sartre, "is feared because of his [or her] potential for acquisitiveness" (1952/1986, p. 121). We have thus a case in point then of a desired phallic attribute – the ability to make money – which, despite being demonized in others, is in fact highly prized, deeply coveted.[37] Crucial here is the fact that the idealizing component contained in any instance of bigotry, the *phallic stereotype* around which its logic turns, is excessive, hopelessly overstated, *fantasmatic*, despite apparent empirical evidence suggesting otherwise. Fanon is at pains to emphasize that this assumption of white colonialists is unrealistic, that there is no evidence to suggest that the sexual powers of Blacks are in any way superior to that of whites. Of course, this, the fact of empirical evidence, in no way diminish the power, the hold, of racist fantasies or reoccurrence of longstanding historical stereotypes.

The libidinal logic of racism is thus something like the following: "I blame you for something that I perceive myself to lack, something that you, the other, possess in abundance, which represents a threat to my livelihood or

enjoyment". A type of symbolically mediated social jealousy is apparent here. One way of managing this jealousy, of downplaying the apparent phallic power of the other, is through caricature. The other possessing the desired attribute, be it the Jew, the Muslim, the Black, is *reduced* to this quality, condensed to an offensive phallic feature, as if it exhausted all there was to know about them. "[T]he [black man] is eclipsed" says Fanon. "He is turned into a penis. He *is* a penis" (1952/1986, p. 130). In the logic of racism, even the idealized (phallic) social trait can be twisted into a corrupting vice; the once-prized feature takes the form of an "ideal gone bad". It now becomes a corrupting element, a kind of toxic excess. There is a double gain to this logic. For a start, it becomes easier to mask one's own apparent inability to secure the cherished object. Secondly, the other thought to possess the object has been objectified; his intimidating phallic endowment has been converted into a single deplorable trait beyond which nothing else is worth knowing. This problematizing factor thus becomes the key to the other; it is *the* salient feature that overrides any other positive attribute they may be thought to possess. The Jew, to stick with Fanon's Sartrean example, is, within the logic of Anti-semitism, nothing more than the love of money.

Not only then is the desired object exaggerated, spoiled by its apparent excess; it is now twisted into a threat to my well-being – a whole way of life, a type of enjoyment, is now at stake. Here then we confront the paranoid element of racism, *the sense of personal threat*, and the danger of demise that the other comes to embody. This is the elementary racist fantasy writ large: the other is taking something away from me, somehow stealing my livelihood, my vitality, something of immense value to my existence. *That* is why I hate you: because you threaten to imperil my way of life and to ruin all the things I hold dear. The other thus seems always to pose the threat of moral corruption, the degeneration of values, the violation of law and order, of the ways things are meant to be. In other words, in this distorted logic of racism, it is not that *I lack a particular quality*, it is rather that *you have this quality in an excessive and hence dangerous quantity*. I, the racist subject, hence become *the victim* of you, the other, who undermines and threatens my existence. You, on the other hand, become *my persecutor*, that which represents all that is threatening to me. Hence, I deserve protection *against you*, and *you*, on the other hand, *deserve punishment*.[38]

The rhetoric of racism is littered with indices of desire and envy, characterized by the presence of precious objects – objects that are both valorized and, once linked to the other's enjoyment, deplored. If there is a truth of the racist subject (or community) that the affective logic of racism distorts and conceals, then it is one that involves several operations of disguise, operations that Fanon's libidinal economy of negrophobia enables us to identify. There is, of course, an ego – other displacement (a projection) that enables the racist

to believe that the problematic attributes in question are most fundamentally about *the other* rather than about the subject (the subject community's own disavowed qualities). A defensive reversal is also present: the feared and threatening object also exerts an attraction – it maintains a sexual charge, and proves an object of curious desire. There is, thirdly, a transformation of the object, a transformation that follows a virtue–to-vice trajectory. A once-prized phallic quality is reduced to something tainted by the other's *jouissance*; we have thus a de-valorization that functions to cover over the subject's own perceived lack.

Colonial structure and the subject: toward a sociogenic unconscious

We have covered a good deal of ground in our overview of Fanon's use of psychoanalysis thus far. Before concluding this section, it is helpful to consider two related topics: the prospective limitations of an exclusively Manichean conceptualization of racism, firstly, and the related question of how to think of the nature of colonial situation as something that is not strictly reducible to the binarism of Manichean categories, secondly. Rethinking this issue – that is, that of how the colonial situation is not limited to the entrenched impasse of two antagonistic positions – will open up the important conceptual question of how we might think the colonial unconscious in a properly Fanonian way.

We begin this discussion with an insight from an earlier historical psychoanalytic conceptualization of colonial racism, one derived from the work of Octave Mannoni. While we have already remarked on some of the shortcomings of Mannoni's analysis of colonialism, there is a particular facet of his account that might helpfully inform us in thinking about the nature of the colonial situation. Khanna (2003) makes just such an argument with reference to the notion of the so-called "Prospero complex" and its related inferiority and dependency complexes. Khanna is, of course, aware of the racist potential of such notions (the implications, for instance, that only certain subject peoples can be colonized, that the colonized effectively wish colonization upon themselves or would otherwise be unable to develop to "higher" stages of civilization). She nonetheless emphasizes how the necessary *relationality* of these complexes might offer a different level of conceptualization to the binary oppositions of Fanon's stark Manichean categories of oppressor/oppressed.[39] The relationship between colonized and colonizer, she argues, is not simply oppositional or antagonistic as such; it is relationally constituted and it can be understood only with reference to a third term, that of *the colonial situation itself* (Khanna, 2003).[40] Such a view entails a different emphasis on positionality; the colonizer, for Khanna, does not necessarily assume absolute authority or dominance, or exert a wholly determining relation upon the colonized. Despite the necessity of such categories of analysis

(i.e. colonizer/colonized), colonial relations should not then – at least for Khanna – be concretized into static structures (unchanging categories of dominance and/or dispossession).[41]

We might respond to Khanna by observing that this – the conceptual need to move beyond Manichean categorizations – is something that Fanon (1961/1990) himself had already grasped, certainly so by the publication of *The Wretched of the Earth*. We find there the assertion that "Decolonization is the meeting of two antagonistic forces", a phrase which at first glance substantiates Khanna's claims, although Fanon goes on, crucially, to add, that these forces "in fact draw their originality from the sort of substantification that is *secreted and nourished by the colonial situation*" (Fanon, cited in Etherington, 2016, p. 166, *added emphasis*). As such there is clearly a third term of sorts present within Fanon's analytical framework, even if this third term of analysis is perhaps only most significantly conceptualized in Fanon's later work, developed particularly via an engagement with Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. However, if we skip back to a decade before *The Wretched of the Earth*, to the opening pages of *Black Skin, White Masks*, we find the well-known description – or "socio-diagnosis" – of colonial racism, namely the fraught situation of white and Black subjects each trapped in respective narcissisms of whiteness and Blackness ("The white man sealed in his whiteness. The black man in his blackness" (1952/1986, p. 3)).[42] This sounds very much like a paradigmatic instance of the Manichean non-relationality that Khanna has in mind. The point is worth conceding – Fanon's descriptions of the Manichean nature of the colonial world do sometimes sound as if they have been fashioned in starkly dichotomous terms. We find this also in the famous section of *The Wretched of the Earth*, where Fanon stresses that "the "native" sector is not complimentary to the European sector"; the inhabitants of these two sectors "confront each other… not in the service of a higher unity… [but following] the dictates of mutual exclusion: There is no conciliation possible" (p. 4).

The obvious objection here is that the characterization of the Manichean nature of the colonial situation, while certainly an apt description of the obduracy of coloniality, is not intended to reinforce an unchangeable antagonism nor to lend it a quasi-ontological status; the whole point, surely, is to destroy this world, to over-ride the Manichean system, to subject it to dialectical forms of moment, disruption, to revolutionary and even violent decolonial forms of change.[43] Why then have we stayed so long with Khanna's argument? Well, for several reasons, the first of which pivots on the Lacanian insight that any communicative or adversarial exchange between two parties (or two groups) necessarily involves a mediating factor of sorts, even if this third factor is language or the prevailing symbolic system (of discourses, laws, customs, etc.) that makes the exchange intelligible. It is worth underscoring that the mediating factor here – in apparent distinction to what is

invoked by Khanna – is not merely a type of relationality; such a mode of description or analysis does not take us sufficiently beyond the conceptual level of oppositions of subjectivity (beyond, what in Lacanian terms we would refer to the domain of the imaginary). What is required then is a reference to a different (symbolic) register of conceptualization, one that exceeds the parameters of inter-subjectivity.[44] While this might seem little more than a conceptual insight, it has important political implications. Firstly, a dyadic impasse, insofar as it remains at the imaginary level of warring inter-subjectivities (as in the case of one egoic position in a standoff against another), leads to an intractable deadlock, one which precludes the dimension of effective historical change, and which cannot be transcended or changed from within. Secondly, if change is to occur, if a radical mutation in consciousness (to cite Gibson, 1996) is to be brought about, this necessarily involves an intervention at the symbolic level of this third element, be it that of the colonial symbolic order (or that of "the colonial situation") itself. This echoes the warning mentioned in the Chapter 2 with respect to racism: inter-subjective (psychological or *imaginary*) forms of analysis must be read in conjunction with – rather than as supplanting – analyses of prevailing symbolic and structural systems.[45] It also links us back to the discussions of the dramaturgical/performative dimension of the colony, of the symbolic efficacity of racism (the "symbolic automatism" of the colony), or, in other words, the idea that once a symbolic system is populated with racist values, designations, and segregations, it takes on momentum and agency of its own, tireless replicating such symbolic instantiations of racism beyond – or, more accurately perhaps, *in addition to* – the subjective racism of individual social actors.[46]

This discussion about the necessity of a "third factor", of some or instantiation of the "colonial symbolic order", calls to mind two observations that Fanon makes in *Black Skin White Masks*. Firstly, his argument that colonial language itself – aside, that is, from the racist psychologies of colonialists – has an amputating and alienating force on the colonized. This conceptualization registers the role of the colonial symbolic order (i.e. the system of symbols, modes of expression, racist concepts, stereotypes, and the "treasury of signifiers" of the European Collective Unconscious); this provides us an interesting perspective on Fanon's remark "To speak is to exist absolutely for the [O]ther" (1952/1986, p. 8).[47] Indeed, as Richards (2021) has observed, when Fanon remarks that "to speak means being able to use a certain syntax…[to possess] the morphology of… a language… it means… assuming a culture and bearing the weight of a civilization" (1952/1986, p. 8), this is "as good a definition of Lacan's symbolic [order] as [one] could wish to find" (Richards, 2021, p. 227). Secondly, there is Fanon's appeal to – or for – "the end of the world", when he laments the malign influence of

school inspectors and government functionaries – agents, of course, of the racism of European cultural imperialism– and pauses to consider what could – or should – follow a decolonial realization of this influence, i.e. precisely "The end of the world" (p. 168).[48] Given the foregoing arguments, it seems evident that what is being called for here is the *end of the colonial symbolic order* of the "white world". Differently put, unless this symbolic world is destroyed, the colony – and its associated forms of psychical belief and investment – will surely continue. In these crucial moments within *Black Skin White Masks*, Fanon is clearly aware of the symbolic efficacity of racism (i.e. "colonial automatism"), and of the need, both analytically and politically, to take into account the potentially "overdetermining" role of the colonial symbolic order itself. In other words, his theorization of racism already contains – even if only implicitly – the basis of a three-part model of racism. At the risk of repetition, this foregrounds the importance of an analytical model that cannot be reduced to a dyadic or narrowly "psychological" (or ego-other or "relational") conceptualization.

From a Lacanian position, one would want to further develop this conceptual basis, to insist upon the need to grapple with the complexities of the entanglement of subjects in the symbolic materials of the colonial situation. One needs to grasp this symbolic order in the broadest possible sense, inclusive of the effects of the symbolic Other of colonialism, that is, in view of how long-standing historical and socio-economic power-relations come to be enfolded within conscious and unconscious lives of colonial subjects. Lacan's perennial insistence that the subject is effectively *the subject of the signifier* takes on a new relevance when it comes to tracking the saturating influence of racist symbolism and dramaturgy in the colonial context. This compels us to consider again how best to conceptualize the unconscious in the colonial situation.

It also helps us to refer here to our earlier discussion of sociogeny. As a psychiatrist and psychoanalytic thinker, Fanon was clearly aware that a sociogenic direction of emergence is often supplemented by a feedback loop. The racist social-economic realm generates fantasies ("the Negro myth", the "dream of turning white", inferiority and superiority complexes) which then take root at the individual level where they are subject to the unique articulation of fantasy preoccupations in singular subjects (i.e. their own distinctive phobias and anxieties or wishes and phallic aspirations), preoccupations which then mediate everyday lived experience (or "subjective experience of objective reality" (Bhabha, 2004, p. xxi)). This leads us to a methodological injunction when tracking social and psychic formations of colonial racism: we need both to *track the sociogenic origin of forms of psychological suffering* and *engage them as they are individually experienced and psychically elaborated* in the lives of individual subjects. Or, in Fanon's (1952/1986) own words (in a rare case of agreement with Mannoni): "the problem of colonialism includes not only the

inter-relations of objective historical conditions but also human attitudes towards these conditions" (p. 62). This, in turn, sheds light on the Lacanian notion of a trans-individual unconscious, a conceptualization which foregrounds how the incessant flow of (racist) signifiers, gestures, dramaturgical/performative acts, symbolic contents, societal/ideological ideals, etc. – all of which, crucially, are *sociogenic influences* – etc. impact upon, are "digested" by, "metabolized" by, the psychical particularity of individual subjects. We can understand now why the notion of the Lacanian symbolic Other refers to the symbolic Order *as it is particularized for each subject*. This Other, we might say, occupies the space of fantasy, it is the site (the "Other scene") where socially produced fantasies flow into and inhabit the desires, wishes, and anxieties of colonial subjects, albeit – and this is a vital qualification – in the "negotiated", individualized form of their own singular fantasies. It is a type of relay between socially produced desires (the imagined desire of the Other) and the subject's own desire. Recall in this respect Fanon's call-and-response assertion at the opening of *Black Skin White Masks*: "What does the black man want?" (p. 1), "The black man wants to be white" (p. 3).

Having now stressed that the trans-individual unconscious functions as a "third term" – going beyond the levels of the subjective and inter-subjective, beyond the dialectics of inter-subjectivity – it might come as a surprise that a very similar idea is present in Fanon. In his critique of Adler's psychoanalytic model, in which each subject is involved in a continuous ego struggle for dominance with his or her fellow subject, Fanon insists upon the role of a constant third term in the colonial situation:

> The Martinican does not compare himself with the white man *qua* father, leader, God; he compares himself with his fellow against the pattern of the white man. An Adlerian comparison would be schematized in this fashion:
>
> Ego greater than the Other
>
> But the Antillean comparison, in contrast, would look like this:
>
> $$\frac{\text{White}}{\text{Ego different from the Other}}$$
>
> *(Fanon, 1952/1986, pp. 167–168)*

Fanon offers an important qualification at this point:

> [t]he Adlerian comparison embraces two terms; it is polarized by the ego. The Antillean comparison is surmounted by a third term: Its governing fiction is not personal but social.
>
> *(Fanon, 1952/1986, pp. 167–168)*

Fanon's move away from the crude inter-subjectivity of a two-part model of ego comparison is thus quite explicit, as is his insistence that a necessary third element – a "governing fiction", as he puts it, in a description that clearly resonates with Lacanian conceptualizations of the symbolic (big) Other – is necessarily of a social/symbolic sort. Gibson (2003a) offers a characterization which would seem to support such a reading: in *Black Skin White Masks*, the "White…[is] the transcendental Other" (p. 17). Not only then does Fanon involve a governing term in a triadic schema of colonial inter-subjectivity, but this third element takes the form of a fictional/social/symbolic Other – that of whiteness itself.[49] Implicit in this schema is the understanding that the place of the White (of the Other of whiteness) has a transferential power – hence the various alienating "dreams of turning white" and forms of lactification discussed by Fanon in earlier sections of *Black Skin White Masks*.

Fanon is, in this sense, fully aware of a "political unconscious". He grapples with the role of a symbolic, trans-individual unconscious that is never merely individual (populated as it is with signifiers, ideas, and symbolic elements from the social realm) just as it is never merely "intrapsychic" (in the sense of being cut off from or insulated from the social or political dimensions of existence). Fanon's idea of the unconscious thus lies indivisibly between the subjective and the "socially objective" (i.e. the social reality as prescribed by the ideological/socio-historical conditions of the colony).[50] This, I think, is what his refashioning of the Jungian collective unconscious gestures toward. So, in response to a line of critique which asserts that Fanon's conceptualization of psychical life is strongly socio-historical and sociogenic in nature – so much so that it de-prioritizes or even explicitly refutes psychoanalytic conceptualizations [51] – one can only respond that this is precisely what makes it commensurate with Lacanian conceptualizations of a trans-individual unconscious, anchored in a "treasury of signifiers" (that of the European Collective Unconscious) and that features the role of a governing fictional "third term" (a symbolic Other) of whiteness which exerts a pervasive (and transferential) influence on the minds of its subjects. One way then of accommodating what a Fanonian decolonial standpoint necessitates – one that takes into account precisely, to cite Fanon, "*the inter-relation of historical conditions…[and] human attitudes*" (Fanon, 1952/1986, p. 62, added emphasis) – lies with the suggestion that a Fanonian unconscious is always both necessarily a *sociogenic* and a *trans-individual* unconscious. We can conclude this section by noting that the conceptual overlaps and/or enhancements noted above – those between Lacanian ideas of the symbolic order, the trans-individual unconscious, and the symbolic ("big") Other, on the one hand, and Fanonian notions pertaining to the influence of the colonizer's language and culture, the European collective unconscious, and the role of a governing third term

of colonial inter-subjectivity, on the other, work to strengthen the sociogenic aspect of Fanon's psychoanalytic analysis.

Libidinal economy

Racial fantasy structures and distributions of libido

In the introduction to this chapter, I made mention of a "very Fanonian challenge", namely: how to apply psychoanalysis to the colonial domain without reducing social structures to intra- or inter-psychical dynamics. My first response to this challenge has been to highlight a series of conceptual tools that allow us to broaden the sociogenic dimension of certain existing psychoanalytic ideas. Hence the links established between Lacanian and Fanonian conceptualizations so as to establish the following ideas:

1 The notion of a trans-individual/sociogenic unconscious
2 The concept of colonial symbolic order (as extending Fanon's idea of the "European Collective Unconscious") as, a "treasury of racial/racist signifiers"
3 The idea of "colonial automatism" – i.e. the symbolic efficacity of colonial racism – (linked to Fanon's emphasis on the role of colonial language (which brings with it the "bearing and weight of a civilization" (1952/1986, p. 8)) and his assertions that "the racial drama is played out in the open" (Fanon, 1952/1986, p. 116) and that the "colonist is an exhibitionist" (Fanon, 1961/1990, p. 17))
4 The idea of a structural mediating third term in psychical life (Fanon's "governing fiction" which is "not personal but social" (p. 215)).

What though about the pronounced affective/libidinal dimension of Fanon's account – that is, his focus on the phobogenic nature of racism? Essential as it is to attend to the symbolic, ideational components of a fantasy structure with its relentless succession of historically persistent stereotypes and its related signifiers of derogation and segregation, surely such an approach begs a necessary counterpart, an account of the force of *jouissance*, of those embodied intensities and passions that breathe vigor into such fantasmatic perspectives. This is not to imply that affects/libidinal flows are in some way outside of, or prior to, symbolic operations – for both Fanon and Lacan, this is decidedly *not* the case [52] – although it is to underscore the importance of a multi-dimensional analytical framework when it comes to racism. This points to one of the strengths of Fanon's account: his contribution is not simply to remark upon the recurrence of certain unconscious symbolic racist "archetypes"; he also explores the affective facets of racism, most clearly in what

Mercer (1996) refers to as "Fanon's libidinal economy of negrophobia". Several questions come to the fore here. Firstly, how can we best connect these two conceptual approaches (i.e. one which prioritizes the symbolic and one which prioritizes the libidinal)? Differently put: how might an attention to libidinal intensities be accommodated within a framework that stresses the *sociogenic/symbolic* nature of related colonial psychical phenomena? Secondly, how, in attending to the stuff of passionate investments and libidinal intensities, might we avoid succumbing to psychological reductionism? Thirdly, how might such a framework lend itself to studying racism in other contexts? The notion of libidinal economy provides an effective way of responding to these questions. Offering a few reflections on this topic provides a suitable way of concluding this chapter; not only does it allow us to underscore several of Fanon's most salient psychoanalytic insights within *Black Skin White Masks*, it also points us in the direction of a methodological framework.[53] The hope is that in learning from Fanon, we might devise a methodological template of sorts for the analysis of libidinal economy as it occurs at other historical sites.[54]

What though is a "libidinal economy"? Alcorn (2002) comes close to offering a definition when he stresses the libidinal power of language in "its potential for attachments, attraction, organizations, repulsions and bindings that create … stable sites of identification" (p. 105). The prioritization of language here is significant: not only does it resonate with Fanon's emphasis on the weight and bearing of colonial language in the first chapter of *Black Skin White Mask*s it also places such libidinal arrangements firmly within the symbolic register, that is, within the trans-individual and thereby necessarily sociogenic domain of discourse itself. It is important to be clear on this point: a libidinal economy, while not itself reducible to language – it is rather *the distribution of affective currents according to existing social fantasy structures* – nonetheless operates to structure and consolidate such affects along, of course, with the various social identifications associated with them. Such arrangements of libidinally-loaded fantasies entail relations of passionate attachment and exclusion; they affirm types of group identification; and they hold social formations in place – hence Alcorn's reference to "attachments, attractions…repulsions and bindings" (p. 105). This aligns with the definition of a libidinal economy that I offered at the outset of this chapter: a sociogenic framework of fantasy and its corresponding distributions (or patterns) of affect/libido which necessitate the constant reiteration of both treasured and feared libidinal objects as a means of anchoring symbolic identifications.

How does Fanon's psychoanalytic account in *Black Skin White Masks* both accord with and inform such an approach? It was already clear within Fanon's account of phobogenesis that the libidinal charge (the affect) in

question is by no means merely narrowly "psychological" (or ontogenetic) in its origin. By the same token, this libidinal component is never merely individual or intra-psychic in its "domain of experiencing". As a structure of colonial feeling, it is socially determined and discursively arranged – not to mention powerfully tied to identifications with whiteness. It is likewise not to be reduced to a type of primal affectivity.[55] Fanon, to recall, insists that "[t]he choice of the phobic object… does not come at random out of the void of nothingness", that "there is an organization that has been given form … the phobic is governed by the laws of rational prelogic and affective logic" (1952/1986, pp. 119–120). This is highly instructive in guiding us to think about racism as a libidinal configuration that involves a distribution of affects, a channeling of passions, and the production of libidinal objects (i.e. the precious narcissistic treasure that the racist subject perceives as under threat and the noxious excessive/phallic object that the racial other is thought to embody or possess).

What quickly becomes apparent is that Fanon's notion of negrophobia is not about a single affect. Negrophobia concerns a constellation or arrangement of affective trajectories: fear of an object, yes, but this fear is also, as Fanon shows, dynamically related to – is a *defense against* – desire for, sexual interest in, jealousy toward, the racial other. This phobic affect is also followed by reactions of revulsion and disgust – fear here taking the form of abjection – and, often, by aspects of paranoiac and/or persecutory anxiety. This is why it serves us better to refer to a libidinal economy – an arrangement of a complex array of libidinal flows or intensities which take on a regular discursive form – than appeal simply to racism as pivoting on single predominant affect (hate, fear, aggression, envy, etc.).

Earlier on, I noted that by virtue of his reference to the "laws of [affective] prelogic", Fanon effectively designates the role of fantasy as a type of "preemptive structuring" of ideas and affects. I remarked, furthermore, that this term – "affective prelogic" – alerts us to the presence of a type of social-discursive intelligibility that structures the affective intensity of the experience.[56] The racist social fantasy structure that is most well-developed in *Black Skin White Masks* is, as we have seen, that of the rapacious, violent, and sexually supercharged Black man, possessed of libidinal appetites beyond measure. Why am I once again drawing attention to this crucial component of Fanon's account? To underscore the crucial role fantasy – and in this instance, racial fantasy structures – play in any libidinal economy. If we are speaking about sexuality, or (aggressive/sexual) drives – which Fanon most certainly is – then we need to bear in mind that such energies are not merely subjective. They don't float free of social structure; they retain an elementary narrative or discursive coherence.

Human sexual activity, says Nobus, (meaning "sexual" here in the inclusive terms suggested above) "is never intrinsically satisfying.… satisfaction

only ensues if a particular fantasy is operative" (2018, p. 153). Fantasy, he continues, is "the psychic architecture which allows us to experience an event as a source of [libidinal] satisfaction…*jouissance* is dependent on the fantasy" (p. 153). Adapting this formulation to our discussion of libidinal economy, we can say that fantasy provides the interpretative framework that allows the various instances of *jouissance*, or libidinal intensity (inclusive of excessive or painful arousals), to be arranged, to take on a type of subjective and social coherence. These intensities require the elementary mapping, the minimal narrativization, that a fantasy frame provides. Such a framework, moreover, specifies who or what might be most desirable (whiteness, according to Fanon's analysis) and who or what qualifies as the libidinal treasure to be safeguarded (white women, being one example, although others can be supplied (white culture/civilization, etc.)). It also specifies who or what poses the greatest and most traumatic threat (for Fanon, Blackness, Black men) to such object treasures and, furthermore, what particular "phallic endowment" within them (sexual potency) underlies the corrosive, toxic, or evil influence they stand for.[57] Even the most primal of affects, in other words, like sexuality itself, occur within precise historical and cultural coordinates, and they take on distinct forms, defined by social fantasy structures. So, although Nobus is concerned primarily with the clinical domain, how he describes fantasy proves instructive for our concerns here, especially when he notes that "fantasy constitutes the subject's…[or a *social group's*] *weltanschauung*, a subjective [or *societal*] ideology which guarantees psychic continuity, regulates…inter-subjective space, and provides stability" (2018, p. 153). We understand better now why an account of affective force must be accompanied by the parameters of comprehension (the "logic") of the fantasy that provides its coherence and its arrangement. As noted above, fantasy – or a given racial fantasy structure – sets the logic of arrangement, the parameters of comprehension underlying racialized inter-subjectivity in colonial contexts. It is for this reason that Fanon's theorization of the libidinal economy of negrophobia must be read in tandem with his sketch of the fantasmatic frame of the "Negro myth".

Tracing a libidinal economy however is not only a case of identifying a given social passion, but of registering the upsurge of drive impulses, or modes of enjoyment (*jouissance*), within a group or community. Nor is it only a task of noting disproportionate investments of love and/or hate that a group exhibits in respect of certain social objects – although observations of these kinds are obviously of great importance. A libidinal economy also functions to manage anxiety. At first glance, this seems counter-intuitive, because the libidinal economy of negrophobia surely entails an accentuation and exaggeration of anxiety. We should not forget here that a phobia represents a focalization, a stabilization of anxiety, because such a phobia gives form to, condenses, indeed, *personifies* a variety of anxieties into a single scapegoated figure.

In other words – and this is readily apparent in Fanon's account – the libidinal economy of negrophobia stabilizes identification by delegating/projecting unwanted characteristics onto the figure of the Black man.

In other words, a libidinal economy necessarily works to substantiate a community, to establish the elementary social ties, and to consolidate processes of group identification. From an analytical perspective then we need to register the narcissistic, imaginary *ideal-ego images* that a given community has of itself, to make note of the narrative ensemble of loveable, desirable, heroic, and often grandiose self-representations that it promotes and identifies with. Equally important to note are the oft-reiterated positive symbolic components of a group identification, that is, the longstanding pantheon of *ego-ideals* that link the history of a given group or nation to its present, and that include a vast array of symbolic resources (cultural codes and values that bond a community, the traditions, structures, and historical mandates that ground it).[58] While now is not the time to embark on a further digression in theory, it would help, in future elaborations of the notion of libidinal economy, to refer to the terms of description utilized in Freud's (1921) *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. The irreducibly social focus of the concept quickly becomes clear in this text. Libidinal economy, for Freud, is a fundamental vector of group identification. Freud's focus there is on "the individual… as member of a race, of a nation, of a caste…. As a component part of crowd of people who have been organized into a group" (1921, p. 70). He is concerned with the binding force of libido, indeed with libidinal ties as they take imaginary and symbolic forms (i.e. loving attachments occurring laterally, between members of a group, and vertically, to a figure embodying the symbolic ideals of a group) and against members of an outgroup. It is worth stressing here the obvious point that a libidinal economy necessarily permits degrees of individual variation. Not everyone who is enthralled by the same political fantasy dreams the same dream, so to speak, just as not everyone in the hold of fantasmatic racist notions is as invested in, or preoccupied with, implementing such beliefs. That being said, such an economy remains tied to the Other (of prevailing socio-historical norms, ideological values, etc.) which ensures that a general consistency of sorts is obtained in the singular (individual, "intra-psychic") articulations of such political fantasies.

The topic of libidinal economy approached either (meta)theoretically or methodologically – that is, as offering a framework for analysis in other socio-historical contexts – is deserving of further research. It is surely of interest to decolonial psychoanalysis insofar as it sidesteps certain of the methodological shortcomings associated with earlier psychoanalytic interpretations of social phenomena, i.e. of reducing social structures to intra- or inter-subjective psychical dynamics. In the previous chapter, I noted that

racist discourse is always locked into a relationship with "extra-discursive" factors, factors that provide a fuller means of understanding the dynamics and limitations of discursive processes themselves. In engaging the topic of libidinal economy, this chapter has proposed an answer to this conceptual challenge. The analysis of libidinal economy might be seen, as, in effect, *a variant of discourse analysis*, one which, having learned from Fanon's analysis:

1 remains at the analytical level of the trans-individual (or sociogenic),
2 isolates the fundamental fantasy structures – the particular "logics of fantasy" – at work, along with the associated libidinal treasures and feared libidinal objects in play (in addition, perhaps, to pinpointing the symbolic ego-ideals and the idealized, narcissistic images affirming the associated group identification),
3 draws upon psychoanalytic language to describe the dynamism and complex interplay of affects, that is, the *libidinal patterns* (i.e. obsessional, phobic, paranoid, melancholic, hysterical, psychotic, etc.) that characterize such structures.

Used as a variant of – or supplement to – discourse analysis, libidinal economy would, I think, provide a non-reductive analytical strategy, one asserting that discourses themselves maintain the coherence, the repetitiveness – indeed, the cycles of *jouissance* – that mark certain well-established patterns of libidinal functioning. Apprehending the libidinal economy of a given discourse might enable us to answer questions along the lines of why certain signifiers come to be locked into patterns of repetition, and why some are so historically persistent, "sticky", and difficult to shake. It may likewise assist us in understanding how certain regimes of representation are so effective in, to paraphrase Glynos (2001), fueling identification processes, creating effects of discursive/ideological fixity, and holding certain subject positions and stereotypes in place. Whereas critical discourse analysis has traditionally focused on constructive and rhetorical features of texts, an analysis of libidinal economy would draw our attention to *jouissance* – modes of libidinal intensity – and to the involved psychical operations (such as, in Fanon's analysis of negrophobia, projection, displacement, denial, reversal, condensation, etc.). This is an approach that is aware of both the psychical dimensions of racism and of the broader social formations (ideological fantasies, "collective"/symbolic forms of the unconscious) that in turn consolidate socio-political structures. Not only then do we have a tentative answer to a question posed in the previous chapter – that of how to link discursive and more psychoanalytically-oriented accounts of racism – we are also better able to grasp the complexity and libidinal intensity of the "sociogenic unconscious".

FIGURE 3.4 'Read Fanon' street art (London).

Notes

1 While there was much psychoanalytic terminology in the previous chapter, the analytical prioritization of the abject as a force of repulsion and its associated "zones of uninhabitability" is arguably distinct from a more psychoanalytic focus on ideas related to the unconscious, fantasy, desire, and sexuality, which of course come strongly to the fore in Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks*.

2 There are many examples of this emerging tradition (Beshara, 2019; Gaztambide, 2024; Guerra, Hook & Lima, 2023; Rahmat, 2025; Mendelsohn, 2021; Mendelsohn & Boni, 2023; Richards, 2021, Sheehi & Sheehi, 2022; Swartz, 2019). One of the most promising developments in respect of how a decolonial psychoanalysis is being advanced in the Global South comes in the form of the Ubuntu Collective, an international network of researchers, clinicians, and activists based in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Led by Andréa Guerra and colleagues at the University of Minais Gerais, the Collective has organized a series of colloquia on the theme of "Decolonization and Psychoanalysis". For an example of published work stemming from the work of the Collective, see *A Psicanálise em Elipse Decolonial* (Guerra & Lima, 2021) and *Psicanálise e Herança Colonial* (Guerra, Hook, & Lima, 2023). The work of the Ubuntu Collective is worth mentioning not only because of the caliber of scholarship and activism it produces but also because such contributions of the Global South will doubtless prove to define in respect of the future of decolonial psychoanalysis. South Africa is another site where decolonial forms of psychoanalysis are being debated (Barnard-Naude, 2023, 2024; Maldonado-Torres, Fanon Mendès France, Suffla, Seedat & Ratele, 2021) and, despite struggles and tensions, developed and practiced (Lau, 2021; Long, 2016, 2017; Swartz, 2019; Truscott, 2013) is being debated and developed. Another crucial global hub of decolonial psychoanalysis is the Pantin Collective in Paris (https://www.collectifdepantin.org/blog/actualites) (see Mendelsohn and Boni's (2023) *Psychanalyse du reste du monde* for an example of the research stemming from this group).

3 I have in mind here Fanon's remark in *Black Skin White Masks*, offered in respect of psychoanalytic theorization:

> I have been struck by the disparity between the corresponding schemas and the reality that the [Black man] presents. It has led me progressively to the conclusion that there is a *dialectical substitution* when one goes from the psychology of the white man to that of the Black (1952/1986, pp. 116).

4 I am referring here to the conceptualizations of Fanon (1952/1986), Coetzee (1991) and Gilroy (2004), respectively.

5 Citing Fanon's above remarks suggests that a tension exists between his earlier psycho-existential and psychoanalytic theorizations of racism in *Black Skin, White Masks*, and the socio-economic and structural focus of "Racism and culture". This tension, which has come to be tirelessly – and often counterproductively – replayed by different groupings of Fanon scholars, is something I address below. Suffice for now to say I, like others (Hall, 1996; House, 2005; Macey, 2000b; Marriott, 2018), do not subscribe to the view that a rift separates the psychological concerns of Fanon's earlier writings (principally *Black Skin, White Masks*) from the "properly revolutionary" later work (*A Dying Colonialism*, *Toward the African Revolution*, *The Wretched of the Earth*).

6 It is hard not to be reminded in this respect of Edward Said's (1978) use of Gramsci's famous injunction at the beginning of *Orientalism*. Given that one is a product of historical processes which have "deposited in you an infinity of traces without leaving an inventory", the "starting-point of critical elaboration" for Gramsci is "the consciousness of what one really is", a task which necessitates that one "compile … an inventory" of such unregistered influences (Gramsci, cited in Said, 1978, p. 25).

7 It is worth mentioning – despite the obvious importance of Fanon's critiques – that not all readers have been so quick to dismiss Mannoni. Chassler (2007) for example, insists upon the importance of reading Mannoni's (1950/1990) *Prospero and Caliban* before *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952/1986), as a crucial antecedent that

sets in place many of the foundations for the latter, more famous text (see also Khanna, 2003; McCulloch, 1983). Chassler maintains that Mannoni presents a far more cogent examination of European colonization than either Fanon or many of his subsequent followers. *Prospero and Caliban*, he claims, needs to be read principally *as a critique of European colonialism*:

> Mannoni's … premise is that colonization can be … understood as a process of psychological projection – that it is the European, who goes forth seeking compensation for the "inferiority complex" that accompanies the struggle of the autonomous individual typical of modern European society and who then "projects" his desires and fears on the people he colonizes.
>
> (p. 71)

8 Frederick Jameson (2003) offers valuable commentary in this respect, referring particularly to Ortigues and Ortigues's (1968) *Oedipe africain*, a text that repudiates formulaic impositions of the Oedipus complex in African contexts. Ortigues and Ortigues make the case for horizontal, intra-generational, or "collateral rivalries" spread across communal groupings as opposed to the vertical, inter-generational, and intra-familial forms of rivalry so emphasized in settings of Western modernity. Approaches of this sort, says Jameson, have "the merit of freeing the psychoanalytic model from its dependency on the classical Western family, with its ideology of individualism and its categories of the subject and … of the character" (p. 10).

9 Two edited collections are particularly worth highlighting here. Christopher Lane's (1998a) *The Psychoanalysis of Race*, a benchmark of sorts in the field, includes contributions from Tim Dean, David Marriott, James Penney, Jacqueline Rose, Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks, Slavoj Žižek and others. *Lacan and Race: Racism, Identity, and Psychoanalytic Theory* (George & Hook, 2021), following almost 25 years later, is in many ways a successor to the former, including chapters by Gautam Basu Thakur, Sheila Cavanagh, Sheldon George, Patricia Gherovici, Michelle Stephens, Todd McGowan amongst others).

10 When Gates (1999) offered his well-known account of "Critical Fanonism", which highlighted the historical fault lines that had developed in how Fanon had been taken up in fields such as cultural studies, sociology, and postcolonial theory, this difference loomed large. While a series of issues had split the field – the role of textually-focussed modes of poststructuralism, the predominance of postcolonial theory, the scholarly influence of figures such as Gayatari Spivak and Homi Bhabha in particular – perhaps the single most divisive issue concerned how Fanon's anti-colonial, political and indeed revolutionary agenda was potentially being eclipsed by a psychoanalytic (and typically Lacanian) attention to the psychical dynamics of the colonial encounter. The charge was frequently made that an over-emphasis on the psychical/psychological in Fanon's work had led to the factors of economic and structural exploitation slipping from view; hence the accusation leveled at Bhabha's treatment of Fanon, namely that Fanon was being read "as a black Lacan in the making" (Macey, 2000a, p. 28). While there may be some merit in such remonstrations, the critical dilemma at hand is surely less about which side one takes in a Fanon studies turf war (a prioritization of socio-economic as opposed to psychological/psychoanalytic factors) than about how these two irreducible strands of a properly Fanonian decolonial approach might be most effectively combined?

11 While Macey (2000b) is clearly pushing back against interpretations of Fanon which in his view, over-prioritize psychoanalysis, his account of Fanon's clinical perspective is worth briefly considering:

> [t]he diagnosis and treatment of mental illness in the colonial situation must begin, not with metapsychology, but with a situation and the lived experience

> it induces. Whereas psychoanalysis speaks of fantasy, Fanon consistently speaks of trauma and explains mental illness as a form of social alienation.
>
> (p. 194)

Apt as these comments are in highlighting the factor of concrete lived experience for Fanon, Macey seems here to assume that "lived experience" is a category that exists wholly outside the ambit of unconscious dynamics. Macey thus implies that what counts as trauma can be established in a factual or empirical manner without reference to the psychical makeup or subjective history of the individual, a claim that holds little water psychoanalytically (for critical reflections on Macey in this respect see Marriott (2018)). In his biography of Fanon, Macey (2000a) takes up the issue as follows:

> Fanon consistently described mental illness as a form of alienation from the world and as a loss of existential freedom. As a therapist, his goal was to "consciousnessize"… his patient's conflicts… Fanon always stresses the sociogenic aspects of symptomatology: symptoms did not, in his view, originate from the person's unconscious or repressed sexual impulses as much as from a distorted dialectic between the ego and the world and from the internalization of social conflict
>
> (p. 320)

This is a helpful description insofar as it brings to the fore the irreducible existential-phenomenological and humanist dimension of Fanon's psychology, yet in Macey's insistence to exclude a psychoanalytic perspective from Fanon's clinical vocabulary he fails to note a contradiction in his own account. Why would one need to "consciousnessize" conflicts if the unconscious played no part in the scenario he describes?

12 For one of the most informative and theoretically accomplished accounts of the conceptual and political challenges underlying Fanon's conceptualization of sociogeny, see Marriott's (2018) engagement with the work Sylvia Wynter in the ninth chapter of *Whither Fanon?*

13 Chiesa (2007) likewise draws attention to the idea of a trans-individual unconscious that can be collapsed neither into intra-subjectivity (the unconscious as "the Other within me") nor into inter-subjectivity (the unconscious as the Other subject):

> The idea of an "individual" unconscious – on which both intra- and intersubjective accounts of the unconscious are based makes sense only if the Symbolic [the realm of law, language, socio-symbolic functioning] is associated with the Imaginary [the ego domain of idealizing identifications and rivalry]. More importantly, we should emphasize … [the] unconscious understood as the universal, nonindividuated *Other of language* (which … relies on the linguistic notion of the signifier and the structural laws that govern it) … [W]hat appears – from an imaginary standpoint – to be the "individual" unconscious of one given subject cannot be dissociated from language as such. It is in this sense that the unconscious is at times said to lie "outside" the subject.
>
> (pp. 43–44)

14 Such a non-psychological perspective on the unconscious eschews notions of depth, internality and hidden primal/repressed contents. The unconscious in this respect is, to quote the well-known Lacanian dictum, "the discourse of the Other", a designation emphasizing that the unconscious must always be approached in relation to the trans-subjective social order of the big Other. Seshadri-Crooks (2000) makes this argument to great effect: the unconscious must not be grasped as a subterranean space opposed to consciousness, as an inchoate, swirling mass of repressed contents, but rather as *the subjective locus of the Other or the*

symbolic order. The Lacanian unconscious, as she insists (2000) is not a primal, archaic function; it is not a set of unorganized drives or repressed contents; it should not be viewed as a collection of an individual's prohibited memories and desires. This is an *external* rather than internal unconsciousness, activated in the operations and performances of language, in the subject's grappling with place – relative to the Other's desire – in the symbolic order.

15 Evans (1996) puts it this way: "the big Other is inscribed in the order of the symbolic…. The big Other *is* the symbolic as it is particularized for each subject" (p. 133), or as we might add, for each *ideological community*. While the concept takes on many forms in Lacanian theory, we can view it as a locus of supposed truth and authority, a point of appeal which represents "the rules of the game" of a given social order. Such a point of reference, weighted with socio-historically specific ideals of Law and History, takes on a transferential importance in the life of subjects. In the chapter that follows I expound upon the transferential dimension involved, elaborating, more specifically, on the implications of a "fantasmatic transaction" between the subject and the Other for racist ideology.

16 To stress the "social" or symbolic nature of the Lacanian unconscious is not to imply that this unconscious has no singular or unique instantiation in the lives of individual subjects. It most certainly does exist in such a singular capacity, but the repressed desire of the unconscious is always derived in some way from the desire of the big Other (hence Lacan's insistence that "desire is always the desire of the Other") from which the psychical life of the subject is never extricated. The same point can be made via a discussion of fantasy – the focus of Chapter 4. The singularity of an individual's psychical reality must be read as the outcome of a type of fantasmatic transaction with the symbolic Other, whereby the subject, is constantly preoccupied with the task of fathoming his or her place in the social order, via the *Che vuoi*? formula repetitively posed to the big Other of the trans-subjective social structure ("*What do you want*? ", "What am I to you?") (Lacan, 1979).

17 For a fascinating Lacanian account of how "Fanon's concept of the colonial unconscious" can be factored into a sociological account of post-apartheid racism, see Hudson's (2013) paper "The state and the colonial unconscious".

18 Another approach to accommodating the multiple intersections (or "indivisibility") of societal and psychological factors can be found in Bhabha's (2004) highlighting Fanon's reference to the "psycho-affective". While Bhabha has often been critiqued for focusing more on the psychical dimensions and complications of colonial subjugation than upon its material and political realities, there is cause to revisit this key Fanonian term. We can thus use Fanon's notion of the "psycho-affective" to complicate the routine separation of psychical and societal and to refute the charge typically leveled at psychoanalytic social critique, namely, that of imposing ahistorical models of psychological functioning. Fanon's exploration of the psycho-affective does not prescribe a hierarchy of relations between material reality and mental or corporeal experience, insists Bhabha (2004). "[H]is reflections on violence, decolonization, national consciousness, and humanism" are insistently framed "in terms of the psycho-affective realm – the body, dreams, psychic inversions, and displacements, phantasmatic political identifications" (Bhabha, 2004, p. xix). Furthermore:

> A psycho-affective relation or response has the semblance of universality and timelessness because it involves the emotions, the imagination or psychic life, but it is only ever mobilized into social meaning and historical effect through an embodied and embedded action, an engagement with (or resistance to) a given reality … a performance of agency in the present tense.
>
> (p. xix)

19 See for example Fanon's case studies included in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Chamberlain's (forthcoming) Fanonian-Lacanian discussion of colonialism and reactionary psychosis and Richards' (2025) discussion of Lacan, Fanon and psychosis.

20 Fanon (1961/1990) also offers a less well-known psychoanalytically informed characterization of the pathology of colonialism in *The Wretched of the Earth*:

> At the level of the unconscious … colonialism was not seeking to be perceived as a sweet, kind-hearted mother who protects her child from a hostile environment, but rather a mother who constantly prevents her … perverse child from committing suicide or giving free rein to its malevolent instincts.
>
> (p. 149)

21 For all the failings of Mannoni's analytical approach, this factor of "twinned psychopathologies", i.e. paired types of destabilization or modes of lack and anxiety affecting colonizer and colonized, can be said to stem from his theorizations of the colonial situation. Indeed, the colonized's unexpected ability to trouble the colonizer is given a theoretical elaboration in Mannoni's (1950/1990) notion of the Prospero complex. The men who seek out a vocation as colonists, Mannoni declares, are drawn both by the promise of subjective superiority and by a *covert sense of identification* with the subject community. The "colonial vocation" is hence characterized by radical ambivalence. While the colonialist feels longing and admiration for an imagined lost freedom that the colonized seemingly still enjoys, the colonialist nonetheless feels contempt for their primitive conditions of existence (Mannoni, 1950/1990).

22 While much decolonial scholarship either ignores or rigorously critiques the foregoing era of postcolonial theory, I would argue that if we are to provide an adequate historical contextualization for a decolonial *Fanonian* psychoanalysis, we need to take such contributions into account.

23 Gates (1999) does a nice job of summarizing these facets of Bhabha's thinking. Bhabha, he remarks, objects to Edward Said's vision of Orientalism in which power and discourse are possessed entirely by the colonizer. Bhabha's readings "are designed to breach the disjunction Said's [approach] may appear to preserve, that is, between the discourse of the colonized and that of the colonizer" (p. 254). For Bhabha, Gates continues, the fact of colonial ambivalence means that the differentiation of colonizer and colonized is, in effect, put into question. The boundaries of such colonial positionality are different from both the Hegelian master/slave dialectic and from the phenomenological projection of otherness, Gates insists. While there is something intellectually appealing about this – and we should bear in mind that Fanon himself both draws upon and then critiques and/or adapts to reject a variety of existing conceptual models when analyzing facets of colonial racism – it leaves one with the sense that Bhabha neglects almost completely the violence of colonial dispossession. Hence JanMohamed's (1986) retort to Bhabha (cited by Gates (1999)): "Fanon's definition of the conqueror/native relation as a 'Manichean' struggle … is not a fanciful metaphoric caricature but an accurate representation" – an assertion that surely must be affirmed – "What [moreover] does it mean… to imply, as Bhabha does that the native, whose entire economy and culture are destroyed, is somehow in possession of colonial power?" (1986, p. 11).

24 Bhabha's attention to psychic uncertainty and ambivalence has proved highly controversial in the literature on Fanon, particularly so for critics who assert the priority of dialectical forms of analysis (Bernasconi, 2020; Sekyi-Otu, 1996) – and, more significantly yet, *a dialectical conceptualization of change* – as opposed to a concentration on the psychical dynamics of ambivalence. Gibson (1996) for

example insists "Fanon is a dialectical thinker… his dialectic has far more in common with Hegel's concept of negativity than is generally thought" (p. 274), before going on to insist that Fanon's theorizations of revolutionary change in *A Dying Colonialism* explicitly highlight the role of dialectical change as opposed to ambivalent stuckness. In Fanon's words, what is in question in such transformations is "not a back and forth", not "an ambivalence but rather…a dialectical progression" (1965, p. 73). For Gibson then Fanon's insistence upon dialectical progression "is antithetical to… Bhabha's privileging of ambivalence" (p. 281). We could say then, taking up Gibson's position, that Bhabha's initial diagnosis of the colonial situation is – despite his terminological borrowings from Fanon – essentially a misdiagnosis, or, at best, one which is premature. This being said, I would venture that ultimately this need not be a zero-sum game; attention to the dialectical dimension of Fanon's analysis (particularly pronounced in *The Wretched of the Earth*) need not wholly invalidate the earlier consideration of colonial forms of narcissism and ambivalence (as evident in *Black Skin White Masks*). One way of making this argument is to consider how Fanon's later work focused on how what he had effectively diagnosed in *Black Skin White Masks* ("a massive psychoexistential complex" (1952/1986, p. 5) might be overcome. The crucial point here from a decolonial standpoint is surely that revolutionary activity needs to aim precisely at metabolizing the fixation/petrification arising from conditions of colonial ambivalence; radical mutations in consciousness, to draw on Gibson's (2003a, 2024) description, aim at breaking up the back-and-forth pattern of ambivalence, rupturing it via the momentum of dialectic forms of progression.

25 Gibson (2003b) has been particularly vocal in this respect.

26 Hudis (2015) makes an important adjacent point in this respect. What many postcolonial theorists do to Fanon, he laments, is "to focus on his analysis of the overdetermining power of alienation and repression…while passing over his humanism. Fanon's sensitivity to cultural difference and contingency is celebrated, while his advocacy of a "New Humanism" is often treated as… naïve" (p. 64). The lesson here is twofold: a properly *decolonial* as opposed to postcolonial reading of Fanon needs to highlight and develop possibilities for transformation, firstly, and a humanistic frame of reference (or an appeal to something akin to Fanon's new humanism) is a crucial ally in such a process. A decolonial psychology perspective thus needs to develop adequate resources of resistance and change which entail a humanistic component (as in the case of Chapter 1's revisiting of Black Consciousness).

27 Admittedly, Bhabha here is speaking about literature, about the receptions of English literature in colonial settings, rather than the face-to-face encounters between colonizer and colonized, yet this sampling of Bhabha's (1994) text is nonetheless indicative of the type of analysis he offers.

28 In this respect it is worth recalling Fanon's (1952/1986) insistence elsewhere that "All forms of exploitation are identical because all of them are applied against the same 'object': 'man'", and the subsequent declaration "Colonial racism is no different from any other racism" (p. 65). Interestingly, while Fanon's point here is obviously to be considered in the context of his important critique of Mannoni, there is good reason to suggest, to the contrary, that anti-Black racism and colonial racism are in certain crucial respects different from other forms of racism. This is, indeed, a key assertion of afro-pessimism (Wilderson, 2020).

29 For this reason, one is tempted to side with Fanon against Macey's (1999) charge of a "quite extraordinary misreading of Freud" (p. 12). While there are other Freudian texts that Fanon might have cited to grapple with dilemmas of neurosis, the point is that Fanon's is a *vernacular* psychoanalysis; his is a reinterpretative, inventive recourse to Freud.

30 From a Freudian view a psychoneurosis does not develop merely from the objective presence of danger; psychical elaboration of such a presence is also crucial. This is not the case in Freud's oft-neglected notion of the "actual neuroses".

31 This returns us to some of the issues discussed in the previous chapter. The pervasiveness of racism as a cultural schema that typically *over-rides* or seemingly *"overdetermines" individual experience* is part of what made Fanon's work so important to discourse theorists who saw in it a prefiguring of the idea of racism as an encompassing discursive or epistemic formation. Crucially, however, the problems of racism that Fanon discusses cannot be reduced to the issue of representation; we need to take seriously not only the affective intensity of racism but also the contagious associative spread of what Fanon dubs the "Negro myth". Affective force and symbolic density come together here, as we shall see, in substantiating what we might call the brute "social objectivity" of colonial racism. To speak of "social objectivity" here is to suggest – a point discussed at length in the subsequent chapter – that the symbolic Other of the social order is itself racist.

32 If this sounds like an exaggerated claim, consider Pogrund's (1990) remarks on the apartheid government's Population Registration Act:

> every South African was put into a defined racial pigeonhole. Each person was given an identity number…[designating] a racial classification. [This classification was] intended to, and did, affect life from birth to death, with every detail specified and fixed by law: in which hospital you could be born; in which suburb you could live; which house you could buy; which farm you could buy; which nursery school and school you could attend and which university or technical college; which cinemas and theatres you could go to; which buses, train compartments and taxis you could travel in; which bus stops, railways pedestrian bridges and platforms you could use; which beach you could swim from; which municipal swimming pool you could use; from which library you could get books; which park bench you could sit on; in which restaurants you could eat; which lavatories you could use; in which hotels you could stay; whether you were allowed to enter a municipal hall; which jobs you could hold and how much you could earn; how much liquor you could buy and possess; who you could legally have sex with and who you could marry; how easily you could get a passport for travel abroad; how much your old age pension, disability or war veteran's pension would be; which sportsfields you could use, and the quality of the facilities available to you; whether you could vote; which hospital you could go to if you fell ill and which doctors and nurses would attend to you; which hearse you would be carried in when you died; and in which graveyard you would be buried
>
> (Pogrund, 1990, p. 79)

33 Interestingly, there is another psychoanalytic perspective we could mention here. While we should not understate the psychical impact of racism as it becomes constantly re-entrenched via the "symbolic automatism" of the colonial situation, we might also ask: Why the necessity of such obsessional repetitions of racial difference in all facets of everyday life? Does this incessant dramaturgy alert us to the fact that the symbolic Other of the colonial symbolic might not actually believe what is so relentlessly insisted upon? Does this constant reminder of racial difference tacitly indicate an anxiety pertaining to white apartheid mentality, namely, that racial and racist differences are not natural, essential, and that, furthermore, without such constant signposting, they might be neglected or eventually come to be seen as less than necessary or significant?

34 This is also a hallmark of a Lacanian approach: rather than focusing only on the affective dimension of a given psychical phenomenon, phobia, anxiety, etc., one

should always refer it back to the symbolic operations – such as displacement – which would enable us to tie it to a defensive procedure of the unconscious.

35 It is worthwhile pointing out that sexual anxiety within the colony is not limited to the contexts we have hitherto focused on (Fanon's Martinique, apartheid South Africa). Consider for example the eruption of sexual anxiety amongst the Raj in late nineteenth-century India, as described by Ferguson (2002). This imaginary of sexual danger followed a decree, the "White Mutiny" of the 1883 Ilbert Bill declaring that Indian judges would henceforth be eligible to try English women. Ferguson cites examples of outraged responses to this legislative change that, time after time, centered on the phobic reaction that Indian magistrates would take delight in bullying, raping, and even torturing, English women. "Such language", he claims, "laid bare one of the older complexes of the Victorian Empire: its sexual anxiety" (p. 201). It was no coincidence, he continues, "that the plots of the Raj's best-known novels – Forster's *A Passage to India* and Scott's *The Jewel in the Crown* – begin with an alleged sexual assault by an Indian man against an English woman" (p. 201). Although Ferguson suggests that one tentative answer to this upsurge of colonial anxiety might be that of miscegenation – "the awareness that the supposedly clear line between 'White and Black' was in reality quite blurred" (p. 201) – he leaves open the question of why the threat of Indian judges trying English women should so routinely be linked to the danger of *sexual contact*.

36 Having noted that Fanon's account of racism in *Black Skin White Masks* is differently psychoanalytic than Kristeva's (1982) notion of abjection – due to the importance he accords to sexuality – it is likewise important to highlight that the sexuality Fanon discusses entails the dimension of abjection. Hence his description of the sexual revulsion of the negrophobic subject.

37 In *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon (1961/1990) provides an additional example of this phallic anxiety. Speaking of European anti-Muslim sentiment in Algeria at the time of the war of independence, Fanon claims that Europeans' belief in the Muslim's apparent proclivity for violence revealed a hidden admiration.

38 One is reminded of the paranoid logic that Freud (1911) discerns in the Schreber case. He traces the transformations underpinning the progression from the (unacceptable) affective proposition "*I (a man) love him (a man)*" to its opposite "*I do not* love *him* – *I* hate *him*!" This proposition is itself subject to further transformation, that of projection: "He hates (*persecutes*) me, *which will justify me in hating him*". Freud's conclusions – which he claims hold for all types of paranoid delusions – are worth reiterating:

> The mechanism of symptom-formation in paranoia requires that internal-perceptions – feelings – shall be replaced by external perceptions … the impelling unconscious feeling makes its appearance as though it were the consequence of external perception: "I do not *love* him – I hate him, because HE PERSECUTES ME".
>
> (p. 63)

Freud insists further that "Observation leaves room for no doubt that the persecutor is someone who was once loved" (p. 63). The pertinence of his analysis to our current concerns is clear, particularly so given that he is interested in a form of erotic love (homosexual – or, we might add, *inter-racial* desire), which, within prevailing social norms, is unacceptable to the subject.

39 For Khanna, "Mannoni sought to understand the peculiarly new psychical conflicts that emerged from the colonial situation… he saw colonialism giving rise to a unique configuration of desire, conflict, and, most importantly, dependency" (p. 149). These ideas would of course prove influential for Fanon. "Mannoni's emphasis", she continues, "was on encounter rather than clear-cut difference"

(p. 149). She goes on to note an important facet of Mannoni's account that is sometimes ignored given Fanon's strident critique of his analysis in *The Psychology of Colonialism*: Mannoni overturned "a basic assumption of both anticolonial politics and colonial psychology: the idea that the colonized felt inferior to the colonials. His assertion that it was colonizers who felt inferior was controversial even among intellectuals of decolonization" (Khanna, 2003, p. 149). It is worthwhile noting that later in his life, Mannoni himself reflected upon the shortcomings of his analysis in *The Psychology of Colonialism* (Boni, 2017).

40 In the course of a careful explication of Mannoni's idea of the "colonial situation", Boni (2017) breathes new life into this useful and multifaceted concept, which, in the aftermath of Fanon's fiery critique of *The Psychology of Colonization*, is all too easily neglected. Consider the following:

> the category of "situation", … [which alludes] to Sartre's existentialist thought… allows Mannoni to condense a number of perspectives into one: the Hegelian Master-Slave dialectic, the intersubjective logic of phenomenology (in which the subject is constituted, so to speak, on the basis of objects) and Sartrean logic (according to which nothing is conceivable except "in situation", that is to say… in the context of the experience of a choice that determines it in a concrete circumstance). Each of these theoretical ingredients is present in the way Mannoni reworks the notion of situation for application to the colonial condition. Given its spatializing dimension, this notion also refers – as in Sartre – to the idea of a scene in the theatrical sense, and to a conception of subjectivity as a role within a situation that remains open to a series of possible inversions
>
> (Boni, 2017, p. 154)

There are many features of this approach which are worth highlighting, such as the idea of the "theatrical sense" of such a situation, which emphasizes what I have referred to above as the dramaturgical/symbolic dimension of colonial racism. On this basis of the above overview, one can appreciate why Khanna (2003) invokes the idea. The concept of the colonial situation, says Boni, "is not reducible to a univocal relation between dominated and dominator" but implies a more complex mode "of intersubjectivity" (2017, p. 153).

41 Khanna's approach thus bears the imprint of Bhabha's (2004) postcolonial theory which, as we have seen, foregrounds the "anxious and ambivalent" nature of the "settler-native boundary" (p. 166) and "the hybridity of colonial authority" which, by virtue of the paranoid threat it elicits, "breaks down the symmetry and duality of self/other" (p. 165)). Despite the shortcomings of Bhabha's approach – which I have commented on above – it is worth staying a little longer with Khanna's argument, on the basis of which we can develop some rather different insights.

42 Even this memorable characterization is qualified in Fanon's reference to a "dual narcissism", which implies, there is something – a "structure [behind]…the complex", "this morbid body" (p. 3) – which plays the part of a mediating factor.

43 In an earlier endnote I drew attention to how Gibson (1996) prioritizes dialectical as opposed to ambivalent processes in how Fanon thinks of the colonial domain. This point is again pertinent here insofar as it pertains to how Manichean relations and the stasis of ambivalence that they lead to – i.e. type of colonial-petrification – need to be upended, ruptured, broken apart via dialectical forms of action (that is, via praxis). To return then to Fanon's important qualification regards revolutionary decolonial activity in *A Dying Colonialism*: "What is involved… is not…ambivalence, but rather a mutation, a radical change….not a back-and-forth moment but a dialectical progression" (1970, p. 73).

44 It is also, incidentally, for this reason, that the Lacanian unconscious, which is symbolic in nature for Lacan (at least in the sense of being "structured like a language"), is described as trans-individual, i.e. what is "individual" about it is always the result of signifiers and functions that are symbolic, i.e. social, "trans-individual" in nature.

45 The argument made there, via the work of Seshadri-Crooks (2000), was that to approach racism within the dialectics of inter-subjectivity, as an opposition between a "self" and an "other" loses sight of the symbolic frame that underlies such imaginary activities and holds them in place. To neglect the role of the symbolic as a type of "third term" means to lose the opportunity of adequately "interrogating the structure and constitution of the subject of race" (Seshadri-Crooks, 2000, p. 31), foreclosing thus not only how subjects become raced, but – as we might add – how they might in some conceivable future become "unraced".

46 See also, in this respect, the discussion of extra-psychological racism in Chapter 2, i.e. the idea that I need not be "psychologically" racist, that is, in any way personally invested in or consciously identified with racist values, *for there nonetheless to be racism of which I am a part*.

47 I am experimenting here with the difference between the existential and Lacanian resonances of "the Other", i.e. "other" at the level of inter-subjectivity as opposed to "Other" at the trans-subjective level of as symbolic Other standing in for the symbolic order as such.

48 This is a refrain that occurs twice in *Black Skin White Masks*, firstly via a citation from Aimé Césaire in the context of the wretched conditions of the colonized ("*The only thing in the world that's worth the effort of starting: The end of the world, By God!*" (cited by Fanon, p. 71)), and secondly in the form of an angry retort to Mannoni, which stresses the role of the environment and society in inducing colonial instances of neurosis/psychic instability. It is in this latter instance that Fanon bemoans "school inspectors and government functionaries" (p. 168). The repetition of the phrase highlights both the atrocious material conditions of the colonial world that should be destroyed, and the symbolic/cultural infrastructure of white racist values that hold this world in place and perpetuate it.

49 To avoid confusion, this fictional/social/symbolic (big) Other of Whiteness would need to be distinguished from the bottom line of Fanon's diagram, which refers rather to the imaginary (little) other, i.e. that of another ego, such that his diagram could be rendered as such:

$$\frac{\text{White (symbolic) Other}}{\text{Ego different from the (imaginary) other}}$$

50 This indivisibility, is also, I think, what Mbembe (2001) aims at with his comments on the violence of the colony as insinuating itself "into the economy, domestic life, language, culture, consciousness", pursuing the colonized "even in sleep and dream" (pp. 174–175).

51 We might take as a case in point here Sekyi-Otu's (1996) argument, made, significantly, as a retort to Bhabha's (1986) insistence that there is a "privileging of the psychical dimension" (p. xii) in Fanon's work:

> Fanon ultimately gives psychoanalytic language no more and no less than an analogical or metaphoric function, as distinct from a foundational or etiological one, in accounting for the condition of the colonized
>
> (p. 8)

While we might contest this, or at least remark, by way of reply, that psychoanalysis can prove an important ally to decolonial thinking even if only in an analogical

or metaphoric capacity, what seems perhaps more pertinent is what Sekyi-Out goes on to say:

> To the Lacanian dictum that the unconscious is structured like a language, Fanon might have responded that the dreams of the colonized may well be structured like the language of neurosis but that they are occasioned by the language of political experience
>
> (p. 9)

Although this remark seems intended to relegate psychoanalysis to a strictly secondary role in Fanon's analysis of *Black Skin White Masks*, it actually hits the mark: such dreams are both, simultaneously and inextricably, structured like a language (deserving thus, like the unconscious, a psychoanalytic engagement) and occasioned by the language of colonial experience.

52 The account offered in the previous chapter in respect of how the "extra-discursive" is not outside the symbolic likewise makes this point.

53 This is a mode of critical analysis that has been developed elsewhere with respect to racism, even if not explicitly named as such. Take for example Gilroy's (2004) analysis of post-imperial melancholia, and, to some extent, in Coetzee's (1991) analysis of apartheid ideology discussed in the following chapter.

54 For an example of a libidinal economy of anti-Blackness that draws both upon the literature of Afro-pessimism and upon Lacanian concepts, see Hook (2022a).

55 This, as we have seen, is one of the potential limitations of the theory of abjection if not adequately grounded in the symbolic, if not utilized in a way which prioritizes sociogenetic parameters determining what counts as abject.

56 In thinking about fantasy in relation to logic (albeit logic in the form of "affective prelogic") Fanon anticipates Lacan's theorization of the logic of fantasy as explored in his (1966–1967) Seminar XIV: "The Logic of Phantasy".

57 In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon makes this point in emphatic terms. For the colonist, the "native" represents not merely an absence of values, but "the negation of values…absolute evil", he is:

> A corrosive element, destroying everything within his reach, a corrupting element, distorting everything which involves aesthetics or morals, an agent of malevolent powers, an unconscious and incurable instrument of blind forces… Values are, in fact, irreversible poisoned and infected as soon as they come into contact with the colonized. The customs of the colonized, their traditions, their myths… are the very mark of… innate depravity
>
> (1961/1990, pp. 6–7)

58 Take for example Paul Gilroy's (2004) account of "post-imperial melancholia", a conceptualization which, in retrospect, is all the more perspicacious and prescient, given that he formulated it more than a decade before the events of Brexit. For Gilroy, formations of British cultural identity conceal a central tension, a push–pull relation between amnesia and aggrandizement. This dynamic is the result of a juxtaposition between two powerful yet contrary cultural imperatives. There is, firstly, a largely unconfronted colonial past, an entire epoch of imperial dominance that remains repressed from popular cultural memory. For Gilroy, this is a pathological orientation, born out of the inability to face up to – let alone mourn – "the profound changes in circumstances and moods that followed the end of the Empire and consequent loss of imperial prestige" (p. 98). Running counter to this cultural trend is another: the incessant imperative of rejuvenating a vision of British greatness. Such an outlook "dictates that conflicts against Hitler and Hitlerism remain imaginatively close while Britain's many wars of colonisation … are to be actively forgotten" (2004, p. 8). These two contrary imperatives should

be read dynamically. The regretted fact of Britain's "lost greatness" must be linked to a narcissistic self-image that has been wounded and that now needs to be retrieved. What results is an anxious regime of affirming images that require constant reiteration. The resulting cultural conjunction exhibits, for Gilroy (2004), all the patterns of neurotic blockage (undulations of ambivalence, repetitive assertions of certain historical events alongside the denial and elision of others). The popular imaginary of Britishness is thus underwritten by a "postimperial melancholia", a libidinal formation denoting a lopsided form of cultural identity that selectively idealizes aspects of its past while effectively erasing others. Hence Gilroy's characterization of a defensive cultural attitude of Britishness, and his conclusion that outward commitments to non-racism can occur alongside exclusionist rhetoric, just as apparent compassion for immigrants and asylum-seekers can exist alongside xenophobic loathing.

4

DESIRE, FANTASY, AND APARTHEID IDEOLOGY

> *[I recall how in school] blackness was tirelessly re-evoked in a setting where there were no black pupils … The fascination with … blackness was often evoked in bodily kinds of ways, in the repetitive games and gestures of adolescents.… [T]he oddity of the situation was that there were no black pupils, and very few black people present at the school. … Why then the repetitive ongoing need to invoke blackness …?*
>
> (Apartheid Archive Project, N53)

> What is South Africa? A boiler into which thirteen million blacks are clubbed and penned in by two and a half million whites. If the poor whites hate the [Blacks], it is not, [or, *not only*] as M. Mannoni would have us believe, because "racialism is the work of petty officials, small traders, and colonials…" …No, it is because the structure of South Africa is a racist structure.
>
> (Fanon, 1952/1986, p. 64)

> I wonder sometimes whether…government functionaries are aware of the role they play in the colonies.
>
> (Fanon, 1952/1986, p. 168)

At around the same time that J.M. Coetzee was conducting the preliminary research for what is perhaps his most explicitly psychoanalytic essay, "The mind of apartheid: Geoffrey Cronjé" (1991) – a text which must surely also number among his most significant pieces of critical social analysis – the Slovene philosopher Slavoj Žižek (1989, 1991a, 1991b) was developing a

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series of pathbreaking analyses utilizing Lacanian psychoanalysis to further the project of ideology critique. While neither of these two intellectuals cites the associated scholarly work of the other in any significant way, their attempts at theorizing ideology share an important common denominator: a creative yet critically astute application of psychoanalysis. Their efforts converge interestingly also inasmuch as they both take aim at orthodoxies pertaining to structuralist notions of ideology or – to state things somewhat more broadly – at approaches to ideology that treat the facts of psychical life (desire, fantasy, libidinal investment, operations of repression, and displacement) as surplus to analytical requirements. What I set out to do here is to explore how various of Coetzee's insights in "The mind of apartheid" both converge with, and are profitably extended by, an unexpected ally: Lacanian psychoanalysis, and Lacanian ideology critique more particularly.

Part of the originality of Coetzee's approach was that he enlisted Freudian psychoanalysis – which, given its overtly psychological nature, would have been something of a *persona non grata* for structuralist approaches to ideology of the time – so as to move beyond the impasses within predominant trends of apartheid historiography. While a scholar like I.D. Macrone (1937) had interestingly drawn on psychoanalysis to conceptualize facets of pre-apartheid colonial racism in South Africa, Coetzee attained a new level of complexity in thinking through conundrums of agency, desire, and ideology apparent in the apartheid period. Two of the conceptual dilemmas posed by apartheid for Coetzee are worth highlighting:

1 How to account for the contagion-like spread of apartheid thinking, for the fact that apartheid seemed to operate like a colonizing virus, attaining the status and persistence of a veritable *weltanschauung*?
2 What held the madness of the racist system in place; how, despite the evidence of both its egregious injustices and its manifest irrationality, did apartheid maintain such a profound grip on the white population of the country? Or, emphasizing a different facet of the same inquiry: what psychological gains or libidinal rewards sustained the white commitment to such a blatantly oppressive and dehumanizing political order?

The key term in the challenge Coetzee issues to existing theories of apartheid ideology is desire. Racism, and apartheid racism, in particular, he avers, must be approached through the prism of this psychoanalytic concept. As counter-intuitive as such a move might seem – desire at first glance seems at odds with two commonplace assumptions regarding racism, namely, that racism is driven by hate and/or indifference, by antagonism or alternatively, by a worldview that accords the racial other no significance whatsoever – it turns out to pay dividends by pointing to what, aside from the gains of material wealth, might play a compelling role in apartheid thinking.

Apartheid ideology, as a formation of desire, was, Coetzee argues, sustained by libidinal or subjective gains that went beyond the factor of material rewards. Intriguingly, Coetzee eventually puts forward the notion that apartheid involved a type of ideological and fantasmatic exchange, a *phantasmatic transaction*, in other words, a type of interchange of desire as effected between apartheid as an ideological belief system and the subjects of that ideology. This fascinating insight, unfortunately, less than fully developed in view of its conceptual and political ramifications, occurs toward the end of Coetzee's essay, and it begs both further elaboration and conceptual refinement. Several key notions from within the domain of Lacanian theory – desire, the (big) Other, fantasy, and especially the dimensions of alienation and separation in the subject–Other relation – prove helpful in this regard.

This then, is my twofold agenda in what follows: firstly, to provide an overview of the difficulties and impasses that Coetzee highlights in (then) existing theories of apartheid ideology, and secondly, to refer to a series of crucial concepts in Lacanian psychoanalysis so as to offer a response to several of the key paradoxes we find in the study of apartheid ideology. This work of theory conjunction helps us respond to a number of questions which seem to particularly vex Coetzee. Firstly, where should we seek to locate agency in respect of apartheid ideology, primarily on the side of the subject or primarily on the side of structure? Secondly, if the answer to this question is less than forthcoming or clear-cut, if, indeed, we need to appeal both to subject and structure by way of response, then how are we to understand the *relation between* these two factors in the workings of apartheid ideology? These questions require a two-tiered response, and as a result, this chapter is composed of two parts. In the first of these, I foreground and supplement Coetzee's argument according to which the psychoanalytic notion of desire is central to understanding the spread and hold of apartheid ideology. In the second part, I offer a Lacanian understanding of ideological agency which accounts for the relation between subject and structure (or, in Lacanian terms, subject and the big Other) and does so by thinking apartheid – and here a clear debt to Coetzee must be acknowledged – as a transaction of desire between the two.

Racism as desire

The libidinal economy of apartheid

In the opening pages of "The mind of apartheid", Coetzee muses that madness has its place in history, or differently put, there are periods of history which are themselves effectively mad, that operate – as we might rephrase this idea – within a libidinal economy (of, for example, obsessionality, hysteria, phobia, psychosis, perversion, etc.) that is itself pathological. While intuitively this makes

sense, such a contention ran counter to prevailing (structuralist/Marxist) historiographies of apartheid which relied upon rationalist models of the functioning of ideological systems. A blind spot is thus revealed: such models of ideology cannot fundamentally grasp how ideologies are *themselves* subject to systematic forms of irrationality. In his reading of a wide cross-section of texts by one of the prime ideologues of apartheid – those of Geoffrey Cronjé – Coetzee wastes little time in identifying what he takes to be the libidinal economy in question – that of obsessional neurosis. We see evidence of this economy both in Cronjé's writings – which Coetzee provides a near-exhaustive analysis of – and also in the multiple structural features of apartheid as a system of governance, principally perhaps in its segregations and divisions, its "mad" preoccupations with categorization and differentiation, but also in its displacements, substitutions, and deferrals of desire:

> apartheid deserves to have restored to it the chapter that has been all too smoothly glossed over, censored out, removed: a denial and displacement and reprojection of desire re-enacted in further huge displaced projects of displacement: the redrawing of the maps of cities, the division of the countryside, the removal and resettling of populations.
>
> *(1991, p. 18)*

Coetzee here yields a Freudian vocabulary of neurotic defenses to great effect, applying it to the (ir)rationality of apartheid governmentality, alleging, furthermore, that types of (structuralist/Marxist) analysis that have foreclosed such facets of desire from consideration in conceptualizing the spread and hold of apartheid mentality are themselves guilty of a type of (analytical/intellectual/subjective) repression.

Coetzee is to be commended for opposing the idea that apartheid was at base a distorted form of rationality that, in the final analysis, was motivated most fundamentally by material gain. The analytic strategy he takes up is, by his own admission, riskier, more speculative, and yet critically it proves instructive. Exploring the apartheid ideology as a mode of desire, entailing all the varying operations of desire (of displacement, substitution, denial, projection, etc.), enables a different vantage point on the pliability, the resourcefulness, and the insistence of apartheid thinking. Given then that obsessional neurosis, as subjective structure or as libidinal economy more broadly understood, is essentially a way of managing desire, it helps here to say a little bit more about how we can think of racism and racist ideology *as desire*.

Coetzee's concern with racism *as* desire is not, of course, unprecedented. In respect of the colonial context, as we have seen in Chapter 3, Fanon (1952/1986) had famously asked "What does the black man want?" (p. 1) prior to posing a sobering conclusion, "To be white" (p. 3). Coetzee's analysis

can be read as a variation on this question, indeed, as posing the query: "What does the white South African want?" A simple reversal of Fanon's conclusion ("To be black") will obviously not suffice here, however, and not only because the white man or woman does not typically countenance the desire to be Black, but because their desire takes on the form of actively affirmed negative: they desire *not* to desire what is Black. We are perhaps moving too quickly, here however; let us pause for a while to consider how Fanon's analysis might help us best grasp what is most original in Coetzee's thinking.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon (1952/1986) advanced that for the white man, "the [black man]…become[s] the mainstay of his preoccupations and desires" (p. 131). More than just this, the phobic object of Blackness is not only a source of fascination and attraction but of prurient, desiring, or erotic interest, or, as Fanon (1952/1986) more accurately puts it, of "sexual revulsion" (p. 120). The psychoanalytic sophistication of this account–discussed at length in Chapter 3 – very quickly outstrips the limited psychological vocabulary that is often introduced by way of understanding racism (notions of "othering", dehumanization, objectification, the ignorance of hate, lack of recognition, etc.). Racism, for Fanon, as we have seen, entails a libidinal factor; it involves an interweaving of envy and abjection, a combination of desire and objectification, the roles of both fantasy and denigration. What is the implication of this for Coetzee? Well, thinking of racism as desire brings to the fore a series of different analytical insights and perspectives, as we will go on to see. It foregrounds the historical adaptability and resilience of racism, for a start, and it enables us to better grasp the saturating spread and seemingly unshakable hold of apartheid mentality – referring here to two of the conceptual challenges I noted at the outset – that proved so characteristic of apartheid ideology as a whole. To prioritize the notion of desire in conceptualizing racism is also to highlight that the various primary process phenomena offered by Freud in the analysis of dreams (most notably condensation, displacement, and symbolization) are very much part of the operating system of racism. As Stuart Hall (1992) remarked, racism works "rather more like Freud's dreamwork than anything else… racism expresses itself through displacement, through denial, through the capacity to say [or represent] two contradictory things at the same time" (p. 15).

We will turn shortly to Coetzee's more fine-grained analysis of the particularities of racism as desired within Cronjé's texts, but let me briefly note a number of Lacanian implications of understanding racism in this way. Desire, in Lacanian psychoanalysis, is unending. Desire proper is not that which I can attain and secure; it is instead the process of constantly striving for whatever it is that lies *beyond* what I do secure. Desire, in other words, evades satisfaction or domestication. Hence the well-known characterization of desire as metonymic: it spreads in a series of "infectious" linkages from one object to another without ever being reducible to an object. To risk a short digression

here: Blackness, for the white racist subject, is itself metonymic inasmuch as it is this troubling feature which migrates across a seemingly endless series of features which come to stand in for what, given a particular historical moment or situation, is taken to be most problematic about the Black other. Coetzee himself, in fact, highlights the role of metonymy in racism – without, admittedly, connecting it explicitly to the Lacanian notion of desire – when he discusses "the sanitation syndrome" in apartheid (that is, public health administration concerns that came to link Blackness and infectiousness):

> In a first sequence of metonymic displacements we see the germ of infection suspected of being harboured by the black carrier being displaced on to his breath, his sputum, his mucus, and then onto the black as black who houses that breath, that spittle, that mucus. From being a carrier who is black, the suspect becomes the black who is a carrier; from being the vehicle of infection blackness itself becomes the infection.
>
> *(p. 26)*

This factor of desire, that it operates metonymically, along the lines of a generative and never-ending series of extended associations, will prove a useful tool in conceptualizing facets of racism. It provides a useful means of conceptualizing the spread of racist sentiment and thinking, especially given the "contagious" yet never fully secured or domesticated ideological "object" that Blackness is understood to be in racist ideologies.

As troubling here is the fact that desire, in its unfulfillable aspect, is effectively without end for Lacanian psychoanalysis. This suggests that if racism is itself a type of desire, then this racism knows no final satiation or endpoint, and is endlessly self-perpetuating, potentially infinite. It is worth recalling here that for Lacan, in his Hegelian conceptualization of language, the symbol – or, more specifically, the signifier – manifests "as the killing of the thing, and this death results in the endless perpetuation of the subject's desire" (Lacan, 2006, p. 262). Desire thus persists, or, to use the preferred Lacanian term, *insists*, existing always in the register of that which, by definition, is unending. Having provided a psychoanalytic perspective on the first of Coetzee's two major conundrums in respect of apartheid racism – the virus-like spread of apartheid thinking – we can now offer a speculative avenue on the second conundrum, namely the seemingly endless tenacity, the unrelenting grip, of apartheid as *weltanschauung*.

This theoretical perspective on racism as desire remains, however, all too abstract; thus far we have provided little more than a sketch in broad strokes. We need to turn now to the fine-grain empirical analysis that Coetzee offers us by means of his study of Cronjé's texts. Why though, we might ask, the texts of Geoffrey Cronjé? There are surely multiple other textual sources Coetzee could have consulted in grappling with apartheid ideology via a

literary lens. Coetzee's choice, it turns out, is particularly apt. Not only was Cronjé a prominent Afrikaner intellectual, but he was also an important apartheid ideologue whose multiple texts on the sociology of segregation (Cronjé, 1945, 1946, 1948, 1958) provided a robust defense and justification for apartheid.

Racism in obsessional form

Coetzee provides himself remarkably adept in applying the technical concepts of Freudian psychoanalysis. After reviewing all of Cronjé's major texts, and considering their key concerns and anxieties in light of a Freudian diagnostic system, Coetzee concludes that Cronjé is best understood within the rubric of obsessional neurosis. Obsessional neurosis is a diagnostic structure that needs to be understood in terms of desire, indeed, as precisely a series of strategies for managing desire. Furthermore, obsessional neurosis, certainly within Lacanian theory, is always to be understood in terms of a structural relation to the desire of the Other. The caveat that necessarily follows here is that this desire – like the suppressed wishes underlying the production of dreams – is oblique, displaced, denied; it is, in short, *repressed*. The desire of the obsessional, in other words, is not directly manifest but is rather – again like the wishes propelling the ciphered contents of dreams – only detected via the distortions, negations, and operations of disguise that cloak its presence. Cronjé's desire, more specifically, is enacted in relations of repudiation and avoidance; it is a desire expressed in instances of *counter*-desire. In Cronjé, says Coetzee, "we encounter a continual hide-and-seek with desire" (p. 11). Cronjé's desire is apparent in his inability "to face the desire of black for white or white for black"; it "manifests itself in motions of evasion…revulsion and denial" (Coetzee, p. 11). These conspicuous defenses against desire, provide the evidence of that something is being repressed. This desire shines through in another distorted (negativized) way, in both Cronjé's obsessional concerns with the perils of mixing, and in his anxieties concerning interracial living conditions (*deurmekaarwonery*) and racial blood-mixing (*rassemengelmoes*). Even a rudimentary understanding of Freud allows us to appreciate how phobias and anxieties conceal repressed relations of desire. Coetzee concurs:

> What Cronjé does not address in his text, what he repudiates at every turn, is a desire for mixture. Around mixture his mind obsessively turns…mixture in its endlessly attractive and endlessly repulsive allure… It is mixture and the desire for mixture that is the secret enemy of Geoffrey Cronjé and the knights of apartheid, the baffling force that must be thwarted, imprisoned, shut away.
>
> *(Coetzee, 1991, p. 3)*

What is exemplified here is not only the obsessional's famous trait of ambivalence but also how this ambivalence is realized in relation to *jouissance*, that is, to the "substance" of intense libidinal enjoyment, i.e. that which is at once obscene, disgusting, taboo and yet also immensely erotically appealing, precisely by virtue of its transgressive qualities. The obsessional's list of prohibitions ultimately functions to keep just such a traumatic – yet nonetheless alluring – *jouissance* at bay.

Cronjé's texts, never of course (consciously) raise the issue of the desires that played their part in the formation of apartheid ideology. And yet the topic of desire is raised, albeit in a curiously inverted manner. The question of desire that does explicitly emerge is one that addresses whites – we might paraphrase Fanon here by way of anticipation, asking, "What does the white man want?" – yet does so in a curious form. Why do those whites who are willing to co-exist in proximity with other races *not* feel a *more* forceful desire to separate themselves from these others? Cronjé thus queries the absence of "*apartheidsgevoel*" (the feeling or drive for racial separation), the lack, differently put, of what he takes to be an inherent tendency to segregation within "*die Afrikanervolk*". There is, as Coetzee stresses, something telling about the fact that Cronjé's question takes the form of a double negative, "why *not* the desire *not to*?" A psychoanalytic reading here is helpful, as we pay witness to how Cronjé's words imply the reverse of their intended meaning, suggesting in fact – contrary to Cronjé's wishes – that *there may in fact be none of natural impulse toward racial segregation that Cronjé presumes to exist*. Another example of this – of Cronjé's writing speaking against his consciously asserted ideological agenda – is to be found in his insistence that as the distance between whites and non-whites diminishes, so "Unconsciously a gradual process of feeling equal (*gelykvoeling*)…begins to take place", such a process is the result of "a condition of being exposed to blood-mixing" (Cronjé, 1945, p. 58). Coetzee remarks that such an assertion can be read as an argument that interracial tensions can be, in fact, *reduced* by social mixing. Once again then, the unintended implications of Cronjé's words speak louder than his presumed message; he seems here, despite himself, to convey the basic underlying principle of what social psychologists call the contact hypothesis, the idea, in short, that prolonged exposure to other groups reduces both inter-group conflict and perceptions of difference.

The motif of absent desire becomes evident also when Cronjé turns his attention to the void that he takes to exist at the place where Afrikaner men might desire Black women. This is an absence in which Coetzee intuits something else: the presence of a disguised allure and attraction: "the true force here", he remarks, "is desire, and its counterforce, the denial of desire" (1991, p. 18). Desire may also be said to lie at the heart of the problem that apartheid endeavors to solve, namely the need voiced by Cronjé to avoid the degenerative slide into a "mishmash-race" (*mengelmoesras*) (Cronjé, 1948,

p. 27). The Afrikaner ideologue thus foregrounds the need to consistently separate "the white man from the daily view of the black man", so as to "ensure that an essentially unattainable white culture and lifestyle do not become the object of his envious desire" (Coetzee, p. 15). Coetzee subversively paraphrases Cronjé's rationale here, interjecting his own suspicions of Cronjé's reasoning: segregation will "remove the black man (the black woman?) from the view of the white man and thus ensure that he (she?) does not become the object of white desire" (p. 15). The challenge of apartheid governance for Coetzee, then, is less the control of dissent than the control of desire. Cronjé's version of apartheid, Coetzee suggests, develops precisely as *a counterattack upon desire*. We can bring this section to a close by citing Coetzee, who in an inspired turn of phrase, insists: apartheid was overdetermined, "It did indeed flower out of self-interest and greed, but it also flowered out of desire and out the hatred of desire" (1991, p. 2).

Between subject and structure: an exchange of desire

The absent subject of a "self-writing" system

I have stressed above that for Coetzee apartheid ideology cannot be understood merely as the outcome of rational (although, admittedly, iniquitous, dehumanizing, oppressive) processes, and that the goals of economic domination, greed, wealth, etc., while surely pertinent, are likewise, in and of themselves, unable to fully explain the fantasmatic and libidinal gains that apartheid offered its white beneficiaries. I have highlighted the role that desire plays for Coetzee in apartheid ideology – something that existing historiographies of apartheid had, in Coetzee's view, failed to properly register.

Building on the foregoing arguments regarding the role of desire in apartheid, we now turn our attention to questions concerning agency with respect to apartheid ideology. Coetzee is clearly frustrated with the accounts he consults (Dubow, 1989; Du Toit, 1975; Legassick, 1974; Moodie, 1975; Thompson, 1985). One issue that seems abundantly evident to Coetzee concerns the question of how to think of the role of the subject within structuralist accounts which unfailing accord structure itself an agentic role. Indeed, prevailing theories of apartheid ideology, for Coetzee constantly "elide… the question of the subject" (p. 28).

A related point: while theorists suggest that the analysis of ideology requires a deciphering, an unmasking, a deconstruction, then who was it who might be situated as the author of apartheid, as the agent responsible for the initial ciphering, masking, or construction? Was apartheid a self-authoring system which "cipher[s] itself, mask[s] itself, unconsciously" (p. 28)? Or, by contrast, was apartheid ideology "the creation of a group of

people … who appropriate … inchoate popular notions, put them together in a pseudo-system … and use them to further [their] interests?" (p. 28). Neither of these suggestions seems a viable answer, especially given that the second still begs the question of who or what authored the material that apartheid ideologues reassembled. Questions of the authorship of apartheid, or indeed, of a kind of prime ideological agency, seem to require a different elaboration of agency to what Coetzee finds in prevailing structuralist/Marxist theories of ideology. The question – which seems to haunt Coetzee – is repeated: is apartheid a "free-floating, parasitic idea-system running the minds of its hosts" (p. 30) or is it a *weltanschauung* devised and consciously elaborated by apartheid ideologues? If, presumably, it is neither one nor the other, then how to understand the relation between these two? How are we to grasp, in other words, the distinctive mode of the articulation joining apartheid ideology as the mode of subjectivity and apartheid ideology as societal/discursive/structural force? If this were not enough, Coetzee also puts forward an additional dilemma, that of accounting for the ostensibly extra-ideological move – indeed, the paradoxical type of agency – that would be required if apartheid ideologues were able to author the ideology that somehow nonetheless exercised a determining influence upon them.

Coetzee settles upon an interesting prospective idea as he works his way through this puzzling terrain: the notion that perhaps apartheid ideologues are themselves caught up in the spell of the ideology that they are conjuring. This idea, that apartheid might be viewed as a type of ideological virus that attaches itself to a society of subjects, certain of whom, for a limited time, act as its privileged points of articulation, cannot simply be dismissed. This is certainly true from a Lacanian standpoint, which sees the subject as precisely *the subject of the signifier* and which views the symbolic domain as itself possessed of a formidable (over)determining form of agency – hence the idea of the agency (or instance/*insistence*) of the letter, to site one of Lacan's most well-known texts (Lacan, 2006).

We could say that Lacanian theory has precisely the concept that Coetzee is reaching for in respect of his questions concerning the authorship of apartheid and in respect of the apparent "supra-agency" such an authorship would imply. The Lacanian notion of the big Other is the trans-subjective point of appeal grounding what counts as truth, authority, and law in a given society. It provides the "rules of the game" that enable and coordinate everyday ideological interactions and presumptions. It seems as such the best conceptual tool for the task at hand. What better conceptualization can we find of the supra-agency that Coetzee's critique invokes? And yet, while this concept will prove crucial in what follows, it seems apparent that there is something questionable about positing the big Other as primarily responsible for apartheid ideology. While there are many good reasons why we could argue that the

big Other – as the delegated locus of law and authority, as the transference-inducing "subject supposed to know", as a collectivity of societal norms and historical values, etc. – was necessary for apartheid to function as an ideology, this in itself is not enough. To assert that the big Other of apartheid was racist – a point that seems difficult to refute – is potentially to imply that this is where the lion's share of responsibility for apartheid should lie; it suggests, in other words, that the subjective accountability of the white beneficiaries of apartheid might be negligible. It helps to remind ourselves here that one of the concerns motivating Coetzee's critique of structuralist accounts of ideology was precisely their inability to grasp the *subjective investments* of individuals in the ideologies they have become most invested in. Such forms of structural agency seem curiously bloodless; theorizations of ideology as structure seem, accordingly, unable to account for the affective/libidinal intensity of ideological beliefs; irrationality and passionate investment alike are elided in such accounts of ideology.

If we agree, as Coetzee urges us to, that the psychical subject (of desire, fantasy, libidinal investment, etc.) must be factored into the analysis of ideology, and if we likewise concede that structure (or, in Lacanian terms, the domain of the big Other) is likewise necessary, then the question we are confronted with is how to understand the relation between these two crucial analytical components. How, then, should we approach this interchange, this transaction between subjective and structural levels of ideology? We need to conceptualize how subjects – inclusive of apartheid ideologues such as Cronjé himself – are active as agents in an authorial process which nonetheless at times effectively overdetermines them. This process of exchange, whereby the subject is both spoken (or overdetermined) by the Other of ideology while nonetheless proving able to voice their own fantasmatic articulations of that ideology (such as Cronjé's varying accounts and ideals of apartheid ideology), was not something that Coetzee believed had received a satisfactory explanation.

We now have a better sense of the complexity required in addressing questions of ideological agency and authorship, especially in situations where the subject and Other are not clearly divisible. This challenge, of understanding the subject-structure (or subject–Other) relation, especially in cases where agency appears to flow in both such directions, indicates the need to consider the role of the unconscious, and the unconscious more precisely in the Lacanian sense of *the subjective locus of the Other*. This is what a Lacanian perspective brings to these dilemmas of ideology: an attention to how the agency of the Other exerts a force on the subject even as the agency of the subject exerts its force on the Other. This is relation, furthermore, which, psychoanalytically, necessarily entails an unconscious dimension, and that dimension, in turn, involves the subject's (transferential) positing of *what it is the Other wants*.

Racist fantasy as transaction of desire

Desire, for Lacan, is always mediated by the desire of others, and, more significantly yet, by the big Other of the symbolic order. This theme of mediated desire – Lacan here having repurposed the Hegelian idea that "desire is always the desire of the Other" – proves crucial in what follows. It will shed light upon both the role of desire within ideology and upon the complex relation between the subject and the (big) Other as it pertains to questions of agency within apartheid. How then to begin? Simply by noting that this formula is relational in form and by stressing, accordingly, that desire is never static and is never the exclusive property of either subject or Other. Desire, by contrast, must rather be seen as always in flux, in a state of constant movement and negotiation, and, as importantly, as the outcome of a type of co-ownership.

We can relate this theme of mediated desire – which is always, for Lacan, sustained and developed by means of fantasy – to an elementary question: "What do you, the Other, want of me?" From an explanatory standpoint, it proves helpful here, despite Lacan's stated antipathy toward developmental psychology, to make illustrative reference to the context of early childhood. The infant's variation on the above question, "What does mOther want?", provides an important means of negotiating the uncertainties of their world. While the child's responses to what (*they imagine*) the mother desires may take on an endless variety of forms – from subjective enactments, seductive behaviors, differing modes of being, to the making of identifications – what is important is that this very process *sets the child's own desire in motion*. If the Other's desire is akin to a lack, a space without content, then it is at the same time, an unoccupied area in which the young subject can begin to move about it, a place to explore and investigate. The quandary of the mOther's desire, we can say, is hystericizing for the child, in the particular Lacanian sense of subjectivizing them, igniting their own desire.

We have thus a circuit of sorts joining the unconscious guesswork of presumption (what the Other is imagined to want) and intense wishfulness (what I should be in order to fulfill mOther). More than this, we have the rudiments of the psychical process of fantasy, namely: the ever-repeated cyclical procedure of generating hypotheses about the Other's desire, which are followed by wishful assertions of subjectivity which eventually fade and then need to be followed by new hypotheses regarding the Other's desire.

It perhaps helps here to underscore a series of aligned Lacanian ideas. Firstly, the question of the Other's desire can never be settled with a sense of finality for the simple reason that this desire is less than clear – if not in some sense enigmatic – to the Other themselves. This opacity, furthermore, does not result in the fantasmatic hypothesis-generating process grinding to a halt. Quite the opposite: being confronted with an enigma is, in terms of the

unconscious, a hugely generative situation. This is itself a principle of how the transference is induced and maintained in the Lacanian clinic: the more difficult it is for a subject to come up with a working hypothesis regarding how they should situate themselves regarding an enigmatic Other, the more the unconscious will be put to work.

While the child invariably runs through a variety of existential hypotheses regarding the desire of the mother (particularly apropos what type of object they might be for her), their eventual realization is that they will never be able to encapsulate within themselves all of what this Other is imagined to desire. This is unsurprising, because it is, ultimately, an impossible goal. To realize this is also to experience one's self as in some way insufficient, as, indeed, lacking. Two distinctive areas of lack are now apparent in the relational field that is constituted between the subject, the Other, and the various imagined figures of desire that the Other appears to be drawn to. The subject's desire is not, thus, in other words, alone: the mother/Other is also perceived as incomplete, as wanting something, as lacking. What we are presented with then is a relay joining these two lacks, two locations of desire (desire being, for the most part, coterminous with lack for Lacan). These two sites of lack are connected, and a momentum of sorts is generated between them. What is essential to the subject, namely, their subjectivizing desire, is set in motion by the questions posed to the Other ("What do you, the Other, want of me?", "What must I be for you?"), a situation which results in two barred (lacking) positions being joined in a type of imagined dialogue of lacks. The fact that no final, consummate answer is ever supplied by the Other means that this exchange is ongoing and unending. This is the circuit of questioning and imagined response that underlies the production of unconscious fantasy. The argument I am advancing here is that it is precisely this exchange between levels (those of the subject and of the Other) that enables us to conceptualize the relation between subjective and structural agency in apartheid ideology.

There are moments within Cronjé's texts where this apparent lack in the big Other seems abundantly present, and where he, as active agent of apartheid ideology, seems called upon to act. Perhaps the most striking example of this is when he laments that

> There are whites, born in this country, who have degenerated to such an extent…that they feel no objection against blood-mixing… The nation-community (*volksgemeenskap*) is entitled to call to dock everyone who acts in conflict its highest interest…the interest of the nation (*volksbelang*) always outweighs person interest (*eiebelang*)".
>
> *(Cronjé's emphasis, cited in Coetzee, p. 10)*

The *volksgemeenskap* (nation-community) as both a crucial point of appeal and collection of cultural (and racial) ideals is Cronjé's (and apartheid's) big

Other. The fact that there is something lacking within this Other is most certainly a call to action, or, in more psychoanalytic terms, a call to be subjectivized through one's lack, a call to actively desire, and more than just this, to feel and be compelled by *the desire for apartheid*. What Coetzee's essay certainly shows is that Cronjé, as apartheid ideology, intuits lack within the *volksgemeenskap*, and attempts to provide what this Other is imagined to desire.[1] Cronjé's many responses to the crisis of a lacking *apartheidsgevoel* and the related problems of miscegenation remain multiple, diverse and, in a significant sense never-ending. An unceasing momentum is produced in this interaction between subject and Other, a recursive movement which abides by no stasis or finalization.

The sublime object of apartheid

There is, however, a further facet of Lacan's account of fantasy as a type of exchange between lacks that we need to introduce. We can do this by way of a qualification. There are two different types – or sites – of lack involved in this interchange between subject and Other. This is perhaps not unexpected, given that the former is a site of subjectivity, whereas the latter is a site of the condensed symbolic order, of the social substance as such personified (precisely in the figure of the transferential big Other). Nonetheless, this factor of disparity, of disproportionality, is important to emphasize because this subject–Other exchange cannot be equated to a form of intersubjectivity, to an interpersonal dialogue. This is not an interchange between equal partners, it is a relation of marked nonequivalence (it is "circular, but….dissymmetrical" Lacan (1979, p. 207), says, noting also that it lacks any balanced sense of reciprocity). A different dialectic of exchange is involved.

To readers of Lacan's early seminars, this qualification will not come as a surprise. In the first decade of his teaching, Lacan constantly reiterates how the subject is unavoidably alienated in the Other, how this Other (as "treasury of signifiers" or repository of ideological values) overdetermines the subject. This is not a view he retracts: "The Other is the locus in which is situated the chain of signifies that governs what might be made…of the subject" (1979, p. 203). Yet, by the eleventh year of his seminar, he needs to supplement this account of the subject's symbolic alienation in and by the Other with an additional process, that of separation. Incidentally, it is for this reason that Lacan can never be categorically characterized as a structuralist, and for this reason also that his conceptualizations of the subject and fantasy in relation to the Other prove such an essential resource for Coetzee's attempts to think beyond the remit of structuralist theories of ideology.

What, then, is the psychic process of separation as understood by Lacan? Verhaeghe (1999, p. 180) is of assistance here, noting that whereas "[a]lienation takes the subject away from being, in the direction of the Other".

Separation, he continues, "is the opposite process", one which "redirects the subject toward its being", thereby "opening a possibility of escape from all-determining alienation, and even a possibility of choice" (p. 180). Not only does Verhaeghe emphasize how closely intertwined the processes of alienation and separation are, he also foregrounds the particular psychical entity – Lacan's *object a* – that is produced by means of separation. He also goes on to offer a few metatheoretical comments on the conceptual breakthrough represented by the notion of separation in Lacan's teaching (hence it is worth quoting him at length):

> Alienation and separation are linked to the twofold lack [in subject and Other] and they install the subject in a never ending pulsating process of appearing and disappearing… The process of alienation conducts the subject towards the signifying chain of the Other… With separation, the effect is the installation of a void between subject and Other, in which *object a* makes its appearance. This void permits the subject and Other to fall apart momentarily. This negativity implies an escape from the all-embracing determinism of the Other and…a limited possibility of choice…separation [is made possible because of] the interaction between the *lack* of the Other and the *lack* of the subject….
>
> *(Verhaeghe, 1999, pp. 181–182, emphasis added)*

This order of separation is made possible precisely because of the interaction between the perceived lack of the Other and the lack of the subject. This, Verhaeghe continues, brings us to questions of ontology and ethics because

> [f]rom the point of view of alienation, the subject has no substance whatsoever: it is…an ever fading effect of the symbolic order, the Other. At this point, Lacanian theory belongs to constructionism and determinism [and, we might add, partly also to structuralism]. Ideas of individuation, self-realization, and subjective autonomy do not belong to this line of thought… Through separation [however] the subject receives an element of choice.
>
> *(Verhaeghe, 1999, pp. 181–182, emphasis added)*

Without getting overly bogged down in Lacanian theory, let us just note that in Lacan's attempt to move beyond the remit of what Verhaeghe refers to as a constructionist, determinist (and, for that matter structuralist) paradigm of explanation, he, Lacan, focuses precisely on the agentic impetus of *lack*, lack as it is radicalized in both subject and Other, or, more accurately, a *coincidence of lacks* which permits for something new, *object a*, the object-cause of desire, to emerge. While this fantasmatic object emerges from a juxtaposition of lacks, which means that the Other is involved (at least by virtue of the fact that the Other's *lack* is crucial), this *object a* is not simply owned or

overdetermined by the Other. We can stress this point by noting that whereas the alienation is governed by the posited *desire* of the Other, in separation the Other has failed in some way, and is perceived not merely as contingently but as *ontologically* lacking. The accent in Lacan's explanation of separation has thus shifted from a sense of agency impelled by imagined desire to a form of agency induced via lack. (This is why Verhaeghe adds: "Separation does not take place through the intervention of the Other and the symbolic; on the contrary, it takes place through…the real" (p. 182)).

This precious *object a* – which Žižek (1989) will go on to dub the sublime object of ideology – is often thought of as a reminder, or more aptly yet, as a remainder, of the subject's imagined unity with the Other. The importance of this conceptualization of separation is by now, perhaps apparent. Doesn't Verhaeghe's description of the "pulsating processes of appearing and disappearing" (p. 180), of the subject's vacillation between "the all-embracing determinism of the Other and…a limited possibility of choice" (p. 181) lend itself to thinking of apartheid ideology? I have in mind particularly the complexities of and ambiguities of agency eluded to above whereby the subject of apartheid (like Cronjé himself) is both spoken (or overdetermined) by the Other of ideology while nonetheless proving able to voice their own fantasmatic articulations of that ideology. We have thus one response to Coetzee's paradox of ideologues who both self-consciously write ideology and yet are nevertheless overwritten or by it.

One implication of this theorization in respect of Cronjé's writings is that his various rationalizations for apartheid, like the many signifiers he deploys to such ends (such as the *Afrikaner volksgemeenskap* (nation-community) as it is threatened by *deurmekaarwonery* (senseless racially-undivided living conditions) and *rasse-mengelmoes* (mishmashes of race) see Coetzee, 1991) are not simply determined in a top-down fashion but are, in a significant sense, *his own*, offerings of his own lack. It seems apparent, moreover, that a sublime ideological fantasy *object a* does emerge in Cronjé's writings. Coetzee's analysis makes it apparent that Cronjé offers a relentless generation of signifiers by way of response to the Other's perceived lack. The most salient example is Cronjé's constant compaction of nouns with the prefix *Afrikaner*: *Afrikanerbloed* (Afrikaner-blood), *Afrikanermoeder* (Afrikaner-mother), *Afrikanergesin* (Afrikaner-family), *Afrikanerplaas* (Afrikaner-farm). Cronjé's linguistic inventiveness is occasioned – as we have seen – by concerns with the racial degeneracy of those whites who "feel no objection to blood-mixing" (1945, p. 47). This grammatical operation, says Coetzee (1991)

> carries a heavy ideological freight, both conscious and unconscious… Unconsciously it is a morphological figure of introversion, exclusion, enclosure, embrace. It looks forward to a time when there will literally thousands of nouns starting *Afrikaner*.
>
> *(p. 7)*

This, I suggest, is the sublime object of apartheid ideology, the signifier *Afrikanereie*. This is the unique, non-replaceable quality of the *Afrikanervolk*, the libidinal treasure that sustains desire; it is that which, to resort to a Lacanian turn of phrase, is in them more than them.

The role of the subject

We need to clear up a few outstanding issues before progressing any further. The first of these concerns the degree to which we can consider the Other as the overriding agent responsible for the production of apartheid ideology. With the above conceptualizations in place, we can now assert that this symbolic Other – Cronjé's name for which is the *Afrikanervolk* or *volksgemeenskap* – is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the maintenance and spread of apartheid. It helps to bear in mind here that the symbolic Other in Lacanian theory is not simply an aggregated set of social facts or sedimented historical values; the Other is a focus of transference, and it embodies the role of the "subject supposed to know" (Lacan, 1979, p. 267) and is always thus populated with, and supported by, the stuff of subjective presumptions. The apartheid Other cannot be separated from the subjects who passionately invested in and replicated the values it was thought to embody, subjects who remain thoroughly implicated in the ideological worldview thus consolidated.

In much the same way, the virus-like spread of ideological values that seems, at first glance, to reproduce itself as a type of self-writing system that bypasses the authorial role of subjects, now appears, in retrospect, less "extra-subjective" than we may have initially presumed. Inasmuch as subjectivity entails a process akin to Lacan's notion of separation, where the subject's lack overlaps with, and offers an original response to the Other's lack in the form of the fantasized *object a* – then (discursive, material, and economic) ideological structures always receive the supplementation of subjective fantasy. We can agree then that there was a type of "supra-agency" underlying apartheid ideology, we can agree, moreover, that this ideological system did overdetermine those subjects alienated by the chain of signifiers that it set in motion, and yet we can assert these facts without accepting that this Other wholly exhausted the subjectivity or fantasmatic productions of these subjects. To put this in Coetzee's own terms: apartheid *was* a parasitic idea system that, in some capacity, ran the minds of its hosts (as occurred via the Other in the process of alienation), yet apartheid was also an idea system constructed by ideologues insofar as it was a fantasmatic response to this Other's perceived lack (in the process of separation).

In respect of Cronjé's writings, it seems evident that he was a faithful mouthpiece of apartheid ideology, providing, as he did, revitalized expressions of commitments and principles of Afrikaner Nationalism that preceded him. He was, in this way, a conduit for the desire of the Other. And yet his obsessional concerns and formulations, his anxieties, particularly regarding

the perceived dangers of miscegenation, informed the big Other, supplied apartheid ideology with a series of master signifiers (*volksgemeenskap, apartheidsgevoel*, and of course, *Afrikanereie*, etc.) which would come to inform its legislative program of segregation. The exchange of lacks facilitated in the process of separation does not thus proceed in a one-way or top-down direction. It may lack balance, and it may indeed be "dissymmetrical" in Lacan's eyes, but it is also circular: the subject's fantasizing plays its part in the making of the Other.

This gives us the opportunity to clarify a point about fantasy in Lacanian theory. Fantasy is both that which forms the intimate core of the subject – that which is genuinely irreducible about them – despite that it never exists apart from, beyond the remit of the Other. We understand this better by recalling that fantasy is always an answer that is posed – and posed in the form of the subject's own lack – in response to the Other (or more accurately, to the Other's *lack*). In this sense, the subject's fantasy remains always within the field of the Other, even though it is, nevertheless, absolutely the invention of the subject, *their own* contribution in response to the lack of the Other. As Renata Salecl (1998) insists, that fantasy is of the subject; it cannot be located solely within the ambit of the Other; the Other is incapable of producing fantasies. At the risk of repetition then, we can insist once more: fantasy is to be understood as the invention of the subject, a fact which reiterates again that this subject does possess agency even given the overdetermining alienating force of ideology.

A similar point can be made apropos *jouissance*, which, like fantasy itself, cannot be reduced to the domain of the Other. For psychoanalysis, a given subject remains always responsible for their *jouissance*. So, while the idea of alienation as discussed above stresses how the subject is in many respects the result of the Other (the product of a chain of signifiers, the effect of the symbolic order, etc.), their *jouissance* is something that they themselves remain fully accountable for. Apartheid's white subjects need answer, in other words, for their *enjoyment of* the symbolic systems of racism that they found themselves located within and that they nonetheless played their part in perpetuating. Whether this means the *jouissance* of overt forms of racist passions (the pleasures of hating, of aggressive/sadistic dominance, etc.), the more subtle narcissistic enjoyments of the constant reiteration of white cultural superiority, or a host of other instantiations of racist *jouissance* facilitated by the system, white beneficiaries cannot blame the Other for their libidinal investments in, and enjoyments of, apartheid.

Phantasmatic rewards

With the above set of Lacanian conceptualizations in place, let us now add an additional articulation to Coetzee's (1991) above-cited insight that the

persistence of apartheid may have been in part due to the "phantasmatic rewards" (29) that the ideology of apartheid offered the white electorate. Coetzee, to recall, advanced that the possibility of various intangible psychical rewards – or, we might add, *modes of enjoyment* – exceeded the terms of rational material or financial gain. His idea then – not, sadly, fully developed or theorized – was that the ideological rewards of apartheid were of a very different nature, indeed, that they might take the form of a fantasmatic possession. Coetzee himself seems less than convinced with the types of "phantasmatic reward" (29) that he posits, such as the idea of racial purity and the prohibition against interracial sex.

What is hopefully by now clear is that what Coetzee refers to as a "phantasmatic reward" is none other than what Lacanian psychoanalysis would identify as the libidinal treasure of *object a*. We have observed how, for Lacanian social theory, the result of separation – the overlapping of the lacks of the subject and the Other – is the *object a* of ideology (Žižek's "sublime object"). In Cronjé's work, this libidinal treasure has a number of names (*Afrikanervolk*, *Boereras*, *Afrikanereie*). Each such incarnation of *object a* stimulates the passions, indeed, the *jouissance*, of Cronjé's own particularized fantasmatic investments in apartheid ideology, and, as history shows us, that of other Afrikaners and whites as well.

The insidious spread and tenacious hold of apartheid ideology had much to do, psychoanalytically speaking, with the exchange of desire between apartheid's white subjects and the apartheid Other, an exchange which of course produced a series of such fantasmatic objects. It is in this way – Coetzee does not offer a conceptual account of how this might occur – that the image of the pure *Boereras* is burnished, the political ideals of the *Afrikanervolk* are affirmed, and the unchallenged value of the *object a* of *Afrikanereie* is elevated to the status of the sublime.

The attempted safeguarding of such fantasmatic possessions is the unstated agenda of Cronjé's writing, virtually all of which is concerned with securing the mythical identity of the *Afrikanervolk*. For Cronjé, this precious libidinal object is worth more than any material expense incurred in its protection. What becomes evident in light of this reading is the degree to which such fantasmatic properties – such modes of enjoyment – are typically posed alongside equally fantasmatic threats. Cronjé's *object a* of the *Afrikanereie* always coincides with threats to its purity, such as those of *uitbastering* (bastardization) and *mengelmoes-samelewing* (the degenerative effects of races living among one another). Intriguingly, Cronjé seems just as innovative in conceptualizing threats to the *Afrikanervolk* as in developing signifiers for the *object a* of the apartheid Other. This is less than surprising when we bear in mind the Lacanian notion that fantasy both conceals and yet also pictures castration. Castration, in short, needs both to be veiled, shielded, obscured, and yet also staged, and reiterated, so its threat remains salient. We have then

a continual to-and-fro, a call-and-response routine whereby the consoling images of fantasy respond to the picturing of a nightmarish vision, and a nightmarish vision needs to be constantly reiterated so as to necessitate and highlight the assurances of the consolatory fantasy. This idea has received a very effective reformulation in terms of Lacanian social theory, as Žižek (1997) puts it, in respect of political ideology: fantasy is always divided between its stabilizing aspect (Fantasy 1), and its vexing, undermining, threatening aspect, which forms the basis of exaggerated threats (Fantasy 2).

How might this idea be applied to Cronjé's work, and apartheid ideology more generally? Well, in Cronjé's writings, these two interlocking components seem quite clear. We have both the uniqueness and treasured racial superiority of the Afrikaner race, firstly (Fantasy 1) and also the frightening threat of racial degeneration, as pictured in a catastrophic future where the descendants of Afrikaners will no longer be white (Fantasy 2). The internal dynamism of these two components is worth reiterating. The consolatory dimension of fantasy, fantasy in its utopian guise, as we might put it, is there to entrench the reassuring – even if ultimately unrealistic, impossible – idealized image of a racially pure, homogenous *Afrikanervolk* existing in a pristine unmixed state within Southern Africa. The castrating dimension of the fantasy supplies the emotionally fraught, aggrieving scenario, one which threatens the cherished image of white racial purity, announcing as it does the nightmarish inevitability of a degenerative slide into a "mishmash-race" (*mengelmoesras*) of racial blood-mixing.

Racism's transactions of fantasy

In the foregoing discussion, I have tried both to trace and expand upon several of the most vital and original critical conceptualizations advanced by Coetzee (1991) in his landmark essay, "The mind of apartheid". Doing this by means of Lacanian psychoanalysis – and the conjoined notions of alienation and separation, more precisely – has opened up a number of distinctive vantage points on the hold of "mad" ideological systems and on the fantasmatic ties that bind subjects to such ideologies. It also provides a way of thinking about the complicated patterns of authorship, agency, and causality involved.

Utilizing Coetzee's account in tandem with Lacanian psychoanalysis has enabled us to foreground the role of desire in the ongoing production of racist ideology. It has helped to stress the need to trace desire – and varying subject – Other *transactions of desire* – in the analysis of racist belief systems. In addition, it has highlighted the role of fantasy in ideological processes. It has pointed to how fantasmatic exchanges between subject and Other play their part in engendering a variety of sublime ideological objects. While there are significant parallels and resonances between Coetzee's musings on

ideology and those advanced by Lacanian social theory (Žižek 1989, 1997), there is one area of Lacanian conceptualization that takes us beyond Coetzee's speculations. I have in mind here Lacan's *object a*, the sublime object of ideology, that libidinal treasure which functions as the *jouissance*-infused cause of desire. I would argue that we cannot, ultimately, comprehend the tenacity of racist ideology without grasping this idea, and the idea that there remains something irreducibly singular about the individualized contents of racist fantasies despite that they take shape within the remit of the Other of this ideological system. Within the terms of the interlinked Lacanian notions of desire, symbolic Other, and fantasy as described above, we have an account that arguably includes both a non-reductive conceptualization of agentic ideological subjectivity and a viable understanding of the ostensibly overdetermining structural influence of the symbolic Other of a given ideology. Both aspects of this account will prove essential if we are to understand how exchanges of desire – fantasmatic transactions – operate within racist ideologies, and within the mind of apartheid more particularly.

Note

1 This factor, of what the apartheid big Other wants, and to which the subject responds with a constructed fantasy object, is also evident in the constant reiteration of a type of inferiorized Blackness described in the Apartheid Archive quote cited in the epigraphs to this chapter.

5

THE "REAL" OF RACIALIZING EMBODIMENT

> *[B]lack men were somehow more hardy: thicker skulls, tougher bodies, more robust … impervious to physical damage … [I have] fragmentary memories of seeing black men in damaged states (stabbed in one instance, hit by a car in another), whereby they seemed to endure despite the attack – almost as if the … assumption was that they were "more body" … stronger … I think the assumption … was that there is less psychological damage experienced by way of the injury … [There was an] inability to identify with the black suffering body.*
>
> (Apartheid Archive Project, N53)

> [The abject is] … an insistence on the subject's necessary relation to death, to animality, and to materiality … the subject's recognition and refusal of its corporeality.
>
> (Gross, 1990a, p. 89)

> The structure of living organisms is … able to reflect complex social forms … [S]ymbolism [is] worked upon the human body … [We must be] prepared to see in the body a symbol of society, and to see the powers and dangers credited to social structure reproduced in small on the human body.
>
> (Douglas, 2002, p. 142)

Troubling embodiments

If one were to identify a shared premise running through most schools of psychoanalysis, it would involve the idea of a division, a barring, a break or sorts within subjectivity; such is the necessary implication of the existence of the

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unconscious: the subject is always in some ways incomplete, or unknowable, unto themselves. Philosophically, and psychoanalytically, there are many ways of exploring the nature of this rupture, this gap, this irreconcilable division. Whether formulated as the dislocation between "the subject of the statement" and "the subject of enunciation", as the rift between *innenwelt* and *umwelt*, or as simply the result of the unconscious dimension of human existence, this division needs to be grasped in reference to the fact that language and being are never fully commensurate (i.e. never perfectly, harmonized, merged, "made one", etc.). This incompatibility of ourselves to ourselves creates an abiding tension, a type of rift or irreparability that, despite all attempts at reconstitution, remains, for psychoanalysis at least, a constituent factor of subjectivity. Let us take this incommensurability as our starting point here, but let us steer our attention to one particular facet of our incompatibility with ourselves, revisiting an abiding concern in previous chapters, namely the dilemma of embodiment.

Despite its relative neglect by the mainstream of contemporary social-psychology – neglect that has to some extent been addressed by critical psychologists (Baraitser & Frosh, 2007; Blackman, 2001, 2008a, 2008b; Blackman & Cromby, 2007; Cromby, 2004, 2005; Johnson, 2002; Peet, 2002; Walkerdine, 2002b) – embodiment is neither a new nor a forgotten theme in psychoanalytic theory. Whether we refer to Freud's (1984) depiction of an ego that emerges from the surface of experience of a body that is never simply homogenous to it, or to the primal discordance of Lacan's (1977) *corps morcelé* that lacks the imaginary unification of an "I", we repeatedly encounter the body as a problem. Science fiction is filled with instances of such troubling embodiments, with exemplars of Freud's (1919) notion of the uncanny: endless variations on the themes of disembodied presence (ghosts, poltergeists, haunted places) and embodied absence (robots, zombies, beings without souls), dramatize the ego–body split. More anecdotally we might think of the constant war of control we fight against our bodies: the bodily technologies of weight loss, dieting, muscle gain, skin lightening and darkening, regimes of fitness, the daily struggles of getting the body to signify what we want it to. Given Chapter 2's description of Kristeva's notion of abjection as an "operation of repulsion", and her account of the forceful physical, psychical, and symbolic ejections of waste matter that threaten the distinctness of one's bodily/ego parameters, it would seem we need no further emphasis on the perils that the body poses to the self-images and agency of the ego. The body betrays us in multiple ways: it ages, it fails our imaginary ideals, it is alive, it grows and decays of its own accord, it gives off odors, it produces waste. What is so pertinent about Kristeva's notion of abjection is that it outlines a logic of bodily exclusions and separations that provides an array of potent quasi-instinctual reactions upon which various political rationalities may be transposed.

An earlier yet no less influential historical reference point within psychoanalytic social psychology for any engagement with the political problem of

the body–ego split is to be found in Reich's (1970) *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*:

> "Away from the animal; away from sexuality" are the guiding principles of the formation of all human ideology … whether disguised in the Christian form of man's "spiritual and ethical nature", or the liberal form of "higher human values" … all this adds up to an overemphasis of the intellect, of … logic and reason as opposed to instinct … the superior man as opposed to the inferior man.
>
> *(p. 339)*

This represents a variation on the theme that I wish to develop further in the present chapter: the cultural and political dimensions of the crisis – even the "impossibility" – of embodiment as understood through a psychoanalytic and (although to a lesser extent) a phenomenological lens. I will focus, more particularly, on the issue of the incommensurability or the real of the body–ego relation. This is never a relation of seamless integration; it requires the mediation of various psychical, symbolic, and ideological mechanisms, each of which plays a role in the reproduction of various forms of social asymmetry, as is most notably the case in racism and anti-Blackness.

As suggested above, there are a number of perspectives one might take in elaborating on the problems the body presents to culture, in tracing how the difficulties of bodily materiality come to be channeled into the logic of various inequitable systems of social ordering. Given my concerns in this book, neamly, to enlarge the resources of critical decolonial psychology, I would suggest that there is a distinctive perspective on these issues that is particularly worth revisiting: the early work of the South African psychologist Chabani Manganyi. Manganyi's early essays (1973, 1977, 1981), influenced as much by Fanon's (1952/1986) anti-colonial and psycho-existential concerns, as by the imperatives of Black Consciousness, and the struggle against apartheid, stressed the factor of embodiment as an indispensable mode of analysis.

Manganyi's attempts to grasp the body psychoanalytically, as simultaneously a phenomenological and a socio-political entity, are particularly instructive inasmuch as they provide a means of pushing beyond the notion of the body as merely discursive, as simply socially constructed.

The bodily real and symbolic mediation

Manganyi's (1981) lasting interest for us has much to do with how he takes up the crisis of embodiment within a "psycho-existential" register. In his estimation, the body is not just a problem of ego-denial (as in the disavowal of the crass physicality of its wastes and wants). Nor is it merely a problem of alienating depersonalization (the assimilation, in patriarchy, for example, of a woman's body, dress, and deportment to a standardized framework of

norms). In embodiment, we confront, additionally, the existential dilemma of the disharmonious body–ego relationship as it is transformed into a pragmatic socio-cultural problem. The existential dualism that arises in this situation involves "the contradictory realities of the finitude of the body and the limitless horizons of self-consciousness and man's capacity for symbolization" (p. 106).

What quickly becomes clear in Manganyi's account is that this dissonance between registers – the attempted conversion of the unpalatable real of the bodily into symbolic terms – gives rise to a virulent series of social and ideological formations. This conversion is undoubtedly effective inasmuch as the problem of bodily disavowal becomes "in race supremacist cultures, a medium for the development of racist systems and fantasies" (1981, p. 105). Yet it is dysfunctional as it produces an excess, a set of symptomatic effects that return to haunt and destabilize the ideological system that had supposedly been secured in the process.

The point is perhaps yet to be made strongly enough: why the disavowal of the bodily? Why allocate this crass corporeality to some other abjected social figure rather than simply assume and, as it were, 'own' it? Is our own corporeality that problematic for us? This is perhaps an instance where the psychoanalytic vocabulary of the excremental seems fully justified. It is precisely this lower range of values, of shit, and all its extended socio-symbolic equivalences that drive home the problem Manganyi confronts us with. His arguments in this respect strike up an unexpected kinship with Milan Kundera's (1984) *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, which poses the philosophical quandary of the incompatibility of God and shit: if "man" was created in God's image, then does it not follow that God must defecate? How then might God and shit be thought together; can the idea of shitting be consolidated with our sense of God as divine, holy, and pure? It is for this reason that Kundera argues that "Shit is a more onerous theological problem than is evil" (p. 246).

It is worth playing out the steps of Manganyi's argument in his single most important essay on racializing embodiment, "The body-for-others" (1981), as this enables us both to replicate the structure of this discussion and to develop links to other conceptualizations of racism and differential embodiment. A brief historical allusion may be in order here, both to preface Manganyi's argument and to connect more overtly the themes of the excremental and racism. In his description of township life during the apartheid Dlamini (2009) cites Mathewson's (1957) account of the sewage costs particularly for the establishment of a new Black location:

> In the case of the Daveyton sewage disposal works, which will serve a township consisting entirely of Bantu residents, a factor which warranted special consideration was the nature of the Bantu diet, which being principally carbohydrate in character … is deficient in protein and this necessitates a very much higher consumption of food than that of Europeans who

> live on a more concentrated diet. In consequence the amount of faecal matter to be treated per capita is greater than that of a mixed township and the capacities of the sludge digestor and sludge drying beds will therefore be greater than that normally provided for a European township.
>
> *(2009, p. 132)*

Dlamini concludes that for Mathewson – and for what we might term the faecal imaginary of apartheid – "blacks are literally full of shit" (p. 132). It is precisely such longstanding historical racist associations that hinge on the relation to matter, to the bodily, that motivates Manganyi's early work. Indeed, it is in light of such examples, that Manganyi seems justified in adopting a rather dramatic turn of phrase: "At the core of human existence is a devastating contradiction – the contradiction between the fate of creatureliness and the infinitude of the symbolic" (p. 123). It is worth emphasizing that Manganyi's account – which in this respect parallels Kristeva's notion of abjection – does not rely on the assumption that it is chiefly the *sexuality* of the body that makes corporeality unbearable. It is rather the body's inevitable fate of decay and death, the body as itself waste-matter – as inescapable proof of finitude – that make it, and the spiral of associated ideological values linked to it, so necessitating of rejection, disavowal, and denial. For Manganyi, the threat of deathliness far outweighs the force of sexuality: "[T]he reality which is feared most and defended against is death … the denial of death is first and foremost a denial of the body" (p. 121).

This incongruence of the ego–body relation, as so dramatically evidenced in the above contradictions of mortality and infinitude, presents both a psychical and an ideological crisis. This is the crisis of allocating a variety of bodily values and experiences a place both in a given libidinal economy, and within an existing discursive network of meanings. It results, as Manganyi puts it, in two psychological responses, repression, and symbolization, of which he focuses predominantly on the latter. The displacements of ideological symbolization make it possible for individuals to have and maintain the polarization evident in the body–ego relation. They are able to drive a wedge between a set of "owned" imaginary ego properties and those less habitable aspects of bodiliness, those appalling facets of corporeal experience that are more comfortably accommodated in an external location. For Manganyi the role of ideology in this respect might be understood as the "symbolic transformation mediating fundamental human needs for normative sanity" (p. 118).

Although the symbolic realm provides some relief from this pressing existential anxiety of the body, this strategy is ultimately not enough. The conflicts and tensions between the bodily real, the ideological symbolic, and the imaginary force of racist fantasy, prove considerably more complex than this. The body itself becomes a means – a living vessel of experience – for the articulation

and projection of ideological values. It is not just the case that corporeal dilemmas are played out within the symbolic; symbolic dilemmas are also played out at the level of everyday phenomenological bodily experience:

> [T]he human body is a perfect medium for the symbolic elaboration of social meanings, including the irrational substratum of superordinate/subordinate relationships. When this bodily symbolism is considered within the wider symbolic matrix which equates the body with creatureliness, finitude, excrement, sin … [then] the social and individual [psychic] dimensions of the body become manifest.
>
> *(p. 112)*

For Manganyi the body is not merely a socially constructed object, just as the anxieties of embodiment cannot be captured solely through the lens of socio-historical and discursive contextualization. His implication is clear: not every social object is constructed in the same way or proves to be such a recurring problem across a variety of socio-historical locations. Not every object poses the same challenge to given processes of symbolic mediation or makes for a potent underlying factor in the making and practicing of racist ideology.

This lies at the heart of what is most important to retrieve in Manganyi's psycho-existential register of critique: a sense of the ostensibly universal dilemma of the disturbing physicality of the embodied ego.[1] Bigoted social logics are one mode of response to this impasse, to the threat with which the bodily real plagues the ego. It is from this "irresolvability", from this traumatic potential of the body–ego relation that springs a variety of racist symbolic articulations and fantasies. Such grievous modes of sociality are attempts, within the historical and political life of given communities, at resolving this deadlock. Moreover, racist fantasmatic and symbolic narratives may be said to exploit this real of the body–ego relation – the fact that the ego is always attached to that which guarantees its contingency, its decay, its death – to lend affective substance to its ideological standpoints. Racism, in Manganyi's terms, insists on polarization in individuals' interpretations of their body–ego experience such that it comes to be expressive "of an elaborate symbolic matrix" (p. 118).

To avoid confusion: this real of the impossible body–ego conjunction should not be taken as a license to a lazy universalism; it by no means bypasses the imperative of socio-historical specificity. Although the real does represent a recurring deadlock of mediation in different historical eras – as is the case with the body–ego relation – it is never simply independent of the flux of historical and discursive construction within which it plays its part. It is crucial to grasp the role the real plays in spurring representation, that is, its ostensibly productive capacity in incurring symbolic activity. The productivity of the symbolic is often linked, as a matter of course, to prevailing discursive formations. Whether

we are speaking of the body's resistance to symbolization – that irreducible aspect of corporeality never fully mediated by language – or, more in line with my specific concerns here, the impossibility of harmonizing the body and the ego – this real plays the part of spurring on a cascade of representations and fantasies. These representations and fantasies aim at a type of domestication, a type of gentrification of this inassimilable factor. Žižek provides a helpful point of clarification in this respect. Warning against thinking of the real as a kind of content, as a simply extra-symbolic domain – an argument already raised in Chapter 2 – he cautions that "the Lacanian Real is strictly internal to the Symbolic: it is nothing but its inherent limitation, the impossibility of the Symbolic fully to 'become itself'" (2000, p. 120). We are confronted here by the symbolic order's own (trans-historical) inability to explain away a given excessive, traumatic "irresolvable" element, an element that takes on a particular configuration at a given time and place.

Orders of embodiment

Returning to the "elaborate symbolic matrix" generated by the denial of the body: one of the most persistent and categorical of the available symbolic equations in Western culture, Manganyi insists, is that which traces an equivalence between whiteness and mind, and between Blackness and the bodily. These sociological schemata are essentially elaborations of a single dichotomy "between body and inner symbolic core (mind) which reflects and is supported by the symbolic variations of up and down (above and below), good and evil" (1987, p. 112). We have thus two chains of signifiers: the upward trajectory of whiteness–mind– goodness–life and the downward trajectory of Blackness–body–evil–death. Such trajectories are meant literally: Manganyi's phenomenological frame of analysis insists that the subject's bodily-experiential domain – the lived physicality of "up" and "down" – recodes and reaffirms this racist division of values. "Being above somebody and being below somebody", he comments, "are fundamental and deep-seated orienting constructions of the racist consciousness" (p. 110). There is an interesting point of resonance here with Mary Douglas's (2002) anthropological observations as regards the bodily encoding of caste system hierarchies, which, in turn, links to our earlier discussion of abjection in Chapter 2:

> Seen from [the] ego's position the system of caste purity is structured upwards. Those above … are more pure. All the positions below … be they ever so intricately distinguished … are to him polluting. Thus for any ego within the system, the threatening non-structure against which barriers must be erected, lies below. The sad wit of pollution as it comments on

> bodily functions symbolizes descent in the caste structure by contact with faeces, blood and corpses.
>
> *(p. 153)*

The polarized sets of values that Manganyi identifies not only replay the rudimentary dynamics of racism (its logics of superiority and inferiority), but they also represent routes of identification: the upper pole (whiteness) provides a means of narcissistic self-valorization, affording its subjects the position of symbolic idealization; the lower pole (Blackness) represents that which is devalued, deserving of denial and repression. What thus needs to be built into these sociological schemata (or chains of signifiers) are two general subject categories – the prospect, that is to say, of negative self-evaluation – if one is the subject of racist objectification – and of aggrandizing, positive self-over-evaluation – if one is its beneficiary. The former instance is, of course, something that Manganyi and Fanon, among others, have long since insisted upon: the problem of the unconscious dimension of the negative evaluation resulting from the incorporation of such stereotypes. Referring directly to Manganyi: "In racist societies the white body is denied through a frivolous kind of idealism … [whereas] the black body … is something unacceptable in its entirety" (p. 115). We should not, therefore, be surprised that the impossible integration of body and ego is made more difficult in the case of oppressed or minority subjects, as Manganyi claims in the case of Black children vis-à-vis "the experience of negative stereotypes of the black body espoused by racist cultures" (p. 115). An important proviso he adds is that this process is to be anticipated before the advent of Black Consciousness, but not necessarily thereafter; hence the imperative placed by Black Consciousness on the meaningful political reappropriation of the body of the oppressed.[2]

The Manichean sets of values introduced above also, importantly, affirm racial differences in a variety of modalities of human experience. This is not just a case of the contrast of the physicality of the lower (genital) body with the higher, cerebral qualities of the mind. Whether we compare the spatial orientations of the upward transcendence of spirit with the downward earthly destiny of flesh, or the realm of disciplined moral order versus that of base, unprincipled, instinctual action, each such comparison affirms two mutually exclusive racial categories. Racial difference, we might venture, is given a radical reality, substantiated as a mode of being. Race here is not simply a reality of meaning or signification, but a "holistic" experiential reality of embodied, affective and spiritual depth. Racialization, for Manganyi, thus occurs in a profoundly personalized – which is not to say explicitly conscious – manner, within the phenomenological dimension of how we make sense of our social and bodily "being-in-the-world". Racism thus profits from bodily ostracization:

> The negative values associated with blackness (blackness as dirt, impurity, smell) become vehicles in race supremacist cultures for the racist's attempts to adapt to his estrangement from the reality of the human body. The projection of these undesirable attributes of the human body to the victim of racism as a convenient scapegoat, is part and parcel of the process of denial and self-deception which characterizes the cultural heroics of Western culture and civilization.
>
> *(p. 113)*

Apparent in this extract are debts both to the social and psychological depiction of authoritarian fascism by Adorno et al. (1950) and Fanon's (1952/1986) analysis of colonial racism. However, while many of Manganyi's principal themes – projection, rejection of the bodily, the other as the embodiment of denied desire – are evident, particularly in the work of Adorno et al. (1950), I want to avoid viewing his work merely as a subvariant of this tradition. The particularity of his concerns – anti-apartheid rather than anti-fascist critique, white racism as opposed to anti-Semitism, a focus on embodiment rather than on personality – marks his approach as distinctive, as sharing far more in common with a variety of differing Black Consciousness and anti-colonial struggles. Manganyi clearly endorses Fanon's (1952/1986) depiction of the Manichean dynamics of colonial racism whereby a "metaphysics" of whiteness, as embodied by the higher values of culture, intellect, civilization, and spirituality, is opposed to the resolute bodiliness of Blackness, which by contrast, gravitates around values of nature, sexuality, criminality, and deathliness.

Contrary to attempts to bypass these Manichean divisions, to reject them as outdated analytical frameworks, authors such as Lewis Gordon (1995), Achille Mbembe (2001), and Paul Gilroy (2000) have called attention to their ongoing persistence. A variant identified by St Louis (2005) and Stuart (2005) is the long-standing insistence within contemporary American and British culture on Black masculinities as hypersexual and hyperphysical. Gilroy (2000) is emphatic in this respect: the most iconic and/or heroic African American and Afro-Caribbean figures seem inevitably tied back to the familiar themes of bodily beauty, physique, and athleticism. More vividly yet, Mbembe evokes many of Manganyi's string of Manichean oppositions (object–spirit, animal–human, death–transcendence) in his discussion of what he terms the Hegelian tradition within colonialism's philosophies of legitimization:

> [T]he colonized individual … [was] the very prototype of the animal … [this] individual … was subordinate to power and the state and could not be like "myself". As an animal he is strictly alien to me. His way of viewing

> the world, that is, his mode of being, is not mine. No power of transcending himself can be perceived in him. Encapsulated in himself, he is a bundle of drives, not abilities … He is a tool subordinated to those who, having made him, can employ him and modify him as they wish. In this respect, he belongs to the sphere of objects. They can be destroyed, just as one can kill an animal, cut it up, cook it, and, if need be, eat it. To that extent, in the colony the body of the colonized individual is considered, in its profanity, one object among others. Indeed, being no more than a "body-thing," it is neither the substrate nor the affirmation of any mind or spirit … His cadaver remains lying on the earth in a sort of unshakable rigidity, a material mass and a simple, inert object, condemned in the position of that which plays no role at all.
>
> *(Mbembe, 2001, pp. 26–27)*

This division between mute physicality and the enabling powers of the intellect, between the objectified body-thing that capitulates unto death, and those subjects that represent death's overcoming, is by no means only a tactic of racism. This differential order of embodiment – a conditional relation to physicality as opposed to a reductive relation – is also operative in the making of sexual difference, in the fact that men and women are thought to be embodied differently within patriarchy. One is reminded of Adorno's (1990) remark that a woman's voice cannot be properly recorded because it demands the presence of her body, in contrast to a man's voice which can exert its full power as disembodied.[3] We seem to have here, as Žižek (2001) notes, an exemplary case of the ideological notion of difference in which man (or "whiteness") is a disembodied Spirit-Subject, while woman (or "Blackness"), remains anchored in the body.

Lewis Gordon's (1995) influential schema of racialized absence and-presence – itself derived from a reading of Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* – provides another means of understanding the Manichean dynamics of white/Black embodiment:

> [T]o look at a black body is to look at mere being-among-beings … [But] the white body, being human (Presence), doesn't live as mere being-among-beings. It lives with the potential to be a being that stands out from mere beings.
>
> *(p. 101)*

As Wilderson (2008) notes in his commentary on Gordon's work, Black presence is itself a form of absence, a type of voiding; Blackness amounts to the destruction of presence, the negation of what this presence may promise.

Envious racisms and "regimes of enjoyment"

For Manganyi, the fact that the most creaturely, obscene, and traumatic qualities of the bodily self might be located externally in the racial other – extimately we might say, drawing on a Lacanian term to designate a mode of intimate exteriority – proves essential if we are to understand the obduracy of racism. This extimate relationship to the corporeality of the other helps explain why this figure remains simultaneously an object of desire and denigration. Racism then, we might propose, occurs when this disconcerting relation, this disjuncture of the repressed bodily and valorized ego, is afforded an attempted socio-political mediation. This, it would seem, is part of what lends racism its infamous tenacity. In Manganyi's eyes, there can be no harmonious combination of these two parts: inasmuch as this psycho-existential problem is displaced onto others, these others will always exert the relation of bodily dread and sexual fascination that characterizes colonial forms of racism.

Now although this account must be viewed as contributing only one possible originating factor among a host of others within the complex genealogy of racism, it does have the benefit of offering a unique answer to racism's apparently ineradicable nature. We are dealing here with a "shifting up" of registers in which a psycho-existential dilemma becomes impacted at a sociological level. Given this, the fact of the upward transmission of an impassable deadlock to another (societal, socio-political) frame, we can better appreciate something of the intractability of the situation we find ourselves in. There are, as it were, two axes of impossibility that exist here: not only the constitutive incompatibility of the body–ego relation, but the epistemological impossibility that results when a series of broad societal and ideological logics are enlisted as a means of disavowing – both denying and explaining away – the real of an underlying psycho-existential problematic.

The Hegelian ambivalences of this relation to bodiliness and its traumatic excesses and pleasures have been revisited many times. It is, nonetheless, worthwhile briefly juxtaposing two historically diverse psychoanalytic conceptualizations of the disturbing intimacy in bodily otherness as a means of complimenting Manganyi's account. Let us first follow a broadly Fanonian (1952/1986) line of analysis: the bodiliness, the physicality, and sexuality that the white colonial cannot permit himself to possess, he projects onto the screen of the colonial other. This other then returns to the white man the aspects of disavowed bodily existence – along with all its illicit intensities and enjoyments – that he envies and resents the Black man for. There is thus a return effect of projection: to lose out on the creatureliness of the body and all its carnal aspects is to lose out also on its concomitant transgressive "surplus enjoyments". That is, doing away with the body's finitude and mortality is to

deny that irreducibly traumatic kernel of sexuality with which – to follow Lacanian psychoanalysis – the painful enjoyments of *jouissance* are inextricably attached. More simply put: there are times when racist subjects want their disavowed bodiliness back, as in the case of the negative pleasures of sexual intensity, or those other carnal libidinal "enjoyments" which are by definition excessive, and which are always aggressively defended and covetously desired.

One might thus speak – and here we switch to a Žižekian (1992, 1993, 1994b, 1997) account – of the racist envy of a given "regime of enjoyments", of the experience of imaginary castration in which racist subjects wish to take back those surplus enjoyments they perceive in various racial others. The enjoyments in question are properties racist subjects feel themselves singularly entitled to, but deprived of; these are properties that have as such been stolen away by others, whose possession thereof qualifies the others in question as radically blameworthy.[4] In such moments the "enjoying other" becomes curiously important, indeed indispensable, certainly inasmuch as they represent the racist's repository of enjoyments. We return then to what is by now a familiar lesson in the psychoanalysis of racism: the fact that the racial other is needed and desired far more than the racist subject can ever admit.

My attempt above in overlapping these two psychoanalytic accounts – which, curiously, are not typically associated with one another – has been to combine their differing points of emphasis in a way that enables us to draw out the latent aspects of Manganyi's theorization of embodiment. Fanon clearly stresses the role of projected bodily pleasures and excessive sexualities, adding to this the idea – largely derived from Sartre – that it is possible to match up each form of bigotry to an envied (yet also denigrated and feared) property that has been projected upon a category of racial otherness. Žižek's (1993) conceptualization of the "theft of enjoyment" by contrast is skeptical of an over-reliance on the dynamics of projection and scapegoating, wary of the reductionism implicit in viewing racism as a psychological function, as the outcome of the individual subject's management of his or her own affective disequilibrium. His concern, as such, lies less with the generation of denigrating stereotypes than with the libidinal economy underlying the impression of certain "lost" properties. These elusive properties lie at the core of what constitutes the distinctness of particular socio-symbolic identities; they stretch from the privileged historical myths of a given people or community (the prized elements of their cultural heritage, their own valorized attributes) to a series of imperiled present concerns (the case of threatened traditions, livelihoods, ways of life, etc.). Not only do such "object-treasures" make up the essence of what is considered most vital and irreplaceable to the subject community; they have, furthermore, taken on the currency of a *jouissance* (i.e. of excessive libidinal enjoyment) that the racial other has usurped.

This schema of imaginary castration is one in which the other is posed both as preventing what is most precious in me from being fully realized – an obstruction of *jouissance* for which they are responsible – and as possessing a disruptive, foreign mode of enjoyment I am unable either to comprehend or access. It is within this auditing of *jouissance* – an accounting of what has been "lost" on my side and unfairly gained on theirs – that the libidinal economy of racism becomes self-defeating. It generates its own losses – the injustices of the apparent afflictions it complains of – and endlessly perpetuates them as a means of explaining its own division, the structural impossibility of ever attaining its own "full" *jouissance*. A paradoxical ontology underwrites this *jouissance*: it exists for us only to the extent that we have been dispossessed of it.

Žižek thus adds an additional twist to Fanon's account. What is disturbing is not only that certain fragments of bodily *jouissance* recognized in the other might in fact be our own. More disconcerting yet is the trauma implicit in the idea that this surplus enjoyment was never ours, indeed, that we never were in possession of what we claim the other has pilfered. This, for Žižek (1993), is what we conceal by insisting on the other as guilty of the theft of enjoyment: the fact that this utopian "full" *jouissance* – which would presumably accompany the attainment of the celebrated object treasure – never was our prerogative, nor in fact ever could have been, because the lack (or castration) in question is originary, constitutive. This, from a Lacanian standpoint, is a far more appalling proposition, one that necessitates recourse to a blameworthy other even more so than the fact of the real of the subject's own traumatic corporeality. Despite this apparent divergence in accounts – apropos whether the *jouissance* of the other is my own displaced enjoyment or *jouissance* that I never in fact possessed – one should point out how the Fanonian and Žižekian accounts ultimately dovetail. Although "full" *jouissance* remains a myth, a structural impossibility within Lacanian thought, the subject does nonetheless retain fragments of a troubling, traumatic bodily *jouissance* that needs constantly to be fended off, and defended against. The resulting tactics of disavowal, and the constancy of the extimacy – by virtue of which the other's enjoyment is always the hatred of one's own enjoyment – ensure the commensurability of this account with Fanon's. Besides, as Žižek (1993) adds, do we not obtain *jouissance* precisely in our prurient imaginings of what it is that constitutes the other's enjoyment? In this sense, the hatred of the other is once again the hatred of our own excesses of *jouissance*.

It is worth noting here that Žižek's recasting of the themes already present in Fanon is an enabling one, inasmuch as this elusive property of "enjoyment" that he speaks of – realized either as an object of aggressive envy (the perverse, unjustified "enjoyments" of others) or of zealous over-defensiveness (the precious, yet equally indefinable qualities of our own "enjoyment" that is threatened by others) – is both more abstract and more variable than that

permitted by a thematics of the bodily. This is in many respects true; perhaps an analytics of *jouissance* derived from Žižek's (1991a) notion of "enjoyment as a political factor" represents a promising route of expansion for critical decolonial psychology's engagement with the politics of embodiment. As is perhaps by now apparent, the reason I have spent so much time elaborating upon the notion of *jouissance* is that this concept maintains the potential to unify a Freudian emphasis on the force of repressed sexuality with Manganyi and Kristeva's focus on the traumatic bodily real, certainly inasmuch as in such excessive enjoyments, the factors of sensuality, the bodily and the deathly are never completely separable. As Stavrakakis (1999) puts it: *jouissance* manifests the link between death and the libido.

Nonetheless, having pointed out the advantages of Žižek's approach, one should note that it is perhaps precisely the reintroduction of earlier psychoanalytic theorizations like Manganyi's, in which the attempt is to capture the phenomenological breadth of experience within very precise socio-historical configurations of embodiment, that might enable us to best apply and extend Žižek's Lacanian line of analysis.

Racism's *Corps Morcelé*

There is a dimension of embodiment that remains somewhat underemphasized in Manganyi's treatment – at least in his discussion of "The Body-for-others" – namely, the experiential aspect of embodied subjectivity. It is not enough, I think, to insist on the bodily problematic as a crucial component of any ideological system, as that real which feeds a variety of symbolic constructions and fantasmatic captivations. Nor is it enough to argue that such ideological values get damagingly replicated – again in symbolic form – in the embodied individual's own ego ideals and internalized discursive values. My concerns are perhaps best formulated as a question: does Manganyi attend enough to the feeling body, that is, to the body as a creaturely vessel that is able to turn back against the regulations of the ego and to give symptomatic expression to the formulas of the wider symbolic social matrix? Manganyi's account emphasizes the necessary roles of symbolization and repression in the body–ego relation; but does he capture anything of the symptomatic release of this repression, the "coming undone" in visceral eruptions and reactions, of this denied bodily aspect and its displacement into racial others?

It is in Fanon (1952/1986) that we find what is perhaps still the most powerful depiction of this aspect of racializing (and racist) embodiment. This rendering of the violated dialectic of the body and the world is one in which – to repeat the oft-revisited refrain – the man of color "encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema" (p. 83). Fanon's body here is "sprawled out, distorted, recoloured, clad in mourning in that white winter day"; he is surrounded by the presence, the metaphysics of whiteness:

"All around me … a white song. … [A] whiteness that burns me" (p. 86). As I argued in Chapter 3, one cannot but notice the prevalence of the bodily in *Black Skin White Masks*, particularly the physicality of the Black body as it is contrasted against insignias of disembodied whiteness. The notion of "corporeal malediction", the disjunction, in other words, of a particular corporeal schema (of inhabiting a "Black" body) in a given historico-racial schema (of the racist "white" world) is offered as a means of conceptualizing the brutal psychological effects of racism. A recurring motif of traumatized corporeality grounds the text's phenomenological concerns with racism: the "metaphysics" of racism is read into the natural features of a hostile, white world; the hatred of this racist world, correspondingly, is read back into the experience of a mutilated, radically objectified body. There is something difficult to fathom in this disconcerting mismatch of physical and psychological properties: a violent disjunction that obeys no strict demarcation between ideology and bodily experience, between the stereotypes of racist discourse and its effects on an embodied psychology.

Paul Gilroy (2000) provides an illuminating commentary on this aspect of Fanon's work, emphasizing that in "epidermalization" – a notion discussed already in Chapter 3 – the observer's gaze "does not penetrate that membrane [i.e. the skin of the body] but rests upon it and, in doing so, receives the truths of racial difference from the outer body" (p. 46). Furthermore:

> Fanon used the idea to index the estrangement from authentic human being in the body and being in the world that colonial social relations had wrought. For him epidermalized power violated the human body in its symmetrical, intersubjective, social humanity, in its species being; in its fragile relationship to other fragile bodies and in its connection to the redemptive potential dormant in the wholesome or perhaps suffering corporeality. What he glimpsed as a "real dialectic between (the) body and the world" might be re-articulated, in a less triumphal mode, as our being toward death.
>
> *(Gilroy, 2000, pp. 46–47)*

A similarly useful contribution to thinking about Fanon's epidermalization in relation to the effects of racism on the body (and ego) is provided by Kelly Oliver:

> If … the ego is "a mental projection of the surface of the body", and the surface of the body turns out to be the site of political struggle and oppression, then the mental projection of that surface is going to be inflected by oppression … The mental projection, or ego, of the oppressed, mirroring the experience of the body, will be fragmented and in pieces … Racist epidermalization gives new meaning to Freud's suggestions that the ego is

> a mental projection of the surface of the body when that surface signifies inferiority and lack of agency; ultimately, the surface of the body signifies lack of ego.
>
> *(2000, p. 15)*[5]

Despite the usefulness of such a contribution, I am concerned here – as in Chapter 2 – with the risks of potentially delimiting racism's effects to the psychological. We need to keep in mind, that is to say, the never-stable body–ego relation, which entails a double direction of incommensurability, the irreducibility both of body–to-ego and ego–to-body.

One may take this argument up in a different way. Fanon, I think, is going beyond a phenomenology of the Black body, beyond a "corporealization" of the psychological violence of racism. This is not simply a metaphoric conversion of psychic assault into the terms of bodily brutality. Rather, these two domains, the realm of ego-subjectivity and the physical, can never be neatly or comfortably separated: attempts at ego–body mediation inevitably fail. We have instead a horrific disjunction, a violent intrusion of each into the other. This is a way of conceptualizing the assault of racism: not only the determination of the soul by the body (the sense, as in Fanon's [1952/1986] "epidermalization", of race and racism getting "under the skin"), not only the metaphysical permeation of the material domain by racist subjectivity, but a splicing together of objectified souls with subjectified objects. This then is what occurs as a result of modes of racist colonial embodiment: the balance of the body's relation to the world, to other bodies, to its own positive identity, and to an array of cultural and historical values, is obliterated.

One might thus extend the analyses offered by Gilroy (2000) and Oliver (2000) above by noting that what is involved here is not only the breakdown of the dialectic between body and the world, but the dialectic between spheres of positive subjectivity and stable objectivity. Something more severe yet may be identified. We have an intersection here of two traumatic conditions, conditions I have referred to above as "embodied absence" and "disembodied presence", that is, a coupling of the object-status of souls that have been evacuated of psychological presence with the "psycho-materiality" of objects animated by racist beliefs. What results is a nightmarish variation of Lacan's *corps morcelé* in which Fanon experiences his physical being in a series of mutilated disjunctions.

This is a state in which no real dialectical interchange can be maintained, be it with respect to Fanon's basic phenomenological stability in the world, or in view of his relation to his own history, culture, or even his own basic "lifeworld" of values. Hence the idea, so prevalent in Black Consciousness thought, of the "disfigurement" of the colonized's culture and history (as in Biko, 1978), a phrase that, as we have by now seen, should not be read as merely metaphorical.[6]

I would argue then that Manganyi's conceptualization of the denial of the bodily in racist culture – at least in the important "The body for others" (1991) essay – needs to be complemented with an array of ideas derived from Fanon's notion of epidermalization. In tackling the problem of racializing and, indeed, racist embodiment we must not focus solely on the body as it presents a dilemma for racist ideology. We must not remain focused only on the "imposed phenomenology" of the meaning of "other" bodies, concerned simply with the transposition of discursive frames upon our own bodily existence. Nor should we concentrate singularly on the physicality of racism's bodily fascinations, that is, on racism's preoccupation with "evidential" markers of difference. We must also engage – as I have attempted at some length in Chapter 2 – with the affective factor of bodily experience itself, with the "expressive phenomenology", so to speak, of the body as a surface of experience that undergoes anxieties, visceral responses, symptomatic forms of release. One should perhaps refer here to the psychosomatics of race and racism; indeed, to use this as a departure point from which to investigate further the effects of racism's disruptions of modes of embodiment. I am alluding to – again as in Chapter 2 – the lived experience of racism, to race at the embodied, affective, and seemingly "extra-discursive" level. The mode of racism in question is not dissimilar to social-psychological conceptualizations of aversive and implicit racism (Aberson & Ettlin, 2004; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; Durrheim & Dixon, 2005; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986, 2005; Son Hing, Li & Zanna, 2002). It is a variety of racism that is played out in behavioral and bodily reactions, a mode of racism not easily contained, or assimilated into the symbolic domain of speech, language, and signification. These two manifestations of bodily racism should not be seen as existing independently; "extra-discursive" forms of racism may underwrite and exert a driving influence upon racist patterns of signification, just as race as ideology, as a regime of truth, or order of signification, may come to encode the body, and hence over-determine its impulses and its affectivity.

The deadlock of "expressive" versus "imposed" phenomenology

Thus far, embodiment has been understood as a subjectivizing force, a potent means of exercising influence upon subjectivity via the means of the body. I have tried to emphasize that the body – and indeed racializing embodiment – should be understood in at least two ways: firstly, and more structurally, as a vessel of physical experience and affectivity (along the lines of an "expressive phenomenology"); and secondly, in terms of the ideological imposition of particular frames of value and meaning (an "imposed phenomenology"). This distinction serves to highlight how the body can both be overdetermined by symbolic and ideological means (via various structural impositions) and

yet also function, in its capacity as a surface of experience (affectivity, visceral reactions), as a point of discontinuity and resistance that is never wholly subsumed within the horizon of the discursive. This distinction is helpfully supported by Schrag's (1980) important observation that

> Clearly there is a socio-historical horizon to lived experience, but there is also a psychico-natural horizon. Man can neither be lifted out of history nor out of nature … The lived-body is neither historical nor natural in the categorical sense. It is the base of operations and the centre of concernful projects which envelop at the same time a sense of lived through history and a concrete experience of nature.
>
> *(pp. 57–58)*

Importantly, we have then neither a naive appeal to the primacy of experience (in an "imposed phenomenology" experience is necessarily subject to structure), nor an insistence on the unmediated role of the symbolic (which needs always to be factored through the bodily, through the somatic field).

An obvious question arises in connection with the above discussion of two modes of racializing embodiment: do we not need to focus our energies on conducting parallel types of analysis, on performing a kind of dual analytics of embodiment? This, it seems, is the answer implied above, that we need to combine the analysis of experience (the expressive phenomenology of an "extra-discursive" racism) and of structure (the imposition of discursive frames upon our bodily existence). There is a moment of historical resonance in posing such a question; it echoes the terms that defined the deadlock of British cultural studies in the 1980s. As Stuart Hall (1980) memorably demonstrated, this tension between the primacy of the experiential and an awareness of the over-determining structures of language and materiality is not so easily overcome. Despite then the charm of a prospective dual analytics, we must remain wary of overstating the reconcilability of the underlying paradigms involved.

Interestingly, in the jostling for ascendance between structure and experience discussed by Hall, in the very inability to harmoniously interrelate these factors, we appear to confront another real: the irreconcilability of a given problematic – in this case, the overarching framework of analysis – that is divided from within. We might call for a different approach here, one that eschews the gradual integration of paradigms in favor of the attempt to grasp better what underlies their irreconcilability. Foregoing the hope of synthesis then, our analytical efforts should be aimed at understanding how both opposed viewpoints are marked by a shared impossibility, and how such an irresolvability underlies a proliferation of attempts at integration.

Claude Lévi-Strauss's discussion "Do dual organizations exist?" in his (1974) *Structural Anthropology* is one of Žižek's (2005) favored explanatory devices in exemplifying deadlocks of the real. Lévi-Strauss presents the case of the Winnebago people, whose two subgroups consistently represent the ground plan of their shared village in opposed ways (a symmetrical design of concentric circles for one subgroup; a clearly divided arrangement for the other). Žižek's objective in using this example is to point to a traumatic constant that remains present in two opposed and properly irreconcilable ideological perspectives. The real here points to the deadlock of comprehension that – despite all attempts at symbolic and fantasmatic mediation – cannot be resolved, assimilated by the worldviews in question. Two tendencies, insists Žižek, must here be avoided. Firstly: the attempt at a type of relativization, whereby the difference of perspective is explained away by the coordinates of the onlooker's own particular interests. Such an approach does not enable us to bring into view that traumatic regularity, that real which cuts across the positions of both sets of subjects. Secondly, as opposed to the impulse to resolve the apparent incompatibility in question through types of combination or complementarity – precisely against the impetus to a higher-order synthesis – we need to ask: what would be elided, obscured, in such attempts? The same holds for attempts to ascertain the "objectivity" of a wider, more truthful, less subjective, view of the phenomenon in question. These are simply attempts to avoid the traumatic rift, the deadlock, or the incommensurability that defies resolution for the simple reason that, as Žižek (2005) insists, it is the constitutive antagonism around which the social realities in question are themselves structured.

The reasons for this digression are by now, I hope, evident. The two versions of embodiment that I have discussed above do not offer the prospect of a viable reconciliation. We are ultimately unable to close the gap between the fine-grain richness of the experiential being of the subject and the fact of the unavoidable socio-symbolic structuring of their identity. The "truth" here, to paraphrase Žižek, is not to be found in some combination of perspectives, in an idealistic complementarity of parts, but rather in the constant of the antagonism itself. This division is inherent; this gap is a constitutive aspect of embodiment that itself poses an unavoidable blockage within subjectivity. This is the inescapable impossibility the subject faces in ever assuming a body, an impossibility whose ramifications reverberate at the epistemological level of our own inability to synthesize these two registers of embodiment. Bluntly put: our failure to harmonize the paradigms of structure and experience (of "imposed" versus "expressive" phenomenology) points to an underlying deadlock, a traumatic and irreducible "irresolvability" within embodiment itself.

What answer does this conclusion return to us vis-à-vis the problematics of racism and racialization? Well, it suggests that we need to appreciate how certain versions of the real operate as the generative basis for a host of

fantasmatic attempts at overcoming such constitutive deadlocks/impossibilities. Rather than falling in line with a variety of projects proffering imaginary or symbolic solutions to an impasse that is by definition irresolvable, we should forgo attempts to "solve" this real. By contrast, we should treat it as the starting point of our analyses, as the rock upon which socio-symbolic mediation runs aground, and around which coalesce a great many attempts at domestication. Accordingly, we should focus our attention on the real as the fulcrum of discourse, and on the various mechanisms – fantasmatic identification and symbolic construction chief among them – that are called upon to reconcile this constitutive irresolvability. We must retain this sticking point, the irreconcilable of a given socio-discursive order, firmly in our sights; otherwise, we fail to understand the proliferation of exclusionary and bigoted social logics that blossom around it. Unless we maintain the irresolvability of this real squarely in the foreground, the force, the persistence, indeed the charms, of race as a fantasmatic and symbolic "solution" to this impossibility will elude us. As in Lacan's (1992a) ethics of psychoanalysis, and in Žižek's (1994a) critique of ideology, it should be the antagonisms of the real that provide the starting point from which we attempt to grasp the uncanny persistence not only of racializing embodiment, but of racialization more generally. We are now in a better position to understand why racism and

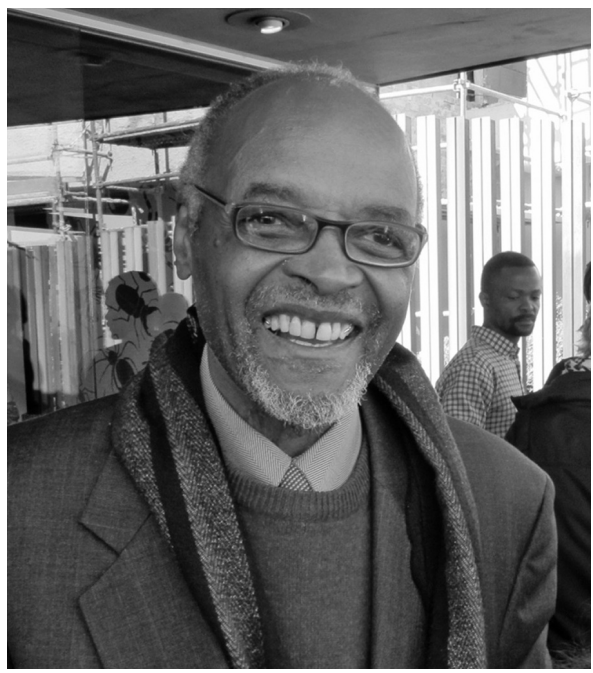

FIGURE 5.1 Chabani Manganyi (photo by Corina van Der Spoel) (Apartheid Archive Project, N53).

other discriminatory logics constantly bedevil the inherently divided nature of subjectivity: they represent the the necessarily failed socio-fantasmatic attempts at mediation, efforts at resolving the real of social subjectivity itself.

Notes

1 Decolonial modes of critique tend to be suspicious of the notion of the universal. Such presumptions of universality are problematic, of course, not only insofar as they assume that white European or Global North populations serve as the yardstick for all cultures but also because they either negate – or derogate – those features of cultures that do not conform to the theorizations being offered. Given that Manganyi himself makes reference to the universal – and does so in a clearly anti-racist manner – I have retained the term. Also worth noting is that Fanon himself, despite being highly critical of certain universalizing presumptions of psychoanalysis (such as the idea that the Oedipus complex should necessarily be found in all cultures), clearly utilizes the notion of the universal in respect of an emancipatory and decolonial agenda. Fanon appeals to the universal on multiple occasions in *Black Skin White Masks*, where, in the words of Hudis (2015), it is understood as "a world of reciprocal recognitions" (p. 6).

2 One is reminded here of the words with which Baby Suggs, the sage preacher in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1998) entreats her listeners: "[I]n this here place, we flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs … Love it. Love it hard. Yonder they do not love your flesh. They despise it" (p. 88).

3 I should note that Žižek (2001) defends Adorno's remark against its apparent antifeminist implications: the latter's conceptualization of feminine hysteria is taken to represent "a protest of subjectivity against reification", that is, an in-between position in which the subject is "no longer fully identified with her body, not yet ready to assume the position the disembodied speaker" (p. 45).

4 "[T]rue intolerance is the intolerance of the Other's jouissance" maintains Jacques-Alain Miller (1994), whose theorization of these ideas is the basis of Žižek's own further elaborations: "Racism is founded on what one imagines about the Other's *jouissance*; it is hatred of … the Other's own way of experiencing *jouissance*" (pp. 79–80). Racist stories, furthermore, are always about how this Other is "endowed with a part of *jouissance* that he does not deserve" (p. 80).

5 Pellegrini (1997) also takes up this point. For Pellegrini, the implication of Fanon's "body in pieces" is that it will display multiple projections and surfaces rather than the united surface of the Freudian bodily ego. A broken and scattered body would hence seem to yield an equally fragmented ego, lacking in cohesion, potentially inchoate. For this reason, we might understand that practices of identification may well prove pathogenic and self-destructive for oppressed groups in racist contexts (Pellegrini, 1997). One might read the obvious limitations of such an approach – the implication that the oppressed are inevitably psychically damaged, along with the related issue of the potential re-inscription of racist objectifications at the level of psychological analysis – as an index of the problem I dealt with in Chapter 2, namely that of centering one's analysis of racism at the imaginary level of ego dynamics.

6 Another example of this trope is evident in Thiong'o's (2009) insistence that "[T]he colonising presence tried to mutilate the memory of the colonised and, where that failed, dismembered it" (p. 56).

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